

God's Word at our Fingertips

'The Bible is the Word of God.' These words so easily roll off of our tongue. But, what does this expression really mean? Volumes have been written over many centuries attempting to explain how Christians should view Scripture based on the claims found within its pages. Practically speaking, however, the central matter is how each believer understands the nature of the biblical record and how this belief should influence his or her everyday life.

Because of this, I would like to take a fresh approach to this subject. Instead of submitting statements I think are true and using quotes from the Bible for support, I will first analyze passages relevant to the topic in order to present their findings. Then, I will offer practical applications suggested by these teachings. In addition, I will focus on significant ramifications connected with Christian conviction and practice. My goal is to stimulate the reader to examine their heart in regard to how each views biblical teaching. It is my hope this evaluation will encourage more study time in His Word so each person can be increasingly directed by the truth he or she individually sees written.

Throughout the years, certain passages have personally challenged me with regard to how I should be impacted by teachings from the Bible. Based on this experience, I have chosen to concentrate on seven contexts from the Letters of Paul and Peter as well as the Book of Hebrews. Though, there are many other passages which could have been considered in relation to this topic. Join me in considering various Scriptures which pertain to the idea we have direct access to God's written will.

Second Timothy 3:16-17

The first passage of consideration is also one of the most quoted. It reads, "Every scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, in order that the man of God might be equipped, having been fully equipped for every good work." Referencing God's revelation, Paul begins by focusing on "every scripture". This phrase is *singular in number* so it emphasizes *every particular Scripture* is "God-breathed".

The word translated "God-breathed" (θεοπνευστος) is an *adjective, which describes the nature* of the Scripture. It is a compound word built from the nouns "θεος", meaning *God*, and "πνευμα", meaning *Spirit*. It is commonly and well translated by the phrase "given by inspiration of God" (KJV). It could also be translated *given by the Spirit of God*. Note, part of the English word 'inspire' is derived from the word "spirit". The Greek word for "Spirit" refers to the *movement of air* such as *breath*.

So the literal meaning of the word 'inspire' is *to breathe in*. What this verse intends to convey is *God breathed His Word into the authors who wrote "every scripture" or men were caused to write "every scripture" as they were prompted by the Spirit of God*. Therefore, each Scripture has its source from God not any man. He simply used men as couriers to write down His will for mankind.

A second *adjective* describing the nature of "every scripture" is the word "profitable" (ωφελιμος) which means it is *beneficial* for numerous applications. The first application for which Scripture benefits believers is the understanding of God's "teaching" (διδασκαλιαν). In His Word, we learn His *instructions* regarding what is true and false; right and wrong. Also, every God-sourced Scripture is profitable for "reproof" (ελεγμαον). At its root, this word means *exposure*. After evil is *exposed* by illumination from Scripture, this wrong can be *reproved* or *rebuked* (Eph. 5:11; 1 Tim. 5:20; Titus 1:13).

Scripture is not only used for pointing out sin, it is also "profitable . . . for correction" (επανορθωσιν). This word is derived from the noun "orthos", meaning *straight*, combined with the prepositions "ανα", indicating *repetition*, and "επι", used to *add emphasis beyond* the basic meaning of the word it is joined to. Just as an orthodontist straightens teeth to correct alignment problems, the Scripture can *fully re-straighten* immoral character in our lives back to the godlike quality of our created state. The last mentioned application of Scripture is "for training in righteousness". The noun translated "training" (παιδειαν) is related to the Greek word for "child" (παις), so it speaks of *discipline associated with raising a child*. We are the children of God, so He wants us to submit ourselves to His will in order to be *reoriented* from our rebellious condition toward *righteous actions* pleasing Him.

When we are initially saved, we find ourselves living entirely in the flesh while practicing sinful thoughts and desires. As we come to gradually know God's will through the "God-breathed" Scriptures, a foundation is laid enabling us to make progress toward spiritual maturity. This involves *coming to know His teaching so our sinful actions can be exposed and changed into conformity with His character while we undergo His spiritual training*. This transformation brings us to a moral plane where the potential to live in alignment with His will exists (Eph. 2:10).

