

Inspiration of the Scriptures

by William MacDonald

The Bible is the inspired word of God, and its infallibility and trustworthiness are guaranteed by its divine origin.

Duration: 28:09

Scripture: Matthew 7:9-13, Galatians 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21

Topics: "Scriptures"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of accepting the Bible as the Word of God. He shares the story of Billy Graham, who experienced a transformation in his preaching when he fully embraced the authority of the Bible. The speaker emphasizes that arguing people into the kingdom of God is not effective, but encouraging them to read the Bible can lead them to encounter the living materials within it. The sermon concludes by highlighting the role of the Holy Spirit in transforming believers into the image of Christ, referencing 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Transcript

Remember what I said? I'd just like to add my own personal word of thanks to all who labored so hard and so well in this conference. I go away with many pleasant memories. I would appreciate your prayers as I travel to California beginning tomorrow.

Long, long trip. We need the Lord every hour. Just for a few minutes, I'd like to gather up some threads with regard to the inspiration of the Scriptures.

The Holy Spirit is the one who inspired the Scriptures. 1 Corinthians 2:13, which we looked at in detail. We didn't look at 2 Peter 1:21. Would you look at that for just a moment, please? 2 Peter 1:21. It says, "...knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scriptures of any private interpretation.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God speak as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The usual interpretation of this verse is that no one has a right to interpret the Scriptures according to his own personal way of thinking. No prophecy of the Scriptures of any private interpretation. But that isn't really what it means.

This doesn't refer to the way you interpret the Scriptures. It refers to the way in which the Scriptures were originally given. The rest of the verse goes on to prove that.

When it says no prophecy of the Scriptures of any private interpretation, it means when Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Malachi, Matthew, John, when they wrote, they weren't giving their own private interpretation of things. They weren't using their own wisdom in what to write down. They were speaking, writing, as the Holy Spirit moved them.

Now, of course, it is true that no prophecy of the Scripture, that we don't, individuals don't have a right to interpret it apart from the Holy Spirit. That's true. But that's really not what the word is saying here.

This has to do with how the Scriptures were originally given. And the Bible that we have in our hand doesn't consist of men's interpretation of things. They were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke accordingly.

Now, we believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. When we say the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, we mean that the very words those men wrote down were the words of God. No question in the world about that.

And we saw that this morning when we were reading in 1 Corinthians 2.13. It uses that, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but words which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. When we say the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, we mean that the Bible is inspired from Genesis through Revelation. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

Just to show you how thorough the inspiration of the Scriptures is, turn to Matthew 5.18. There you read these words. The Lord Jesus is speaking. He says, "... but verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all be fulfilled." One jot and tittle.

What would we say today? One dotting of the I, one crossing of the T. A jot and a tittle weren't even letters in the Hebrew alphabet. They were marks. They were strokes.

They were very, very minor. When you think of a capital E, and then think of a capital F. The difference between a capital E and a capital F. Just that stroke at the bottom of the E. The Lord said, "... but verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all be fulfilled." I want to tell you, that's inspiration to the very minutest degree in the Scriptures, isn't it? Not one jot or tittle would pass until all be fulfilled. Then even the singular and the plural of words is inspired in the Bible.

Galatians 3.16. I think this is thrilling when you see this in the word of God. Paul makes a big point here between singular and plural. It says in verse 16 of Galatians 3, "... now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.

He saith not unto seeds as of many, but as of one, unto thy seed which is Christ." A difference in the English of one letter. Adding that plural F to a word. And that shows you the minute detail in which the word of God is inspired.

Now, it's all inspired to the same degree. All the Scriptures inspire. You know, that's one of the problems with a red-lettered New Testament.

Some of you may have it. Don't feel badly if you do. Publish the New Testament with all the sayings of Christ in red letters.

Well, that's all right. But it might create the impression in people's minds that what's in red letters is more inspired than what isn't. And that isn't true, is it? What Paul writes in the epistles is just as much the word of God as what you see in red letters in your testaments.

And because the word of God is inspired, it's infallible. There are no errors in the word of God. It's absolutely trustworthy.

