

## THE BIBLE'S AUTHORITY ASSUMES GOD'S INSPIRATION

Here we are—the first Sunday after the mid-term elections! I wonder how many Christians who were *eligible* to vote *actually* voted. For at least 2 of the Sundays before the election, Art shared with us how he had read—or heard—that there are roughly 25 million Christians that don't even bother voting!

How many Christian adults are there in America? One on-line article I read stated that in a survey conducted 3 years ago, 65% of American adults—**about 167 million**—described themselves as “Christians.” So...if 25 million out of the 167 million *didn't* vote, that means 142 million Christians *did* vote! But did they?

Here's another question: If 142 million Christians voted, I wonder how many of them voted *Biblically*? What I mean simply is this: I wonder how many Christians looked at issues through a *Biblical lens* and voted accordingly? In other words, did so-called “Christians” vote *for people* in favor of *abortions* and *homosexual “unions?”* If so, they obviously *did not vote Biblically* because God is unmistakably *against those things*.

'Pastor, are you saying we should use the Bible to help us decide how *to vote*?' Yes, I am!

I'm also saying that we should use the Bible to help us decide how to spend our *money and our time*.

We should use the Bible to determine where *we go*...and what *we do*...and who our *friends are*.

We should use the Bible to determine what we *wear*...and what we *watch*...and what we *listen to*.

We should use the Bible to determine our *priorities* and how we *treat others* and how we *talk*.

And young people, you should use the Bible to help you decide *who to marry* and what to *do for a job*!

The list could go on, but I believe you get the point: as a believer—as a child of God—*the Bible* is to be the *authority* in our life for faith and practice; for doctrine and “doing.” But in order for us to submit to the Bible as our *authority* for what *we believe* and how *we behave*, there are some foundational beliefs we need to have—besides the belief that God exists!

For *the Bible* to be our authority, we need to *start* with the belief that *God is our authority*. Last week we noted that God has the right to rule over us—to tell us what to do—for the following reasons: 1) Because He created us. 2) Because He created us for His glory. 3) Because God is Sovereign over all. 4) Because God is the Judge of all. 5) Because Christ redeemed us.

But just because *God* has the right to rule over us, does that mean *the Bible* has the right to rule over us? *It depends* on how you view the Bible, right?

--If it is *merely the writings of men* then, no—it is not authoritative!

--But...if we receive the Bible *not as the word of men*, but as it is in truth—*the word of God* (like we saw in I Thessalonians 2:13 a couple of weeks ago)—then the Bible carries the *authority of God Himself*!

For the Bible to be our authority, then, there is a second foundational belief we must have, and it is this: *For the Bible to be our authority, we must believe in the inspiration of the Bible*. The main passage in the Bible that talks about inspiration is found in II Timothy 3:16-17. Please turn there and follow along as I read verses 14-17.

Let's consider first... **1. The meaning of inspiration**

Notice again vs 16: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...”

What does inspiration *mean*? Most of us have probably heard someone say something like, “That was an inspired performance” or “That is an inspired piece of art-work” or “That poem sure was inspiring.”

But **is that what is meant** here in verse 16 when Paul wrote “All Scripture is given by **inspiration** of God?”

Not quite! “**Inspiration**” comes from the Greek word “*theh-op’-nyoo-stos*” and literally means “breathed out from God.” Benjamin B. Warfield, a world-renowned theologian back in the early 1900’s, is best known for his writings on inspiration. Here is **how Warfield explained it**:

“...**the original documents** of the Bible **were written by men**, who, though permitted to exercise their own personalities and literary talents, yet wrote **under the control and guidance of the Spirit of God**, the result being in every word of the original documents a perfect and errorless recording of **the exact message which God desired to give to man.**”

(As cited in *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Catholics* by Ron Rhodes, pg 53).

There’s obviously a lot to unpack in that definition, but I tried to simplify it by “bolding” certain words. If you take the bolded words and make a sentence from them, you end up with this: “The original documents were written by men under the control and guidance of the Spirit of God, the result being the exact message which God desired to give to man.”

We’ll get into **how** God did that in a little bit, but the main thing we need to remember is that **God’s Word is God’s Word!** It came supernaturally **from God**. And because God **is the Author**...because God is the originator...it is true and without error! And all God’s people said? Amen!

Notice on your outline **Psalm 33:6** “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the **breath of His mouth.**” J.I. Packer put it like this: “...just as God made the host of heaven ‘by the breath of His mouth,’...so we should regard the Scriptures as the product of a similar creative fiat...” [a fiat is a command that creates something]. (*God Has Spoken*, pg 98.)

Simply put, if we believe God can **speak the world into existence**, we should also believe He can **speak His Word through men**—and have it recorded for us without error!

Next, let’s consider... **2. The method of inspiration**

**How did** God record His Word using men? How could something written by man be called “God-breathed”—meaning God-produced? And how can we be certain that sinful man didn’t “make mistakes” while recording it? The easy answer would be to simply declare—“it was a miracle”—which of course is true!

