

Inspired by God

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Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 00] All right, well we are working our way as a church through Paul's second letter to Timothy. We've been doing that for a good part of this year because I took two months off this summer.

So we're still there and we are in chapter three. And we're going to kind of pause here a little bit and we're going to consider two things. So this morning's message and next Sunday's message will be a little out of the ordinary.

We're going to kind of widen the focus to the rest of the scriptures to see what they have to say on this thing that we've come to in 2 Timothy 3, verse 16.

This idea, this truth that God has inspired. He has breathed out the scriptures. So this is the passage that we came to last Sunday, 2 Timothy 3, verse 16.

Paul writes, All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

[1 : 11] This is a passage of scripture that is so foundational to our Christian faith. It explains why we here at the Bible Church take the Bible so seriously.

It is not just the words of men who lived long ago. It is the very word of God. As men like Moses and Isaiah and Peter and Paul were putting pen to parchment, God was breathing out his own words, speaking through them, so that what ended up on the parchment was God's own words to us, not just their own.

The Apostle Peter said it this way in his letter. He writes, We did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the majestic glory saying, This is my son whom I love.

With him I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it as to a light shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

[2 : 55] Peter says, Peter reminds the followers of Jesus that all of the teaching about Jesus that he's been proclaiming isn't just some cleverly devised bunch of stories.

Peter says, I was there on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured before us. I heard God speak audibly from heaven. I heard him confirm that yes, this Jesus was and is his son.

And so you can count on what I saw. You can count on what I heard, says Peter. It's reliable. It's trustworthy. And then he goes on to talk about how we can completely depend and rely on the word of the prophets that we have in the scriptures.

They too are reliable. They too are trustworthy. He's basically saying God really has spoken through human beings.

The words the prophets wrote down, the scriptures, you must understand, he says, these words didn't come about because men just decided, I'm going to sit down and write a book about what I think is going on in my day.

[4 : 40] No, the prophetic words, the words of scripture came from God. And the prophets spoke and wrote as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit of God.

What Paul and Peter are saying here is that God acted supernaturally over, under, and within the biblical authors to ensure that his own words were written and communicated just as he wanted them to be.

God's own spirit, God's own breath are in the words of scripture that we have in our Bibles.

And this was the whole topic of last Sunday's message. But now we want to consider a couple other questions related to this this morning. To what extent is the Bible inspired by God?

To what extent is the Bible inspired by God? We want to talk about this this morning. Our church is now a member of the Baptist General Conference of Canada.

[6 : 00] And our conference has a good statement about this in our affirmation of faith. And this is the statement. We believe that the Bible is the revealed word of God fully and verbally inspired.

We believe that the Bible is the word of God. Written under the direction of the Holy Spirit. We believe it is without error in the original manuscripts and is true and trustworthy in all that it asserts. It has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. Notice the wording here. We believe that the Bible is the word of God and that it is fully inspired.

In other words, we believe that all of the Bible is God-breathed, divinely inspired, coming from God himself as his own word. And a lot of why we believe that comes from 2 Timothy 3.16, which we just saw on the screen and which we looked at last Sunday.

It says all scripture is God-breathed. And so from Genesis all the way to Revelation and everything in between, all of it is inspired by God. All of it comes from God.

[7 : 15] It was breathed out by him as the human authors wrote on the parchment. It's fully inspired, we believe. Not only that, but we believe that it is verbally inspired.

Verbally inspired. That is, that every word of the Bible is God-breathed, comes from God under the direction of his Holy Spirit as the human author wrote it down.

And I want to explore this a little bit more together this morning. Why do we believe that every word of this book comes from God? Let's look together at a few passages.

The first one comes from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. As he was teaching his disciples and later the crowd that gathered. This is what he said. He said, Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets.

I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For truly, I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished.

[8 : 42] Therefore, anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

So there was some suspicion in Jesus' day that he had come to cast doubt on the word of God, the trustworthy word of Moses and the prophets that had been handed down to Israel.

But Jesus says, Don't even think. Don't even think that I have come to do away with the law or the prophets, to abolish them.

If you look at the law, that's actually the short name for the law of Moses. Referring to the first five books of the Bible that Moses wrote down, Genesis to Deuteronomy.

And the prophets, this is also kind of a shorthand way of referring to the rest of the Old Testament. We tend to think of the prophets as only referring to men like Elijah and Isaiah and Ezekiel.

[9 : 53] But the biblical notion of a prophet is much broader. It would have included men like King David, who wrote the Psalms, and Solomon, who wrote Proverbs.

It would have included anyone who truly spoke or wrote on God's behalf. To the people. And so when Jesus says, The law and the prophets, it's actually a reference to all of the scriptures that they had.

