

John Gill:

THE WORDS OF DAVID,  
THE WORDS OF JEHOVAH,

FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT.

2 SAMUEL 23:2, 3.

The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his Word was in my Tongue: the God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me.

Having considered in a former discourse the preceding verse, which contains a line description of David, that tends to recommend to our notice those last words of his recorded in the following verses. I shall now proceed to show how they are further recommended to us, from the author of them: for they are to be considered not so much the words of David himself, as the words of a divine person spoken by him, This we may gather from the text. The Spirit of the Lord spake by me. They were his words, and not merely David's. It was the God of Israel that said, it was the Rock of Israel that spake to him and by him. From which we may notice,

I. The author of these words as represented in these several different expressions, which all tend to recommend them to our most serious consideration. And then,

II. The words themselves, which the divine person or persons spake in, by, and to David.

I. The author or authors of them, for these words do not appear to be David's words, properly, but another's, even the Lord's.

1. It is observed, the Spirit of the Lord spake by him. He did not speak what he did, from his own spirit, nor out of his own heart, according to the dictates of his own mind; but the Spirit of the Lord spake by him. We read of some in the times of Jeremiah, "who ran and were not sent, who prophesied, and the Lord had not spoken unto them (Jer. 23:21). The same sort of persons are described by the prophet Ezekiel, "as speaking out of their own hearts, and following their own spirit" (Ezek. 13:2, 3). They said those things which their own carnal minds suggested unto them, and which they judged would be pleasing to natural and carnal men, whereby they might get introduced among them, and so serve their own purposes, either with respect to applause or worldly wealth. And this being the case, some persons pretending to divine and spiritual things, speaking not by the Spirit of God, but from their own spirit, makes the caution the apostle John gives necessary. Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God, because many false prophets are gone forth into the world (1 John 4:1).

All who pretend to speak by the Spirit of God are not to be believed: they speak only out of their own hearts, and follow their own spirits, therefore are to be tried by the word of God, to see whether what they say is agreeable to that or no. What David said was not from his own spirit, but the Spirit of the Lord spake by him. He, and other holy and good men, spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit of God; for prophecy came not of old time by the will of man. Even those who were the true prophets of the Lord, and by whom the Spirit of the Lord spake: they could not prophesy, they could not deliver out any thing as from God when they pleased. It was not at their option, it was not according to their will; no, but just as they had an impulse upon their spirits by the Spirit of God. Even Balaam, though a false prophet, yet in the hands of God and under his direction at that particular time, of which he was sensible, was obliged to say, he could not go beyond the commandment of the Lord (Num. 24:13), or say more or less than what was suggested to him.—Nay, if Balak would give him his house full of silver and gold, it could not have been otherwise: he could not go beyond the commandment of God, to do either good or bad.

Now if this was the case with Balaam, we may reasonably conclude, that what the prophets of the Lord spake, was not according to their own will; but according to the will of God, and by the Spirit of God. This was so well known, that Zedekiah, King of Israel, puts this question to Jeremiah, who was a true prophet of the Lord, Is there any word, from the Lord? (Jer. 37:17). He knew very well Jeremiah could say nothing to any purpose, that he could depend upon, unless he had a word from the Lord: and that he gives according to his sovereign will and pleasure.

Well, these last words of David were spoken by him, not out of his own heart, not out of his own spirit, not out of his own head, as pleased himself: but by the Spirit of God. And much less were what he said, from an evil spirit: the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, or what is called the spirit of the world, which rules and governs in the world, and in worldly men. We have received, says the apostle, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given us by God (1 Cor. 2:12). Now it was this Spirit of the Lord that spoke by David. Who is of God, comes from God, is of the same nature with the divine Father, and proceeds from him: so our Lord describes the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the Father (John 15:26). What is meant by that proceeding, we know not; we are unable to explain it: we must take it as it is. This we are sure of; that the Holy Spirit is of God, comes from God, and is of the same nature with him,

So also he is from the Son, and therefore is called the Spirit of the Son (Gal.4:6).

A dispute there was in ancient times, and that in the churches—whether the Spirit proceeded from the Son as from the Father? It is most certain he proceeded from the one as from the other: but as to the modus of it, it is not in the power of a finite mind to conceive of. This we know, it is the Spirit which is of God: possessed of the same nature, and of the same divine perfections with God the Father, and with the Son, from whom he proceeds. He is eternal, He is called the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14): so from everlasting to everlasting, God. He is omnipresent: a perfection which only belongs to God. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit or whither shall I flee from thy presence? (Ps. 139:7). There is no such thing. He is every where; and therefore must be God. He is a God omniscient: he searches the deep things of God, and reveals them to his people. He can, and has foretold things to come. He, the Spirit of Christ in the prophets, foretold the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Omnipotence is ascribed to him: miracles such as are above the power of nature, and contrary to the laws of nature, are done by him, in confirmation of the truths of the everlasting gospel. You read of wonders, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, by which the gospel was at first continued. Now these abundantly prove him to be the true God, as he is represented. He is Jehovah, whom the Israelites rebelled against; they are said to vex the Holy Spirit (Isa. 63:10). It was Jehovah who said, in a vision of Isaiah, who will go for us? (Isa. 6:8). In the Acts of the Apostles He is said to be the Lord, the Holy Ghost. He is expressly said to be God: lying against him is said to be lying against God (Acts 5:3, 4). The saints are called the temples of God; and this reason is given for it, because the Spirit dwells in them. He is likewise denominated, the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17): that is, Jehovah the Spirit.

