

## Series: The Gift of the Holy Spirit

# The God-breathed Word, 2 Peter

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Dr. Mary Craig (Message delivered by Stephen Craig)  
Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.



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In 2 Peter, the only allusion to the Holy Spirit is the connection with the inspiration of the prophets, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:21). This verse, however, proves vital. We explored this verse, its meaning, and its implications in our Bible study on “The God-breathed Word.”

**2 Peter 1:20, 21: knowing this, first of all that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation [or is of any private interpretation]. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men [*anthropoi*] spoke from God as they were carried along [or moved] by the Holy Spirit. ESV**

**The prophets conveyed God’s message to the people.** Everything they said was ultimately from God (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21). The divine factor sometimes so overpowered the human factor that the person virtually drops out of sight. Louis Berkhof says this:

“The prophetic word [often] begins by speaking of God in the third person, and then, without any indication of a transition, continues in the first person. The opening words are words of the prophet, and then all at once, without any preparation of the reader for a change, the human author simply disappears from view, and the divine author speaks apparently without any intermediary...the word of the prophet passes right into that of the Lord without any formal transition. The two are simply fused, and thus prove to be one.” (Berkhof, Louis. *Introductory Volume to Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1932), page 149. E.g. Hosea 4:1-6.

**God instructed the prophets** to preserve in writing the revelations He was giving them. (Isaiah 8:1; Jeremiah 25:13; Ezekiel 24:1, 2, e.g.) The prophets speak of the Lord’s hand being upon them in a constraining manner, sometimes contrary to their natural desire (Exodus 3:11; Jeremiah 1:6) in order to proclaim the divine message (Ezekiel 1:3; 3:22; 37:1). Jeremiah expressed it like this: Jeremiah 20:9.

**If I say, “I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,” there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. ESV Jeremiah 20:9.**

Each document as it was inscribed became a covenant or kingdom document given to the people of God in the history of redemption. Later prophets cite former prophets as the word of God (Joel 2:32; Amos 1:2, e.g.).

**The Process Issue.** Dr. Robert L. Reymond weighs in.

2 Peter 1:20, 21 gives us a general answer about the process of how God gave His word-revelation to men.

The issue came up because false teachers, maybe Gnostic enthusiasts propagating their theology throughout the Roman Empire, were claiming to have a new word from God that superseded the authoritative word of the OT prophets and the NT apostles. Peter responded in a move to protect the flock from their infectious teachings.

Peter described their “knowledge” as sophisticated myths (2 Peter 1:16) and “made-up” stories. (2:3). Then he brings up the fact that he had an eye and ear witness experience of Jesus’ transfiguration. At this transfiguration, Jesus manifested His majesty. That in itself was a fulfillment of OT Scripture (1:19a) in that it confirmed the prophetic word. Peter said his readers would do well to pay attention to it (1:19b). Then Peter gives his statement about how prophecy came into being; “knowing this first...” Peter uses the Gnostic’s favorite word, “knowing.”

Peter starts to refute the falseness of gnostic thinking with two negatives about the production of prophecy. No prophecy of Scripture originated in or arose or came from the prophet’s estimate of the current state of affairs or in his prognosis about the future. No prophecy of Scripture emerged from his own understanding. Likewise, no prophecy of Scripture was motivated by man’s will, meaning no prophecy of Scripture came from mere human impulse. Peter is excluding the human element as the ultimate originating cause of Scripture.

Next Peter asserts two positives about Scriptural prophecy. On the contrary to the negatives, the prophets spoke from God. What they spoke did not originate IN them but was given TO them by God. What the prophets “spoke” included what they “wrote.” We know this because Peter addresses “prophecy of Scripture.” The prophetic Scriptures themselves came to them from God. Cf 2 Peter 3:15, 16.