The scriptures of the Old Testament. He says, I've not come to abolish the law or the prophets, all the scriptures that you have now. I've come to fulfill them.

He makes it clear that those writings are not something he came to do away with or replace. God doesn't intend to replace the Old Testament with Jesus.

He intends to fulfill what was written in those scriptures through Jesus. But now let's look at the way Jesus speaks about the Old Testament scriptures here in verse 18.

[10 : 59] The law of Moses, the writings of the prophets. Truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished.

In other words, according to Jesus, every letter of every word matters. God intends to fulfill all of what he has spoken.

Not just kind of, not just essentially, but down to the smallest stroke of the pen. In other words, not a single word of the revelation that God gave through Moses or the prophets is unimportant or irrelevant.

We believe that the scriptures are verbally inspired, word for word. Every word from God. Let's look at another passage where we see this. Jesus on another occasion had a run-in with the religious, some of the religious leaders known as the Sadducees.

And the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. So they denied the afterlife, essentially. They didn't believe in many spiritual things.

[12:22] And Jesus has a conversation with them. They come to Jesus and they say, Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, then that man's brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.

Now there were seven brothers among us and the first one married and died. And since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother.

The same thing happened to the second. They married the widow, had no children, died, and the third brother right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died.

Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seventh since all of them were married to her? This was kind of a hypothetical scenario used to challenge Jesus' belief in the resurrection. And Jesus looks at him and says, you are in error because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection, people will neither marry nor be given in marriage.

[13:38] they will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what God said to you? I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

Jesus is quoting from the book of Exodus, chapter 3, verse 6. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching. So here Jesus uses the scriptures from the book of Exodus to correct the Sadducees, and he quotes it word for word.

This is what God said. And amazingly, he makes his whole point here on the tense of the verb.

I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. As in presently, right now, I am still the God of Abraham. At this point in Exodus, Abraham had died long before this.

[14:47] He's not the God of the dead, but of the living. Is Jesus just nitpicking? Is he being argumentative? Far from it. Jesus understood that God was deliberate in his choice of every word that he spoke long ago.

Even to the tense of the verb, it was significant. It was accurate. What was written in the scriptures. And so we believe in the verbal inspiration.

We believe that every word is God-breathed. One more quick example from the letter that Paul wrote to the Galatians. Galatians 3, verse 16.

Paul is writing here and he says, the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say and to seeds, meaning many people, but and to your seed, meaning one person who is Christ.

Now I know we're kind of jumping into the middle of something here. Paul's making some big points here. He's laboring to show that the promises which God made to Abraham and his seed, his offspring.

[16:02] He's laboring to show that those promises are fulfilled in one person. And that person is Jesus Christ. And so here Paul, under the direction of the Holy Spirit as an apostle of Jesus Christ, makes his case on the singularity of the word seed as opposed to the plural, seeds.

think of this. This was a word penned in the scriptures by Moses recording what happened with Abraham thousands of years prior to this.

And Paul's saying, yes, whether the word was plural or not mattered to God. When he made that promise, God had a particular fulfillment in mind the day he said this to Abraham.

And that fulfillment would be Christ. And so his word, the scriptures, said, say, seed, and not seeds. So as we look at how Jesus and the apostles handled the Old Testament scriptures, it becomes pretty obvious that they understood the scriptures to be verbally inspired by God.

[17:17] every word. They understood them to be God-breathed and accurate down to the tense, down to whether the word was plural or not, and every word authoritative and important.

And so that's what we believe. Not just that the general gist of ideas that God had in his mind are essentially intact in our Bibles, but that every word comes from God under the direction of his spirit.

And so this has big implications for how we view this book, the Bible. It necessarily follows that if every word in this book is supernaturally selected by God and spoken by God, then it necessarily follows that this book is without error.

It also follows that it's true in all that it asserts and trustworthy. And it also follows that it has supreme authority in everything that we believe and in everything that we do for all of life. But here's one caveat that we have to notice here, especially when it comes to looking at the inerrancy of Scripture. We believe it is without error in the original manuscripts.

[18 : 51] So we do not believe that every copy that has ever been made over the centuries has no mistakes or words accidentally left out or accidentally added in over the centuries.

We believe that the original scroll which Moses wrote under the influence of God's Spirit is 100% without error. We believe that the original letter that was penned by the Apostle Paul on the parchment was 100% without error.

That every word that he wrote was God-breathed and was exactly as God wanted it to be. And this is a place where the devil has worked to cause all kinds of trouble amongst Christians.

His goal has always been to get us not to trust the word of God. Did God really say were the words of the serpent in the garden that fateful day?

And so for centuries the devil has been trying to cause people to doubt whether God has really spoken to us, whether we can really be sure that we have his words intact in our scriptures.

