

## UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but this is my one aim: to forget everything that's behind, and to strain every nerve to go after what lies ahead. I press on toward the finish line, where the prize waiting for me is the upward call of God*

**IN KING JESUS.**

(Philippians 3:13-14)

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### ***Scripture Inspired by God***

Others have said—*All truth has its appropriate place; take truth out of its place and it becomes the most insidious error because it seems to have support of scripture. Scripture is for us but not always about us.* T. Austin-Sparks once said: *"In the beginning was the Word", and the meaning of that designation is just this, that God has made Himself intelligible to us in a Person, not in a book. God has not first of all written a book, although we have the Bible. God has written a Person.*

**God has written a Person.** What a profound truth! I am tempted to proceed no further, for it completely transcends the thought for this issue. Nevertheless, the opening quotes (although I won't address each directly) go along with the thought on my heart which deals with how the Lord's people view what we call the *Bible* or *scripture* or *the word of God*—three ways in which we describe our book.

I'm sure we all agree that the Bible, made up of 66 books, is an amazing compilation that clearly comes from the hand of God. Given its long and diverse history, it is difficult to imagine the spirit of God being absent in this history. Without it, we would have no foundation to stand upon and no anchor to keep us steadfast in the storms of life. Further, we would be lost in our own theories as to what God has done and continues to do through His Son. Or worse, we would never know who and what Jesus truly is; He would be lost in history.

Now, before proceeding, I have a concern that comes out of the concepts of the *infallibility* and *inerrancy* of scripture and the insistency that only one translation, generally the *King James Version*, is God's book and all the rest are not. We need to be careful that we don't worship the word of God and we don't become superstitious over it, as if God is going to toast us like marshmallows (my exaggeration) if we don't hold the correct (by one's estimation) view of His book. Much more could be said along this line, but the point is that we don't become so obsessed over these matters relating to scripture that we lose sight of the central theme of it—Jesus! By His spirit, God is writing Jesus on our hearts, not words on paper.

This leads to the crux of this issue. Are the words of the Bible, whether printed on paper or in electronic media, *inspired*? Without hesitation, most would probably say yes. But what does this mean? Does it mean that everything written therein has some spiritual meaning or message? Does it mean that the holy spirit directed men to pen every single word contained in the original documents, making it infallible and inerrant throughout? Or, does *inspired* simply mean the entirety of the book—meaning the whole of it, not necessarily every single detail—contains a message from our creator, leaving room for men's errors (fallibility and errancy) in originally writing it and later translating it?

I discuss similar questions in another writing that I strongly encourage you to read at this point, since I make points that won't be repeated here.

See *No Word from God Shall be Void of Power* — <http://www.kingdomandglory.com/tuc/tuc654.pdf>

It is a safe conclusion that most of the Lord's people who know scripture will cite Paul's letter to Timothy in addressing the matter of scriptural inspiration, with a general consensus that all scripture is inspired.

Here is the word from Paul as presented in three translations.

Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16 ASV)

All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice (2 Timothy 3:16 DRB)

All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16 KJV)

Many seem to base their understanding of inspired scripture on the KJV, but take note the word *is*, is in italics, meaning it is not found in the Greek text and thus added by the translator. Instead of it reading, *all scripture is inspired of God*, it could just as easily read, *all scripture inspired of God*. The first implies all scripture (without distinction) is inspired of God, and the second implies scripture must be inspired for it to be of God, that is, from God—the latter also implying that something must transpire for printed words to be inspired, they are not simply inspired because they are called *scripture*. The first two translations cited above seem to imply this point. However, they insert *is* just like the KJV but have chosen to place it after *all scripture inspired of God*. I call this *interpretative bias* that is built into all the translations.

So, the question is—How do we resolve this issue? Consider this. What we have today that we call *scripture* is simply translations (into our native tongues) of manuscripts far removed from the original writings that were written in the languages of their time and locality. If these were inspired by God, how does it follow that what we have today, as translated by men hundreds or thousands of years later, is inspired? Have all the translators been inspired as well? What about their interpretative bias that is obviously built into their translations? I know some would and do argue that the *King James Version* is the only inspired or accurate translation out there, as if the translators were inspired like the original writers. How could this be true considering it has obvious interpretative biases built into it like all the others? With interpretative bias in play, then how do we know what is inspired of God and what is not? Of course, the counter to this argument is to believe there is no bias and to read all scripture literally.

Interestingly, the word *inspired*, translated from the Greek word *theopneustos*, which means *divinely breathed in*, is only found in 2 Timothy 3:16. This leads to my main point.

We can stare all day long at the written text and get all sorts of knowledge and understanding of scriptural topics that get logged into our head which we can then spit out to others, even down to chapter and verse. In some measure this is helpful, even needful. However, this alone is not enough. What we need is *rhema* from God, not just words from men or words on a piece of paper or electronic screen. There is transformative power when God speaks His word directly into our hearts and enlightens us to His truth, *for no word from God shall be void of power*. For words to be of any spiritual value to us, they must be divinely breathed into our spirits. Anything less is simply words without effect, regardless of the source. Applying this to scripture, the words contained therein must be personally breathed into us for them to have a lasting effect on our spiritual growth. It is *the living and active and enduring word of God* (Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 1:23) divinely breathed into us that is an integral, but not an exclusive, part of the process of changing us more and more into the likeness of our beloved Lord Jesus. **It is God's words breathed into us by the holy spirit that makes scripture inspired.** Scripture inspired of God *is* profitable!

Let us not worship or idolize scripture or doctrine, or superstitiously hold to one translation over another. Let us not get stuck in the weeds of infallibility and inerrancy. Can God not use errors and mistakes to His glory? Is He wringing His hands, so to speak, over such things? **God the Father and His Son are far more magnanimous (big-hearted) and gracious than most realize.** Just look at us! Let us worship the one who is the word and seek for Him to be divinely breathed into us to become living and active. As Sparks said, *God has written a Person*, and this person is His Son—the Son who is the word must be written in us. We don't need more words for the sake of words; we need more of Him who is the word. I believe God can and does do this through the many translations out there with their fallibility and errancy and biases, as well as through whatever source or means or experience He deems fit to utilize. God is not worried about the things that worry us, so let us move past these things and into Jesus.