Next, Peter says that the reason or means whereby the prophets were able to speak from God as they did was that they were continually being borne along (present passive participle) by the Holy Spirit as they spoke or wrote. They were under the Holy Spirit’s superintending influence the entire time they spoke or wrote as prophets. Cf Acts 27:15. Here the ship was caught in a violent wind and could not face the wind; the men had to give way to it and were driven along [*epherometha*] or borne along by the wind. The ship had no will of its own; it was being carried along by the will of the wind. In such a case, every sailing team knows you must adjust the sails. So the prophets knowing no will of their own in any ultimate sense in the production of prophetic Scriptures were “driven” or “borne along” by the will of the Holy Spirit.” (Robert L. Reymond) The prophets were passive in the process, but not zombies; it was not a process of automatic handwriting.

**To be borne along is not the same as being led or guided or directed. The one that is borne along contributes nothing to the movement induced; he is passive, moved.** The intelligence of the prophets was active in the reception of the message and it was by means of their active intelligence that the message was received. The prophets were not co-authors with God of their messages. Their messages are given to them in the entirety and given precisely as they are given out by them. God speaks through them. They are God’s MOUTH.

In the prophets’ own view, they were just instruments through whom God gave revelation which came from them, not as their own product, but as being the pure word of Jehovah. What can we say?

God authored the instruments He uses for communicating His messages to people. He framed them into precisely what He wanted for the exact communication of His message. He uses the instruments He employs according to their natures, e.g. intelligence, moral agents, etc. (Remember, God spoke through a donkey to Balaam!) God framed His own message in the language of “the organs of revelation” using their own particular language and self-expression. Theologians speak of this as “the accommodation of the revealing God to the several prophetic individualities.” (Robert L. Reymond, quoting B.B. Warfield.) It was not a mechanical process, but rather, the marks of the several individualities were imprinted on the messages of the prophets.

God did not violently force the material He wished expressed through the prophet, against the prophet’s natural bent. God prepared those He used to write Scripture and brought to the task a person who spontaneously would write the message, but under the superintending influence of the Holy Spirit.

**Ending up with a pure word of God.** Thus in Scripture, we can see the human characteristics of the writers, and we can qualify them. God was in the whole process, from prophet to prophetic word. Thus, we end up with a pure word of God. The providence of God secures the divine purposes of God such that Scripture possesses qualities which rise above the powers of men to produce, e.g., the knowledge of divine purpose.

The Spirit of God flowed and flows confluent, side by side, and with the providentially and graciously determined work of men, spontaneously producing under God’s direction the writings appointed to them. The result is scriptural writing, not merely the word of godly men, but the IMMEDIATE word of God Himself speaking directly as such to the mind and heart of the one who reads it. (Galatians 1:15, 16; Jeremiah 1:5; Isaiah 49:1-5)

Confluence – running together; flowing together; coming together. Example: places where two rivers meet or converge.

**Why did the Holy Spirit “bear” the prophets along as they wrote?** He superintended them in their writing in order to guarantee that what they wrote was revelatory in character inasmuch as they spoke FROM GOD as they were being borne along. Also, God insured the divine quality and therefore the infallible trustworthiness of what was produced, the pure Word of God.

The prophets were organs of revelation. What they wrote was pure Spirit-inspired revelation. As such, it was inerrant, without error in the autographs. (Psalm 119:160; Psalm 19:9; Deut. 13:1ff; Jeremiah 28:7ff; Philippians 2:2; Ephesians 3:1-7; 2 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 15:11; 2 Peter 3:16; 1 John 5:8; John 8:26-28; 16:13, e.g.)

**Discord is a symptom of untruth.** Consider the false witnesses at Jesus’ trial (Mark 14:56, 59). Romans 16:17 and Titus 1:9 say contradictors are to be refuted. This couldn’t happen if there were inconsistencies and conflicts within the Standard-bearer nature of Scripture. The whole logic of Jesus’ appeal to Scripture would instantly collapse if there were a presupposition of scriptural incoherence, that the Scriptures did not agree throughout and lacked unity. “It is written” would not settle anything, because contradictory views would compete with each other for being “truth.” The authority of the Word of God would no longer mean anything. Consistency to previous divine revelation would not be an issue, “the analogy of faith test.”

**Do the Scriptures truly have “apparent contradictions?”** So today when people see the Bible as lacking any authority and irrelevant to their lives, it is because others have promoted the idea of apparent contradictions in the Bible. I say “apparent” because it takes work to rightly divide the word of truth; in fact, it takes the Holy Spirit’s anointing. 1 Corinthians 2:10-16.”

