

## Part 2: Inspiration

***Inspiration*** is commonly understood as the active influence of the Holy Spirit on the writers of Scripture that resulted in their writing the exact message God wanted conveyed to mankind. However, the term is never utilized in Scripture itself. Instead, the adjective “inspired” is employed to indicate a quality of the Scriptures themselves.

**The doctrine of inspiration must be based upon the self-witness of Scripture.**



2 Timothy 3:16–17



1 Thessalonians 2:13



2 Peter 1:19–21

■ Plenary and verbal inspiration

***Plenary inspiration*** means that the inspired quality of Scripture is entire and without restriction — all Scripture is inspired.

***Verbal inspiration*** means that even the writers’ choice of expressions and words have the quality of being inspired.

- If the thoughts and concepts are inspired, so must the words, since they are the vehicle of expression. Wrong words = wrong thoughts.
- Proper interpretation and understanding depend upon the words and the forms of words.

The intellectual ground of natural man is a fictitious cosmos in which all truth is first responsible to him, that is, to the sanctity of his private judgment, before he is responsible to it. Any god which might exist, therefore, by virtue of his “might-ness” must subject himself to man for verification. But the Almighty cannot be known in such fiction.

The right of verification from a stance outside, and therefore over, the Word, of verification from the standpoint of one’s own resources, is not common ground but fallen ground. It belongs to man’s fanciful independence and futile attempt to serve as his own reference point.

— Douglas Farrow, *The Word of Truth and Disputes About Words*  
(Winona Lake, IN: Carpenter Books, 1987), 36, 37

### ■ How God Spoke to His Prophets

- A decisive meeting with God normally marked the beginning of a prophet’s career.
  - Isaiah 6:1–9
  
- God did not provide the superintending work of the Holy Spirit all the time for all writing or speaking.
  - Jeremiah 1:1–3; 25:1–2; 26:1; 33:1; 34:1
  
  - Acts 23:5 (Paul) and Galatians 2:11–14 (Peter)
  
- Whether or not the writer was aware of it, his message might surpass his own comprehension. The ultimate author is God Himself.
  - Daniel 12:8–9
  
  - 1 Peter 1:10–12
  
- At times the superintending work of the Holy Spirit was very compelling.
  - Jeremiah 20:7–9
  
- The prophets fully believed that they were transmitting the very words of God.

- Leviticus 1:1; 4:1; 5:14; 6:1, 8, 19, 24; 7:22; etc.
  - 2 Samuel 23:1–2
- Erroneous concepts concerning inspiration of the Scriptures:
- *Natural inspiration*: Scripture is a literary masterpiece just like any other humanly-produced but exceptional literature.
  - *Partial inspiration*: Only those things that are unknown or unknowable by human experience or research were inspired.
  - *Mechanical dictation*: Scripture writers were passive.
    - Romans 9:1–5
  - *Conceptual inspiration*: Only the ideas or concepts are inspired, not the words. Scripture writers were given the concepts and were allowed to express those concepts in whatever words or literary forms they chose.
    - Jeremiah 26:2
    - Matthew 5:18
    - Galatians 3:16
  - *Mystical or subjective inspiration*: Scripture is inspired only when it speaks to us or engenders faith in us. It becomes the Word of God. Scripture as a totality is not the Word of God, it only contains the Word of God.
- The importance of the inspiration of Scripture:
- The Scriptures are the basis of preaching.
    - 2 Timothy 4:1–5
  - The Scriptures are the basis of Christian living and spirituality:
    - 2 Timothy 3:15 – for salvation from sin (see, also, 1 Peter 1:23)

- 2 Timothy 3:16–17 – for doctrine, correction, instruction in righteous living, and good works
  - Ephesians 5:26 – for cleansing and making holy
  - Romans 15:4 – for patience, comfort, and hope
- Since the Scriptures are “God breathed,” they are His Word – the Bible is the Word of God.
- The Old Testament declares 3,808 times that it conveys the words of God Himself.
  - Jesus promised the superintending work of the Holy Spirit for the writings of the New Testament:
    - *The Gospels:* John 14:26
    - *The Book of Acts:* John 15:26–27
    - *The Epistles:* John 16:12–13
    - *The Book of Revelation:* John 16:13

When I am tired the Bible is my bed;  
 Or in the dark the Bible is my light;  
 When I am hungry it is vital bread;  
 Or fearful, it is armor for the fight.  
 When I am sick 'tis healing medicine;  
 Or lonely, thronging friends I find therein.  
 If I would work the Bible is my tool;  
 Or play, it is a harp of happy sound.

If I am ignorant it is my school,  
 If I am sinking it is solid ground.  
 If I am cold the Bible is my fire;  
 And it is wings if boldly I aspire.  
 Should I be lost the Bible is my guide;  
 Or naked it is raiment rich and warm.  
 Am I imprisoned, it is ranges wide;  
 Or tempest-tossed, a shelter from the storm.

Would I adventure, 'tis a gallant sea;  
 Or would I rest, it is a flowery lea.  
 Does gloom oppress? The Bible is a sun.  
 Or ugliness? It is a garden fair.  
 Am I athirst? How cool its currents run!  
 Or stifled? What a vivifying air!  
 Since thus thou givest of thyself to me,  
 How should I give myself  
 Great Book, to thee!

— Anonymous