Then, verse 17 expresses *the reason* God gave these applications of Scripture. It was "in order that" (ινα), or *for the purpose that*, "the man of God might be equipped, having been fully equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). The noun "equipped" (αρτιος) means *completed* or *perfected*. The English words "artisan" and "artist" are derived from this Greek root describing individuals who are *equipped to accomplish their craft or artwork*. In the same way, every "man of God" can be "equipped" to perform His will by using the "God-breathed" Scripture

designed to benefit believers for this task. The word translated “man” (ανθρωπος) is a generic term referring to either men or women. And, the *verb of being* translated “might be” (η) is in the *subjunctive mode* indicating every single Christian has *the potential* to be “equipped” if they seek to apply Scripture to their lives. Only obedience will activate the Word’s divine capabilities to transform our character.

In the last phrase of this verse, the participle “fully equipped” (εξηρτισμενος) is found in the *perfect, passive form*. The perfect tense indicates a person *can be equipped* by the Scripture *to attain a morally outfitted status which remains in effect*. The passive voice tells us this equipping *happens to us by an outside agent* – the Holy Spirit. And, this word is translated “fully equipped” because the preposition “εκ”, meaning *out*, prefixed to the verb *adds emphasis* showing we have what it takes to *out-artisan* any force of ethical opposition. Believers obtain this preparation by gaining Spirit-supported understanding while taking God’s Word at face value. Then we need to *implement this same divine power to convert knowledge into action in order to launch us on a course of accomplishing “every good work”* (2 Tim. 3:17).

First Thessalonians 2:13

Speaking to the believers at Thessalonica, Paul said, “And on account of this we also give thanks to God unceasingly, because as those who have received the message of God heard from us, you accepted *it* not as the word of men but according as it is truly the word of God, which also is working in you who believe.” This statement follows a context which records how well the believers in this town received the message proclaimed by Paul, Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess. 1:6-10). Then, a full paragraph follows which details how Paul and his associates effectively conducted their ministry among the Thessalonians. They had success with giving a bold, God-fearing presentation of the gospel because it was accompanied by pure motives, visible sincerity, humility, a demonstration they were not seeking personal gain, and an affectionate treatment of these Christians like family (2:1-12).

The *demonstrative pronoun* translated “this” (τουτο) occurring in the *neuter gender* refers to a *concept* in the former context (1 Thess. 2:13). The concept Paul thanks God for unceasingly is these Christians’ comprehensive reception of the message which was preached to them. Proof of this welcome is illustrated by how the gospel had become incorporated into their entire lifestyle (1:7-10). Then, Paul says they “accepted *it* not as the word of men, but according as it is truly the word of God.” The words translated “of men” and “of God” both occur in the *genitive case*, the case of *association*, indicating these people *associated the message*

they heard as being directly from God. They did not think the gospel shared with them had its origin with these men.

In order for this attitude to materialize, there had to be a divine force working to arouse those who received the gospel. Other Scriptures give evidence this was God moving them by His Spirit (Acts 13:48; 2 Cor. 3:1-3, 6; Titus 3:5). As a result, these believers did not receive this message as some psychological communication or humanly generated wisdom to be equated or compared with other philosophies originating from men. But, it was accepted as absolute truth originating from the Creator of the universe.

As the text continues, it further describes the gospel by saying, “which also is working in you who believe.” The verb translated “is working in” (ενεργειται) literally means just that, and when it is transliterated into English we get the word “energize”. Since this word occurs in the *present tense*, it indicates this message *constantly energizes* in those who believe it, *producing an ongoing spiritual effect* in their lives. This influence is from God’s revelation being uniquely invigorated by the Holy Spirit unlike other spoken or written messages with which they had come into contact. Every Christian can individually attest to the impact this same message has had on them since their initial belief and continuing response is prompted by the Spirit behind the humanly observable scene (1 Thess. 1:4-5).

