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## Editor's Introduction

Living to please God is challenging no matter where you live. In some parts of the world, Christians are prevented from meeting together or from witnessing. In other areas opposition is rather more subtle – your biblical principles and way of thinking will be challenged by all of sorts of wrong beliefs and a godless world view. If you are interested in considering how this works, have a look at some of the previous issues of YPS where we did a series called 'Thoughts about Thinking'. This can be accessed through our webpage [www.youngpreciousseed.org/magazine.cfm](http://www.youngpreciousseed.org/magazine.cfm).

This issue of YPS will hopefully whet your appetite for studying the scriptures and help you to appreciate a little more of the love of Christ and the work of the Spirit of God. As always, please let me know if you have any comments.

*Stephen Baker*

### HOW WE GOT OUR BIBLE:

## The Inspiration of Scripture No.2

BY **TM SE ASIA**

MEN'S PENS 2 Pet. 1. 20-21

'No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit', 2 Pet. 1. 20-21 NKJV.

Previously we saw that the Bible is God's complete, written revelation to us. It is 'God-breathed'; God is the source of the Bible. His word is perfect, and has the authority to tell us what to believe and how to live. This is the first aspect of inspiration.

**YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED** is a supplement of *Precious Seed International* designed for those young in faith. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live. YPS is published by *Precious Seed International*, 34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh, Sheffield, S21 1HW, UK, and is available separately from the main magazine.



In this study, we will consider the second aspect of inspiration and see how God used human beings to write down the scriptures.

The Bible contains writings from numerous different authors, addressed to diverse groups of people, written over many centuries. It includes a tremendous variety of subject matter, literary genres and writing styles, yet has an overall unifying theme and harmonious message. This unity and diversity is explained by the process of inspiration.

Peter says that Bible writers were 'moved' by the Holy Spirit. Elsewhere, this Greek word is translated 'bear' or 'carry', John 21. 18. In Acts chapter 27 verse 17 it is used of a sailing boat being 'driven' by the wind. The idea is that the Holy Spirit was the wind in the sails of the writers. Their hand was on the rudder, so to speak, using their own words and phrases, but the Spirit guided and influenced them; God's breath breezed them along. The final result is writings which fully convey the style, feelings and intent of the human authors, and at the same time perfectly express the mind of God.

## Why didn't God just hand us a book?

Some religions believe this is how they got their holy book, and, had He so desired, God could have used that method, dictating to a scribe, or engraving golden plates. He could have handed Adam a leather-bound, gold-leaf, red-letter, wide-margin, chain-reference Bible on the evening of Day 6. But He didn't, because that was not the best way.

Imagine Adam opening his Bible to Genesis chapter 2 where he learns that he can eat, almost, any fruit, but he must be vegetarian; all well and good. But he reads on and discovers in Genesis chapter 9 that, actually, he can eat meat – any animal he fancies. But when he reaches Leviticus chapter 11, he finds that the seafood is off. He follows a restricted diet until he reads Acts 15, where everything is back on the menu again. It might be quite perplexing! (And the same confusion would exist for topics as varied as worship, washing and warfare!)

God's best way was to reveal truth 'at various times and in various ways', Heb. 1. 1 NKJV. He told Adam everything he needed to know. He told Moses everything the Israelites needed to know. The Lord Jesus told the disciples everything they needed to know. And He told Paul everything the body of Christ needs to know.

## Why did God use human authors?

The Bible is a book for people. God wants to communicate with us in language we understand. Although some of the Bible is cold, hard, law, most of it is exciting stories, beautiful songs, vivid pictures, and personal letters.

Perhaps God could have written Proverbs and told us how to be wise, but He could hardly have written Ecclesiastes with His own hand! Ecclesiastes is the diary of a man who is out of fellowship with God. A holy God could not tell us that there is nothing better than to 'eat, drink and be merry', Eccles. 8. 15 NKJV. but when a sin-sick Solomon says this, we get the point!

God could and did write the words, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery' with His own finger, but David's brokenness in Psalm 51 touches our hearts in a way letters engraved in stone cannot.

God does not write prayers to Himself in the Epistles, but Paul's expressions of thanksgiving encapsulate the response of a human soul overwhelmed by God's grace.

