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Editor's Introduction

Welcome to Young Precious Seed (YPS). If this is the first time that you have come across YPS I hope that you find it worthwhile reading. Our aim is twofold – to encourage younger writers to write so that they can develop their gift and to present the truth of God in a way that is understandable to a younger generation of Christians. So, you might be freshly saved or you might be a young person, either way our prayer is that reading YPS will strengthen your faith and stimulate your interest in the word of God.

Paul gives some advice in 1 Timothy chapter 6 about living in a godless world. In verse 11 he reflects on some of the dangers we face and he states 'flee these things'. However, leaving the mind-set of the world behind is only part of the answer; so, in the same verse, he describes godly qualities that we should 'follow after'. He concludes the little triplet by saying that we should also 'fight the good fight of faith'. I hope that you will find this advice helpful, as I am sure the original readers did.

Stephen Baker

HOW WE GOT OUR BIBLE:

The Inspiration of Scripture

BY **TM SE ASIA**

1) THE BREATH OF GOD - 2 Tim. 3. 16

'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness', 2 Tim. 3. 16

What do we mean when we say that the Bible is the word of God?
God has revealed Himself to people in different ways at different times. He has revealed something about Himself in creation, Rom.

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.

1. 20; Ps. 19. 1. We can look at the spectacular stars and know that God is powerful. We can look at a beautiful flower and understand that God is wonderful. Sometimes God revealed Himself by speaking from heaven, 1 Sam. 3. 10; Matt. 3. 17, sometimes by appearing in angelic form, Gen. 18. 2; Judg. 13. 3, sometimes through dreams and visions, Gen. 28. 13; Matt. 2. 13, and sometimes through the mouths of prophets, Jer. 1. 9; Acts 11. 28. God's greatest self-revelation is in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, Heb. 1. 2; Col. 1. 15. Indeed, one of Jesus' titles is 'the Word of God', John 1. 1; Rev. 19. 13.

But, in the Bible, God has revealed Himself in a very special way. He has communicated to us in the form of a book. The Bible is the complete, written revelation of God to us.

Paul says that the Bible is inspired by God, 2 Tim. 3. 16. 'Inspired' literally means 'God-breathed'.

How do we know that the Bible is the word of God?

In many places, the Bible itself claims to be God's word. The prophets often begin their speeches by announcing, 'Thus says the Lord . . .', Obad. 1. 1 NKJV. The Bible speaks with authority about things we could not know without divine revelation, whether things in the distant past, Gen. 1. 1, or the far future, Rev. 22. 1, in heaven, Job 1. 6-7, or in hell, Rev. 20. 10. It contains scientific information which has only recently been rediscovered, Isa. 40. 22, and even tells us what people were thinking in their own private thoughts, Esther 6. 6.

Because the Bible is God's word it has absolute authority. The Lord Jesus affirmed the authority of the Old Testament by quoting from it to answer the devil, Luke 4. 4. The Gospel writers affirmed its authority using phrases like, 'that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet . . .', Matt. 1. 22. Peter says that the Holy Spirit was 'in' the Old Testament prophets when they wrote. In the New Testament, Paul describes his own words as 'the commandments of the Lord', 1 Cor. 14. 37, and Peter ranks Paul's letters alongside 'the rest of the Scriptures', 2 Pet. 3. 16 NKJV. John affirms that he wrote at the Lord's command,

Rev. 1. 19, and the Lord strictly warns us not to add to or subtract from His words, Rev. 22. 18-19.

If the Bible is the word of God what does this mean for us?

Because God Himself is the author of the Bible, we can trust it completely. Since God is perfect, His word must be without error. The doctrine of inerrancy includes not just the thoughts and ideas of the Bible, but the actual words themselves.

'Every word of God is pure', Prov. 30. 5.