Second Peter 1:20-21

This passage reads, “Knowing this first that every prophecy of scripture does not come about from its own explanation; for no prophecy was once carried forth by the will of a man, but men spoke from God while being carried along by the Holy Spirit.” As in First Thessalonians 2:13, the *neuter demonstrative pronoun* translated “this” (τουτο) refers to a *concept* found in the above context – how divinely given prophecies became “scripture”. Peter first gives an example of personally hearing the voice of God say, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased”, which is also recorded in three of the Gospel Accounts (2 Pet. 1:17; Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35). Then, he refers to all prophecies including his own record in this Letter when he says, “And we have a more confirmed prophetic word . . .” (1:19).

Peter uses the word “first” (πρωτον) to emphasize what follows is the *fundamental point* which explains how these prophecies originate (v. 20). Then he says, *every single* (singular in number) “prophecy of scripture does not come about from its own explanation”. The word translated “explanation” (επιλυσεως) is rendered “interpretation” in most English Translations. However, it is translated “motion” in both the 1557 *Geneva New Testament* and 1568 *Bishop’s Bible*. In addition, the

most basic meaning attributed to this word by *Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, based on its usage in New Testament times, is *release*. The noun “ἐπιλυσεως” occurs only here in the New Testament. However, the verb form is found in two other passages, which help define its meaning.¹

Before summing up the combined meaning of the words and grammar in verse 20, the contribution of two more words is significant. First, the *verb of being* translated “does . . . come about” (γίνεται) means *to come into existence*. The second key word rendered “from its own” (ιδίας) is a *possessive*. Occurring in the *feminine gender*, it modifies the phrase “every prophecy” indicating no single prophecy came into existence *on its own* or *by itself*. The *genitive case* form of this possessive indicates no prophecy came about *in association with* “its own explanation”. Based on all of these individual elements, an expanded literal translation of this verse is as follows: “*knowing this fundamental point that no single prophesy of scripture comes into existence in association with its own explanation.*”

The translation “private motion” (ιδίας ἐπιλυσεως) found in the above two cited early English Versions support this conclusion. Introducing the idea of *human interpretation* into this verse, which is not supported by the Greek grammar, tends to focus the reader on how men *explain the meaning of these prophecies*. However, a literal rendering focuses on *how “every prophecy” surfaced with no natural “explanation” of how its release came about.*

So how were these prophecies set into motion through the writers of Scripture? The next verse answers this question, “for no prophecy was once carried forth by the will of a man, but men spoke from God while being carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). The conjunction translated “for” (γὰρ) is commonly used to indicate *information is coming to expand upon the thought being discussed*. Then, to specifically amplify the thought in verse 20, the word translated “carried” is used twice in verse 21 to explain how these prophecies came about.

The first occurrence rendered “was . . . carried forth” (ἠνεχθη) is the *aorist passive* form of the verb “φέρω” which means to *bear* or *carry involving the idea of motion*. The thought expressed in the first phrase is “no prophecy was once” *set into motion* “by the will of a man”. In other words, no prophecy originated out of a person’s head, being initiated by his or her “will”. In contrast to this, we are told;

¹ In Mark 4:34, Jesus uses the verb form to *explain* what His parables meant to His disciples. That is, He *released the meaning* when He explained His analogies to them. Then, in Acts 19:39, the same verb is used in reference to *determining a settlement* in a “lawful assembly”. This passage refers to some kind of court hearing in which a verdict would be rendered based on the evidence. That is, they would *release a decision* which would be a legal *explanation* based on the testimony.

“but men spoke from God while being carried along by the Holy Spirit” (v. 21). The participle translated “being carried along” (φερομενοι) has the word “men” as its subject. But, since this word is in the *passive voice* it indicates these men were *being set in motion by a force outside of themselves* to deliver these prophecies. This initiating power is stated as “the Holy Spirit”. Because this word also occurs in *present tense form*, it specifies the Holy Spirit is the *consistent* force directing them during the reception of each prophecy “from God”.

