

Inspired, Inerrant and Infallible

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[0 : 0 0] to the chapter we had, 2 Peter chapter 1, just the last verse in that chapter. 2 Peter chapter 1, this is the text we can take, verse 21, for our study this evening, carrying on in the confession.

2 Peter chapter 1 and verse 21. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. It's been a few weeks now, but if you remember, we were working our way still through chapter 1 of the confession.

I didn't promise it would be a quick study, and realistically speaking, we'll be in a study for God willing, if he gives it to us, years. We'll mingle it and disperse it enough, but I don't want to rush it. There's no sense in rushing it. We may as well get what we can out of it.

So we're still in chapter 1, but we're coming to a conclusion this week, or perhaps next week, in chapter 1. Remember last time we got to section 7, we did 5, 6 and 7, basically saying, what does the Bible teach? What does it contain? Quite simply, we saw that although there's parts of scripture which are complicated for us, to say the least, we are assured that all that we have to know for salvation is made clear. And following on from that now, we come to the final few sections of chapter 1, and we see that the writers of the confession now just defining down what scripture actually is, how we got it, how do we interpret it fully, and what sort of power does scripture truly carry. So this evening, at least, we're going to look at section 8, and hopefully section 9, but we'll see how we get on. Again, I don't want to rush it. There's plenty of content for us.

Section 8, first of all then, chapter 1, section 8. Where does scripture come from? We've covered this before in the first few sections, but in section 8, we see the doctrine, we could say, of inspiration being described to us, and that's why we're looking at 2 Peter chapter 1 here, this verse, which is the very central point of our three sections this evening. What does it mean that we have an inspired word? How do we know, or how can we trust that God's word is truly God's word? And quite simply this evening, how did God speak his word? How did that word go from being God's word to being recorded word? What did that process look like? And the confession deals with that. I'll break down just two very simple quotes from this section. The first few verses of section 8, it tells us of the Old Testament in Hebrew, New Testament in Greek, being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages. Being immediately inspired by God. In other words, how did God speak his word? How did man then receive that word? How did

[3 : 2 3] God cause what we call today the scriptures? How can we trust that these words are truly the words of God? How did God inspire? Well, there's three main theories, three main interpretations as to how God inspired. Now, you can say, well, just give us the actual one. That's not fair, and that's not right.

There's three main ways that people would argue God created, God inspired, God wrote or caused scripture to be written. And again, there is one way that is the reformed way, that is the confessional way, that is the, I would argue, biblical way. But it's only fair that we look at all these three, just briefly, because we will face and you will encounter folks and other Christians who have a very different view as to what the Bible is. And this is not just dry theology. We're very careful not to tar whole dominations of a brush. So I won't say a domination, but there are many in Scotland today, Christians in Scotland today, and perhaps they are Christians that won't doubt their salvation because of this. It's not my place to do that. But I will say there are many Christians in Scotland today, and there's certainly plenty of ministers in Scotland today who will teach a view of inspiration that comes under these other two ways. So it's important that as we interact with other Christians, as you perhaps listen to other sermons, don't assume that they think the Bible came to you in the same way that you do.

Three main views about how God inspired scripture. The first view is the dictation view. As I say, he's in the tin. This quite simply is a view that sees God as just dictating his word to the writers. With respect, and I'm not even trying to be humorous here, it is very much the view that the writers, take David for example, David is writing as Sam, that he is suddenly zapped by some kind of power that takes over him, and he writes down the words of the Psalms. He's nothing more than a human typewriter, as God inspires him directly what to say.

Now, even more simply, this is the view that, quite simply, that man has no input into the style, into the writing of scripture. We're not touching on content just now, but into the actual style of scripture, into the wording of things, into the writing of it, that the writers had no input, that David had no input, that Paul had no input. The exact words we see are the very exact way from God through Paul, that the human writers were just nothing more than machines, nothing more than robots writing down the word of God. Now, that might sound good, and might say, well, that sounds pretty right. Of course, God inspired his word directly through man, and that's how we have the Bible. That would sound right, but it goes against what scripture tells us. It also goes against what we see in scripture. We'll see this in a second. Take the Gospels, every single one of the Gospels, every single one of them. Now, remind the rest of the books in scripture, but just take the four

Gospels just now. The writing styles, the Greek grammar, the words they choose, the way they write, are so different. The very Gospels themselves prove that this is not the way that God inspired his word.

