

Dear Friends,

We often undervalue the God-given treasure we have in our Bible. Its self-description (2 Timothy 3:16-17 JV) teaches us that it was given by God, and that it contains God's revelation and direction to His people, "**the man of God**," ("man" is used in the older grammatical protocol to refer to both men and women) for "**all good works**." Over my time in the faith, I've occasionally encountered those folks who decide they prefer a way of thinking, a belief, or a personal liberty not granted in Scripture. One of the most frequent refrains I've heard is "You know, the Bible says so little about this that we are free to use our common sense in our choices." If I ever again hear someone speak those words to me, my immediate response will be "What Bible are you reading?" This sentiment rejects and contradicts Paul's "Inspired" description of the content and character of our Bible.

We may have authentic personal experiences with the Lord which He gives to us for our need of the moment. They strengthen our faith and remind us of His grace and goodness. In the context of our study passage, Peter referred to just such a personal experience, his time with Jesus, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter in no way dismisses or belittles that experience. However, when preparing his readers for their faith journey after his "decease," he doesn't write that they will be adequately served in their faith if they remember his experience. He rather directs them to what he terms "**a more sure word of prophecy**," God's inspired and holy writings which we call our Bible.

Lest we think Peter was thinking only of our Old Testament, consider the following verse from Paul's writings.

**For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.** (1 Timothy 5:18 KJV)

Paul included two quotations in this verse. The muzzling of the ox appears in Deuteronomy 25:4, and the "worthy of his reward" quote appears in Luke 10:7. Don't miss the monumental truth which Paul taught in this verse. He respected both Deuteronomy, written by Moses around 1500 years before Jesus came, and the Gospel of Luke, written by the faithful physician and personal faith-companion of Paul, as "**Scripture**."

Peter highlighted the emphasis every faithful believer and Bible student needs to store permanently in their minds. What we read in Scripture is "**more sure**" than even our most precious personal experience in the faith. Lord help us to refresh our memory and high regard of His inspired and above-all-other sources of insight and direction for our walk of faith.

Lord bless,  
Joe Holder

**Scripture: The Nature of Inspiration**

**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)**

You frequently hear that Scripture is “Inspired” of God. Exactly what does this mean? “Inspiration” is a Biblical word.

**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 KJV)**

The Greek word translated “inspiration” in this lesson refers to breath. Literally, we could refer to Scripture as “God-breathed.” In an intimate and personal manner, God involved Himself in the lives of some forty or fifty people across multiple cultures and several centuries to give us what we refer to as our “Bible.” The harmony, the consistent message contained in all those individual “Books,” is self-attesting to the supernatural origin and preservation of Scripture.

In the context of our study verses, Peter referred to his personal experience on the Mount of Transfiguration. That was a real event in his life which left a permanent imprint on his thinking. However, as Peter faced the inevitable reality of human life, that he would soon “decease,” (2 Peter 1:15 KJV) he longed for his readers to anchor their faith on something “more sure” than Peter’s personal experience. Our study verses reveal that “more sure” message which we, just as those first century readers, should take to heart above all other sources for life and truth to guide us.

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul focused all of Scripture’s divine “inspired” teachings to “**the man of God.**” Peter likewise addressed his description of Scripture to his born-again readers, “**We have....**”

It is a mystery how God so interacted with His chosen human authors of Scripture so that what they wrote was precisely what He intended to be written. But then a mystery to us is no problem with God. We should thank Him daily that He chose to direct those men as He did to write what His people would need throughout all future generations for their spiritual direction and faith. “**That the man of God may be....**” Based on 2 Timothy 3:16-17, we might say that God “Breathed on” those men to govern their writings for His people.

**Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.** “Private interpretation” might contrast with both Peter’s and Paul’s description of God’s giving us these “Holy writings.” A “Private interpretation” refers to ideas or beliefs that are the unique property of one individual. He/she reached these conclusions with their own “Breath.” As the final authoritative guide for our faith and lifestyle, which do we prefer, the “Breath” of one individual broken human or the “Breath” of God? No contest for me whatever.

