

The Divine Inspiration of the Bible CHAPTER THIRTEEN: VERBAL INSPIRATION

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Transcript

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Not only does the Bible claim to be a Divine revelation but it also asserts that its original manuscripts were written "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth" (1 Cor. 2:13). The Bible nowhere claims to have been written by inspired men—as a matter of fact some of them were very defective characters—Balaam for example—but it insists that the words they uttered and recorded were God's words. Inspiration has not to do with the minds of the writers (for many of them understood not what they wrote (1 Pet. 1:10-11), but with the writings themselves. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and "Scripture" means "the writings." Faith has to do with God's Word and not with the men who wrote it—these are all dead long since, but their writings remain. A writing that is inspired by God self-evidently implies, in the very expression, that the words are the words of God. To say that the inspiration of the Scriptures applies to their concepts and not to their words; to declare that one part of Scripture is written with one kind or degree of inspiration and another part with another kind or degree, is not only destitute of any foundation or support in the Scriptures themselves, but is repudiated by every statement in the Bible which bears upon the subject now under consideration. To say that the Bible is not the Word of God but merely contains the Word of God is the figment of an ill-employed ingenuity and an unholy attempt to depreciate and invalidate the supreme authority of the Oracles of God. All the attempts which have been made to explain the rationale of inspiration have done nothing toward simplifying the subject, rather have they tended to mystify. It is no easier to conceive how ideas without words could be imparted, than that Divinely revealed truths should be communicated by words. Instead of being diminished the difficulty is increased. It were as logical to talk of a sum without figures or a tune without notes, as of a Divine revelation and communication without words. Instead of speculation our duty is to receive and believe what the Scriptures say of themselves. What the Bible teaches about its own inspiration is a matter purely of Divine testimony, and our business is simply to receive the testimony and not to speculate about or seek to pry into its modus operandi. Inspiration is as much a matter of Divine revelation as is justification by faith. Both stand equally on the authority of the Scriptures themselves, which must be the final court of appeal on this subject as on every question of revealed truth. The teaching of the Bible concerning the inspiration of the Scriptures is clear and simple, and uniform throughout. Its

writers were conscious that their utterances were a message from God in the highest meaning of the word. "And the Lord said unto him (Moses), Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Exod. 4:11-12). "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). "Then the Lord put forth His hand, and touched my mouth. and the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth" (Jer. 1:9). The above are only a sample of scores of similar passages which might be sighted. What is predicted of the Scriptures themselves, demonstrates that they are entirely and absolutely the Word of God. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Ps. 19:7)—this altogether excludes any place in the Bible for human infirmities and imperfections. "Thy Word is very pure" (Ps. 119:140), which cannot mean less than that the Holy Spirit so superintended the composition of the Bible and so "moved" its writers that all error has been excluded. "Thy Word is true from the beginning" (Ps. 119:160)—how this anticipated the assaults of the higher critics on the Book of Genesis, particularly on its opening chapters! The teaching of the New Testament agrees with what we have quoted from the Old. "Take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (Luke 12:11-12),—the disciples were the ones who spake, but it was the Holy Spirit who "taught them what to say." Could any language express more emphatically the most entire inspiration? and, if the Holy Spirit so controlled their utterances when in the presence of "magistrates," is it conceivable that He would do less for them when they were communicating the mind of God to all future generations on things touching our eternal destiny? Assuredly not. "But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled" (Acts 3:18). Here the Holy Spirit declares through Peter that it was God who had revealed by the mouth of all His prophets that Israel's Messiah must suffer before the glory should appear. "But that I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" (Acts 24:14). These words clearly evidence the fact that the Apostle Paul had the utmost confidence in the authenticity of the entire contents of the Old Testament. "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4). Could any man have used such language as this unless he had been fully conscious that he was speaking the very words of God? "The prophecy came not at any time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). Nothing could possibly be more explicit. Dr. Gray has strikingly and forcefully stated the necessity of a verbally inspired Bible in the following language:—"An illustration the writer has often used will help to make this clear. A stenographer in a mercantile house was asked by his employer to write as follows: "Gentlemen: we misunderstood your letter and will not fill your order." Imagine the employer's surprise, however, when a little later this was set before him for his signature: "Gentlemen: we misunderstood your letter and will not fill your order." The mistake was only of a single letter, but it was entirely subversive of his meaning. And yet the thought was given clearly to the stenographer, and the words, too, for that matter. Moreover, the latter was capable and faithful, but he was human, and it is human to err. Had not his employer controlled his expression, down to the very letter, the thought intended to be conveyed would have failed of utterance." So, too, the Holy Spirit had to superintend the writing of the very letter of Scripture in order to guarantee its accuracy and inerrancy. Many proofs might be given to show the Scriptures are verbally inspired. One line of demonstration appears in the literal and verbal fulfillment of many of the Old Testament prophecies. For example, God made known through Zechariah that the price which Judas should receive for his awful crime was "thirty pieces of silver" (Zech. 11:12). Here then is a clear case where God communicated to one of the prophets not merely an abstract concept but a specific communication. And the above case is only one of many. Another evidence of verbal