[20 : 09] One of the questions he loves to poke us with is isn't it possible that so many human errors and mistakes have crept into the Bible over the centuries that now it hardly resembles the original manuscripts?

Isn't it likely that the truth of the Bible has been lost in translation over the centuries? And so we're going to take next Sunday Lord willing just to talk about this issue of transmission and translation from the originals to today because there's a lot to talk about there's a lot to look at and we do not want to give the devil an opportunity or a foothold in our church.

Yes we believe that every word penned by the biblical authors is breathed out by God is without error true in all that it asserts and trustworthy in the original manuscripts and I'll give you a spoiler for next Sunday we can be absolutely confident that the best English translations that we hold in our hands today are very accurate and that the overwhelming majority of variances between the manuscript copies that we have do not affect any major Christian doctrine whatsoever.

More about that next Sunday. For the rest of our time here I want to look at some examples of how different genres in the Bible are inspired by God.

How they are God-breathed and we're going to start right at the end and kind of work our way backwards a bit. Let's go to Revelation. chapter 1. How did Revelation come to be in our Bibles?

[22 : 01] This is what John wrote right at the beginning. He said the revelation from Jesus Christ which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.

He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John who testifies to everything he saw. That is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it because the time is near.

God So the apostle John identifies himself as the recipient of this revelation. He says that it came from Jesus Christ himself through an angel and John as he writes this now he says I'm testifying to what I saw everything he saw and then the rest of revelation is his vision which Jesus gave him through this angel and if you've read the book of revelation you know it's quite the vision.

But we notice also in revelation there are numerous times where Jesus tells John write and then tells him exactly what to write. In other places he's told to write what he sees or to write what he hears.

[23 : 31] And so there's two ways here that we see God causing his word to be written down. Sometimes he dictates it word for word and he told his chosen man write this and then told him what to write.

We see this all over the prophets in the Old Testament too. Say to so and so and then God tells him word for word what to say. The other way that we see inspiration happening here is just the vision itself that John sees that God gives him.

He's told to write it down and that this is inspired by God means that John is accurately describing exactly what he really saw as Jesus gave this vision through this angel.

Sometimes in this book John gives some explanation about the meaning of certain things in the vision. That this is inspired by God means that his explanation is true. The spirit was influencing him as he was writing this so that he understood what he was writing about.

That's revelation. Let's consider one of the letters of Paul. What does it mean for this genre to be inspired by God? Paul was an apostle, sort of the New Testament equivalent of a prophet, specifically though, a spokesperson of Jesus Christ.

[25 : 07] Jesus said on the night of his betrayal that his spirit would give his apostles the words to say. And then he enabled the apostles to perform signs and wonders just like Jesus did to authenticate those men as his messengers.

And Paul was one of those men. Paul wrote letters to the churches that he helped to establish all around the Mediterranean world. And his letters are full of teaching and instruction for followers of Jesus.

But we also notice that his letters are not devoid of his own personality. Paul had a fun tendency to take some things to the extreme, to make a point.

And it just shows up in his letters and we kind of have to laugh when we get to those points. If you're new here, you're probably thinking that that verse right there is really strange. But if you read all of Galatians in context, you'll understand what he's saying there.

The Holy Spirit did not bypass Paul's personality altogether as Paul wrote the scriptures that he wrote. His personality shines through at the same time.

[26 : 22] We see the authenticity of Paul's love for the people in the churches. We see how he really cared for people, how he related to people.

We see his frustration over the division, his personal frustration over the division and the damage caused in the church by false teachers. And so as God breathed the scriptures that Paul wrote, he did so in a way that kept the humanity of Paul and his relationships fully intact.

I love this reference to Paul's letters that Peter makes in his letter. Peter writes this in 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 15.

He says, bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. Paul writes the same way in all his letters, says Peter, speaking in them of these matters, his letters contain some things that are hard to understand which ignorant and unstable people distort as they do the other scriptures to their own destruction.

Notice how the apostle Peter spoke of Paul's writings as coming from God's wisdom and how he lumps Paul's letters right in with the other scriptures.

[27 : 49] letters. Peter recognized the letters of Paul as God breathed scripture on the same level as the other divinely inspired writings that they had in the Old Testament.

Next, let's look at the gospel of Luke. Luke admits right at the beginning that he was not one of the first eyewitnesses of all that happened with Jesus but that later on once he heard about it, he made an effort to carefully investigate everything about Jesus right back to the beginning.

And then Luke took everything that he had gathered from these eyewitnesses and compiled this account of Jesus' story, of Jesus' life and death and resurrection.

And he did this for a man named Theophilus. That's who he was writing at this for. And so that Luke's gospel account is God breathed means that as he did this work God's spirit was directing him to the right people to have the needed conversations, to ascertain the precise words and details of the events of Jesus' life.

