

# Πασα γραφη θεοπνευστος All Scripture is God-Breathed

2 Tim 3:14-4:5

## LION & PARROT

*Did you hear the story about the scientists in America who are trying to cross a Lion with a Parrot. They are not sure what they are going to get, but when it speaks, people had better listen!*

One of the biggest differences between the human race and the animal world is language – the ability to communicate ideas using a variety of methods and media.

## SPEAKER & BOOKS

Over the past few months I've mentioned time and again that our relationship with God is not a one way street where we make our requests and He may or may not grant them, but a relationship where He speaks to us and we understand His mind and His ways.

We have a God who wants to speak to us. He loves us and God's heart is to communicate that to the human race, fully and clearly. You can communicate with human beings in a number of ways and there is no better way than face to face. FACE TO FACE And that is exactly what the Father did. We remembered that on the first Sunday in advent

## LIVED AMONG US

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the word was God . . . and the Word became flesh ....* God had no better way in demonstrating His love towards us than sending His logos – His eternal Word, His own Son to communicate that love in the most effective way possible, by giving His won live that through personal faith, men and women have a way to God and to know Him personally for all eternity.

For human beings there's no more effective way of communicating than demonstrably. What do you do when you aren't bodily with someone? in our absence we developed another method of communication with one another – by using written words. WRITTEN WORDS (4 SLIDES)

And right back over 4000 years, we see God revealing Himself in His written word, what we now know as the Bible. GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH HIS WRITTEN WORD

There is something important about written words. If you want to really communicate something clearly to someone, then written words are there as our considered position on any matter so that they hopefully will be clear to our readers and we can refer back to them if people have misunderstood us.

God give us a written word for precisely this reason. It was written in the ordinary languages of the people who received it, not secret or special ones. What does that tell us – that it was not intended for special people to keep and understand, but to be circulated and read amongst ordinary people. And in that spirit that's why it's been translated into so many languages down the years.

Why is this book more important than any other book written on the subject of God? SCRIPTURE Timothy gives it to us: *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

It's also a book that has a reputation for having a powerful effect on people: SCRIPTURES A term often used for the scriptures is the word of God. Paul describes it in Ephesians 6 as the Sword of the Spirit. In Hebrews it's described in this way. *Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.* I'm sure that if I was to ask this morning, there would be quite a few testimonies for you about how God has spoken to you through His word.

Why is this a powerful book? The reason is given in just three words from this morning's passage: ALL SCRIPTURE IS GOD-BREATHED. I've used the NIV for a particular reason because it uses these words ALL SCRIPTURE IS GOD-BREATHED because that's exactly what this Greek here

means: *Πασα γραφη θεοπνευστος*. This may be at variance with what you may memorised if you learnt your Bible from the Authorised King James version. It says all scripture is inspired. In fact, being an evangelical usually includes some kind of allusion to believing that the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God. Americans have massive arguments over what “inspired” means.

Just a minute, doesn't the Greek say “God-breathed”? It does and quite unequivocally so. So where does inspiration come from? Good question. It comes from the Latin translation of the New Testament which was translated by a chap called Jerome in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. Here it is: *omnis scriptura divinitus inspirata*. And it's been the convention to translate *θεοπνευστος* as inspired ever since. The problem is that inspired is not quite the same as God-breathed – it doesn't have the same scope.

A little biology for you. What happens when we breath (BREATHE 1). Well, first of all, we BREATHE IN ... AND of course we BREATHE OUT. Breathing in is called inhalation and breathing out exhalation – of course two old words for that are inspiration and expiration. Now try to speak whilst breathing in. It can't be done, you can only speak by breathing out!

Why do I say all this: because people over the years have got a confused idea because of Jerome's use of inspiration which only means to breathe in. It's let to misconceptions of what Paul meant. Inspiration is about breathing in; so therefore Jerome's use suggests that God has only breathed something in to scripture.

This can lead to an unfortunate problem. Some have assumed that if Scripture is inspired, it has a power within it to change people's life because God has breathed some sort of life into it as He breathed life into Adam. Therefore the book becomes a holy thing, rather in the way the Muslims view the Qu'ran. To them the book has power, or the words have power in themselves because God has inspired them – He's given them life just as He breathed life into Adam. I know that's a position that is taken by some evangelicals too.

But if scripture is God-breathed which is what 2 Tim 3:16 actually says, then scripture is the product of God breathing something in and breathing something out – we need to understand what that means.