In all these writings, the hand of man is easily discerned, but the breath of God is unmistakable. No wonder the psalmist exclaims, 'My heart stands in awe of Your word', Ps. 119. 161.





# Chapter & Verse

BY **TM SE ASIA**

## 3. LIGHT AND UNDERSTANDING

**'The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple', Ps. 119. 130 NKJV.**

God wants us to understand His word. He has communicated to us simply and clearly, because He wants us to know Him, and He wants us to know how we should live.

But how can we understand the Bible? And how can we be sure that we have the correct meaning? After all, many different Bible teachers teach many different things. Is it even possible to be certain of the meaning of any passage of scripture?

The answer is that it is possible to understand the Bible, and it is possible to be sure that we have understood it correctly. The Bible itself gives us the principles of correct interpretation. If we follow these principles we can have confidence in studying the scriptures.

In fact, God has given us the key to interpretation in the very third verse of the Bible!

**'Then God said, "Let there be light." And there was light', Gen. 1. 3 NKJV.**

God said . . . and it happened . . . just the way God said. When God says something, He means what He says. He communicates in simple language so that even the simple can understand.

If God had just said, 'Let there be light', and verse 3 had finished there, perhaps we could debate exactly what He meant. 'Light' has lots of different meanings in English, and can be used in various ways. But by adding the words, 'And there was light', the meaning becomes clear. Physical light came into existence when God spoke.

If you are in a dark room, and someone says, 'Switch the light on', you know what they mean. They are not asking you to open the windows or give them a banana. Language works because we are all agreed on the meaning of words and how to use them. Although the Bible contains some very deep truths, the actual meaning of the words it uses is almost always simple and straightforward.

Of course, the Bible also uses figures of speech, just

as we do in everyday communication. For example, in Psalm 119 verse 130, 'light' is used in a metaphorical sense. Opening the Bible does not generate a visible glow, but it does give understanding.

Genesis chapter 1 is historical narrative, so we understand the word 'light' literally. But Psalm 119 is poetry, so we allow for a metaphorical meaning. We recognize that light is a metaphor for understanding, and it makes sense as a metaphor in that verse. Even if we were not sure, the verse itself makes the meaning absolutely clear, because the second half of the verse uses the word 'understanding' in parallel to 'light' in the first half.

Unless there are clear indications within the text to do otherwise, we should understand the 'plain sense' of the words of the Bible. Someone has said, 'If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense'.

In both of the verses we have looked at, the second half of the verse not only explains the meaning of the first half, but it also limits the meaning. It makes clear that the verse has a single, definite meaning, not multiple meanings which are open to the reader's imagination.

Sometimes we hear, 'That's what it means to you, but to me it means something else'. In our postmodern society, people like to decide their own meanings. But the Bible does not allow us to do this. It requires us to discover the author's meaning. Certainly, we must each apply what we read to our own individual experience, but we may only do that after we have understood the objective meaning of the text. I may prayerfully consider a personal application to my own circumstances, but I may not pompously choose a private meaning for my own convenience. If the text means something to me other than that which the original author intended, then my interpretation is wrong. Otherwise, I could make any verse of the Bible mean whatever I wanted it to mean. But the only meaning that matters is God's meaning.

**'Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me', Ps. 43. 3a.**

PAUL'S:

## I am series – No. 2

# Not Ashamed

BY ANDREW DUTTON NORWICH

**'Be not . . . ashamed of the testimony of our Lord', 2 Tim. 1. 8.**

In verse 6 of chapter 1, Paul encourages Timothy to 'stir up the gift of God'. This has the idea of a continual 'rekindling'; just as a fire constantly needs feeding and maintaining, so does Timothy's gift. As Timothy needed to 'stir up' his gift, we too need to be careful that we don't neglect the gift God has given us; it is so easy to diminish our Christian service through feeding other interests which have no value. In verse 7, Paul gives Timothy three reasons why he doesn't need to be timid in service: God has provided a spirit of 'power, and of love, and of a sound [sober and balanced] mind'.