Some men today say, well, it's trustworthy in matters of faith and morals, but not in other matters. I say it's trustworthy in all matters that you can possibly think of. B.H. Carroll said, it's foolish to talk about degrees of inspiration.

He says, all the Bible is the word of God. When I was a boy, I found a thousand contradictions in the Bible. I marked them.

I had nearly a thousand more contradictions than I have now. I now have a half dozen in the Bible. I cannot explain satisfactorily to myself.

I think if I had a little more sense, I could explain them. That's what he said. That's very good, isn't it? When he was a boy, he had a thousand contradictions in the Bible.

Today, he has only about six. And he says, if I had a little more sense, I think I could explain those six. I think we want to mention that inspiration, when we hear about the Spirit of God inspiring the Scripture, inspiration doesn't guarantee the truth of what, for instance, Satan says in the Bible.

It guarantees the authenticity of the record. But if Satan tells a lie in the Bible, it doesn't mean it's true, does it? If man says something in the Bible that isn't true, it's inspired because God wanted it to be in the Bible, even if it isn't true. For instance, the Book of Ecclesiastes.

The Book of Ecclesiastes represents Solomon's search for meaning to life under the sun. The expression under the sun is found 29 times in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Now, a lot of his conclusions under the sun aren't true at all.

He says, you know, man dies and goes into the grave, and the dog dies and goes into the grave, and man has no advantage over the dog. Well, that's not true, is it? That's not true at all. But that's man's wisdom under the sun.

Dear friends, you have to get above the sun to get true wisdom. I'm glad it's in the Bible. I'm glad it's part of the inspired word of God, because God is saying, McDonald, don't go through that dreary search for meaning under the sun.

Solomon, the wisest and richest man who ever lived, went through that search, and he couldn't find it. Don't think you can find it. So I'm grateful for the Book of Ecclesiastes, but just remember, not everything in it is true.

It represents man's search under the sun. Incidentally, the cults love Ecclesiastes, because they don't put the key in the door. That's why they love it.

Now, here's a problem. When we speak of the inspiration of the scriptures, we're thinking of the original documents. The original documents, as they were written down by the various men.

Moses, the Pentateuch. But you know, we don't have the original documents today, and that presents a problem to some people. They say, well, you believe in the inspiration of a book, and you don't have the original documents.

No problem. There are so many copies of the Old Testament, and so many copies of the New Testament, handed down, transmitted down through the centuries, it's just as good as if we had the original documents. Let me put it this way.

Supposing there were a fire back in Philadelphia, and the Declaration of Independence were burned, would we be any of the losers? Just because the original copy was burned. But we'd know everything that was in it, wouldn't we? We'd know everything that was in it. And that's true of the sacred scriptures.

Let me just give you some little facts about that. The book of Isaiah we've had for centuries. Is that the right book of Isaiah? Is that the way it should be? Well, not too many years back, they found the Dead Sea Scrolls, and in the Dead Sea Scrolls, among them they found a copy of the book of Isaiah.

So they were going to take this copy of the book of Isaiah that they just found, and compare it with what they had assembled as a true book of Isaiah down through the years. It represented a hundred pages of manuscript, the book of Isaiah. Sixty-six books.

And a Jewish scholar found thirteen problems. There were thirteen words in the Dead Sea Scroll Isaiah that seemed to be a little different. They didn't affect any doctrine, of course, of the faith.

Thirteen words. Just think of that. A few years passed, and he said that in his considered opinion he was hasty on ten of those thirteen problems.

They were all small problems. Problems like the difference in the spelling, the brief spelling of judgment, J-U-D-G-E-M-E-N-T, and the American spelling of judgment, J-U-D-G-M-E-N-T. What was comparable in the Hebrew.

Things like that. The differences between Isaiah as we have it, and Isaiah as it was in the Dead Sea Scrolls copy. Only thirteen changes that this scholar thought of, and he says, well I was a little hasty about ten of them.

I want to tell you, that's marvelous when a copy can be transmitted down through the centuries, and only three. I would like anybody in the room to typewrite a hundred pages of manuscript, and have only three typographical errors in it. I'd like to see it.