**For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man.** Often sincere Christian folks will develop odd opinions about something they read in Scripture, followed by the errant reasoning that their unorthodox idea is actually taught by the passage. They must put “Shoes” on the idea to help it “Walk” and seem credible to other believers. Other sincere folks will find an unusual idea in an old Christian writer and conclude that his idea must be true merely because it is old. While the Christian faith is distinctly historical, the record of what past Christians thought does not rise to the level of Scripture. Primitive Baptists hold Hassell’s History of the Church of God in high regard. However, when we magnify either our personal idiosyncratic opinions of Scripture, old writings, or respected history above—or even equal to—Scripture, we compromise both passages cited in this study. None of these sources is the sixty-seventh book of inspired Scripture. I have often wrestled with my frustration at folks who magnify an old confession of faith above their study of Scripture. When reading those old confessions, they/we need to keep in mind a section in most of those confession’s which rejects all other sources, including their confession, and rests its credibility in Scripture alone. Our “**more sure word of prophecy**” stands on those inspired writings in the sixty-six books contained in our Bible. Why not add other ancient writings to those books? Critics of the divine origin and preservation of “**all scripture**” claim that a church council a couple of centuries after the time of Jesus decided which books to include and which to reject, a convenient rationalization by which they add their own favorite ancient writings or ideas to those books. However, they fail to address, much less explain how those sixty-six books were held in high regard as divinely given during the entire intervening time from Jesus to that council. In fact, the respect toward those books exclusively by mainstream Christians during that time affirms the right view of those books. They did not become part of our “Bible” by a church council. They were regarded by the church from the beginning as self-attesting, as “**...given by inspiration of God.**”

Any of these authorities, when used to compromise or to dilute the teachings of Scripture becomes our own “private interpretation.” Given Peter’s point that no prophecy of the Scriptures represented the human author’s “private interpretation,” we have no wise or godly basis on which to magnify our “private interpretation” above—or equal to—Scripture. So, what is our divinely given and approved source for “**all good works,**” our “**more sure word of prophecy**”?

**...but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.** "...as they were **moved by the Holy Ghost.**" These men wrote what they wrote as they were guided, governed, or controlled by the Spirit of God, similar to the wind driving a large first century sailing ship across the sea. True to the symbol which Peter used, as the oarsman on a sailing ship adjusted the rudder and sails of the ship, the men whom the Lord directed to write the books contained in our Bible interacted with the Spirit of God in their writing. For example, David wrote.

**My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.** (Psalm 45:1 KJV)

The "**Pen**" we choose to write has a direct bearing on the appearance of our words on the page, but the ideas, even the words we choose, are still ours. In similar fashion, a thoughtful reading of the various books of the Bible, especially the New Testament, reveals subtle indications of personality and distinction from other inspired books. When we read Paul's writings, we get a sense of the man. Similarly, we sense different personalities and manners of expression in John or Peter. We see the personality of the human writer, but the message of Scripture is no less God's. David wrote another key description of inspired 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 forever.** (Psalm 12:6-7 KJV)

The editors of the NIV translation of the Bible honestly acknowledge that they did not approach their "Translation" in a manner to reproduce the nearest possible to a word-for-word literal translation. They used the term "Dynamic equivalence" to describe their translation philosophy. In other words, the editors injected their personal interpretations onto the content of this "Bible" rather than reproducing a word-for-word translation and allowing the reader to prayerfully study to reach his/her own interpretation. I appreciate the honesty of the NIV editors in this description, but I strongly disagree with their philosophy of translation that imposed their judgment of "Equivalence" onto the words they present as Scripture. In contrast, the King James translators worked to arrive at the nearest to a literal word-for-word translation of the Bible as possible. I also respect and increasingly value those "Marginal" readings in many KJV Bibles which give us the translators' full intent by various alternate words. One of my favorite marginal readings serves as a good example.

**But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.** (Micah 5:2 KJV)

The translators footnoted “**from everlasting,**” and their marginal wording powerfully states their understanding, “**From the days of eternity.**” Some seven hundred years before Jesus was born, the Holy Spirit directed Micah to name the specific village in which Jesus would be born. He further directed Micah to affirm the deity of Jesus, His full godhood. In the New Testament, John affirmed this truth.

**And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.** John 1:14 KJV)

It was that same “Word” who was in the beginning with God, who was God, who became a human and lived a human life for over thirty years. But Spirit further directed Micah to affirm the full deity of Him who would come. His “**goings forth have been...from everlasting,**” “**From the days of eternity.**” Can we fully grasp the amazing miracle we have in the Bible we hold in our hands—and so often take for granted?

Later Paul affirmed this same truth.

**And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.** (1 Timothy 3:16 KJV)

Jesus, the “Word” of God, His divine eternal “Vocabulary” to and for His people, the Son (Of the same nature and standing) of God, “**...was manifest in the flesh**” and, after successfully completing His work, “**...received up into glory.**”

We could go through so many examples throughout the Bible that further affirm the truth which Peter taught in closing this chapter. But the rich truth gives us uncompromising respect for and confidence in the text and message of our King James Bible. I started this study with Paul’s

description of “**All scripture**” from 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Not only does our Bible enlighten us in ways no human imagination could explain regarding God and His tender love for His people in the coming and work of Jesus, but it builds on that foundation to provide the “**man of God**” fully, thoroughly, for every good work. If we study our Bible, we have no reason to plead ignorance. We have God’s divinely crafted “Textbook” to instruct our faith and to direct our life. I believe it was Thomas Aquinas who wrote that he found no rest other than the time he spent “...in a nook with the Book.” Lord guide and bless our respect for and study of His Word.

Elder Joe Holder