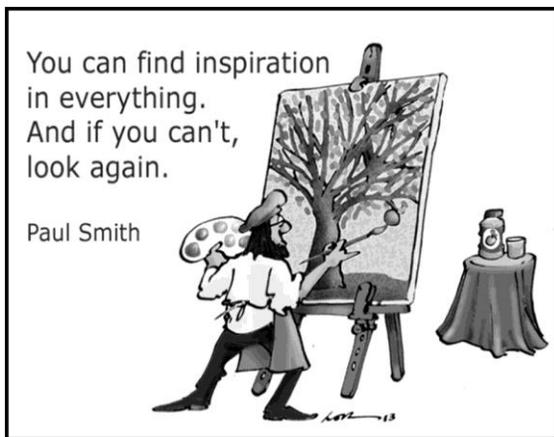


Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, September 9, 2020 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

FROM GOD TO US
How We Got the Bible – Inspiration
2 Timothy 3:16-17



In your own words describe what is taking place in this cartoon. Based on the cartoon define the word “inspiration.”

Read the Paul Smith quote on the cartoon. How does that quote relate to the cartoon?

In your opinion what is the quote saying? _____

Do you agree with the quote? Why or why not? _____

Can this quote somehow be related to the Christian life, to the Bible? If so how? If not why? _____

In your opinion, does this cartoon and quote reflect an understanding of Biblical Inspiration? If how how? If not why? Explain! _____

WHAT IS INSPIRATION?

The word “inspiration” can be a confusing term, because it can have varied meaning in the English language. Inspiration can range from an artist being inspired by beautiful scenery to paint, to a gifted musician sitting down to compose an original musical piece based on the inspiration of the sound of a thunderstorm. We can find ourselves inspired in life from everything from a moving circumstance in our lives, to a person who is our hero inspiring us on toward greatness, to a sermon that may inspire us to live more fully devoted to God. Some may be inspired by music or art, or by nature, or by patriotism. The list can be endless. In order to begin to understand what we mean by the Bible being the “inspired” Word of God and the Bible being given by “inspiration of God,” we must first understand something of the word “inspiration” and what we may mean by the use of this term.

3 Ways Inspiration May Be Defined:

1. **An Influence** - A divine influence or action on a person held to qualify him or her to receive and communicate sacred revelation. The action or power of moving the intellect or emotions. The act of influencing or suggesting opinions.
2. **A Physical Act** - The act of drawing in, i.e. the drawing of air into the lungs. We might call this inhaling... breathing in, as opposed to exhaling... breathing out. In this sense inspiration is breathing in, and expiration is breathing or drawing out. Physically taking something in.
3. **An Emotional (or Mental) State** - The quality or state of being inspired, that feeling that emotional/mental feeling you get that cause you to want to do or express something.

Which one of the above do you believe comes the nearest to defining what we mean when we talk about the Bible being inspired? #1. An Influence

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “inspiration” as:

“Something that makes someone want to do something or that gives someone an idea about what to do or create; a force or influence that inspires someone; a person, place, experience, etc., that makes someone want to do or create something; a good idea.”

– Merriam-Webster Dictionary

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INSPIRATION AND BIBLICAL INSPIRATION?

This is generally our understanding of the word inspiration, and it is common to all of us. We all have things that inspire us, that move us, that create in us great desire. By this definition a lot of things may qualify as being “inspired,” but are they “inspired” as the Bible is “inspired.” Is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (very inspired and very inspirational), or Leonardo da Vinci (very inspired and very inspirational), or Rembrandt, or Coldplay, or John Grisham on par with Scripture in their inspiration for their respective works of art, music or writing? Why or why not? This gives us a noted difference between inspiration in general and Biblical inspiration. Let’s begin this discussion by comparing the definition of the two.

2 Definitions:

1. **Inspiration Generally** – “Something that makes someone want to do something or that gives someone an idea about what to do or create; a force or influence that inspires someone; a person, place, experience, etc., that makes someone want to do or create something; a good idea.” – Merriam-Webster Dictionary
2. **Inspiration Biblically** – “God’s superintending of human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error in the words of the original autographs His revelation to man. -Dr. Charles Ryrie

So what’s the difference general inspiration is... well, “general.” It is something that anyone can generally experience or become, anyone can create, or inspire, or be inspired to do. But when speak to Biblical inspiration we are speaking to a specific thing that is inspired and how it is inspired, so that there is none other and nothing else like it... in this case it is the Bible, the Word of God. What did the Bible say about itself? Let’s look at it again...

“¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God^[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” -2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

“¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” -2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

What is the Bible saying about itself? _____

Why is it specific and special, unlike any others type of general inspiration? _____

In our passage, 2 Timothy 3:16, we are told that, *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...”* We said that the words “inspiration of God” form one word in the Greek language in the original texts. The one word is the Greek word “theopneustos.”

“Theopneustos” 2 Word in the Greek:

1. **Theo or Theos = God**
2. **Pneustos = to breathe** (*think of the word “pneumonia” – a disease of the breathing, i.e. the word “pneuma” is Greek for breath or breathe*)

Simple Definition – **“Biblical inspiration then is God breathing out His Word”** *God breathing out his words/truth and breathing it into (inspiring it into) the lungs of man

Inspiration is one of the most important doctrines in Christianity for the sole reason that we hold the Bible to be inspired by God, and as such is our infallible (unfailing, without error, reliable) rule for faith and practice. If that rule of faith and practice is not “God-breathed” but is simply the work of the human imagination, then there is no compelling reason to follow its doctrines and moral guidelines. God revelation must come to us by divine or Biblical inspiration or it is not God’s Word, but rather words of man on what God might be saying, thus making non-authoritative.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT THEORIES OF BIBLICAL INSPIRATION?

The reason we hold the Bible to be our rule for faith and practice can be summed up in one biblical passage... the one we have been look at and have set as our key text for our study, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16-17; NASB).

We notice two things regarding Scripture from this verse:

1. It is "inspired by God"
2. It is "profitable" for Christian living

We can come up with definitions for the various things Scripture is profitable for (reproof, correction, etc.). What really needs to be defined is what is meant by "inspired by God?" There are four ways to look at inspiration. These are what is known as the "theories of inspiration" by theologians and Biblical scholars. These can get pretty technical, but basically these are the different theories that Christian theologians and Biblical scholars have developed at how God "inspired" the Word of God/ the Bible. Now remember that we could not know God unless He revealed (revelation) Himself to us... He is so far "other" and removed from us (Holy, Sovereign, etc.) we could not know Him unless He revealed Himself to us. Further, we may only know Him as far as He reveals Himself to us. That is revelation, and the Bible is God's revelation. Inspiration then is how He got it to us, man, from a God we cannot not know unless He tells us... reveal it to us. There are four views of inspiration... how God did this... gave us His Word, the Bible.

4 Theories or Views of Inspiration: (note that these may have slightly different titles by different theologians, scholars and their studies, but they are saying the same things)

1. The Neo-Orthodox View of Inspiration – The neo-orthodox view of inspiration is based on their view of the transcendence (otherworldliness, superiority) of God. Neo-orthodoxy taught that God is so completely different from us (i.e., utterly transcendent) that the only way we could ever know Him is through His revelation to us. This view of the transcendence of God is so restrictive that it denies any concept of natural theology (i.e., General Revelation... that God can be known through His creation). Furthermore, it denies that the Bible is the Word of God. Rather, the Bible is a witness, or mediator, to the Word of God, which is God Himself. The words in the Bible aren't God's words, but God can use them to speak to individuals. Other than that, the words in the Bible are fallible words written by fallible men. ***PROBLEM: From what we can see, the neo-orthodox view of inspiration is no view of inspiration at all. If the Bible is the fallible product of fallible men, then it really has no value at all, at least not any more than any other book written by men. God could very well "speak" to us through works of fiction as He could through the Bible.***

2. The Dictation Method of Inspiration – The dictation method of inspiration sees God as the author of Scripture and the individual human agents as secretaries taking dictation. God spoke and man wrote it down, basically. This view has some merit as we know there are portions of Scripture in which God essentially says, "Write this down" (e.g., *Jeremiah 30:2*, ² *"This is what*

the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you.'"), but not all Scripture was created that way. The Pentateuch is essentially a pre-history and chronicle of the Jewish people prior to settling in the Promised Land. While Moses is believed to be the primary author, much of it is the editorial work of Moses and later redactors who finalized the finished product. Luke states in the preamble to his Gospel that he performed detailed research into the events of the life of Jesus before writing his work (Luke 1:1-4, "*Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*"). Many of the prophetic books read like journals of the prophets' lives. **PROBLEM:** *The bottom line is that the dictation method only explains certain portions of Scripture, but not all of it or even most of it. Also, if it is all dictated by God why do certain books, and letter, written by specific people seem to exhibit their style, grammar, and personality. The dictation theory doesn't seem to work, but it is an accepted and espoused theory by some.*