I don't think anybody in the room could do that. I know something about editing and copywriting and all the rest, but I want to tell you, we make more mistakes. What about the New Testament? Scholars today will tell you that the New Testament, the text of the New Testament as we have it today, is ninety-nine and nine-tenths percent pure.

Just think of that. One-tenth of one percent, and that one-tenth of one percent represents very minor problems. Not one of those things represents a doctrine of the Christian faith.

What does that mean? It means I can hold this book up before you tonight and say, that is the word of God. And I really believe it with all my heart. The differences are minor, and they have nothing to do with doctrine.

Somebody said to me, how can you prove that the Bible is the word of God? Well, I want to tell you something. There are many evidences that the Bible is the word of God, and it would take more than the time we have tonight to go over them. But let me just suggest this to you.

You accept the Bible by faith, and then God proves to you that it is the word of God. Many years ago, Billy Graham was down in Southern California. He was at a conference at Forrest Holmes, and he was up there in the hills, and he was having a duel with God.

He had been hearing all these doubts and denials about the Bible, and he was beginning to be a little bit affected by those doubts and denials. Let me just read it to you the way he tells it. Many things in this book I do not understand, but thou hast said the just shall live by faith.

All I have received from thee I have taken by faith. Here and now, by faith, I accept the Bible as thy word. I take it all.

I take it without reservations. Where there are things I cannot understand, I will reserve judgment until I receive more light. If this pleases thee, give me authority as I proclaim thy word, and through that authority convict men of sin and turn sinners to the Savior.

And within six weeks, he started the Los Angeles Crusade, and that's when Billy Graham started to say, the Bible says. And he noticed a new authority in his preaching, and that was the beginning of the great ministry. How did it happen? He accepted the Bible faithfully.

That's what we have done. You can't argue people into the kingdom of God, but you can get them to read the Bible and find that they are dealing with living materials, and they will find that he who has felt the force of it is not likely to doubt the source of it. That's true.

Once you've felt the force of the Bible, you're not likely to deny the source of it. But having said that, let me say this. It's possible to believe in the inspiration of the scriptures, be 100% clear about the scriptures, and yet when we come to a verse in the scripture we don't like, we explain it away.

This is one of the sins of evangelicalism. How do we explain it? We say, number one, it couldn't mean that literally. Have you ever heard that? We come to some verses that say, lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt, where thieves break through and steal.

Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not corrupt, where thieves do not break through and steal. It couldn't mean that literally. They have to have prudence, don't they? They have to have common sense, don't they? And we take that verse of scripture and we wring the meaning out of it so there's not enough left to make soup for a sick grasshopper.

We don't. It's one of the sins of the saints. A second rationalization.

We've never done it that way. That's what we think. We come to a word of God and it's really not the way we've done it.

And that's what we say, we've never done it that way. And do you know that's exactly what the Jews did in the time of the Lord. You read about that in Matthew chapter 7 verses 9-13.

Matthew 7, just let me tell you the story there if you want to turn to it you may. Matthew 7 verses 9-13. The law of God said, honor your father and your mother that your days may be long upon the earth.

The Jews developed a tradition. Here's a Jewish father and he comes to his son and he says, son, I'm bankrupt, I have nothing. Can you help me out? All that son had to say was Korban.

That's all he had to say, just a word. Korban. And that meant, dad, anything that I might have given you at this time has been dedicated to the Lord.

That's what it meant. It didn't mean the Lord would ever get it. He had to say that.

All he had to say was Korban. Anything that I might give you to help you out of your financial distress at this time has been dedicated to the Lord. He said to them here, by your traditions you may void the law of God.

Isn't that what he said? Matthew chapter 7 verses 9-13. I don't have the right reference there, but anyway, it's Mark chapter 7. Sorry about that. Mark chapter 7 verse 9. Let's read it.

Verse 10. So Moses said, honor thy father and thy mother, and whoso curses father or mother, let him die to death. But he said, if a man shall say to his father or mother, it is Korban, that is to say a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free.

He suffered no more to do aught for his father or his mother, making the word of God of none effect through your traditions. And we do that. We come to some hard verse of scripture and we say Korban.