When believers acknowledge biblical content is the accurate will of God, only then can it be trusted as a superior standard designed to guide our lives. If we allow thoughts initiated by the mind of men, including our own, to approach equal authority with His Word, we begin descending on the slippery slope of relying on humanly devised ideas to form our concepts of reality. Needless to say, this enters us into the realm of relativism – a place where absolute standards do not exist. In this philosophical position, spiritual confidence is not possible. This arena promotes the concept that one opinion or idea is just as valid as the next. Sadly, this kind of secular rational creates ‘the truths’ most people depend on to conduct their lives, including far too many Christians. From the biblical standpoint, thought arising from any human source cannot produce spiritual enlightenment, but merely endorses false teaching which is not “according to Christ” and is nurtured by the Devil’s deception (Eph. 4:14; Col. 2:8).

Hebrews 4:12

This Scripture follows a context discussing how people can enter into God’s rest because of their association with salvation through Jesus Christ. It reads, “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than every two edged sword and piercing until the division of soul and spirit, and of both joints and marrow; and able to judge the emotions and thoughts of the heart.”

Three things in this verse personify “the word of God”. The participle translated “living” (ζων) is in the *present tense* indicating the Word *constantly flourishes*. The noun rendered “active” (ενεργης) is built on the same root word appearing in First Thessalonians 2:13, which means it *is energetic* or *works in* us. Also, the Word is described as being “sharper than every two edged sword”. These three designations together affirm the Holy Spirit is working in the background to make the Word of God *alive within us* so it can *actively perform its metaphorical carving ability* which consistently enables us to interpret our character and actions.

With its sharp spiritual capacity, “the word of God” can pierce “until the division of soul and spirit”. Soul and spirit are two of three entities which make up the essence of who we are as human beings. The other part is our “body” (1 Thess.

5:23). Our “soul” is the part of us which encompasses *the totality of physical life*. Animals also are said to possess this “life” when God made them on the fifth day of creation (Gen. 1:20-21). The “soul” includes our thoughts, expressions, emotions, and conscience, which are active only when our body is alive.

The “spirit” is what sets men apart from animal life. It is the foundation of our human element which was distinctly created in the “image” of God (Gen. 1:26-27). This dimension makes up man’s *moral consciousness* and enables us to have a *relationship with God*. Character, motives and attitudes, shaped by moral choice, are central to this portion of our being. Since the corrupting consequences of Adam’s sin, mankind has been alienated from the Creator while occupying a spiritually dead state because of transgressions and sin (Rom. 5:12-14; Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 1:21). However, when a person is made alive in Christ, his or her spirit once again becomes responsive to the moral directives of the Father (Rom. 8:15; Eph. 2:5; 4:23).

After becoming a Christian, how can a person tell whether they are being controlled by the “soul”, our “natural man” which “does not receive the things of the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:14), or by the “spirit”, which enables us to recognize God as our Father and to be renewed toward conformity with His character? This verse teaches us it is “the word of God” which pierces deep enough so we can perceive the *divisions* between these two parts of our being. The only way we can assess whether or not our thoughts arise from the spiritual realm is to examine them by biblical truth defining how we can walk in a manner pleasing to Him. If we do not use this barometer of His righteousness, we will naturally gravitate toward our current sinful state. We will walk in our “old man”, producing the “works of the flesh” from the soul (Gal. 5:16-19; Eph. 4:22).

The last phrase in Hebrews 4:12, says the “word . . . is able to judge the emotions and thoughts of the heart”. The adjective “able to judge” (κριτικός) transliterates into English as the word “critical”. It describes the *evaluating ability* the Word of God possesses. The word translated “emotions” (ενθυμησεων) literally means *inner deep feelings*. It refers to *intentions* originating from the feelings of our natural man, as indicated by its other three uses in the New Testament (Matt. 9:4; 12:25; Acts 17:29). The word translated “thoughts” (εννοιων) is built from the preposition “εν”, meaning *in*, and the noun “νους”, meaning *the mind*. These are *thoughts developed in our mind* which can be aligned with God’s will if they are guided by a Spirit-led approach to His Word. Peter uses this word when he tells believers to “implement the same *mindset*” as Christ did in order to stop sinning (1 Pet. 4:1).