[7 : 12] Mankind and the writers of scripture were not just human typewriters. Interestingly, this is the view our Muslim friends would have of how the Quran was inspired. According to them, small g, very much small g, their God Allah just inspires Muhammad word for word. Muhammad was just there writing down every word. It's not in scripture. It's not right. So if not this dictation view, then what about another view? Or perhaps this is the second most common view, perhaps.

It's that of so-called limited inspiration. So if we're saying that mankind, that the writers of scripture, that they weren't just typewriters, not just robots dictated to word for word, comma by comma, by God, then the limitation of inspiration view says that God just inspires the main message.

That take chapter, John chapter one, God just gave to John that he became man and came to earth. And then John filled in the blanks, you could see.

That God gives the central point, but the majority of the actual text is filled in by the writer himself, by the man himself. I hope you can see straight away the issue with that. It might sound nice, but that leaves us with a scripture that is man-made, that is primarily man-made. And brothers and sisters, this is the view that is prevalent in many churches and across many ministers, not in our own denomination. We praise the Lord for that, but it is very common in our modern church, very common in our current church, that as long as you get the general understanding of scripture, then don't worry about the words. Don't worry about the words. That's how man interpreted it. Don't worry about the two genders. God just says that he gave marriage, and that marriage is for man and woman. Well, that's just how the writer of the time, that was their culture, and that's how they understood it. Sounds nice, but that's how you justify every manner of sin you want to justify. So God didn't, as it were, use humans as typewriters. We're saying God definitely didn't give just a theme and then let humankind fill in the blanks. What then, or how then, did God inspire his word? Well, the Reformed view and the confessional view is that of plenary verbal inspiration. Now, we aren't just using these words to sound smart. There is meaning for this. Plenary verbal inspiration. Plenary just meaning, of course, complete. I say of course, I had to Google it myself. Complete. Complete inspiration. Complete verbal inspiration. Again, this is the majority Reformed view. Indeed, this was the majority view of the other church fathers. And I hope you'll see that. I hope you agree that there's a good scriptural reason why we hold to this view. This view states, first of all, that God is totally sovereign over scripture. Every word belongs to him. He is totally sovereign over its word, its content and its construct, what it says and how it says it. He is totally, completely sovereign. In the original manuscripts, we see the exact precise word of God as it was inspired by him. It's not just that the wider truths are inspired. No, every word is inspired. At the same time, God used men. God uses means. We know that, we teach that, we believe that. And he used men who had different backgrounds, different mental abilities, different academic abilities. And he used these different styles and he allowed the men to write in different styles for his glory. And it's not just theology. We see this in scripture.

If you're to turn to John, perhaps, and Luke are good examples. Who do read the Greek? Who do a literal word for word translation of the Greek we find in Luke, for example? The phrases we find in Luke.

[11 : 55] Luke. And then take a word for example of a translation of Greek we find in John. You see two completely different writers. Both inspired. We believe that. We trust that. But Luke writes like a doctor. He writes like an academic would write. He writes in full, perfect, long-winded Greek sentences. With no breaks, with no stops. He has huge thoughts. He connects together in complicated grammatical ways.

He turned to John. John, although being a fisherman perhaps, he was a poet. He writes in verse much of John. And you see that even in English. It's thin column. A lot of John's writing is written in verse.

It's written in almost poetical form. He was a poetical man. He was a beautiful writer. His Greek wasn't always great. His Greek was grammatically wrong. Because as poets do, as writers do, he abandons the grammar to make his point even more clear. Again, if you could see my notes just now, you'd see that there's full stops missing his exclamation marks everywhere. There's bits underlined. The grammar is awful. But it's there too, because it's matching how I write. If I was to take someone else here tonight, and you'd write the same notes I have, you'd have perhaps precise notes, perfect spelling, perfect layout for different people. God makes use of men. He makes use of them as they are. And we see that in Scripture. Both Gospels, both Luke and John, of course, are equally inspired. We trust both Gospels equally. But they have different styles. Again, take the Apostle Paul.

His style is so different to all the Gospels, because he is a man who is educated beyond belief. If you think sometimes his sentences are long and complicated in English, imagine how complicated they are in Greek. There's no full stops. There's no commas in the original. It's just block text after block text all jammed together. And try to have an exam on that, which I'm Angus marking it.