The early church received ... apostolic writings as being on a par with the OT scriptures (1 Timothy 5:18 cf Luke 10:7; 2 Peter 3:16 explicitly; and implicitly in 1 Thess. 5:27; Col. 4:16; 1 Tim. 4:13; Rev. 1:3.

At the end of his life, Paul points believers to the scriptures, encouraging them to rightly handle the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15) and pointing out the function of scripture, which is God-breathed, for "teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." (2 Tim. 3:16) (See Jude 3, 2 Peter 1:19, 20; 2 Peter 3:16 also.)

**Inerrancy.** To those who would say that the writers of Scripture never claim inerrancy for themselves, we would say that it is true that the writers of Scripture recognized their own personal finitude (finite as opposed to infinite) and sinfulness and thus a proneness to error. Psalm 58:3; 116:11; Romans 3:4. The Bible says we are not to trust ourselves, even. But the writers of Scripture do claim inerrancy for the written Word of God given by Him to humankind through them by inspiration. Psalm 19:7-9; 119:86, 138, 142, 144, 151, 160; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21. The writers themselves could be in error, but the Holy Spirit’s superintending influence kept them from it.

Many today maintain that “Inerrancy is just a tool or ploy on the part of evangelicals and those who believe in it to justify their narrow and exclusive position.” Actually, true believers submit to the Scriptures as the Word of God and that means submitting to what the Scriptures teach about the nature of God. By nature, God is trustworthy, truthful, without error. His word is true; God cannot lie. Therefore, what He declares to human beings must be true. True believers believe the Bible is God’s holy, inspired, inerrant Word, without scientific or historical error or logical contradiction. And remember, we’re talking about the autographs, not the manifold translations from Hebrew and Greek and Aramaic out there.

### **How might we discover this for ourselves?**

1. See what happens in your life if you start believing in Jesus, believing Jesus, and believing what Jesus believed. John 5:39
2. Talk to God and address Him as the One, True, and Living God, about your concerns and issues. James 1:5. Ask Him about the author of the Bible. Ask Him to reveal truth to you. James 1:5; 2 Peter 1:10-12, 20, 21; John 15:26; John 16:12-15
3. Consider the import if the Bible does contain the very words of God. 1 Thessalonians 2:13

**The Spirit is The Life-Producer (John 6:63).** He produced the written Word through a process called spiration. He regenerates and gives life to those given to Jesus by the Father such that these repent of their sins and turn in faith to believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, believing Jesus. By His illuminating work, the Holy Spirit reveals the truth of Scripture, the Word of God, in our lives.

**Who authored the Scriptures?** We call the process of inspiration the superintending influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit authored the Scripture. The human writers were authors only insofar as the Holy Spirit mandated, initiated, and provided their impulse to write. The thoughts and words were originally those of the Holy Spirit. Spirit-taught words were written down, verbally inspired or “spired.” The Holy Spirit moved the writer along under that superintending influence.

**“Does this mean God breathed something INTO the Scriptures and things men wrote down or does it mean that God breathed OUT the Scriptures?”** Turns out that saying that the Scripture is inspired by God is a bit misleading. **The word “spiring” or “spiration”** would be more accurate. The Scripture is not breathed into by God and it is not the product of God inbreathing into its human authors, but that **it is breathed out by God**. It is the product of the creative breath of God. Dr. Reymond notes: “The Scriptures are a Divine product without any indication of how God has operated in producing them.” Robert L. Reymond) Scripture is the product of a specifically Divine operation.

The distinct experience of the Spirit’s immediate inspiration, or spiration, gives way to the Spirit’s **illumination**, working by and with the written word.

The **inward illumination of the Holy Spirit** is necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word of God. The source of spiritual life is in God alone. It is the Spirit of God who works immediately and directly by and with the Word of God in people’s hearts. The Holy Spirit imparts spiritual life.

May we live accordingly. Amen.

*Mary Craig, D. Min.*

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