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Outline:

INSPIRATION

1. The need of verbal inspiration.
2. What is NOT intended or implied.
3. The evidences of verbal inspiration.
4. Encouraging results.
5. Difficulties calmly considered.
6. "If any man speak...as the oracles of God".

Every subject concerning Scripture is important to a child of God. There is not one dull page in Scripture, unless the reader is dull. If the Scripture has the same origin as our own heart, then we may expect a holy fellowship between our new heart and the Scripture, an indescribable feeling of loss if the Scripture is neglected only for a while. Though all subjects connected with the Scripture are deeply important, and though one hesitate to glibly use the word "foundation truth" yet one does feel that much of the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures will be misunderstood unless we have a clear recognition at the beginning of the fact, nature, purpose and results of inspiration. The word 'inspiration' in English, a BREATHING IN and thus it fairly represents the Divine word in 2 Timothy 3 "All Scripture is God-breathed". There we have a claim, a claim, be it noticed, of verbal inspiration for it is impossible to breath THOUGHTS, WORDS are breathed, and therefore it is well that at the beginning of our subject we should know that we are seeking to find out the evidences of that which Scripture asserts is a fact. We are not on some idle speculation, we are not on some curious theory, a pastime, for speculative minds, but we are occupied with that which God Himself has revealed, and I hope, by grace, our hearts are in such a condition that we do not need PROOFS of verbal inspiration though we ENJOY evidences. We do not require to have these demonstrated to our minds, but we rejoice to have the manifestation of it made more real and DEAR to our hearts, and thus expressed in our lives.

But to return to our first point, the Need of Verbal Inspiration, I venture to say, that we must feel the more we study Scripture and the more we study our own lives, - we must feel, beloved friends, the NEED for verbal inspiration. It is a need for the glory of God. If God has revealed Himself at all, we

antipate that He will reveal Himself in a way that will not dishonour Himself. A human law can never be expressed merely in thoughts. Imagine an Act of Parliament put in thoughts, for one to put in his own words, and to apply accordingly. In human documents, even when carefully expressed, there are numerous loopholes of error, but where would be the end of error if there were only an inspiration of thought? But WHAT is "an inspiration of thought"? Can you tell me? Can anyone present describe a "thought inspiration", that is not a "word inspiration"? I venture to say that if it is not a word inspiration it is not a thought inspiration, for there is some defect in the thought. Further, very beautifully we read "All Scripture is God-breathed" - "All writing" - as written it had been definitely breathed. Here is the Divine claim that the inspiration was not of the men as men, not merely toward the men as prophets, but through the men as servants - and this a WRITTEN inspiration. Now I venture to say that the need for verbal inspiration is intensified by such a claim, because if there is not verbal inspiration the book makes an untrue claim, and it is no longer a good book but a deluding book. Therefore we come to the thought that there is a need for verbal inspiration, first, generally with respect to the glory of God, and secondly, when we see how impossible, even in a human sphere, it would be to have anything short of this where exactitude is required; thirdly, because thought inspiration, not word inspiration, fails even to be thought INSPIRATION. There is a defect at the root. Fourthly, the need because there is declared in the Scripture a verbal inspiration, and the book FALLS TO THE GROUND unless its claim can be substantiated. Perhaps you will allow me to put in one suggestion which is closely linked with some that we have already had, but yet it will appeal to each child of God present, "I NEED VERBAL INSPIRATION". It is well to have a big "I" when the word "need" is the next word. "I need verbal inspiration". Is there a child of God present who denies that? Let me repeat it. "I need verbal inspiration". I want to know what to believe. I want to know what to do. I do not see infallibility. I cannot find it in that which may be called a church or a system. I cannot find it in a consensus of ancient writers. I cannot find it in my own individual mind. I cannot find it in public opinion. I cannot find it through mere impulses. I NEED verbal inspiration. And if there is not verbal inspiration, if there is not a book

of exact guidance to which I can turn and on which I can rest unhesitatingly in the enabling of the Holy Spirit, I feel myself largely at sea, and my salvation is largely robbed of its fulness, I mean my present salvation. I feel in considerable and continual difficulty. I almost feel I am unkindly left to grope my way about if there is not verbal inspiration. Beloved friends, the need is a personal need, and we do well to bring in the personal note.