inspiration is to be seen in the fact that words are used in Scripture with the most exact precision and discrimination. This is particularly noticeable in connection with the Divine titles. The names Elohim and Jehovah are found on the pages of the Old Testament several thousand times, but they are never employed loosely or used alternately. Each of these names has a definite significance and scope, and were we to substitute the one for the other the beauty and perfection of a multitude of passages would be destroyed. To illustrate: the word "God" occurs all through Genesis 1, but "Lord God" in Genesis 2. Were these two Divine titles reversed here, a flaw and blemish would be the consequence. "God" is the creatorial title, whereas "Lord" implies covenant relationship and shows God's dealings with His own people. Hence, in Genesis 1, "God" is used, and in Genesis 2, "Lord God" is employed, and all through the remainder of the Old Testament these two Divine titles are used discriminatively and in harmony with the meaning of their first mention. One or two other examples must suffice. "And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him"—"God" because it was the Creator commanding, with respect to His creatures, as such; but, in the remainder of the same verse, we read, "and the Lord shut him in" (Gen. 7:16), because God's action here toward Noah was based upon covenant relationship. When going forth to meet Goliath David said, "This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand (because David was in covenant relationship with Him); and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth (which was not in covenant relation with Him) may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly (which were in covenant relationship with Him) shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear" etc. (1 Sam. 17:46-47). Once more: "And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him; and God moved them (the Syrians) to depart from him" (2 Chron. 18:31). And thus it is all through the Old Testament. The above line of argument might be extended indefinitely. There are upwards of fifty Divine titles in the Old Testament which are used more than once, each of which has a definite signification, each of which has its meaning hinted at in its first mention, and each of which is used subsequently in harmony with its original purport. They are never used loosely or interchangeably. In every place where they occur there is a reason for each variation. Such titles as the Most High, the Almighty, the God of Israel, the God of Jacob, the Lord our Righteousness, etc., etc., are not used haphazardly, but in every case in harmony with their original meaning and as the best suited to the context. The same is true in connection with the names of our Lord in the New Testament. In some passages He is referred to as Christ, in others as Jesus, Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, Lord Jesus Christ. In every instance there is a reason for each variation, and in every case the Holy Spirit has seen to it that they are employed with uniform significance. The same is true of the various names given to the great adversary. In some places he is termed Satan, in others the devil etc., etc.; but the different terms are used with unerring precision throughout. A further illustration is furnished by the father of Joseph. In his earlier life he was always termed Jacob, later he received the name of Israel, but after this, sometimes we read of Jacob and sometimes of Israel. Whatever is predicted of Jacob refers to the acts of the "old man;" whatever is postulated of Israel were the fruits of the "new man." When he doubted it was Jacob who doubted, when he believed God it was Israel who exercised faith. Accordingly, we read, "And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost" (Gen. 49:33). But in the next verse but one we are told, "And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel (Gen. 50:2)!! Here then we see the marvelous verbal precision and perfection of Holy Scripture. The most convincing of all the proofs and arguments for the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is the fact that

the Lord Jesus Christ regarded them and treated them as such. He Himself submitted to their authority. When assaulted by Satan, three times He replied, "It is written," and it is particularly to be noted that the point of each of His quotations and the force of each reply lay in a single word—"Man shall not live by bread alone" etc.; "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God;" "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." When tempted by the Pharisees, who asked Him, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" He answered, "Have ye not read?" etc. (Matt. 19:4-5). To the Sadducees He said, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures" (Matt. 22:29). On another occasion He accused the Pharisees of "Making the Word of God of none effect through their tradition" (Mark 7:13). On another occasion, when speaking of the Word of God, He declared "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Sufficient has been adduced to show that the Lord Jesus regarded the Scriptures as the Word of God in the most absolute sense. In view of this fact let Christians beware of detracting in the smallest degree from the perfect and full inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

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