3. The View of Limited Inspiration – Limited inspiration is sort of the opposite view of dictation. Whereas dictation sees Scripture as primarily the work of God with the human agent reduced to being a secretary, limited inspiration sees Scripture as primarily the work of man with "limited" inspiration from God. God guides the human authors, but allows them the freedom to express themselves in their works. This view asserts that while there may be factual and historical errors in the Bible, the Holy Spirit guided the authors so that no doctrinal errors resulted from their works. **PROBLEM:** *The problem with this view is how one can trust the Bible in doctrinal concerns when it is prone to error in its historical accounts? The reliability of the Bible is called into doubt in this view, and if we can't trust a literary work to get mundane details right, how can we trust it for weightier issues? This view also seems to ignore the fact that while the Bible is a story of redemption from Genesis to Revelation, it is a story told against the backdrop of human history, the doctrine being interwoven within the history. One can't just arbitrarily say that this account is factually inaccurate yet state it contains a kernel of doctrinal truth.*

4. The View of Plenary Verbal Inspiration - The final view, and the view of orthodox Christianity, is the view of plenary, verbal inspiration. The word *plenary* means "complete or full," and *verbal* means "the very words of Scripture." So plenary, verbal inspiration means that every single word in the Bible is the very word of God. It is what Scripture claims for itself and should be accepted by faith. The passage quoted above (2 Timothy 3:16-17) uses a unique Greek word, *theopneustos*, which literally means "God-breathed." Scripture is literally "breathed out" of the mouth of God. Furthermore, in another biblical passage, 2 Peter 1:21 (that we have examined before) we see that "*no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Peter 1:21). This passage gives us a clue as to how God inspired the human authors. We see that men spoke (or wrote) "*as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*" The verb "carried along" is used to speak of a sail being filled by a wind and carrying a boat along the water, which is fitting since the Greek word for "spirit" is also used for "wind." When the human authors were putting pen to paper, the Holy Spirit "carried them along" so that what they wrote were the "breathed-out" words of God. This means

READ:
2 Peter
1:19-21

that while the actual writings retain the personality of the individual authors (and that is obvious if you read the works of Paul compared to James or John or Peter), they contain the actual words of God.

WHAT INSPIRATION IS NOT?

Again, “inspiration” is one of the most important doctrines in Christianity for the sole reason that we hold the Bible to be inspired by God. God’s revelation must come to us by divine or Biblical inspiration or it is not God’s Word, but rather words of man on what God might be saying, thus making non-authoritative. In closing, it should be noted that there are some things that inspiration is not:

5 Things Inspiration is Not:

- 1. Inspiration is not robotic dictation** - (not to be confused with the dictation method mentioned above) The personality of the human authors is present in each of the writings.
- 2. The fact that individual personalities are present in the writings does not mean that God's "control" over them was not perfect** - The Holy Spirit superintended the process so that the words written were the exact words God wanted, despite the fallibility of the human authors.
- 3. Inspiration is limited to the original writings (autographs) not the process of transmission** - We know there are minute transmission errors in the copies of manuscripts, but these errors are more grammatical than substantive.
- 4. The inspiration of Scripture, as we said, is to the verbal level** - Meaning that it's not just the ideas or thoughts that are inspired, but the very words. Moreover, we don't speak of inspiration of Scripture as we would the inspiration of a great work of literature or a work of music.
- 5. Inspiration is limited to the specific works of the authors that are included in the biblical canon** - Paul wasn't inspired, but Romans was. Furthermore, not all letters of Paul were inspired, but only the ones the Holy Spirit chose to preserve (e.g., see the Corinthian letters in which reference is made to two additional letters to this church of which we have no existing copies).

Biblical inspiration, in a nutshell, is the orthodox view of the church which says that the Bible is the plenary, verbally inspired word of God.