But let us be clear as to what is not intended or implied by verbal inspiration. We do not mean that the translation is inspired. Men have rendered the original languages with a large measure of care and zeal. God has answered prayer. The result is that the English child of God is privileged to see much that God has set forth, and he praises God for the same overruling of translations as experienced in his own personal life. But the translation is imperfect. Do not think I am wasting time in speaking thus, I know the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, but it is amazing when speaking of the Scripture to find some who are in a state of comparative human sanity make a remark of this nature - "You keep on revising your Bible" as if that were some argument against the Bible. There is nothing strange when an artist keeps on improving his painting. It is worth it, worth this effort from the human standpoint. But the child's undescribable attempt at painting is not worth revising. The translations that we have are useful, and if anyone starts translating again he will use many of the same words. There will always be a measure of revision. We praise God for the translation that we have, but we cannot rest on it, nor can we rest on anything of man or through man. For a like reason we do not assert the inspiration of any manuscript. I mean to say, as soon as men begin to copy, men make mistakes. They fail to copy. Human choice and human carelessness are more assertive than we think. There is no one present who would copy out the whole of the English Bible without a mistake and in the ancient days there were mistakes in all copies. The original alone was perfect. As soon as human element comes in, fallacy comes in. We assert the inspiration of that which was originally given. Further, we do not mean that every word in Scripture is a revelation. It is all inspiration, it is not all revelation. There are certain portions which are definite revelation. I do not mean simply the last book, which is

called a Revelation of Jesus Christ; a comprehensive title, for it does not simply mean that John saw Him in glory, but that He is coming back; - now He is our hidden Lord, but He is soon returning. What I mean is this - We should not know that we were members of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, but for Scripture. This was God's unveiling of the high and heavenly calling - which in its EARTHLY aspect has a measure of veiling, and a measure of holding back, but in its heavenly aspect and its prophetic aspect remains unchanged. But there are certain parts of the book of Proverbs which we should know without revelation. We know, for example, that the ants are small. We are acquainted with the fact that if anyone will not plow by reason of the cold, he will have a loss in harvest. There shall be a result. We know further that a he-goat is comely in going. There is no revelation in these facts, but there is a very precious inspiration which puts them where they are to be found. There is no revelation in some of the historical parts of Scripture, but there is inspiration, for we MIGHT have been told other things, and we might not have been told what is written. What we want is to confess God's wisdom in SELECTION. Some will tell us that certain parts of Scripture were written first elsewhere. We have extracts from the Chronicles of Israel's kingdom; I do not mean "The Book of Chronicles", but the state histories. Ah, someone will say, Were all these chronicles inspired? and if you answer, "Not all; it may be SOME were written by prophets", they will reply, "Then how is your Bible inspired which copies them?" BUT THE SELECTION IS INSPIRED. The CONNECTION in Scripture is inspired, and this we need to realize from the heart. While speaking this, we do well to call to mind that even the words of evil men are found in Scripture, found sometimes as an evidence that God can use a Balaam, or a Caiaphas, and can show what is in the sinful heart of a Pharisee, or whatsoever it may be. The very words of Satan come in Scripture. Those words were not inspired, but the RECORD of them is inspired, and we do well to thank God for every syllable which is put there. When our beloved Lord speaks, the words are twice inspired. In the epistles the words are twice inspired, inspired in what they state, and also inspired in that they are included. I had almost said, "Thrice inspired", but the first thought includes "perfect language". Satan's language is any-

thing but perfect, the language of wicked men is very much the reverse of perfect, but yet it is inspiration that has put everything found in the Scripture FOR US.

Further, by verbal inspiration we do not mean that every word of Scripture APPLIES to God's people in the present time in the same way as every other word. We do not assume that Psalm 150 tells us to praise the Lord in the high sounding cymbals. We do not believe that a two-edged literal sword is in the hand of the saints to execute the judgment written. This belongs to another dispensation. God has made this clear. Inspiration does not mean that every commandment is for us. Again and again I have had a Jew say to me, "You believe the Scriptures?" The answer is, "Yes". "Well", he says, "You read about the sabbath?" "Yes!". "Why don't you keep it? You do not believe the Scriptures". One seeks patiently to show him that the sabbath was given to ISRAEL, a sign between God and Israel, and that even a human master can give different arrangements to different servants at different times. But the lack of logic seems deeply implanted in the ruined mind and the Jew goes away very frequently satisfied that he has won the argument and proved his point. This, in one way, matters very little to us. Our reputation has long been buried; in baptism we confess this, - everything of the flesh, including reputation to which we cling longest, is put aside from the child of God. But it is painful to realize that the Jew goes away with the thought that we are Scripture breakers, because we discern things that differ.