Finally, the meaning of the word “heart” (καρδιας) is significant in order to grasp what this verse communicates. The heart is the *center of being from which we*

express ourselves. It is no accident the common sayings ‘*Heart of our being*’ or ‘*From the heart*’ are used to define the place from which we act. We were given “the word of God” so that we can have the ability to judge what is coming out of our heart. Are the ideas controlling our heart “emotions” or “thoughts” surfacing from our sin-controlled flesh? Or, are they expressions reinforced by the revealed truth given by God? Because we still live in bodies deeply affected by sin, the only way we can be sure our “thoughts” or “emotions” are properly oriented with God’s ideals is to *evaluate them by the divine critique found in His Word.*

Because our sinful nature is so strong, it takes a great deal of effort to effectively apply the Word in order to “judge” our own actions. However, God has provided power through the Spirit to make this possible (1 Cor. 2:6-16; Eph. 5:17-18). With the Spirit’s help we can allow God’s thoughts to direct our mind in order to forge a humble confidence within us and to aid us in progressing toward the purpose for which we were created – conformity with His image (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

Applying the truth in this verse to its immediate context helps us understand part of the foundational process needed to *enter into a position of “rest”* in regard to our salvation and to *grow in this newly acquired spiritual state* (Heb. 4:1-11; 5:11-14). In Conclusion, this passage teaches *God gives us the ability through His divinely energized Word to assess whether our thoughts or actions are moral in His presence.*

Second Peter 1:3

The opening lines of this Book which follow the salutation are, “As all the things toward life and godliness *are present* for us in association with His divine power which has been given through the full knowledge of the one who called us to His own glory and virtue.” This verse answers the question: What do we need in order to live the Christian life? The solution is *we have “all the things” at our disposal which pertain to living the Christian “life” and doing it in a godly manner.*

This potential exists “for us in association with His divine power”. The word translated “power” (δυνάμεως) is commonly used regarding the power of God available to us through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13; Eph. 3:16; Col. 1:9-11; 2 Tim. 1:7). The *adjective* “divine” (θεϊας – related to the Greek word for God “θεος”) confirms this as the correct thought here. Most English Translations make “His divine power” the subject of this sentence. However, this phrase is not in the nominative case (the indicator of a subject), but in the *genitive case*, the case of *association*. The thought is “all the things” (the subject ²) we have which can help us live a godly life *are associated with* this “divine power which has been given” to

us. The Holy Spirit is the one who enables us to understand and enact godly principles in our life.

Now, this “divine power” is not given to be used in an abstract way, but “through the full knowledge of the one who called us”. The word translated “full knowledge” (ἐπιγνωσεως) is repeatedly used in the Epistles regarding truth God has revealed to be directly applied by the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:13; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9-10; 2:2; Titus 1:1). So, the people God “called” to salvation have access to this “full knowledge” by taking advantage of the Spirit-driven “power” within them. Using this spiritual muscle, Christians can implement the guiding principles discovered from God’s Word in their Christian “life”. When practiced, these truths produce “godliness”. We not only possess this potential by having access to His revealed Word and Spirit, but when these resources are employed they propel us toward the destination for which He “called us” – to participate in “His own glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3).

The Greek word for “virtue” (αρετη) means *goodness* or *excellence*. As this concept is related to God, it speaks of *His excellent moral character*. God’s “virtue” is expressed by His eternal sinless state, righteousness, holiness and benevolence. In the future, when we are glorified together with the Lord, Jesus Christ, we will be conformed to this splendid condition characterizing our Father (Rom. 8:29-30; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:3-4; Titus 2:11-13). Before we experience this future hope, the passage at hand serves as just one of many which clarify how we can begin to realize this glorious alteration now. We accomplish this by putting off our old sinful nature and putting on the personality of God. And, it is possible because we are assisted by the Spirit to integrate God’s will into our lives (Eph. 4:22-24; 5:18).