But God **didn’t just declare** that His Word was “breathed out” from Him—He also gave us some insight as **to how** that happened in a different passage. Please turn now to II Peter 1, verses 19-21.

--Vs 20 refers to “the prophecy **of Scripture**”—and I believe “prophecy” in vs 21 is also referring to “prophecy of Scripture”—meaning the entire OT at that particular time.

--Vs 21. “For the prophecy”—the OT Scripture—“came not in old time by the will of man.” It was not a creation of man. It was not man’s decision or idea—it was God’s!

--“but holy men of God...” God used certain people—not just anyone! They were holy men... they were godly men...they were men that belonged to God and were committed to God and loved God and obeyed God. They were men that had a high regard for **what God said** because they had a high regard for **who God was!**

--Back to vs 21 again. “but holy men of God spake as they were **moved...**”

I’ve pointed this out in the past, but it is certainly important to bring it up again here. The Greek word that “moved” is translated from—“*fer’-o*”—is also found in Acts 27:15-17. I have it there for you on your outline.

**Acts 27:15-17** “And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her **drive**.

<sup>16</sup> And running under a certain island which is called Claudia, we had much work to come by the boat:

<sup>17</sup> Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were **driven.**” “Drive” and “driven” are both translated from “*fer’o*.”

Here in Acts 27, we see the wind was so strong that it was **driving** the ship...it was moving it...it was carrying it along. In the same way, God the Holy Spirit was directing and moving and carrying the men that He used to record His Word. They were not totally passive, though—meaning they did the writing!

Here are a couple of observations that many of us have made on our own while reading the Bible.

1) God used the **personalities of the writers** themselves. The men God used to write His Word had **different “styles,”** so to speak. They were not robots that all sound the same. Mark sounds different than Luke—and Paul certainly wrote differently than Moses and David. Why?

Because God wanted to **give us some variety?** No; because **the men** themselves were different!

2) On the other hand, **there is a unity** about the Bible that is impossible to miss—a unity that points to one Author! I love this quote from **J.C. Ryle**: “How is it that a Book written by a few Jews in a remote corner of the earth—written at distant periods without consort or collusion among the writers...stands entirely alone, and there is nothing that even approaches it, for high views of God, for true views of man, for solemnity of thought, for grandeur of doctrine, and for purity of morality?” (*Holiness*, pgs 294-295).

The meaning and method of inspiration are certainly not easy things to understand or explain. In my mind, it boils down to **faith** and answering these two questions.

1) Do we believe God **has the ability** to use sinful men to give us His Word in a way that is error-free?

I say, “Yes!”

2) Do we believe that God **had the willingness** to give us His Word using sinful men?

To which I again reply, “Yes!”

I don’t necessarily need to understand exactly **how God** did it, but I do need to believe that **He could do it**—and that He **did do it!**

### **3. The scope—the extent—of inspiration**

Let’s turn back to II Timothy 3:16. Notice again what it says: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...”

**How much** of God’s Word was “breathed out” from God? **All of it!**

What does **all** mean? A Pastor of one of the churches Louise and I were members of liked to say: “All means all—and that’s all, all means!”

In my opinion, this really shouldn’t be all that difficult. As stated earlier, if we have the **faith to believe** God can **speak the world** into existence, we should **also be able to believe** that God can **speak His Word** into existence! God can—and did—use men to write His Word without error. And if we believe He can do that with **part** of His Word, why is it so hard to believe that God can do it with **all of His Word?** That shouldn’t be hard to believe—but to some it is!

Here’s what I mean. Some people have the mindset that God gave us the “spiritual part” of the Bible—the part that has to do with heaven...and hell...and salvation...and how to live. The **historical** parts, though—in their way of thinking—and the “**scientific** parts”—like how things were created—God did not give us **those** parts.

They then suggest that because the historical parts and “scientific” parts **weren’t inspired**, we can’t trust the Bible when it talks **about creation**. Anyone besides me have a problem with that line of thought?

Why is it important that we believe **all of** God’s Word is inspired? Because if we believe only **parts of the Bible** are inspired—that only **parts of it** comes from God—then we can **ignore the doctrines** we disagree with—and **disobey the instructions** that we don’t like! In essence, then, we are setting **ourselves up as judge** over the Word of God!

But—since the Bible in its entirety is **inspired by God**—we can’t “pick and choose.” We must believe what it teaches—and obey what it instructs—because **it is God** that is doing the teaching and instructing!

--“All Scripture is given by **inspiration of God...**”

--In **John 17:17**, Jesus said to the Father “Sanctify them through thy truth: **thy word is truth.**”

He didn’t say to the Father, ‘Part of your word is truth,’ did He?

Notice what else Jesus said:

**John 12:48** “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth **not my words**, hath one that judgeth him: **the word** that I have spoken, the **same shall judge him** in the last day.”

Let’s think about what Jesus is saying.