Now in verse 8, after calling Timothy to keep ablaze the gift of God in him, Paul says 'be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner'. The testimony of the Lord Jesus is a term that is used to describe all the truth about Him as the Son of God. Such as, He was a perfect Man, He lived a sinless life, He had the power to forgive sins and He died for sin, He was raised from the dead, He ascended into heaven and He has promised to return. The testimony of Paul was linked with that of the Lord Jesus; Paul submitted himself fully to the Lord's will, viewing himself as 'His prisoner'. What a challenge – not to be ashamed of the great truths about our Lord, or the life He calls us to in His will!

Rather than being ashamed, Paul asks Timothy to be a 'partaker of the afflictions of the gospel'. This is a call to suffering through being linked with the gospel; Timothy didn't have to suffer alone, but to partake in the suffering with Paul and others. The gospel generates suffering and Paul knew this more than anyone. It doesn't just have to be gospel preaching that generates suffering, but the stand of a Christian living out the gospel. Do I suffer because of the gospel? Perhaps today there is a tendency to make the gospel more inviting, up to date, or less offensive. May I be preserved from these temptations and be faithful

to the gospel and willing to be a 'partaker of the afflictions of the gospel'!

**'I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed', 2 Tim. 1. 12.**

Paul moves from his instructions to Timothy to his personal example. Paul certainly practised what he preached! He suffered because of the gospel that he preached, 2 Cor. 11. 23-28, just as he called Timothy to suffer, but he states in verse 12, 'nevertheless I am not ashamed'. There were no disappointments or regrets for Paul. This was because of his confidence in God: 'I know whom I have believed'. At the point Paul was saved, he believed and this provided him with continued confidence; we too can have confidence each day, based on the One we trusted when we were saved, regardless of the circumstances of life.

Paul was also 'persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day'. Not only was Paul's confidence in who God is, but in His ability, strength and power to 'keep'. This is like a soldier standing guard over Paul's salvation and his life's faithful service for the Lord. It was all invested and safe 'against that day'. Paul looked forward to a time of reward. The physical beatings and prison sentences because of the gospel, were all worth it for Paul; he looked forward to a day of reward. He was not ashamed.

What a statement of faith! Paul could say, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ', demonstrating his confidence in the message he preached and his diligence in preaching it. He could call Timothy not to be 'ashamed of the testimony of our Lord' and was willing to suffer for the gospel. Through all his suffering as a Christian, Paul could say, 'I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed'. No looking back with regret, his confidence was in God and his sights were set on a future day of reward.

With God's help, may I declare in my own Christian life and experience that 'I am not ashamed' and faithfully serve my Lord and Saviour.



# The Love of Christ – No. 1

BY SIMON SWAN NORTHAMPTON



It would be impossible to exhaust a subject as vast as 'The Love of Christ' by writing a series of books, let alone a small article. What this may do, however, is fuel a desire that should be within all believers, to learn more of our Saviour.

It is precious to see how scripture provides evidence so frequently of the acts of the Lord Jesus which reflect His devotion to His Father and to others. We see His compassion for the desperate woman with the issue of blood. We see His sympathy over the death of Lazarus. Not to mention the ultimate display of love in His sacrificial death on the cross.

The question must be asked as to why we only read this expression three times? One would think it would be mentioned as constantly as the love of God is. The short answer is, we do not know. What we do know is that the Holy Spirit chose to reveal this only to the apostle Paul for inclusion in his Epistles. In all three instances the love mentioned is the noun *agape*. This word is used over 100 times in the New Testament. If we include its verb counterpart then it appears well over 200 times. Love is unquestionably one of the key truths of the Bible. W. E. VINE<sup>1</sup> says in his dictionary, 'Love had its perfect expression among men in the Lord Jesus Christ'.

**'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?', Rom. 8. 35**

The letter to the Romans when viewed as a courtroom scene sees Paul preach a compelling case to the church concerning the things of Christ. The eighth chapter is a chapter of great encouragement to the believer.

From the fall, mankind has known nothing but separation from God. Since Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden of Eden to the countless sacrifices of the Old Testament, mankind has not been in close communion with God. Hebrews chapter 10 verses 10 and 12 teach us that 'we

are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all . . . but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God'. The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus brought those who trust Him into fellowship and communion with God.

Our communion with God through His Son is symbolized by the events surrounding the crucifixion. For instance, 'the veil of the temple was rent in twain'. The veil had separated the priest from access to the Holy of Holies for generations. Access is now possible into the holiest, the presence of God, which historically had only been available to the high priest once a year on the Day of Atonement. The Old Covenant has now been done away with, 2 Cor. 3. 11; Heb. 8. 7, 13.

