

Introduction:

1. In 2 Timothy 3:16 the Apostle Paul asserted that “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”
  - a. The term “inspiration” is from a compound Greek word, “*theopneustos*.” This word is from “*theos*,” God, and from “*pneuma*,” breath. Scripture is “God-breathed.”
  - b. Numerous passages affirm Scripture comes from God: 2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13.
  - c. Note that New Testament writers refer to the New Testament books themselves as Scripture. Example: In 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul quotes Jesus from the book of Luke and refers to Luke’s writings as Scripture (See Luke 10:7). Peter calls Paul’s writings Scripture in 2 Peter 3:15-16.
  - d. Scripture is a special term that is used more than 50 times in the New Testament. I understand it to be used exclusively of holy writings. There is no question that the New Testament authors believed their writings were from God. The writings were inspired by God.
2. Yet, some of the statements of the New Testament present a potential challenge to that view—and make us dig deeply to get understanding.
  - a. Some suggest that Paul denies inspiration in 1 Corinthians 7. They have Paul claiming inspiration in one place and denying it in another. He does not do that and does not deny inspiration.
  - b. Let us see those statements in chapter seven and see if we can answer the questions raised.

The Lesson:

- I. **“In 1 Corinthians 7:6, didn’t Paul say he was permitted to include some of his own ideas?”**
  - A. Actually, he did not say that.
    1. The context of 1 Corinthians 7:6 addresses sexual abstinence for a married couple. See 1 Corinthians 7:3-6. Husbands and wives are told not to withhold sexual union from one another. Sexual union is a natural and expected part of marriage. Married persons *are allowed* to abstain from sexual union, but only under specific conditions. In Paul’s example the purpose is spiritual (prayer and fasting), done with mutual consent, for a limited period of time, and with an agreement to come together again at the end of this time.
    2. Paul says this is a matter of permission (KJV), or concession (NKJ, NASB). It was not a command of God that couples abstain from sexual union. Rather, God gave them permission, concession (allowance, special consideration) to do this under limited conditions.
    3. When Paul says the nature of this matter is one of permission and not a commandment, he does not deny inspiration. Nor does he deny that what he said was from God. He is simply talking about the nature of the thing under consideration. God does not command abstinence among the married, but allows it. Are we under the illusion that everything in the Bible is a command? Sometimes God tells us what he allows or permits (as in this case). There are numerous things like this in the Bible. Does God allow the eating of meats? He does (1 Timothy 4:3). God permits us to eat meat or even to abstain from eating meat. He does not command us to eat meats.
    4. A command must be followed. A concession is permissible, but not mandatory.
  - B. The point is: Paul did not say he was permitted to include some of his own ideas. He gave teaching about what Christians are permitted to do.
- II. **“In 1 Corinthians 7:10-12, didn’t Paul say some things that were not from the Lord?”**
  - A. Actually, he did not say that.
    1. The implication in verse 10 (it is asserted) is that if Paul says this is from the Lord, then other things he says must not be from the Lord. That contradicts 1 Corinthians 14:37.
      - a. The truth is this: He is saying that the Lord (while on earth) had already given an answer to the kind of question the Corinthians had asked (See 1 Corinthians 7:1a).
      - b. We may deduce from Paul’s answer that they had asked whether or not a married person is obligated to stay with his/her spouse. The Lord’s teaching in Matthew 19:6 already covered that kind of question. Jesus taught that divorce was sinful; that’s why Paul says that neither the husband nor wife is to leave the other.
      - c. Furthermore, in accord with the Lord’s teaching in Matthew 19:9, if a married person disobeyed the Lord’s command, that person must either reconcile or stay unmarried. Otherwise they would compound the sin by unlawfully marrying another.

- d. This is similar to Acts 20:35, in which Paul shows that what he says isn't new revelation from God. Rather, it was something that the Lord Himself taught while on earth.
- e. It is important to note that *Paul did indeed give an apostolic command in verse 10*. It was not only from the apostle, but it was also personally from the Lord while on earth.
- 2. Returning to 1 Corinthians 7:12, the implication (it is asserted) is that Paul did not have the Lord's authority in what he said. He said, "I, not the Lord."
  - a. But this is simply the other side of the coin from verse 10. This is something that the Lord had not specifically addressed in His earthly ministry. It was particularly a question about a believer being married to one who is not a Christian. What are the obligations of the believer in that case? Jesus was not posed with that question.
  - b. Since Jesus did not specifically address that question, the authority of an apostle was necessary to address it. Paul's point was not that he was making up a doctrine on his own, but only that this is something Jesus had not particularly addressed. In the next verses (13-16) Paul spoke of both the benefits and the problems that might come in a marriage to an unbeliever—something Jesus never discussed.
- B. The point is: Paul did not say some things that were not from the Lord. It was all from the Lord. He gave teaching about what Christians are commanded to do.

### III. "In 1 Corinthians 7:25, didn't Paul say he was just giving his personal opinion?"

- A. Actually, he did not say that.
  - 1. Some translations use the word "judgment." Some use the word "opinion," which I find to be an unfortunate translation. I say, unfortunate, because Paul's word does not carry the same connotation that we usually attach to the word "opinion." The word used here carries the idea of "advice" (the same word is so translated that way in 2 Corinthians 8:5).
  - 2. The context is one that has to do with whether or not—in light of the present distress—a person should marry. This was a matter for parents to consider in allowing their daughters to marry (v. 26); it was also a matter for those who were widowed to consider (v. 39-40). We are not told what the present distress was, but to be married under these conditions would bring problems (v. 28).
  - 3. The issue here is much like the point we made on verse six—that God has not given a commandment on the matter; that is, He has not given orders for us to follow on this. God has not commanded virgins (and widows) to marry or not to marry. It would be a matter of judgment whether or not a man would allow his daughter to marry.
  - 4. Though Christ had delivered no universal law about the matter, He now gives direction by an inspired apostle, one who had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. This language is not a disclaimer of inspiration, but is a claim to help from the Lord in the forming of this duly considered advice, which is in no sense a command, but inspired counsel. Paul gave a matter of judgment—advice—that was guided by the Holy Spirit (v. 40).
- B. The point is: Paul did not say he was just giving his personal opinion. It was advice that was guided by the Holy Spirit. He gave teaching about what Christians are advised to do.

#### Conclusion:

- 1. Indeed, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16). Just remember that inspired Scripture sometimes contains things that Christians are permitted to do, things Christians are commanded to do, and things Christians are advised to do.
- 2. The fact that not everything in Scripture is a command of God does not in any way argue that the men who wrote were not guided by the Holy Spirit in their writings. The New Testament writers are no different than those in the Old Testament in that they were "moved (guided, carried along) by the Holy Spirit," 2 Peter 1:21.
- 3. To make 1 Corinthians 7 say that Paul claimed his writings were nothing more than his own ideas does not deal fairly with the context of the chapter. This chapter is consistent with Paul's assertion about his teaching in Galatians 1:11-12. What he taught did not come from man, but he received it through revelation from Jesus—whether a matter of permission, command or advice.