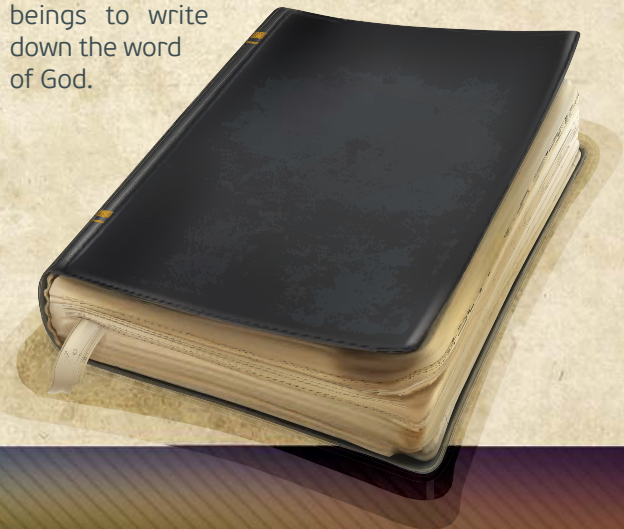
In fact, the Lord Jesus went further when He affirmed that even the dots and crosses on the individual letters were from God.

'Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled', Matt. 5. 18.

Furthermore, we must obey the Bible implicitly. God's word has the right to tell us what to believe and how to live.

We make a big mistake if we arrogantly critique the Bible, choosing which bits we like, and which bits we don't, what we agree with, and what we don't. We must not impose our own ideas upon the Bible or try to make it fit in with our culture. We must humbly allow God's word to judge us, not the other way around.

God is the source of the Bible. But He did not write down the words of scripture Himself. In our next study, we will investigate the second aspect of inspiration and see how the Holy Spirit used human beings to write down the word of God.



Chapter & Verse

BY **TM SE ASIA**

P2. RIGHTLY DIVIDING - 2 Tim. 2. 15

'Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth', 2 Tim. 2. 15.

Have you built your ark yet? It's a direct command of scripture, you know! Genesis chapter 6 verse 14 couldn't be clearer. In case you're not sure how, the subsequent verses give specific boatbuilding instructions. Why delay? Collect your gopher wood right now!

We know instinctively that God does not require us to build an ark. That commandment was for Noah, not for us. It should be obvious that God only requires us to obey the commands He has given to us, not those He has given to others. Yet, strangely, many Christians ignore this basic principle when they read other passages of scripture. As a result, many sincere believers are trying to observe Israel's sabbath laws, they are trying to carry out the disciples' snake handling commission, or are terrified they will lose their salvation if they don't endure to the end.

Paul told Timothy to 'rightly divide' the scriptures. In essence, this means studying a word or verse or chapter or book of the Bible in context and recognizing distinctions, before attempting to apply it. If all Christians rightly divided God's word, we would be far less divided among ourselves.

When we study any section of scripture, before we ask the important question 'WHAT does it mean?', we should first consider five other questions to identify the context.

WHERE is this book/chapter/verse/word located?

Context involves looking at what has been said before, and what will be said after, and comparing scripture with scripture.

If we pluck a verse out of context, we can make it say anything we like. This is where so much misunderstanding springs from, even among believers who truly love God's word.

Note a distinction between Luke and John. John is all about believing, John 20. 31. Peter comes to faith in John chapter 1 verse 42. Luke deals with discipleship, i.e. how a believer should follow, Luke 1. 3. Having already believed, Peter follows in Luke chapter 5 verse 11. Problems arise if we apply Luke's discipleship verses to salvation, e.g. Luke 14. 26-33. Works should follow from salvation but are not a condition for salvation.

HOW was this passage written?

This is a question of genre. Is it prose? Is it poetry? Parable? Prophecy? Letter? Law?

Different kinds of literature convey different ideas. There are commands to obey, examples to follow, and meditations to inspire us.

Compare how Peter uses 'kiss' in 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 14 with how Solomon uses it in Song of Solomon chapter 1 verse 2. One is instruction for wholesome church relationships; the other is romantic poetry. With a word like 'kiss', don't confuse your genres!

WHO is the author & WHO is the audience?

Perhaps the biggest doctrinal errors stem from failing to differentiate between what God says to Israel and what He says to the church.

God made earthly promises to Israel, including financial prosperity in reward for obedience, Deut. 28. 1-14. By contrast, if we live godly lives, we should expect persecution, 2 Tim. 3. 12.

WHEN was it written & WHEN does it apply?

God spoke in different ways and at different times.

We should note what is relevant today, against what is applicable only in the past or in the future. Anachronistic application results in unnecessary confusion.