Can a believer be separated from the love of Christ? David despaired at the thought that God's Spirit would leave him as it did Saul, both fears were because of sin. David exclaimed as he penned Psalm 51, 'Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me'. As Paul asks the question, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?', he proposes seven things that potentially could; yet through Christ we are 'conquerors', v. 37 Paul concludes confidently that not even death, the first of ten things listed, can separate us from the divine love bestowed upon us by a Holy God; a love which is 'in Christ Jesus our Lord'. This verse confirms the confidence that the believer enjoys in respect of salvation; it is eternal and irreversible. John reminds us of the words of the Lord Jesus in John chapter 10 verses 27 and 28 that no one can be plucked out of His hand.

What a glorious truth!

To be continued

<sup>1</sup> Love (Noun and Verb) – Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* Volume 2.

ADVENTURES IN ACTS:

# Acts 27 - Sailing through Storms

BY JEREMY SINGER BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

'There is nothing – absolutely nothing – half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats', says Ratty, one of the heroes of *Wind in the Willows*. The apostle Paul was similarly a frequent sailor, although his nautical adventures could hardly be described as 'messing about'. Sailing was a major mode of transport in New Testament times.<sup>1</sup> Not counting the incident in this chapter, Paul had already been shipwrecked on three occasions, 2 Cor. 11. 25. Nonetheless, Paul and others willingly 'hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ', Acts 15. 26.

Naval historians rely on source material in this chapter as a leading description of first-century shipping technology and practice. Many unique Greek words describe the voyage, as Luke with his doctor's eye for detail provides this rich narrative. If we need to convince ourselves or others regarding biblical accuracy, this chapter provides plenty of evidence.<sup>2</sup>

However, our study focuses on individuals who demonstrate care for others. The virtue of caring indicates that humans are created 'in the image of God', Gen 1. 27, since 'He careth for you', 1 Pet. 5. 7.

## 1) The centurion's care for Paul

Julius the Roman centurion belonged to 'Augustus' band,' v. 1. This elite regiment of crack troops was the equivalent of the modern-day SAS. Despite his tough training, Julius showed kindness to Paul, v. 3. We observe

that strength and gentleness are not mutually exclusive – a good lesson for believers.

Although the centurion did not heed Paul's navigation advice, at the very least he listened politely, v. 11. Julius learned his lesson during the journey; two weeks later he followed Paul's instructions completely, vv. 31, 33. In witnessing as well as general conversation it is important for us to persevere with those whose initial reaction is to disregard our words. The patience and persistence that characterized Paul should also be present in our lives.

At the end of the chapter, Julius was determined to save Paul's life, despite the bloodthirsty instincts of his soldiers, v. 43. Perhaps Julius recognized Paul's innocence, or even his godliness? Like the centurion who met the Lord Jesus, Julius appreciated that Paul was God's man in the same way as a soldier is Caesar's man, Matt. 8. 9.

## 2) God's care for Paul

The Lord's servants often face storms, whether literal or metaphorical. Paul, however, stands apart from many believers. Whereas Jonah brought a tempest upon himself and his shipmates because of disobedience, Jonah 1. 12, Paul went through *Euroclydon* in calm assurance that he was obeying God's will. Although the disciples doubted Christ's care during the storm, Mark 4. 38, Paul was reassured that God would bring him through, Acts 27. 25.



# THE ACTS OF GOD

The Lord sent an angel, v. 23, with a comforting message for Paul, who immediately broadcast it to the other passengers and crew. He told them, v. 23, of his God-given identity – ‘Whose I am’ – and purpose – ‘Whom I serve’. Could we truthfully use this same language of devotion to describe ourselves? Next, Paul passed on the revelation that all aboard would be safe, v. 24. Here is a challenge to us: do we keep the good news of salvation secret, or are we ready to share it with colleagues and companions? This brings us neatly to the final point.