After a relationship with God is begun by trusting in Christ’s death on the cross, transformation of character into His divine image is what Christianity is all about. God’s revelation does not focus on what job we will have, what house we will buy or live in, what person we should marry, what car we drive or what career we should pursue. On the contrary, it wholly involves *how we should live our lives* during every activity we decide to partake in and at whatever location we choose to reside.

Unfortunately, some believers discredit the transforming power of biblical truth while expressing ideas like the Bible is ‘Old Fashioned’ or ‘Not Applicable to our Circumstances’. Although technologies change, human knowledge increases and

² This sentence occurs without a verb which is common in the Greek language. In instances such as these, the *verb of being* is understood and can be inserted for translation purposes. I have used the words “are present” to express this idea. Another good translation would be: “all the things . . . exist for us . . .”

societies evolve in many ways, the nature of God remains constant. It is wise to remember the world is not advancing in sophistication or righteousness when compared with God's standards. Humanity is in moral decline because of a progressive emphasis on sin-based philosophies and pursuits. Christianity transcends these things. It actually encompasses the ability to change sinners from our inherited corrupt condition into a people who represent the virtues of our Creator (Phil. 3:20-21; Titus 2:11-14). Therefore, stand strong and proud in favor of God's philosophy found in His Word which was intended to enable us *to acquire His "divine nature"* (2 Pet.1:4).

Romans 12:1-2

The lifestyle portion of this Book begins with Paul writing, "Therefore I encourage you, brethren, through the mercies of God to present your bodies a living, holy, acceptable sacrifice to God *which is your reasonable service.*" Because of all the wonderful things He has done for us, beginning with making us righteous in Jesus Christ, Christians are now exhorted concerning God's desire for us to serve Him by *presenting our "bodies" as a figurative "living . . . sacrifice"*.

How are we to accomplish this? Verse 2 tells us, "And do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of the mind, resulting in the outcome for you to assess what the good and acceptable and perfect will of God is." The phrase "do not be conformed" includes a verb in the *imperative mode* meaning this is a *command*. It also occurs in the *middle voice* which signifies these Roman believers are to *personally act upon themselves* to "not be conformed to this age". "This age" involves the sin-tarnished atmosphere of this world by which we are continually tested (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2).

Now, what kind of effort would cause Christians to be conformed to this age? This can happen either by inaction or failing to implement God's prescribed solution. For, after we are saved, unless we take steps to recognize our condition controlled by sin and progressively seek to change it, our worldly lifestyle will continue. It is natural for us to live by the degenerate state into which we were born that, apart from outside intervention, automatically orders every facet of our lives (Rom. 5:12-14; Eph. 2:1-3).

However, believers do not need to be stuck in this Devil-encouraged lifestyle, for the verse continues saying, "but be transformed by the renewal of the mind". The verb translated "be transformed" (μεταμορφουσθε) is also a *middle voice imperative* indicating we can get out of our sinful ways if we *exercise responsibility to obey this command*. The English word "metamorphosis" is derived from this Greek root. Just as a caterpillar is morphed into the form of a butterfly, our philosophical

outlook and resultant lifestyle has the ability to be morally changed “by the renewal of the mind”.

The term “renewal” is made up of the preposition “ἀνα”, carrying the idea of *repetition*, and “καινός”, a noun meaning *new*. The word translated “mind” (νοός) speaks of our *mental faculty, the center of our reasoning*. The idea being expressed is our “mind” needs to *constantly* (present tense) *be changed* so we can be transformed from our sinful way of thinking toward a righteous mindset by which we will be able to control our bodies as spiritual sacrifices to serve the Lord (Rom. 6:12-23; Eph. 4:22-24). The word “mind” occurs in the *genitive case* meaning this “renewal” happens *in association with* “the mind”. Following the same vein of thinking we have seen in the analysis of other verses, Paul alludes to the Holy Spirit as the source enabling this renewal to take place (the Spirit’s work has been extensively detailed in this Book – Rom. 7:6; 8:1-39).