The same works which are said to be done by the Father, may also be ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The work of creation, this may be ascribed to him. He not only moved upon the face of the waters, and brought the indigested chaos into order after its creation; not only did he garnish the heavens; but he it was that made them: for by the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them, by the Breath or Spirit of his mouth (Ps.33:6). He is expressly said to be concerned in making man. Elihu says, The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life (Job 33:4). These are works that prove him to be the true God. Worship is also to be paid unto him. He is not only to be prayed unto as the Father and the Son are (the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ (2 Thess. 3:5); where he is manifestly distinguished from the Father and the Son); but he is prayed unto along with them (2 Cor. 13:14). The ordinance of baptism is directed to be preformed in His name equally as in the name of the other two divine Persons (Matthew 28:19).

Now it was the Spirit of God, or God the Spirit, that spake by David; the Spirit of the Lord spake by me: the same that spake by the rest of the inspired writers. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God: holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:21): and so did David. It is expressly said, in a quotation from a Psalm of his, that the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David (Acts 1:16). The Spirit of the Lord spake by me. It may be properly enough rendered, the Spirit of the Lord spake in me: so respects an internal revelation of the mind and will of God unto him, which he was to declare unto others, which was made by the Spirit of God unto his prophets and inspired writers. He illuminated them, or gave them a clear and distinct view of things internally. So the prophecy of Hosea is said to be the beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea; so it is rendered, though it may as well be rendered, in Hosea. The Apostle Peter does with great emphasis express it of the inspired writers, that the Spirit of Christ which was in them, testified of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow (1 Pet. 1:11).

Now inasmuch as the Spirit of the Lord spake by David, then what he said and delivered under his impulse, influence, and inspiration, must be reckoned the word of God; and should be received, not as the word of man, but as it is, in deed, and in truth, the word of God. So we are to account David's Psalms to be a part of the word of God, (and a most excellent part indeed!) and of Christ who speaks in them. Hence the Apostle says, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly: and what does he mean by the word of Christ? He particularly seems to have regard to the words of David; since it follows, teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs (Col. 3:16). These are the words of Christ, at least a great part of them: the reason is, that the Spirit of the Lord spake in and by David, in penning and delivering these Psalms. Moreover, we should regard what the Lord say by David; because what he delivered was spiritual. That which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit (John 3:6): so, what any man says under the influence of the Spirit is spiritual. What David said by divine inspiration was spiritual; and therefore with propriety are his Psalms, in the passage before referred to, called spiritual songs: not only because the matter in them is spiritual, but because the Author of them was the Spirit of God.

It also follows from hence, that what David spake under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, must be holy, for the Spirit of God is holy: an epithet peculiar to the Third Person, called the Holy Spirit, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (Luke 11:13). All that comes from him must be holy. The Law of God is holy; the Gospel is holy; the Scriptures are holy. They are called the Holy Scriptures: the reason is plain and clear; because they come from the Holy Spirit of God; therefore the whole matter of the Scriptures must be holy. The Law is holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12). The Gospel is so; all the doctrines and truths of it are holy (the doctrine which is according to godliness (1 Tim. 6:3)). They open not a door to

licentiousness, as many who are ignorant of them foolishly object, knowing nothing of the power of them; for the grace of God teaches men, that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Therefore, I say, if David spake what he did by the holy Ghost, then what he said must be holy.

It must be true also; because the Spirit that spake by him is the Spirit of Truth. How often does Christ give him that epithet: Even the Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me (John 15:26): and again, when the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth (John 16:13). Now, inasmuch as what was said by David, and by any other inspired writer, was by the Spirit of God, the Scriptures must be the Scriptures of truth: for no lie is of the Truth (1 John 2:21).

This also being the case, David speaking by the Spirit of God, as well as all other holy and good men, it follows, that the blessed Spirit is the best interpreter of the Scriptures. It is He that can most truly lead into all truth, and make application of it; lead men into the truths contained in the Psalms of David; open their understandings, that they may understand them. It is He also that can best assist us in singing the psalms which he himself is the inditer of: most wisely therefore did the Apostle resolve, in the strength of divine grace, to sing with the Spirit as well as with the understanding (1 Cor. 14:15).