## 3) Paul's care for his shipmates

Notice the repetition of ‘all’ through the chapter, vv. 24, 33, 35, 36, 37, 44. Every soldier, sailor, and passenger was valuable to Paul and to God. There were 276 in total, v. 37. Paul (or Luke?) counted them all. God had even counted the hairs on their heads, v. 34, cf. Matt. 10. 30. All (literally people, hyperbolically hairs) were to be preserved unharmed.

A 100% survival rate seemed unlikely during the massive tempest, especially in the presence of cowardly sailors, v. 30, and murderous soldiers, v. 42. However, Paul must have been praying to God. The angelic message refers to those ‘given’ to Paul, v. 24, presumably in response to the apostle’s intercession for his shipmates’ safety. God granted his request. Almost certainly, Paul also prayed for their souls’ salvation. Did God grant this request? We must be prayerfully aware of both the everyday and the eternal needs of people around us.

Paul could not stop the storm, but he did his best to relieve difficulties aboard

the ship. Alongside offering reassurance, he lent a hand to the sailors, v. 19, and encouraged them to eat, v. 35.

Finally, through Paul’s prayer and God’s power, ‘they escaped all safe to land’, v. 44. Have faith and pray! At times it seems unlikely that our friends and family might ever be saved, but God is ‘able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think’, Eph. 3. 21.

<sup>1</sup> ‘It is estimated that in the Roman period, the Mediterranean was better connected than at any point until the 19th century’, JULIAN WAINWRIGHT, University of Southampton, 2017, [www.futurelearn.com/courses/shipwrecks/0/steps/7964](http://www.futurelearn.com/courses/shipwrecks/0/steps/7964).

<sup>2</sup> For example, see *A Meteorological Appraisal of Acts 27: 5-26*. R.W. WHITE, *The Expository Times* 113(12), pp. 403-407, 2002.





# The Holy Spirit, Part 3

BY MALCOLM BEATTIE BELFAST

## **The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.**

In this third study, we will look at why and when the Holy Spirit came into the world.

## **The promise of His coming.**

The Old Testament prophet Joel spoke about His coming, 'and it shall come to pass . . . that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh', Joel 2. 28. John the Baptist also preached that Christ 'shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost [Spirit]', Luke 3. 16.

## **The occasion of His coming.**

Before He ascended to heaven, Christ instructed the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for this promise to be fulfilled, Acts 1. 4, 5. The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost when the disciples were all together, 'And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost [Spirit], and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance', Acts 2. 2-4.

## **He came to bring about the birth of the church.**

Notice what happened. First, the house was 'filled' with the sound of a mighty rushing wind, v. 2. Second, there appeared cloven tongues which sat on each person, v. 3. Third, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and, fourth, spoke with other tongues, v. 4. That was when the Spirit was poured out upon them, and the baptism with the Holy Spirit took place.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 13, Paul explains, 'For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . . and have been all made to drink into one Spirit'. He is teaching that this was the moment that the church, known as the body of Christ, was born; and that, although he was not there when the baptism took place, it applies to all believers. It was a once-for-all-time event and never needs to be repeated.

So, when we were born again, we also came into the good of that baptism and were added to the church. The church started with 120 disciples, Acts 1. 15, and soon grew by another

3,000, Acts 2. 41. And so it has grown down the centuries, and will continue to grow until the return of Christ when it will be presented to Him, 'a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing', Eph. 5. 27.

## **He came to establish the message of the gospel.**

God used miracles and signs to confirm what His representatives were doing or saying. When the disciples spoke in tongues, these were foreign languages, so that people of different nations could understand the message. When they did this, or performed miracles, it was always in the power of the Holy Spirit. These were temporary signs to establish the gospel of Jesus Christ, so that people might know that what was being said was truly from God and believe and be saved.

## **He came to reveal the will of God until the New Testament was written.**

Christ taught the disciples, 'when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth . . . he will shew you things to come', John 16. 13. Before we had the Bible, the Holy Spirit spoke through prophets to reveal God's will, an example of this being Agabus, Acts 11. 28. He also guided the apostles as they wrote the Epistles, Paul states, 'Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost [Spirit] teacheth', 1 Cor. 2. 13.

## **He came to reprove the world of sin, righteousness and judgement.**

The Lord Jesus explained that 'when he [the Holy Spirit] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment', John 16. 8. We considered what this means in our first study.

Next time we will consider the Spirit of God's relationship with individual believers.