When believers take responsibility to study the Word of God, their mind can be supernaturally opened “resulting in the outcome for you to assess what the good and acceptable and perfect will of God is.” The word “will” (θελημα), as it is used in association with “God”, means His *desire* for members of the Church (Eph. 1:9-11; Col. 1:25-27). As Christians prayerfully consider the “will of God” while being “filled (controlled) by the Spirit” to receive understanding, each one is able to attain “the outcome . . . to assess (indicated by the *infinitive* “δοκιμαζειν”) the good and acceptable and perfect” nature of this revelation (Eph. 5:17-18; Col. 1:9).

Furthermore, the *present tense form* of both action words “be transformed” and “to assess” indicates we are to *constantly* utilize His Spirit to *progressively* enable our minds to assess *His will which provides a foundation for this transformation to take place*. The basic meaning of the word “assess” more fully explains what Paul is trying to convey. Used in relation to “the mind” it signifies *making a decision after testing something out* (Eph. 5:10; Phil. 1:10 – note the surrounding contexts). Therefore, it could also be translated with the words *approve* or *determine as authentic*. This passage and verses cited in these last few paragraphs graphically teach *the way to understand the “will of God” today is through renewal of our God-given minds by determining what His revealed Word means with the help of His provided Spirit*.

Many Christians today have abandoned this process of Bible study while thinking the will of God can be understood by human thought or emotion, apart from His Word. These methods do not work. Also, some think they can mystically understand God’s will by His Spirit outside of the framework of studying His Word or being taught by others. This misconception is based on some passages which explain how the Holy Spirit will work in conjunction with Israel in the future

Kingdom program (John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 2:4). But, this is not how the Spirit works today.

Another widely accepted philosophy is the concept that human beings naturally have an ability to make choices from *Common Sense*. However, when Christians grasp the foundational teaching about our sinful depravity found in the Scriptures, and then view ourselves in this manner, we should abandon our own thoughts in favor of depending on the revealed “will of God”. While taking this approach, we have the possibility of undergoing “renewal” of our already deceived minds by the Spirit’s power. Over time we will become more *sensible* as our brains are being directed by His thoughts (Rom. 12:3; 2 Tim. 1:7; Titus 2:1-6).

First Peter 1:10-12

This passage offers a glimpse of how God expects us to take His prophecies literally. Peter says, “Concerning which salvation the prophets diligently sought and searched while prophesying about the grace *given* to you; searching for what or what sort of time the Spirit of Christ was making evident among them while testifying beforehand about the sufferings in reference to Christ and the glories after these things” (1 Pet. 1:10-11).

The prophets in the Old Testament who received revelations about the coming of Christ and the Kingdom glory which would follow were “searching for what or what sort of time” these things would take place. It is plain they were searching their own written prophecies while trying to figure out the timeframe and nature of these occurrences. To achieve this, they were painstakingly combing over God’s revealed instructions. Ezra and the other priests took this same approach toward studying the Scriptures when they sought to re-establish an understanding of God’s teachings in the Law after they returned to the Promised Land following their captivity in Babylonian (Ezra 7:10; Neh. 8:1 – 9:3). Also, note it says they were searching what “the Spirit of Christ was making evident among them” (1 Pet. 1:11). They fully believed the words they were recording stemmed from the Holy Spirit guiding their hands.

Peter proceeds to say, “To whom it was revealed that they were not ministering these things in relation to themselves but for you, which things now were announced to you through those having proclaimed the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit having been sent from heaven, into which things angels earnestly desire to look” (1 Pet. 1:12). This verse contains two pertinent truths. First, *prophecies written centuries ago were intended to be taken literally by both those who wrote them and the ones who read them*. Second, Peter states “*those having proclaimed the gospel*” were delivering these prophetic teachings “*by the Holy Spirit having*

been sent from heaven". Summarizing, we are able to search the Scripture to learn about divine truth which is applicable during the historical framework of time.