Especial care should be taken when interpreting prophecy. In the Old Testament, prophets often described the first and second comings of Christ together, unaware of the time gap between them. In the New Testament, we may need to distinguish between Christ returning for His own, and Christ appearing in judgement.

WHY did the author express himself in a particular way?

What is his main point? Sometimes we get sidetracked because we focus on the wrong thing. Other times, we ignore an important point because we haven't understood the reason for it.

Why did Paul give commands about head coverings in 1 Corinthians chapter 11? Was it because of a local issue? Or does he say it is based on a fundamental principle which God established at creation?

Paul told Timothy to 'be diligent' in his Bible study. It's not always easy. But it is always worth it!

Statements of Faith



BY **ANDREW DUTTON NORWICH**

Today, I am...?

Every day we hear statements that sum up what people are saying, doing or even feeling. A quick look at Facebook reveals so much information about other people, and, if we're honest, most of it is of little value.

But when we listen to some individuals, they can offer information that is of great importance. In the New Testament, Paul provides many of these statements; they are not trivial but vital, not temporary but lasting, not light hearted, but very serious. They are statements of faith.

This is the start of a series of stand-alone articles looking at some of Paul's statements of faith. They all begin with the words 'I am...' They are based on his deep conviction. They provide us with a great example of faith and Christian experience.

A search on your Bible App will help you find over sixty times that Paul uses the words 'I am...' but we

are going to consider the more familiar references, and where better to start than 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ', Rom. 1. 16? Let's look at this important statement along with other times that Paul uses the word 'ashamed'. We will narrow it down to the times Paul uses the same original Greek word in Romans chapter 1 verse 16.

How to look up similar words in the original language:

- Step 1** – take a look at your Bible App and search for the English word 'ashamed'
- Step 2** – identify the different Greek words using 'Strong's numbers'
- Step 3** – Search for the same original word 'ashamed' from Rom. 1. 16, using the reference G1870
- Step 4** – List out the 5 times that Paul uses G1870 (2 in Romans and 3 times in 2 Timothy 1)

We will focus on Romans chapter 1 verse 16 in this article and 2 Timothy chapter 1 in the next article.

Rom. 1. 16 - I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ

The first eight chapters of Romans teach about justification by faith and its consequences; these chapters explain the gospel. As Paul introduces the epistle, he makes three statements about his personal desire to preach the gospel:

- 'I am a debtor', v. 14. It didn't matter which 'group' of society a person came from, whether Greek or Barbarian, he believed he owed them the gospel. This is a great example for us today; regardless of people's nationality, religion, wealth or even their opposition to God's word, do I believe I owe them this life changing message?
- 'I am ready', v. 15. Every part of his being was ready to preach to them. Nothing held him back from preaching the gospel.
- 'I am not ashamed', v. 16. Perhaps the reason for Paul's readiness to preach was that he was not ashamed of the gospel. Let's unpack this verse.

There are several Greek words that translate into the English word 'ashamed'. This is one of the stronger ones; it includes the idea of feeling shame from something that is done. In this setting, it is a feeling of shame as a result of the preaching of the gospel. But here Paul uses one of his definite statements of faith and declares with certainty that he is 'not ashamed of the gospel'. The 'gospel' is the message of good news of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a message that the world around us treats as foolish, but we don't, 1 Cor. 1. 18.

Why was Paul not ashamed of the gospel?

He states first that it is 'the power of God'. In verse 15, Paul had already stated his readiness to preach at Rome. At the time of writing, Rome represented the power of the world, through its empire, luxury, wealth and strength. Paul states that the gospel is God's power. This should really encourage us; even though the world belittles what we stand for as Christians, the greatest force in the world is nothing in comparison to God's powerful gospel.

Before leaving this word 'power', it is interesting to note that it is like our modern word 'dynamite', but different! Whilst this 'power' carries the idea of great force, it isn't explosive; rather, it is a loving message of mercy and grace, which the Holy Spirit makes work in the heart of a sinner.

Secondly, Paul says that the gospel results in salvation. It enables individuals to be delivered from sin's penalty and the awfulness of hell. It also delivers from sin's power here and now. What a great thing, that saved sinners can live a life that pleases God whom they have offended. They can be saved for eternity through all that the Lord Jesus has done.