We come next to the consideration of Divine evidences. I have already alluded, in point one, to the claim of inspiration. I know it is a very poor form of human reasoning to say "This man claims to speak the truth, therefore his claim must have some bearing on the evidence to whether it is the truth". But there are certain cases in which a man's claim is deeply important. Let a man come up to me who has a good character, who is a careful observer. Let him make certain statements concerning Australia, or where you will. I do not say, "This must be true because the man claims that he is speaking the truth, but the fact that one who has a good character makes a claim is not a small matter; it is worth consideration. Now in the Bible this ground work is

intensified so marvellously that we cannot equal it or find ought else comparable. Here is a Book with a marvellous character, a good character beyond all good characters, and this Book makes a claim, not once, not twice, but frequently, THAT IT IS FROM GOD. We are therefore drawn either to regard Scripture as what it professes to be, or as a misleading deceit, or as the dream of one who was misled, or a mixture of all these varieties of literature. Now such a dilemma is a very real one. The child of God cannot for one moment think that so marvellous a book is dangerous deceptions. His HEART and mind alike know otherwise; useful 'evidences' may be issued on paper, but evidences are appreciated far more fully when the heart is united. I suggest that to imply a book of such wondrous wisdom is labouring under a delusion, seems an appalling thought to a believer. Therefore he can only draw the inference that when we read "Thus saith the Lord", the Lord DID say thus. "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver purified in a furnace, words of earth, purified seven times. Every word of God is pure. Add not to His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar". Further, there are evidences of verbal inspiration from the nature of the language. Scripture contains many prophecies. Many have already been literally fulfilled. They have been fulfilled in such a way that we must confess their fulfilment is verbal. The prophecies concerning our beloved Lord Jesus were not fulfilled casually, they were not vague prophecies which might be made to mean anything. They were very definite, and they were fulfilled literally. Likewise is it with respect to prophecies regarding certain nations and certain cities. What then is the inference which our hearts must draw? Verbal inspiration is made clear by the way in which Scripture has been verbally fulfilled. Thought-inspiration, if such a thing were possible, would allow of certain variations in the fulfilment, but Scripture sometimes approaches, in a very remarkable way, the edge of a precipice. ONE WORD DIFFERENT and there would be a mistake, that different word never occurs. Here is an evidence of verbal inspiration. Scripture often goes very near the border line, if I might so put it, of being found out to be defective. A book might be written which would not have given you an opportunity to test it, but the history is so worded, and so arranged in Scripture, that when other histories are lost and confused, the critic comes forward and says, "Here is a mistake".

Then some cylinder is discovered and the evidence is reached that the critic's statement was untrue and that the year set forth was evidently nearer than he thought. Then another cylinder completes the evidence, Scripture stands. The mistake is in the man. The words of God approached very near to a mistake but never fell into it. I venture to say, this approaching near and this provision of tests is one of the most interesting illustrations of, and evidences for, verbal inspiration. I have already hinted that a child of God knows in his heart the POWER of the Scriptures, in like manner he knows and feels that there is a verbal inspiration, he knows that words are used of God as words of God distinctly to his soul, and he feels "Ah, I am so glad THAT word is there", and he does not say "Isaiah put it in", or "John thought it out", or "Paul lighted on the right expression", but he rejoices to believe "God the Holy Spirit put it there for me", and when one has an experience of grace, that is a DEEP experience, he can no more doubt verbal inspiration than he can doubt eternal salvation. The more he studies the Scripture the more he is amazed at the DEPTH of the book and the FULNESS of the book, and the ARRANGEMENT of the book, and he feels that to attribute the book to human authorship is about as wise as to attribute the making of a star to a man. The miracles of unbelief would be greater than the miracles of belief, yet the corrupt mind will embrace them and the infidel will eat any foolishness rather than acknowledge what God has revealed.

