

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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## No Private Interpretation: God Revealed His Truth in Scripture

*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:20–21, KJV 1900)*

I have often heard people interpret this lesson as referring to our interpretation of Scripture. While the point is emphatically true, this passage refers to the actual writing of Scripture. Read Verse 21 as an inspired explanation of Verse 20. When we read the words of Scripture, we are not reading Moses', David's, or other Scripture writers' personal ideas. We are reading God's revelation that He directed them to write. Peter wrote earlier that those writers and prophets didn't always understand what they wrote, though they knew that God had something good in store for His people through the fulfillment of their words. (1 Peter 1:10-12) These men did not write what they thought was interesting or helpful. They wrote what God gave them to write.

In our study passage, Peter gives us an excellent insight into the manner in which God directed the writing of Scripture. *...holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* In this context, to speak is equivalent to their writing. They spoke through their writings.

The Holy Spirit "moved" the prophets to do so as the wind moves a sailboat (cf. John 3:8). The same Greek verb (*phero*) occurs in Acts 27:15 and 17 to describe that action.<sup>1</sup>

Imagine a sail boat with a heavy cargo. The only way that boat can go from Point A to Point B is through the power of the wind blowing in its sails. In the writing of Scripture, the Holy Spirit carried each writer along so that he wrote the words that the Holy Spirit intended.

The precise nature of this work is difficult to understand, but the outcome is clear. The words so written by the moving wind of the Holy Spirit are so true and so reliable that Peter describes them as more sure than his personal eyewitness account of Jesus in the Mount of Transfiguration. If Peter regarded these words more highly than his personal observations, how should we regard them?

We can learn from the wind in the sails analogy. As you read the various letters of the New Testament, you clearly sense the distinct personality of each writer. If you read or hear

someone cite a passage without naming the source, you get a sense of the human author by the language itself. Think about the analogy. The wind blowing in the sails of three very different boats doesn't change the color of the boat. It doesn't change the identity of the crew or the shape and materiel of which each boat was made. But the same wind carries all the boats across the water. The Holy Spirit's work in the heart and mind of an inspired writer of Scripture didn't change the culture in which the man lived, it didn't change the man's education or training, but the Holy Spirit so moved in each man as to precisely direct what he wrote.

Various human theories of inspiration have been raised over the centuries, but they all fail to meet the test of Scripture in its internal description of the actual process of Holy Spirit directed writing. These theories vary from 1) intuition theory; inspired writers were given a heightened degree of their human insight, 2) illumination theory; similar to intuition with more light, but neither theory involves any special communication of truth from God or divine guidance in what was written, 3) dynamic theory; this theory involves a combination of the human and the divine in that it holds that the Holy Spirit gave the human author the ideas or concepts to address, but not the words, 4) dictation theory; this theory holds that the Holy Spirit dictated the words to the human author. In a few instances, we do find evidence in Scripture of dictation, as in Revelation 3:1a, "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write...." However, this fact itself should teach us that the whole of Scripture did not occur by this process. Given that you see each human author's unique writing style, the number of people who hold this view is small, for it fails to deal with the factual distinction in style that appears in each letter or book.

Our primary source of information with which to frame our thoughts regarding the nature of Scripture's writing should be Scripture itself. Our present passage speaks volumes to the process. In our English KJV, we read that the Holy Spirit "moved" those men to write Scripture. Clearly in this process, the Holy Spirit is the controlling factor, not merely the man's heightened intellect or insights, and the human personality distinctions that appear in each man's writings makes it clear that

<sup>1</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 2 Pe 1:21.

some process more intimate to the man than mechanical dictation occurred.

When Paul wrote of the manner in which God gave the Scriptures to His people, his words echo the same process of which Peter wrote.