Paul's third reason for not being ashamed of the gospel is because it is 'to everyone that believeth'. There is no limit to its power. We should be encouraged that the gospel is able to meet the need of everyone who believes. There is no-one that it cannot save.

Before leaving this verse, consider what makes the gospel the 'power of God'. Verse 17 states that in the gospel 'the righteousness of God is revealed'. This is an amazing truth, that the salvation of individuals reveals God's righteousness.

How encouraging to think that people yet to get saved will add to that revelation of God's righteousness. What a great stimulus to spread the gospel!



ADVENTURES IN ACTS:

Acts 26 - A VIP Encounter

BY JEREMY SINGER BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

Who is the most important person you have ever met? Perhaps it was a famous politician, a television celebrity, or a sports star? At Caesarea, the apostle Paul had an audience with King Agrippa and his princess sister, Bernice. Previously, Paul had encountered a Jewish high priest, and successive regional governors – but at this point he came face-to-face with royalty. Agrippa was a notable historical figure, since he was a descendant of Herod the Great and a friend of the Roman emperor Claudius.

As Paul saw the king, what would he say in those few moments when he commanded the full attention of such an important person? Paul wanted to tell Agrippa about a personal, life-changing experience – the day he met Christ, the King of kings. Agrippa is equally keen to hear from Paul. There is a dual challenge here: if we know the Lord, then our top priority must be to tell others about Him; if we don't yet know the Lord, then our top priority must be to find out about Him.

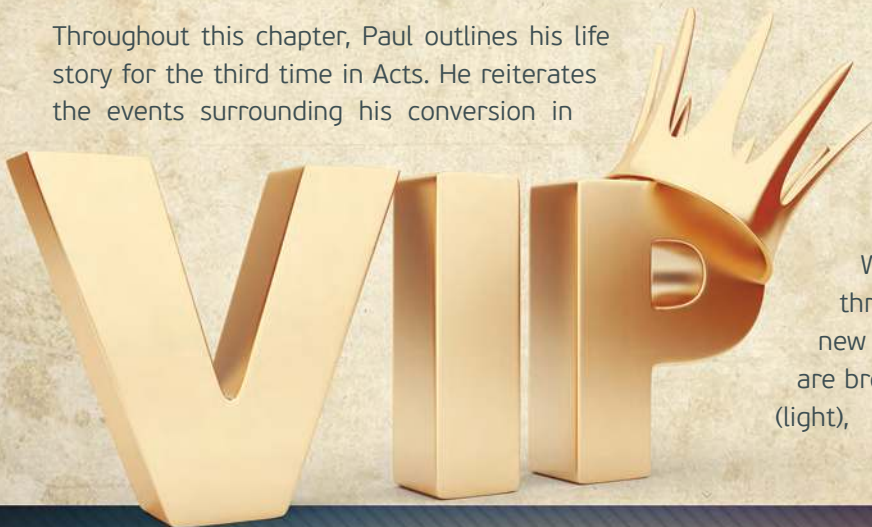
Throughout this chapter, Paul outlines his life story for the third time in Acts. He reiterates the events surrounding his conversion in

several letters, e.g. Gal. 1. 16; Phil. 3. 7. Paul never became tired of telling how Christ saved him. After all, a personal testimony is about the story of God's saving grace – the convert is merely a background character, while Christ is the lead actor. In Paul's life, as in world history, there was a BC (Before Christ) period, 1 Tim. 1. 13; Eph. 2. 3. At that time, Paul was an aggressive persecutor of Christians. C. S. LEWIS¹ characterized people's opinions of Jesus as one of 'mad, bad, or God'. Paul was definitely in the 'bad' camp. He considered Jesus of Nazareth to be an imposter, and he hated all Christ's followers.

Then there came a moment of crisis. As Paul was travelling to Damascus to confront and arrest Christians there, he found himself confronted and arrested by the risen Christ, Phil. 3. 12. That 'heavenly vision', Acts 26. 19, transformed not only Paul's outlook on life, but also the man himself. Natural conversions are remarkable

– think of how stormy days are changed by rainbows, or how caterpillars metamorphose into butterflies. Spiritual conversions are even more amazing – Paul describes the process to Agrippa, v. 18.