It's a terrifying prospect. God uses means. God uses methods. All this to say we can trust God's Word. Because God speaks through men, but he does so with every word being inspired. That's our text this evening. No prophecy was produced, was ever produced by the will of man, as Peter tells us. But men spoke from God as they're being carried along by the Holy Spirit. And it's important for us here, going to the Greek, carried along. The image, the very word Peter uses there is the same word you use of a sail being blown by the wind, a sail being hit by the wind. Not being dictated to word for word, no. But God set the course of his word and he pushed men in that direction. And the men, they sailed their own boats, as it were, as they wrote down scripture, were being carried along by the wind of the Holy Spirit. In other words, we can trust God's Word. It is clear, it is simple, we can trust it. And God makes use of means, and he makes use of normal men to record what it is he wants them to record in the ways he wants them to record. Quite simply, God's Word is inspired. And God does so in a way that's beautiful, that maintains each writer's own personality, which he gave him, that maintains each writer's own writing style, with which they used. And it means we have a scripture that reads like it was written by different people, but at the same time inspired. Just by the by. I don't perhaps advise that you do, but if you have some spare time and you have an afternoon free, if you read the Book of Mormon, for example. And this is not, I'm not saying this to disparage them at all, that's not how we witness to them. But just stating plainly, if you read the Book of Mormon, it's the most boring book you can read.

[16 : 12] Now, it's quite exciting parts of it, there's quite action-packed parts of it, but it's boring because you can tell it's written by one person. And there's different chapters by different authors. It's one person, it's the same tone, the same style, the same writing all the way through. And it's so clear that one person sat down to write this together and tried to make it sound exciting. Whereas in scripture, we see clearly different authors all coming together to say and to give an exact revelation of God's Word.

So God's Word is inspired. We believe that and we trust in that. Why does that matter? It matters because God's Word is the final authority. We'll see that in a second.

As the confession says, in all controversies of religion, speaking of course of Christian religion, speaking of our own faith, in all controversies of our faith, the church is finally to appeal unto them, them being the inspired scriptures.

We can discuss things as a church, we can plan through things as a session, we can come together and have congregational meetings to discuss various biblical issues. Finally, the very level of which actually matters, the very, very base level, we must come, of course, and we must come together. We must come together.

We must come together. We must come together. That is our final appeal of the truth. We'll see that more in a second. Quite simply, as we always say, that God's Word is the three I's of God's Word. Whenever I have me try and explain it, I've quoted here from Daniel DeWitt, a professor of a college in America.

[17 : 53] But these three I's are the three I's that we always go back to. God's Word is inspired, as we said. It is inerrant and it is infallible.

It's inspired, as Daniel quotes here. When we say that the Bible is inspired, we mean that God is its definitive author. Every word is from God.

Inerrant. When we say the Bible is inerrant, we mean that God uses these human authors to pen exactly what God wanted, without any mixture, without any error.

Inspired, inerrant. And finally, infallible. When we say the Bible is infallible, we mean that God's Word is incapable of error.

Because God is perfect, so also is his revelation of himself. All to say, when we turn to Scripture, for the final word in any discussion, in any theological concerns we have, all our ideas, Scripture must be our final foundational word for all we need to understand.

[19 : 08] Not the confession itself, although it's a good document. Not our own understanding, although it might be right. Not what the church has said, our own congregation has said, no, not what I am saying. Certainly not.

Turn to Scripture yourself. Now these things are useful, and we'll see that later on. But God has given us the church. He has given us ways to understand the Scripture. But we must always go back to Scripture itself.

Never taking a minister's word for it. Never taking any committee's word for it. No. As Christians, our understanding is based on Scripture. And Scripture alone.

And God's word is not just inspired, but God has made it understandable. And more than that, God, we see, has declared that we should also make it understandable.

As section 8 carries on. Scripture must be quite simply understandable.

[20 : 24] Every member of the church, the confession reminds us, has a right to read or hear at least Scripture in a language they can understand.

Linguistically in their own language. But more than that, in a way that their own language explains to them. Not everyone has the opportunity, nor the time, nor the ability to understand the original languages.

Brothers and sisters, don't think for a second that I did three or four years of original languages means I am anything close to an expert. I certainly am not. Far from it. But for the normal Christian who is a normal 9 to 5, you're not expected to know the Greek or the Hebrew.

That's what I'm here for in one sense is to help part of that. But God knows that and the writers of confession know that. So, therefore, how can the normal Christian, working a 9 to 5, with a family to look after, with friends and loved ones needing their attention and care, how can a normal Christian, seeking to live a normal, God-fearing, God-serving life, how can they hope to understand the Scripture?