The Spirit of the Lord spake by me. And it is added, His word was in my tongue. His word: the word of the Spirit of God was in my tongue. Not only did he indite the matter, but he gave him the express words wherewith to deliver that matter. Some have been of opinion, that the inspired writers of the word of God had only the matter thereof dictated to them, or their minds furnished within views of things, but that they were left to clothe those ideas with words of their own. If this had been the case, if there had not been infallibility with respect to words as well as to matter, they might have made use of improper ones, which would not have conveyed to our minds the proper ideas of things; so that we should have been at an uncertainty with respect to faith and practice. But this was not the case: words were also suggested unto them, by which they were to express those ideas, those impulses upon their minds. His word was in my tongue. What they said, they said, not in words which man's own wisdom taught, but in words which the Holy Ghost taught (1 Cor. 2:13). The very words they were directed to make use of, as well as the matter. We are said to be nourished up in the words of faith and sound doctrine (1 Tim. 4:6): not with doctrine, but the words of doctrine: not doctrines as to the matter of them—but the very words of those doctrines are laid down in the Scriptures; and therefore we are commanded to hold fast the form of sound words (2 Tim. 1:13)—sound speech that cannot be condemned (Titus 2:8)—which must be that which is under the direction and inspiration of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue—or on my tongue; impressed there; even his very words were so: and thus his tongue became as the pen of a ready writer (Ps. 45:1). Words flowed from him most readily, and he most faithfully delivered and penned them as the Lord says, He that hath my word let him speak my word faithfully (Jer. 23:28). Now this being his word, the word of the Spirit of God, when it comes not in word only but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, it must answer some valuable ends and purposes—for the conviction of sinners, for their conversion, for their illumination and instruction, for the working of faith in them, for the encouragement of hope: it must be effectual to lead them into all truth, effectual for their consolation, and answer all the divine purposes.

2. There is another person that is said to speak by David—The God of Israel. God: He that at the first creation of all things said, and it was done—commanded, and it stood fast (Ps. 33:9). He the great God who said, Let there be light, and there was light: He that said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters: He that said, Let the waters be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear: He that said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit: He that said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven: He that said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life: He that said these things, and they were immediately done (Gen. 1). He spake by David. The God of Israel said. The God of Israel: He that spake to Israel upon Mount Sinai, and said in an audible voice, I am the Lord the God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage (Ex. 20:2). And which was a most wonderful event; for who of any nation (as Moses said to the Israelites) ever heard the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, and lived? Most amazing it was, that God should speak in the manner he did upon Mount Sinai. The same God of Israel said to David what follows.

The God of Israel: that is, the covenant God of Israel. He was so to Israel in a literal sense. He was the covenant; God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. The God of the Hebrews, the God of Israel: so he calls himself. When he sent Moses to demand the free dismissal of the people of Israel out of Egypt, Moses says unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go. Moses also speaks of a very solemn avouchment of this relation between God and Israel. Thou hast (says he) avouched the Lord this day to be thy God—and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people (Deut. 26:17, 18). Now this is to be understood in a national way; but God is the God of his spiritual Israel; the God of all Israel, whether Jews or Gentiles. He is the God of all whom he has chosen for his peculiar people, whom Christ has redeemed by his precious blood, and who are effectually called by divine grace. He is their covenant God in a special sense. This covenant was made with Christ from everlasting. I have made a covenant with David my servant; that is, with the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom that covenant stands for ever. My covenant

will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips (Ps. 89:34).

This is a covenant of grace, we commonly call it so, because it consists of the blessings of grace; and because it is founded on the free sovereign mercy of God. I have said mercy shall be built up for ever, "and therefore I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant" (Ps. 89:2, 3). It is called the covenant of peace which shall never be removed (Isa. 54:10), because the grand article in it is peace and reconciliation by Christ Jesus the Lord: contrived, agreed upon, and settled in that covenant. It is also called the covenant of life, as well as of peace, because the blessings of life spiritual and eternal were secured in it; all those spiritual blessings wherewith the Lord's people are blessed in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3); but the most grand and principal article in this covenant is, the Lord being the God of his people. They shall be my people, and I will be their God (Jer. 24:7). Men may be temporally happy with the things of this world; but happy, beyond all expression happy, is he whose God is the Lord. This is the grand article of the covenant of grace, that God is the covenant God and father of his people in Christ Jesus. "I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:18). This relation always continues: he is their God, and their guide even unto death. Now here we have the God of Israel speaking to David: and what line said, must needs be true, because it is God who said it. He is a God of truth, and cannot lie; and therefore whatever he has delivered out, as his mind and will, must be true: let God be true, but every man a liar (Rom. 3:3, 4). Since it is God that said it, I say it must be true; and as he is the God of Israel, it must be for the good of spiritual Israel. He can say nothing but what is so. All that is contained in the sacred writings, is for the good of spiritual Israel. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16). The whole of the sacred Scriptures as well as the book of Psalms, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4). And he who is the God of Israel that spake by David, could give the best account of the covenant of grace. This is one part of the last words of David "although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant:" and who but Israel's covenant God could give the account he does, of the covenant he has made with them? It is a wonderful instance of his condescending grace, that he should say any thing to the sons of men! Marvelous that he should speak to Israel face to face, as he did; that he should commune with Moses from off the mercy-seat; and that he should speak to his dear children as he does, and disclose the secrets of his heart's love unto them!—The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant (Ps. 25:14).