Jesus's words—what **Jesus said**—will judge us! How arrogant and foolish it is for us to think that **we can judge** what Jesus said! What Jesus said—His Word—will judge us...not the other way around!

What about you? What is your view of God's Word? **All Scripture** is given by inspiration **of God**—meaning it is **authoritative** in all that it says. Do you view it that way—or do you “pick and choose” what you want to believe and what you want to obey?

Lastly, let's consider... **4. The limits of inspiration**

Some of you might be thinking, ‘Wait a minute, Pastor! I thought you just said that **all Scripture** is inspired—and that all means all!’ That is **what I said**—and that is exactly **what I mean**!

But there is a limitation to **what** is inspired; what is “breathed out” from God. What is the limitation? What does verse 16 say? “All **Scripture** is given by inspiration of God...” Please don't misunderstand me. The Bible—from cover to cover—is God's Word and is given by inspiration of God.

But there are people—and some denominations—that want to make the words of certain men equal to God's Word. Others claim that they are receiving **new revelation** from God **now**—and what they are supposedly receiving is just as authoritative as the Bible!

Remember what I told you to do if I stood up some Sunday morning and told you that I had **new, never-before-revealed information** that I received directly from God? What are you supposed to do? **Run me out of the church**, right?!

So how are we to answer the claims about new “revelation” and tradition “trumping” Scripture? Obviously can't cover these in depth due to time, but here are some ways to address these issues:

A. Older, man-made traditions are not equivalent to God's Word

1) Jesus warned against tradition nullifying God's Word.

**Mark 7:7** “Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

**Mark 7:8** “For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men...”

**Mark 7:13** “Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered...”

What is Jesus saying? That tradition—the commandments of men—are **not doctrine** and you cannot “lay aside” **what God says** in order to follow what man says!

2) Jesus used Scripture as the final authority—not tradition.

We see that when He told the Pharisees that they erred, not knowing the Scriptures (Mt 22:29). We see Jesus using Scripture to rebuke Satan (Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13). And when people asked Jesus questions, He would say things like “What is written in the law?” (Lk 10:26) or “Have ye not read...” (Mt 12:3,5; 19:4).

3) Adequacy and sufficiency of Scripture is seen in connection with inspiration

We're still in II Tim 3; look at vs 15. Here we see the Scriptures—not tradition—are what made Timothy “wise unto salvation”—meaning understanding how to be saved from the penalty of sin.

In vss 16 and 17, we see that it is Scripture—not the traditions and teachings of men—that give us our doctrine...and instruct us in righteousness...and throughly—meaning completely—equip us to do good works.

Lastly, let's consider... B. Newer, man-made “revelations” are not equivalent to God's Word

1) Jesus promised His apostles—not us—that the HS would teach them and remind them what He had said.

**John 14:26** “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

This verse applies to **the apostles**—those that heard it directly from the lips of Jesus—and not to any of us! **They** were the ones who needed to be reminded of what they heard from Jesus—and to eventually write it down. That is **not happening now**—and that privilege and responsibility was not handed down to others.

2) The Bible itself strongly supports its completion.

--Most scholars believe that Revelation was the last book written. Because the last book written ties everything together—and ends with the eternal state—there are no unanswered questions about “what comes next.” We have, as Paul Harvey would say, “the rest of the story” and don't need new revelation.

And then we have **Revelation 22:18-19** “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy **of this book**, if any man **shall add unto these things**, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in **this book**: <sup>19</sup>And if any man shall **take away** from the words of the **book of this** prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in **this book**.”

Does “this book” in these verses refer to the Bible as a whole—or the book of Revelation? Probably the book of Revelation. **But** if we are forbidden to add to the **last book** written, aren’t we forbidden to add to the Bible in its entirety? It sure seems that way to me!

**Who** does this warning apply to? It applies to everyone, doesn’t it? It applies to you...and me...and your friends...and any and every so-called “religious leader”—regardless of the denomination!

I realize our time is past up, but I need to try to tie this together a little bit and not just abruptly stop!

**Does God** have the right to tell us what to do? Yes, He does!

**Does the Bible** have the right to tell us what to do? Depends on how we view it, right?

--It has **no authority** if it is just the work of men.

--But...since it is “breathed out” from God, it carries the same authority that God Himself does.

And since all Scripture is “breathed out” from God, we are obligated to believe and obey all of it—not just the parts that we agree with and like.

**PRAY**

So what does God want you to do with what you heard this morning?

It is obvious that God wants you to look at what He gave us—His Word—to be the authority in our lives!

What will that look like?

1. First, you will want to know what God says about getting into **His heaven!** It doesn’t matter what we think—or what a church teaches. What does **God say!**

2. Second, you will want to know what God says about **how to live the life** He gave you.

--You will want to know what God says—and do what God says.

--And to know what God says, you need to hear and read what He says—and not just on Sundays!

Too many Christians are like chickens that scratch around in the dirt, picking and choosing what we like out of the Bible—and leaving the rest.

Is God’s Word the authority in your life? It needs to be!