The word has to be translated in an understandable way to all the people of God. Quite simple, as confession says, to be translated into the vulgar language, the vulgar tongue of every nation into which they come.

[21 : 51] And brothers and sisters, since we have a translation in our language, in various forms of various translations, that means there's a duty given to us. As Christians, we have duties which flow from God, giving us His word in an understandable way.

We have a duty to read and to listen to Scripture. We have a duty then to search out the Scriptures, to spend time meditating on Scriptures, spend time working through the Scriptures.

As the confession says, we are commanded in the fear of God to read and to search them. For the Christian to read and to search the Scriptures, Scriptures must be made understandable to the Christian.

From the earliest days, the word of God was written to be understandable in its language. We see that in the New Testament. Written not in high Greek, not in complicated Greek.

No, but God's word was written in konye Greek. Vulgar Greek. Slang Greek. The most low of the low, common, look-down-upon language.

[23 : 01] That is the language God used and God chose to write His inspired word. One that the most common slave who had no education would hear and understand.

God has made His word clear and understandable in its original languages. It's one of the reasons we as a church, I was before my time, moved perhaps to a different translation.

It's not just to be trendy. It's not just to be up-to-date with the times. That would be a foolish reason. That would be a reason that does not give God any glory whatsoever. No.

But if we were to be a confessional congregation, if we were to actually believe the confession and follow the confession we sign our names to as elders and minister, then it's not just about believing that God inspires His word.

It's not just about believing in the plenary verbal inspiration. We must also hold to this section of the chapter that tells us God's word must be made understandable to the majority of people.

[24 : 13] It's amazing. Things haven't changed. When you go back and you read the King James translator's notes, and again in the early translations of the King James Bible, the translators had a much wider section than we have in our Bibles.

It's online. If you're interested, I can find a copy and print it off for you. But in that translator's note, the poor translators who are having a hard time of it, that people in their day were saying, we have good English Bibles.

We have good English translations. Why on earth are you wasting time and money writing this brand new, newfangled translation? And the poor King James translators, the poor AV translators, spend their time, paragraph after paragraph, defending why they're writing this new translation.

Yes, we have English translations, but our translation has more updated language, has better language. We've spent more time in the Greek, more time in the original languages. That's interesting.

The same arguments that they use of why they had to create a new Bible are the same ones we see translators have to use again and again today. Now, not saying every translation is good.

[25 : 30] It's certainly not. There are some translations we should mark and avoid. I'll name one just now. And if you ever come across it, I mean, it's a free world.

I won't tell you. I've got no authority over you, and it's such. But as your minister, as someone who loves you, if you see anything by the passion translation, mark and avoid.

It's growing in popularity just now. It's growing in use just now. If you see it, read it by all accounts, feel free to. But don't believe a word it says.

The passion translation is one of the translations where its writer, its author, believes that he himself received divine inspiration as he was writing it to understand God's word fully.

I'll be careful because I'm being recorded, but in short, it's complete and utter rubbish. That's the kind way of wording it. There's plenty of translations that are useless, that we shouldn't be touching.

[26 : 32] But not to say we should ignore every new translation. Again, some things haven't changed. Again, the KJV translators understood that God's word had to be in the vulgar tongue of the day, and they tried their best to do that.

Our new Bible, the ESV here, the translators did the same thing. They worked very hard to make sure, and the NIV also, that they worked very hard to make sure the Bible is in the vulgar tongue, the understandable tongue of the day.

And it's not just a theological necessity. It's not just to be confessional. It has real importance, doesn't it? The better we understand God's word, the better it dwells within us.

Now, again, the best translation is the one you actually read. And that's an old quoted phrase, but it's important to know that. Don't think for a second I am against the AV or the KJV.

I'm not against X, Y, or Z. If you read it, if you use it, read it and use it. Whatever language speaks to you, you read in that language. If the Gaelic Bible is what's for you, you read it.

[27 : 38] If the AV is what for you, brother and dear sister, you read it and you love it and you use it. If the ESV or NIV is for you, you read it, you use it, you love it. The best translation is the one you actually make use of, whatever it might be.

But have some discernment in the ones you use. The better we understand it, the better it dwells within us. And the better God's word, the more it dwells within us, the more and the better we worship him.

And the better we worship him, dear brother and sister, the closer we grow to him. The better we understand God's word, the more comfort we find in it, the more hope we find in it.

And the more comfort we have from scripture, the more joy we have, the more peace we have. In short, God's word is perfect.

