

Dear Friends in Christ,

Last week, we reflected on a God who reveals himself to us in specific ways. This week I want to continue our discussion by looking at a topic closely related to *Revelation*, which is what the Church calls *Inspiration*. The Bible isn't just a book like any other book; it has a spiritual origin. We call it "The Word of God" because it is a story about God that also originates from God.

One of my favorite pastimes in the winter consists of sitting around a campfire with good friends, good beer, and good stories. Inevitably the evening digresses into a retelling of tall tales from the past, jokes we've heard, and arguments over football minutiae: "Do you remember that time back in high school," or "Have you heard that one about how a priest and a rabbi walk into a bar," or "Tim, tell us again about what you think will happen to Alabama and the SEC next year." All of these stories and jokes have one thing in common: they each have a point of origin. Some of the stories we tell we have lived through, some we tell second hand, and most of the jokes we tell are variants of others our grandparents told before but with different characters and places. All good stories start somewhere, and the Bible is no different.

In I Timothy 3:16-17, the Apostle Paul teaches us that "All Scripture is breathed out by God and is 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." This passage teaches us two important truths about God's word. First, Scripture is "breathed out by God" which means it comes specifically from Him. To be fair, *how* it originates from God is mysterious and requires some explaining (we'll get to that in a bit). Secondly, Paul teaches us that God's word accomplishes some pretty awesome stuff. It teaches, corrects, trains us in what is right, and equips us to do good work. God's Word is different from any other word written by men because it does things. I can tell you a good story, but I'm not so good a story teller that my words can do all that Paul claims of the Bible. We know the Bible comes from God because of its power. We see this power shown over time as people of every generation since Adam have responded to God's words.

Talking about *Inspiration* and how it works specifically, however, can be a bit tricky. When people talk about the origins of the Bible they tend to make two kinds of mistakes. On one hand, some interpreters want to say that the Bible is only a human book, written by men who want to tell us about their experiences of God. This position is problematic because if the Bible is only a human book, it would only have the same effect as other human authors. On the other hand, interpreters of Scripture go the opposite direction and want to say that God used humans like we use pens: The pen applies the ink but otherwise doesn't contribute at all to what the author intends. God could certainly convey his word to us in this manner, but the Bible reveals to us a God who works with, through, and alongside his creation. It shouldn't surprise us then, that he has chosen to reveal himself through similar means.

I think that the truth is somewhere in the middle of these two wrong-headed views: God calls and uses people to accomplish his purposes, but he does it in and through their capabilities and personalities. For example, in the Book of Revelation 1:11, an angel tells the Apostle John to "Write what you see." The angel doesn't tell John how to do his job but counts on John as a writer to accurately convey what is important. God inspires John to write what He wants to communicate, but He doesn't erase John's personality, writing style, or thought process. He works through John rather than despite him. And we can trust that John's message is faithful and accurate because we believe that God, in his perfect power gives us His word which can never fail.

I love that God works in and through us rather than despite us. This means that our actions, sacrifices, and work have meaning because the God of the universe has reached into our midst to include us. My prayer for you this week is that the Word of God would accomplish and inspire you towards the good works He has prepared in advance for you to accomplish.

Grace and Peace,
Blaine Davis
Your Seminarian