And then ultimately that Luke's gospel account is God breathed means that as he sat down to write it out, the spirit of God supernaturally influenced him such that the final product was 100% true and accurate to every detail of what Jesus said and did and what happened during his life.

[29 : 26] What about the Psalms in the Old Testament? If there's any part of scripture that we may wonder about how can that be the word of God, it could be the Psalms.

Many of them are prayers that are written by men to God. And so we might wonder about that. Let's look at how Jesus quotes the words of David from Psalm 110.

Jesus is having another encounter with the religious leaders. He's teaching in the temple courts and he asks this question, why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David? David himself speaking by the Holy Spirit declared, the Lord said to my Lord and then he quotes Psalm 110 right there.

Now Jesus is making a big point here to the religious leaders. We're not going to get into that but notice what Jesus says about David's Psalm which was written a thousand years before this.

[30 : 35] David himself speaking by the Holy Spirit said and then he quotes.

So when David wrote this Psalm it wasn't just some uninspired his own thoughts. No, the Psalms are God breathed too. And there are lots of examples of this attributing the words of the Psalms in different places to the Holy Spirit.

Which means that we have a God breathed collection of prayers, poetry, wisdom, songs.

That the Psalms are God breathed means that when the writer of the Psalms intends to teach us something about God or asserts something about him in praise, that they're inspired by God, breathed out by him, means that this is true.

God is really like that. He's really worthy of praise for that reason. But it also means that where the Psalmists lament and groan and cry out to God and wonder if God's forgotten them, that these words are God breathed means that their words genuinely describe the kind of anguish or anxiety they felt, even the kinds of doubts.

[32 : 02] that they wrestled with. We might look at verses like this and say, how can that be the word of God? It tells us in other places that God is always with his people, that he never abandons his people, that he always keeps his promises.

These words being inspired by God, it doesn't mean that God actually abandons his people or that he fails to keep his promises. of course not.

Rather, God breathed leaves room, even for the people who wrote the Bible to speak truthfully about how they felt in the moment, even if their thoughts were feelings where they were just lacking faith, or they were afraid, or they doubted.

had a conversation with, where is he, Rob, last Sunday, and he brought this passage to my attention.

Word for word inspired by God does not mean that every single utterance by every single person in the Bible is true. For example, when the devil speaks, is that true?

[33 : 16] Or when the wicked rulers of the nations around Israel blaspheme God, those words are not true. Or when Job's friends, as Rob pointed out, speak wrongly about God, later on in the book, God himself says, they did not speak the truth about me.

We have whole chapters of these characters not speaking the truth about God in the Bible. God breathed means that, not that what they said in those moments was good or true, it just means that the biblical author accurately recorded exactly what they said.

God breathed means that we have a trustworthy account of what Job's friends said and what Satan said and what the rulers of the nations said when they taunted at different times.

God's friends. God's friends said and what God's friends said. On the flip side, let's consider that the divine inspiration of the scriptures is the only explanation for how many of the declarations of the prophets made about the future could be fulfilled so exactly.

Some of the predictions made by the prophets had a specific day or year attached to them and God fulfilled them in the time that he specified to the year, to the day.

[34 : 39] This is one example on the screen. That can only happen as consistently and plentifully as it did in the Bible if the words the prophets penned were inspired by God word for word.

In fact, God even told the Israelites to discern whether a prophet was truly speaking on his behalf based on whether or not the thing that they were predicting in the near future came true.

So I hope that this has been an encouragement to you. Not just from Paul in his letter to Timothy but from all over the Bible, from Peter, from Jesus, from the fulfillment of prophecy.

All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The scriptures are God-breathed down to the word, even the tense, even the plurality of the words. And because the scriptures are God-breathed means that they are trustworthy.

[35 : 58] It means that we can build our lives on these words. And when we start to read our Bibles in this way, it changes everything. The disorientation that we find from all the voices in our world speaking at us, that disorientation just begins to lift.

We begin to see clearly what's going on in our world, where we stand, with God, what he desires for us, how he truly does love us with a love beyond measure.

I want to close with the words of Jesus himself from Matthew chapter 7, Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said this, he said, therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

the rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

[37 : 24] Let's pray. Father in heaven, we want to say thank you for your word. The amazing thing that you've done in preserving exactly what you said all those thousands of years ago for us, so that today we can look in our Bibles and we can read and we can have confidence confidence that you spoke this, and we can know how we need to respond and what we need to believe and how we need to think and how we need to live.

Thank you for this incredible gift. I pray that our hearts would be good soil, that we would all respond whole heartedly to your word in whatever ways we encounter it, whether it's at home reading our Bibles, whether it's on Sunday mornings, whether it's listening as we drive on the road. Do your work in us. Cause us to bear much fruit for your name and for your glory. Amen.