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

In the broader context of this passage, we see a subtle distinction between Old Testament Scripture (“...from a child thou has known the holy scriptures...”) and the New, “*All Scripture...*” not just the Old Testament. Paul assigns two distinct qualities to his description of these Scriptures. 1) They are inspired, literally, God-breathed. They were so influenced by the Holy Spirit that the words recorded are as if God spoke them personally to us. 2) They are profitable. They are full of rich value to the man of God. Beware the man who tries to “Dumb down” the content of Scripture. We are charged by God to protect and preserve the sterling quality and value of the words that we read in Scripture. God-breathed or moved by the Holy Spirit, the process described by these two inspired men is the same.

Referring to the Old Testament, Jesus described the integrity of inspired Scripture, “...and the Scripture cannot be broken.” (John 10:35b) The abiding quality of Scripture, according to Jesus Himself, is so overseen by God that it cannot be broken. The word translated “broken” in this verse is defined as “...to destroy or reduce something to ruin by tearing down or breaking to pieces.”<sup>2</sup> If we believe Jesus’ words, we must conclude that Scripture’s content and teachings cannot be destroyed or reduced by tearing it down.

Even among conservative Christians of our day who claim to believe in the inspiration of Scripture, the idea exists that the Holy Spirit breathed the words of Scripture through His chosen human writers, and then abandoned the words to human translators, so that the Bible that we read may not at all contain the same truths or content as the “Original autographs.” This abandonment idea that subjects the pure words of original Scripture to the hands of frail humans in translation leaves all believers after the first generation of Christians without a reliable Scripture, and it contradicts Jesus’ words. He did not say that the original words of Scripture could not (Past tense) be broken, but that they cannot (Present tense) be broken. Jesus quoted Psalm 82:6, a passage that was likely written around a thousand years earlier. That

psalm was copied many times over that thousand years, but Jesus quoted the passage from a contemporary “Bible” and described the words as presently still preserved so that their original integrity and message were fully preserved, “...cannot be broken.” Further, David emphatically describes God’s ongoing oversight and preservation of Scripture.

The **words** of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. **Thou shalt keep them**, O LORD, **thou shalt preserve them** from this generation for ever. (Psalm 12:6-7; emphasis added)

The internal witness of Scripture itself affirms God’s abiding oversight and protection of His “words,” not merely the general ideas that He intended in Scripture.

Think about the compiled evidence that we see in this brief review. David (ca 1000 BC), Jesus, Paul, and Peter all give their harmonious testimony to the God-given and the God-preserved quality of Scripture.

Critics of the supernatural preservation of Scripture will point out that a number of printer errors occurred in the printing and distributing of the King James Bible, as if these errors refute the internal testimony of Scripture. A full review of the history of these printer errors will more confirm the internal testimony of Scripture than refute it. Just one example; the Wicked Bible or the Adulterous Bible was published in 1631, just twenty years after the original King James Bible was released in 1611. So named because the printer omitted the word “not” in Exodus 20:14, the Wicked Bible read “Thou shalt commit adultery,” not the correct “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Almost immediately this error was noticed, and the errant printing became a humorous joke among serious Bible students of the day. Rather than being overlooked and misleading Christians, the human error was caught and the Wicked Bible rejected by the Christian community.

While we may safely hold that the Holy Spirit so personally and intimately “moved” the writers of Scripture that the outcome was “...the words of the Lord...pure words,” we should observe that the writers of Scripture were not so fully or intimately controlled in all of their conduct. Consider Peter, our present writer, as one example. He affirms the Holy Spirit’s role in the writings of Scripture, and we accept his words and the result of the Holy Spirit’s “moving” in First and Second Peter. However, we see Peter frequently faltering in his faith and conduct through the gospels. We also see him falling into divisive error as Paul records his confrontation and rebuke of Peter for his failure in Galatians 2:11-14. Thus the Holy Spirit’s powerful and unique governance of His chosen writers of Scripture is unique to their writing of Scripture. It does not prevail throughout their lives, making the noble quality of Scripture all the more special.

<sup>2</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 233.

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Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.  
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