And the verses of scripture that we like the least are those that have to do with money. The most sensitive part of modern man's anatomy is his pocketbook. The hardest job the Holy Spirit has is to cut the nerve between a man's brain and his wallet.

Do you know that Jesus talked more about money than he talked about heaven and hell? He talked more about money than he talked about personal salvation. They don't like it. The church doesn't like it.

Everybody ought to be prosperous. Nothing too good for the people of God. Live high off the hog.

That's not what you read in the New Testament. Explanation number three. I know that's what it says in the Bible, but in my case, God wants to make an exception.

Isn't that sweet? Here's a girl who falls in love with an unsaved fellow. He says, look, my friend, you can't marry that fellow. He's unsaved and you're a believer.

I know that's what the Bible says, but in my case, God wants me to marry him so I can lead him to Christ. We make void the word of God with excuses like that. Number four.

That was just for Paul's day or the days of the early church. This is a cultural argument and it's very, very strong today. But I want to tell you something.

If you use the cultural argument at all, you can get rid of anything in the Bible. If you use it with regard to women's place in the church, you can get rid of baptism and the Lord's Supper for the same argument. We do that.

Men do that. Number five. God knows I have to live, doesn't he? When the stern demands of Jesus' discipleship are pressed upon people, they say.

A young man said that to Spurgeon once. God knows I have to live, doesn't he? Spurgeon said, I don't grant that. We have to obey God.

Who said we had to live? Six. You have to be prudent. You have to use common sense.

If you put common sense above the word of God, it becomes rat poison. The word of God is supernatural sense, not common sense. It's above common sense.

Number seven. Those scriptures reveal Paul's prejudices. Paul was a male chauvinist.

Paul was a woman hater. And those scriptures reveal his prejudices. If that's true, you don't have the word of God.

If that's true, the Bible is not the word of God, the inspired word of God. Number eight. I can hardly believe that anybody would say this.

You shouldn't do it if it would offend somebody. You shouldn't obey the word of God if it would offend somebody. Yes, do it whether it offends people or not.

Number twelve. Those teachings are just for the kingdom. That's convenient.

Anything you don't like, relegate it off to the kingdom. But God is not deceived by all of these things. At the coronation of a British king or queen, the Bible is presented to him or to her with this word.

We present you with this book, the most valuable thing the world affords. Here is wisdom. This is the royal law.

These are the living oracles of God. Wonderful, isn't it? There's just one more point on that little outline there, and that is this final ministry. I don't say this is the final one, but the final one on this outline.

The Holy Spirit transforms believers into the image of Christ. I think that's a nice note to end on. 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18.

It says, But we all, with unveiled faith, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Let's go over it. Just take the verse apart and put it together again.

But we all, all believers, with unveiled faith. What's an unveiled faith? A faith where there's nothing between the soul and the Savior. No unconfessed sin.

Perfect communion between God and the believer. Unveiled faith. Beholding as in a glass.

What is the glass? The glass is the Bible. So, what do you behold in the Bible? The glory of the Lord. What happens when you go to the Word of God, not for an occasional glance, but for a concentrated gaze? Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.

What happens? Are changed into the same image. What does that mean? That means we become more like Christ. That's what it means.

From glory to glory. What does that mean? It means from one degree of glory to another. It's a progression.

It's an upward climb. How does that marvelous change take place? It takes place even as by the Spirit of the Lord. This is the secret to becoming like the Lord Jesus.

Being occupied with Him. The gaze, it's the gaze that sanctifies. It's the look that saves, isn't it? You take that look of faith to the Lord Jesus Christ and He saves you.

I tell you, it's the gaze that sanctifies. We all, with unveiled faith, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. May we all go forth from the conference with this prayer in our hearts.

To be like Jesus. To be like Jesus. All I want is to be like Him.

Shall we pray? Father, we would pray this all through life's journey, from earth to glory. All I want is to be like Him. May this be the great ambition of our souls, day by day.

As we go to the Word of God and feed on the Word of God and behold the glory of the Lord, the Holy Spirit will have His wonderful way in transforming us into His image. We ask in His worthy name. Amen.

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