There are encouraging results from the belief in verbal inspiration. I have already alluded to the confidence a believer has when he handles that which he knows to be the word of the living God to himself. Confidence is delightful and God has not left His dear children as wanderers in a desert. True, earth is a desert, but we have a more sure word of prophecy whereunto we do well to take heed. Not only so, not only have we confidence as to personal faith, but we have ability to set forth the truth to others. How miserable it would be to preach from an uncertain book. We should be compelled to begin all our addresses with "I think". How could we go out in God's Name to perishing souls in danger of judgment and say "I think"? for beloved friends, if we draw the line AFTER verbal inspiration where shall we stop? How do we know that it is true Christ died for us? How do we know that is not a thought wrongly expressed? Where are we

to draw the line? If human wisdom can decide, then we are exalting human wisdom; and let me say in passing that verbal inspiration seems almost to me a belief parallel with the belief of an absolute grace-given salvation. The Jesuits opposed verbal inspiration and opposed God's electing grace, or shall I call it God's sovereign grace, omnipotent grace? A young man in the barracks at Hounslow said to me this afternoon, "What is grace?" I told him it was God's gift to those who deserved the opposite. He said that all received grace in baptism when they were infants, but do not always utilize it, they threw it away. I told him I had another belief as to grace, that it was an omnipotent power, that God's grace was not a mere weak thing, but wondrous and mighty. A few moments afterwards he said, "Do you believe verbal inspiration?" I told him that was our subject tonight, but the one who attacked the sovereignty of grace attacked verbal inspiration, and why is it? Those who attack the sovereignty of grace want to bring in a human makeweight and those who attack verbal inspiration want to bring in a human makeweight. Beloved friends, do we not believe with sorrow in the human minus? Grace is all a plus, and inspiration is all a PLUS. Leave a man to himself, he will never make anything that will weigh one fraction to help God's work. Inspiration was perfect and eternal salvation is perfect, and the words in the last utterance of David apply, for these things are "ordered in all things and sure".

But it is well ^{we} should by grace, calmly consider DIFFICULTIES, and I rejoice that any might be mentioned. I will only say, in passing, first, different readings of different manuscripts are no hindrance. If you bring a book with a misprint, I do not say, Here is a proof that the author put it wrong. It is no proof at all. The printer may have made a mistake. So with respect to inspiration - the copyist has often made a mistake, human powers always damage, but suppose we have many copies, as we have of the Scripture, what then? Will they all make the same mistake? No, so some of us can thank God for the various readings. Suppose we had one manuscript, as men have with respect to some of the classic poets. There would be no checking where the mistake came in. You tell me there are thousands of various readings, and instead of being alarmed I feel inclined to say "Thank God, here is one of the most useful

helps in the study of Scripture". Find all the various readings you can, and then when I look at some of the words and you cannot find various readings for them, or you can only find various readings that are on the surface erroneous, I answer, "There is plainly no doubt about those words". Some people will tell us various readings spoil inspiration. Let us reckon what this really means; as to one word in a hundred (shall we say) we are awhile, a little uncertain, we have a probability in nine cases out of ten even there, but assuming we are uncertain for one word out of a hundred, how much more sure, if possible, are we made for the 99 out of the 100? Does the one uncertainty make the 99 uncertain? Nay, it shows how certain they are. If there were an absolute agreement between manuscripts, what would be the natural inference drawn? Either that those manuscripts are not separate witnesses, and their value is nothing, or that man can copy perfectly. In each case, there would be loss of witness. In the latter case, we should lose the wonderful testimony to the failure of man, I suppose. beloved friends, these manuscript errors remind us of that which has been seen with respect to God's work in nature. God graciously created the heavens and the earth became without form and void, and God put it straight. But even since that putting straight, in six literal days, there have been many difficulties brought about through sin. Yet nature is very beautiful and we can see certain parts, large parts, of nature, in which we can say, Here is God's plan, here is God's arrangement, God's imprint is here. So with the Scriptures. God made perfect, and man has damaged a little, but we can still say, God's work. It was the same with respect to Adam - God made man upright, but he found out many inventions. But I am so thankful that the Scripture was not allowed to fall like man was allowed to fall. The nominal church has fallen like Adam fell, and the woman of Christendom corrupts the fine flour and alters the whole of doctrine, and this will be finished to a terrible climax. There will be an entire fall of doctrine. What a need therefore for a book. A tradition would not suffice. God gave the book that it might be a testimony - the first part of it against the boasting Jewish assembly, and the second part against the boasting Christian "church". The custodians of both parts of Scripture are convicted by the books they have kept, and God has vindicated Himself. Further, some will tell us that the Canaanites were to be exterminated; and ask "Can we attrib-