Conclusion

I hope these verses and commentary have been thought provoking. The same Spirit who energizes Scripture resides in all believers giving the potential to transition from our natural agnostic condition – a state in which we do not know what is true – toward an understanding of the Creator's will for our lives.

We live in a world without divine absolutes. The philosophies we encounter are a mixture of relativistic ideas none of which come close to providing a basis for men to know the true God or understand His righteous standards. Satan is clearly the "god of this age", and he is "walking around seeking someone to devour" (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Pet. 5:8). The only way to avoid being deceived by his crafty ways is to take refuge in God's truth and power available through the Scriptures (Eph. 2:2; 4:13-15; 6:10-20). For, we are in an unmistakable spiritual battle. If we want to finish up victorious we need to first believe God's Word. Then, we need to utilize His Spirit for the power to come out on top in the midst of this earthly conflict (Rom. 8:9-39; Gal. 5:16-26; 1 John 4:4). Those who do not use these provisions will be caught in the same philosophical dilemma which Pontius Pilate found himself. For, in reaction to Jesus' reference to "truth" in their discussion, he asked, "What is truth?" (John 18:38).

Philosophically speaking, if the Bible were simply words from men, it could carry no greater weight than other human writings. We would be left without a standard to follow. Furthermore, if the Scriptures are not taken literally they will be interpreted according to each person's whim, which again voids the possibility of having a firm foundation for one's faith. Regardless of the reason, those who do not accept the Word as a record authored by God are left without divine direction. This course does not provide a basis to succeed on the path God has intended for believers. Inevitably, this viewpoint promotes spiritual blindness, discouragement and failure.

Biblically speaking, Christians possess "the mind of Christ" and "the commandment of the Lord" in His revealed Word (1 Cor. 2:16; 14:37). We are able to "know the things having been freely given to us by God" while utilizing the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:12). We can read and understand the Scriptures (Eph. 3:4). And, we are capable of searching them in order to evaluate what we hear others teach (Acts 17:11). If we take advantage of the things our God has so graciously provided, we do not need to flounder in relativistic ideas but we can truly get excited about being successful in making progress on the eternal journey we have begun.

As Christians follow God's path, we should not be threatened by the prevailing philosophies held by unbelievers. For, the Bible tells us those who do not know the Lord think our biblically based beliefs are "strange", they look at us with *pity* for believing in Christ's resurrection, and they view the message of the cross as "foolishness". They will not understand why believers consider their lifestyle as that which "corrupts good morals", and they may even consider us "mad" just like Festus labeled Paul when he heard what the gospel represents (Acts 26:24-25; 1 Cor. 1:18-25; 15:19, 32-34; 1 Pet. 4:4, 12).

It is important to remember the reason we are able to recognize God as our Father and receive His Word as truth is because we have the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9). Those who do not possess the Spirit will not accept God as He is defined in the Bible nor want to "be subject to the law of God" (Rom. 8:6-8). In light of this reality, let us employ this spiritual difference to help thrust us forward toward our goal while being directed by absolute truth and not hindered by exposure to the wisdom of this world. Let us place our entire trust in the Spirit-published Word of God. Only then we will realize the truth God so desperately wants us to grasp regarding Christian practice – when it comes to accomplishing His will, Scripture has an app for that.

Finally, it is essential Christians recognize that teachings and writings produced by members of the Body of Christ should never be viewed on an equal plane with Scripture. What men teach can only benefit believers when it stimulates knowledge of the biblical text and encourages proper application of its instruction. With this in mind, we should promote all gifted members God has provided the Church who are positively seeking to encourage "the preparation of the saints for the work of ministry resulting in the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:7-12).

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Written 2013, revised 2014

Old Testament quotes are from the KJV.

New Testament quotes are original translations by the author from the Greek text.

Published in Journal of Grace Theology 1.2 (2014) pages 77-91