When individuals are saved through faith, they receive a new spiritual sense (sight), they are brought into a new environment (light), and they are transferred



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 Gospel Jew Suffering Antioch Temple Faith Servant Joy Pain Bold Missions Spirit
 James Christian Athens Paul Timothy Preaching Peter Miracle CHURCH
 SOVEREIGNTY Jesus Doctrine Martyr Gentile Crete
 Love Apostle Luke Baptism Stephen Philip
 Philippi Ephesus Hope

THE ACTS OF GOD

to a new kingdom (God's). The past is dealt with (forgiveness) and the future is assured (inheritance). Paul never lost the wonder of the transformation that God had accomplished in his life.

As he explained this narrative to Agrippa and his companions, Paul's passion for souls was clear. His enthusiasm was transmitted through his gestures, v. 1, and his animated speech that provoked such agitation from Felix, v. 24. Paul knew Christ's transforming power, and he wanted others to know it too. These were not the ramblings of a crazy religious fraud, but the keen words of a man who cared deeply about his message. It's not only *what* we say that matters, but also the *way* we say it.

How did Agrippa respond? His words are potentially ambiguous, v. 28. The 'almost thou persuadest me' of the KJV implies that Agrippa is convicted about the truth of the message – perhaps he was 'not far from the kingdom', Mark 12. 34. However, other renderings of this verse cause Agrippa to sound more like an indignant scoffer: "At this rate," Agrippa remarked, "it won't be long before you believe you have made a Christian of me!", Acts 26. 28 (Moffatt). In any case, Paul has discharged his duty, Rom. 1. 14, and he leaves the results with God. We must be just as daring in gospel witness, and just as dependent upon God who 'gives the growth', 1 Cor. 3. 7, ESV.

¹C. S. LEWIS, *Mere Christianity*, Macmillan, 1952.



The Holy Spirit, Part 2

BY MALCOLM BEATTIE BELFAST

The Holy Spirit and Christ

In this second study, we will look at the Holy Spirit and Christ, the Son of God.

The Holy Spirit and the birth of Christ

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit foretold the birth of Christ, the Son of God, through Isaiah, when he wrote, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel', Isa. 7. 14. Immanuel means 'God with us'.

The Holy Spirit was also part of the amazing event that took place, when Mary, who was a virgin, was found to be pregnant. In Luke chapter 1 verse 35 we learn that Mary was told this would happen, because 'the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God'. Note that the three members of the Godhead are mentioned here.

The Holy Spirit and the baptism of Christ

When Jesus Christ was about thirty, He was baptized in the River Jordan by John. Matthew chapter 3 verses 16 and 17 record that 'when he was baptized . . . the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. Notice again that the Godhead was involved and that the Holy Spirit and the Father were making it clear that Jesus was the Son of God.

The Holy Spirit and the life of Christ

When Jesus Christ lived here He depended on God for everything. He did many miracles and these were in the power of the Holy Spirit. These miracles demonstrated that Jesus Christ spoke the truth and was the Son of God, Acts 2. 22. That is what 'justified in (by) the Spirit' means in 1st Timothy chapter 3 verse 16.

People were expected to see this evidence, repent, and follow Christ. Many did believe but when He sent evil spirits out of people some said He was doing it in the power of the Devil! This was a very serious thing and the Lord

warned in Mark chapter 3 verses 22-30 that it was unforgivable to say that the work of the Holy Spirit was of the Devil. After all, if people reject what the Holy Spirit is showing or telling them, what hope is there for them!

The Holy Spirit and the death of Christ

In Hebrews chapter 9 verse 14 we read, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?' Here again we see that the three persons of the Godhead were involved in the sacrifice at Calvary. When Christ went to the cross, He offered Himself to God in the power of the Holy Spirit. Just as Christ in His life did everything in fellowship with God and the Holy Spirit, so it was at His death.

The Holy Spirit and the resurrection of Christ

In 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 18 we read that 'Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit'. The word 'quickened' means to 'make alive' and it refers to the fact that Christ arose from the dead in resurrection. The Holy Spirit was the power by which Christ was made alive again. By raising Him from the dead, God was showing that He was satisfied that Christ's suffering at Calvary fully dealt with the problem of our sins. Notice here also that the members of the Godhead are involved.

So, we have seen in this study how the Holy Spirit was closely involved in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ, the Son of God.

