

Fact Sheet for **“Breathed out by God”**
2 Timothy 3:16-17

Pastor Bob Singer
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ESV ¹⁷ **All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

These words are so important that I have chosen to take them by themselves. They should be right at the top of your list of verses to memorize. Take your Bible and hold it in your hands for a minute. You are holding a book that took 1½ millennia to write. And... your Bible is in English. Did you know that great men paid a high cost in order to give you a Bible in your own language?

John Wycliffe (1320's-1384) – He was deemed a heretic, and his writings were banned. After he died his body was exhumed from consecrated ground and burned. His ashes were scattered in a river.

William Tyndale (1494-1536) – He was also deemed a heretic and imprisoned. He was burned at the stake, but was given a consideration. While he was tied to the stake he was first strangled before the fire was lit. *Notice that he was martyred less than a century before the 1611 KJV was published.*

Myles Coverdale (1488-1569) – He was exiled three times.

Now take a close look at this one sentence in two verses.

All Scripture

This includes everything that has the quality of being Scripture. I've often wondered if Paul knew that he was writing Scripture when he wrote this letter to Timothy.

There is a word... “canon.” It refers not to a weapon but to a list of books that are included in the Bible. These books are then described as being canonical. The OT canon was fairly standard by the time of Christ. The NT canon took shape very early and some formal lists began to appear in the A.D. 300's. But the delay in establishing the NT canon wasn't what it seemed on the surface. Here is a quote from F.F. Bruce. “One thing must be emphatically stated. The New Testament books did not become authoritative for the Church because they were formally included in a canonical list; on the contrary, the Church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired”¹ Some individual groups still consider other books (Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books) as inspired, though the majority of Christians do not. For the majority of Christians around the world today the canon of both the OT and the NT is complete in the 66 books of the Bible.

So **“All Scripture”** includes only the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments.

breathed out by God

The KJV reads, All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God.” The NASB and NLT have these words, “All Scripture is inspired by God.” A single word that Paul wrote is translated by our

¹ F. F. Bruce. Chapter 3 in *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (5th edition; Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1959).

English of these versions as “inspiration of God” or “inspired by God.” But a more literal translation is the ESV “breathed out by God.”

This is critical. It was not the human writers of the Bible that were inspired. It is the words of the text itself that is inspired or breathed out by God. And divine inspiration is what gives the words of the biblical text their authority. I learned this definition of inspiration in seminary.

“God so directed the human authors of Scripture that without destroying their individuality, personal interest, or literary style, His complete thought toward man was recorded without error in the words of the original manuscripts.”²

This is what gives the Bible God’s authority! Look at how the Apostle Peter put it (2 Peter 1:20-21).

This is why Joshua could say...

ESV Joshua 6:26 ¶ Joshua laid an oath on them at that time, saying, "Cursed before the LORD be the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho. "At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates."

And in the time of the prophet Elijah some 500 years later it was fulfilled (1 Kings 16:34).

This is why Isaiah could write...

ESV Isaiah 44:28 who (*the Lord*) says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"

And some 300 years later Cyrus made the decree (Ezra 1:2).

Things like this would be impossible apart from divine inspiration! But Scripture isn’t just there to “wow” us. God had a purpose in inspiring its words. These four things are in order.

1. **teaching** – Instructing believers in God’s truths. God gave His standard for what He desires from us.
2. **reproof** – for sin, when we fail to live by that standard.
3. **correction** – God’s word helps us identify what is wrong and how to make the appropriate modifications.
4. **training in righteousness** – How to live God’s way. This word is also used for training a child.

Listen to His word and follow it (Psalm 119:11, 105)! This is God’s goal for us... that we **may be complete, equipped for every good work.**” Then God also adds His blessing when we take what is in these verses to heart. Here are two great passages from the OT (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3).

We hold an inspired book from God Himself.

Value it accordingly. Live by its words. They are the only words of life from God to us on earth.

² W. Robert Cook. Systematic Theology in Outline Form, Volume I, p. 36.