ute this command to a God of love, and is it in harmony with the later Scriptures?" We reply, Dispensations are different; that we acknowledge God's right to exterminate as He pleases: He can do this without man or through man. While Revelation 20 remains at the end of Scripture, the arguments against the destruction of the Canaanites are utterly out of place. The young man of this afternoon said to me that the Old Testament was largely made up of fables. I told him he was giving the lie to the Lord Jesus Christ Who accepted it. He would not agree to that. But, beloved friends, the two parts of Scripture stand or fall together, in every way. Never can you find sterner words than those uttered by Him, Who spoke so tenderly and gently to His blood-bought people. The different records in the gospels are sometimes urged, but let us remember, addition is not contradiction. One gospel tells more than another. Sometimes, however, two narratives of distinct events are twisted together by human harmonizers, and then someone else says, There is a mistake. There IS. The mistake is the harmonizer's. The narratives are distinct. In one gospel you will find apparently a repetition IN THE SAME GOSPEL; and one is thankful for this, affording a powerful example of the principle now before us.

1 Cor. 7 has been brought forward in which the apostle says, "I think I have the Spirit of God". Such a testimony IN THE CONTEXT emphasizes Divine wisdom. They are distinct views of the work of the Spirit of God. If Paul made it clear that he was telling his thought and not speaking by inspiration, we have a stronger evidence of his honesty, and knowledge of the difference when he gave God's witness. He professed to be speaking by inspiration, else he made it clear. I shall welcome your difficulties afterwards.

Finally, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. Ah, let this be even the characteristic of our conversation at the end of our gathering. Twice over we need to lay a stress on this. Let him speak AS the oracles of God, in language and in matter. Let him speak as the oracles of God in manner. We want more of this spiritual gravity, we want more of this spiritual power, because in harmony with God. I know that in the early church they spoke AS the Spirit gave them

utterance, and we have lost much, yet we have not lost the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Nor have we lost the Scriptures; God is not ruined and His words are ^{not} ruined, and therefore though we cannot give fresh revelations, let us speak AS the oracles of God, If a prophet like Daniel needed to study, much more we need to study, and God will own our use of the very words of Scripture. Let us not be afraid when men are against us, when they glibly remark that we only tell them what is in the book. It is an encouraging TESTIMONY. I hope we shall tell nothing else!

(A question as to human element) ? Answer: God uses different servants, Moses for five or six books, David for other books, in the later Scriptures we have a fisherman - Peter; a scholar - Paul. All these were brought up in different ways. The Holy Spirit inspired certain writers to write in Greek, others to write in Hebrew. These facts show us that inspiration is not bound by circumstances, or mere mechanism. Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they were not hypocrites. John expressed his feelings that he really felt, and Paul expressed his feelings that he really had, though the Holy Spirit guided his feelings and showed him how to express them. The expression "human element" is either to be understood as implying an element of fallen humanity intruding, or merely God's use of that which is of earth. We deny that fallen humanity intruded. God's use of that which is of earth was even marked in the bare fact of employing language at all. "The words of the Lord are pure words as silver purified in a furnace, (WORDS) OF EARTH purified seven times". Consequently, we have the metal and other differences between various children of God employed by God Himself, though the differences are not always so marked as many have thought; or shall I rather put it this way - even the same servants of God write at times in a very different way from what they themselves write at another time. God would thus make clear that He could use human instruments, but God would also make clear that He could use them as He pleased. The human element undoubtedly appears in Scripture even when our beloved Lord became flesh. The human element is marked out that thereby the Lord may cause us to feel that He took men of like passions with ourselves, and thus are we encouraged and helped and cheered on, that God may be glorified.

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