It is complete. Our understanding of it is not perfect, is not complete. In short, God has given us a word we can trust and know for certain is from him.

[28 : 45] And God inspired people, normal men, normal people, fishermen and kings, peasants, rich, poor, the whole range of humanity, which is important to note.

God speaks through the poor and the rich, kings, subjects, oppressed and free. God speaks through the whole range of human experience and he uses these people to write his perfect word.

A word we can see and touch and know. As we saw a few weeks ago, as I brought in the Greek Bible and showed you, we can see these manuscripts, we can see where they are, we can touch them, most of them are behind glass in museums and in safe places, but you can go and see them.

These ancient manuscripts which contain the very words we have in front of us. There's nothing here made up. There's nothing here just to fill in the gaps. It is God's word kept by him for all time.

And as we see here, in his singular care and providence, he has kept it pure in all ages. So all issues and all problems and all debates, all discussions, God's word is the final say.

[30 : 05] I was going to do that today and we can carry on until next week for that. As we come to the end of the chapter, just a look ahead for us, God willing, the Lord's help, next week we can see these final sections. Asking next week the question, how do we actually understand scripture?

How do we understand scripture? What is the main way God's word tells us and teaches us to understand it? And finally, we see that scripture is the final word.

Brothers and sisters, again, this is not just for dry theology. I hope you don't think it is. This is to encourage us as we go about our daily lives. As you sit on a Sunday and sit on a Thursday, as you in private, at home, as you read God's word, as you pray about it, as you meditate on God's word, you can be assured and more than assured, it is God's inspired word, God's infallible word, without error.

It is God's perfect, unchanging word you are handling and you're reading, you're absorbing, you're meditating on, his life-transforming word that he has kept pure for the sake of his people, out of his singular care and love for his people.

You get a full hope as you lay hold in the promises you find in your pages of scripture that these are the promises God gave to his people and keep for all his people for all time.

[31 : 35] God speaks and God speaks through his word and we trust that word. We hold that word dear to us and close to us. We've built up in it.

As we come to the end of section one, God willing, next week or the week after, we're reminded that God is a God who speaks. God is a God who has condescended, who has come down to our level in a way that he has made himself knowable to us.

We perhaps forget that, but we are a people of the book. We are a people of the book. It is God's word which shapes us, which directs us, which keeps us going in our right path.

Yes, there's opinions and discussions, there's committees and councils, there's creeds and confessions and they are good. They are good as far as what? As far as they obey and teach and expound on God's revealed word.

Not the confession, not my words. His word and his word alone return to all our hope, all our help, all our understanding. Let's close now.

[32 : 45] A word of prayer. Lord, we thank you, Lord, for the gift of your word. We confess as we come just now to the end of perhaps an information-heavy time together.

We ask, Lord, you would help us leave this place, not remembering all the exact details, but leave this place of inspiration, with a renewed sense that you inspire your word, a renewed sense of thankfulness that we have a God who speaks to us through your word.

You have given it to us in a language we can understand. We give you praise, Lord. You have had your people sharing your word in our nation for so many years now.

We give you praise as we come around your word once more, as we spend time looking at the issues around it, that you are a God who has condescended. You are a God who stepped down.

You are a God who spoke to us. We see that through the living word, the Lord Jesus Christ, our great and glorious saviour, that through him we see the truth of your scripture being fully fulfilled.

[33 : 50] As we take up and read the word in public worship and in private devotion, we know that we read a word which is real, a word which is certain, a word which gives us hope, and a word that we can trust fully and trust eternally.

Help us to love your word. Help us to enjoy reading it. Help us to enjoy spending time in it. Help us to meditate on it. Knowing that all we do, we do to grow in our love and knowledge of you and of the Lord Jesus Christ, our only saviour, who takes away the sins of his people.

It's in his name and it's for his sake we ask these many things. Amen. Well, let's conclude by singing the glorious words of Psalm 1. Scottish Psalter, Psalm 1.

Psalm 1. Scottish Psalter, Psalm 1. You can sing verses 1 down to verse 4 of the psalm.

Psalm 1, verses 1 down to verse 4. That man of perfect blessedness who walketh not astray and counseleth on godly men nor stands in sinners' way nor sitteth in a scorner's chair but placeeth his delight upon God's law and meditates on his law day and night.

[35 : 08] Psalm 1, verses 1 to 4. To God's praise. God's praise.

God's praise. Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[37 : 21] Thank you.

Thank you.