

RCC in the Word
Week of October 1
2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

For this devotional, I want to simply focus on four words out of these two verses, “breathed out by God.” What does it mean that the Scriptures are breathed out by God? And what are the implications for this?

What does it mean that the Scriptures are breathed out by God? What role did the human authors of the New Testament gospels and letters play? Were they simply like robots and God moved their hands to write words that they didn’t understand? What was the role of God and what was the role of the authors such that what we would end up within our Bible is God-breathed Scripture?

We have to recognize that ultimately, the Bible comes from God. It is not of human origin but it is from God. Humans alone didn’t choose to write Scripture, but nonetheless, humans wrote the Scriptures. We affirm that both God, as the ultimate cause, wrote the Bible, but we also affirm that human beings wrote the Bible. We don’t hold to a dictation theory of inspiration – God did not quote to people verbatim what to write. Most of the Bible was written by human authors who wrote according to their belief and their experiences; this explains the different styles of the Bible.

Why are there four gospels? Why not just one? God wanted to convey different perspectives of what men had seen of Christ. Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:21, “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. God prompted the writing of scripture as He worked in the hearts of these men. Scripture is 100 percent divine but also 100 percent human. Scripture is exactly what God wanted in every way (grammatically, etc.).

I think here we see the combination of the sovereignty of God and human responsibility. We have two truths, that we don’t need to try to systematize to make it fit in a box in our minds. Rather we find two truths presented in the Bible, and we simply leave it that these seemingly contradictory truths are in fact compatible. God controlled the writing of Scripture yet humans wrote scripture. For example, in Galatians 4:19, Paul says he is as a woman in labor until Christ is formed in you. This is not Paul dictating from God but is the imagery of Paul, his own heart, his own thoughts. We have to understand the sovereignty of God and human responsibility as being coupled. They are not in conflict. God controls what we freely choose to do, these two things are not in

conflict; the Bible puts them together. Everything these men wrote they could've written otherwise, but what they wrote is exactly what God wanted to be written.

What are the implications of Scripture being God-breathed?

First, it means that the Scriptures are inspired. The Bible is not simply a religious book. Nor is it simply a collection of 66 books compiled together. As our passage today shows us, the Bible truly is God-breathed. It is inspired writing. And thus it deserves to be read, studied, and kept in our hearts. The idea the term inspiration presents is that God has breathed his character into Scripture so that it is inherently inspired. Paul was not asserting that the Scriptures are inspiring in that they breathe information about God into us, even though the statement is true. The Scriptures owe their origin and distinctiveness to God himself. This is the abiding character of Scripture.

Secondly, it means that the Scriptures are Inerrant. If in fact, scripture is ultimately the word of God, then must this not entail that scripture is entirely truthful? If we hold the inspiration of scripture, we must hold to the inerrancy of scripture. God is truth. He does not lie, so scripture must be truth. The whole Bible is fully truthful in what it says. It is truthful in what it teaches as true or affirms as true. Ok, but some might say, well Jesus said the mustard seed was the smallest seed and we know that is not scientifically true. We have to respect the authors intended meaning as he wrote scripture. Inerrancy is about understanding the author's intended meaning and taking what he intended as truth; once we see intended meaning then we accept it as true; we want to allow Biblical writers to speak in the way they intended. Jesus' truth was not that the mustard seed was technically the smallest of all seeds. The truth he was making was about the kingdom of God, not whether the mustard seed is the smallest seed in existence. The truth was that the kingdom of God begins small, but will grow tremendously, just like a mustard seed. So the intended meaning of the Scriptures is necessarily true, free from error because they are the words of God, who cannot lie.

Third, it means that the Scriptures are authoritative. You can not separate these two - you can't affirm authority and then claim there are mistakes. If you assume the Bible has mistakes then the problem is how can you know where the mistakes are? Who then determines what is true and false? Would we not then be claiming that we have an authority over the Bible, over the Words of God? Authority is not a function of the percentage accurate, but it all must be accurate to be authoritative. The words of Peter again are a warning to those who might place themselves in such a position of authority over the Holy Scriptures. 2 Peter 2:21, "For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them."

Lastly, it means that the Scriptures are sufficient. Finally, our verse here teaches that the Bible is sufficient. What do I mean by sufficient? And sufficient for what, you may be asking. When I say that the Bible is sufficient, I mean that the Bible contains all that you need to live your life. The Word of God is completely sufficient to direct the life and conduct of the church. As Paul wrote this he intentionally put the emphasis on what Scripture is and what it can do. A VW bug can't function as a race car. Something can only do as according to what it is. The promise of Scripture's effectiveness is only true because this is the function of a book which is God's word. The Scriptures are sufficient for living your life. Peter wrote (2 Peter 1:3), "His divine power has granted to us *all things* that pertain to *life and godliness*, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence," He has granted to us His word, and it is all we need for life and godliness. Our Confession says, "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture."

Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers." Let this be an encouragement to us all to remain dedicated to the Holy Bible, the very words breathed out by God.

-Written by Nathan Renfro