#### GOD BREATHED INTO IT

God has breathed something into scripture. There's no mystery as to what it is as the Bible happily tells us just what. What's in the Bible isn't just the words of the many people who were involved in the writing of it, but the Holy Spirit is the author so that what's here is what God wants here. Peter put it like this: 1 PETER 1:21-22 1 *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* Actually, there are a few places in the NT where the Holy Spirit is described as being the author of scripture that's quoted. The Bible consists of God-breathed words – there are many writers, but one author and the Holy Spirit. That's not difficult. Interestingly the word for “Spirit” is the Greek *πνευμα*, which means wind or breath as well as Spirit. That's the idea of the word. The Holy Spirit can be described as “the breath of God”.

But there is a big difference between these words something the Holy Spirit has authored and them having power of their own. If they had power of their own, then everyone who comes in contact with them would be changed, and we know that just doesn't happen.

So how come these words are so powerful because both you and I know that people do get changed by reading this book or hearing words from it. One of the things we have found down the ages is that books can have a significant effect on how people behave and every generation has books that change people and change society.

#### FARENHEIT 451

I remember a book by Ray Bradbury. It was a sci-fi book set in the future where a corrupt government tries to control how people think and behave by banning books. People who are caught with books are arrested by “firemen” who confiscate their books and burn them in public.

#### GUTENBERG

It was one of the pioneers of the printing press, Johan Gutenberg who saw the power of the printed

word. He said *Give me 24 soldiers of lead and I will conquer the world.*

## **MARX**

You might well have known that to be quoted by the communist Karl Marx and communism used the power of words extensively to spread the cause. Communism shows the power that the written word can have over people – but also the fact that it is always only for a season and then the book goes out of fashion.

You can't describe the Bible in those terms. Down 2000 years people have experienced the presence and the power of God through reading this book. There's more to the Bible than revolutionary ideas. And that's where we come to all scripture being God-breathed – because:

## **GOD BREATHES OUT OF IT**

God the Holy Spirit breathed what He wanted to say into this book – He also breathes out through it – He speaks through His word to people – and that's something He dynamically he does today. That's why this book is so powerful.

I know from my experience that these words may have a phenomenally powerful influence on people. It's not because they are intrinsically powerful, but because the Holy Spirit breathes them out to speak light and life into people. They are God's words, put in the way that God wants them put and what brings them to life is the Holy Spirit. Go through the letter to the Hebrews and you'll find the writer constantly saying as he quotes scripture "the Holy Spirit says". The breath of God, the Holy Spirit was instrumental in the words being written, now He's instrumental in speaking those words to people in the here and now. That's how the written word gets to come alive

And my experience is the Holy Spirit has a remarkable knack of being able to make the words in this book come alive to people almost however badly people translate it or poorly quote it. Why is using Scripture so effective when we use it to explain the things of God?

Let me try to explain it another way. I used to be a teacher and I developed my own way of explaining things about Geography to students. I found that the way I explained it made more sense to them than many of the textbooks which were often too technical or too confusing for them. It wasn't that the textbooks were wrong, it was simply that somehow they were written in a way that didn't hit my students' wavelength.

In the end it is the Holy Spirit of God that brings about a person's conversion, it is the Holy Spirit that teaches us spiritual things in spiritual ways – and it's no surprise that He uses His own material to the best effect. Yes, he can use your words or my words, but His words are the ones He's given us because He uses them most effectively when helping us to understand spiritual things in spiritual ways.

We're going to see how He does that next week when we explore more of this passage. But let's come to the inevitable conclusion to all scripture being God-breathed.

God speaks to us through His written word. It's His way and experience shows that for most issues in life, the Bible has something to say on the matter. So if we want to know what God is saying to us on any given matter - our first port of call is His written word, because there's usually something there already.

But in this is a challenge for now! Do we have a problem understanding what God is saying to us? Then how often do we read God's word? How well do we know it? There's enough in here about the will and ways of God to keep all of us going for a lifetime?

But more importantly, how often do we meditate on His word, and ask Him to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us through it? Has the Spirit had the opportunity to breathe it in to you and me – to make it come alive in my life and yours? That's much more of a challenge.

If you are confused about the will and ways of God and don't know what God is saying to you, then I suggest your first port of call is to spend time with God, reading His word, meditating upon it, discussing it with others – and that's when we'll start to see the difference.