Now what the God of Israel says, ought most certainly to be attended to. "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him." The Lord God hath spoken, (says Amos) who can but prophesy? (Amos 3:8) and when he speaks in compassion to the sons of men, who can but hearken?

3. The Rock of Israel spake to me. The Rock of Israel: which may be understood of the same person still; hence the word Rock in Scripture is often used as expressive of Deity, as in that passage, Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges (Deut. 32:32): that is, their God is not as our God, as the Psalmist says. Who is a Rock save our God? (Ps. 17:31). Or, it may be understood of Christ, the second person in the glorious Trinity; and it will not be any difficulty, I think, to observe a Trinity of persons in this account.—Here is the Rock of Israel, the second person: and then here is the Spirit of the Lord, that spake by him: all the three divine persons. A glorious testimony of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead.

The Rock of Israel, who appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: who delivered Israel out of the hands of Pharaoh: called by Moses, his God, and his Fathers' God (Ex. 15:2). The Rock of Israel; he that was typified by that Rock Israel drank water out of in the wilderness; of which the Apostle testifies that Rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4); a type of him.—The Rock of Israel, or, he who is the safety and security of Israel; the Rock in whom is everlasting strength; that Rock of Refuge which is for saints to apply to in every trouble: The name of the Lord is a Strong Tower, and thither the righteous run and are safe.—The Rock of Israel; on which the spiritual Israel of God is built; the church of God, against which the gates of hell can never prevail: that one and only foundation laid in Sion: that sure foundation, on which, whosoever builds shall be safe.—that Rock of Israel on which every single believer is built; for he is the foundation of the apostles and prophets. All the saints under the old and new testament dispensation are laid on this foundation. Every wise and good man lays his soul, and the salvation of it, upon this Rock, which will bear it against all storms, and tempests whatsoever. He is the rock, and the foundation of all our faith, hope, spiritual peace, and comfort. The foundation of our faith, the anchor of our hope, and the spring of our peace and comfort. A glorious Rock indeed! If there be any consolation it is in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:1). This is the Rock of Israel, that spake in, by, or concerning David as his type: The Rock of Israel spake by me.

I should now have proceeded to consider what the Spirit of the Lord spake by David; what words were in his tongue; what the God of Israel said, and what the Rock of Israel spake by him: spake by him as the Psalmist of Israel; for the words may be connected with those, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel said.—The Rock of Israel spake by him, directed him what to speak: which serves to prove the divinity of the Book of Psalms; it is a part of the sacred Scriptures given by inspiration of God. It is also a testimony of the truth of that Book, and of what is contained therein: a greater testimony sure we can never have, since all the Three divine persons appear in



it: there is the God of Israel, the Rock of Israel, and the Spirit of God. There are Three that bear testimony; and if we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. The Rock of Israel spake to me, or concerning me: concerning me as a type of Christ. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of the Psalms: they all testify of him, concerning his offices, concerning his grace, concerning the work of salvation and redemption; and particularly concerning what he is in himself, what he endured and suffered for his people, what office he bears, what a low estate he should be brought into, to what glory he should be advanced, and of what use and service he should be to the sons of men.

This also serves to establish the character of David as a prophet, which the Apostle gives him in Acts 2:30, where he quotes some passages of Scripture out of the Psalms, and argues that David, being a prophet, said so and so. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ. He then cites from the 16th Psalm. His soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption. There are other passages in the same Psalm, quoted in this chapter, which speak of David as a prophet. All which prove, that the God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake by him. We may then conclude, that we ought to receive what is delivered there, as the Word of God.

But what these Three divine persons said to David, or spake by him, chiefly respects what follows; as, he that ruleth over men, must be just, ruling in the fear of God: or, that there should be such a Ruler (meaning the Messiah), who should be as the light of the morning, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. But the consideration of these things I must defer to another discourse.

(Editors Note: Roman Numeral II. was not recorded as a part of this sermon or any sermon following in this series.)