

## 2 Peter 1:21 – *pherō* and *menō*

Taken from: **On Writing**, in: God's Word in Culture, by Elena Scott Whiteside, pp. 183-190, *American Christian Press*, 1983.

...I have given much thought in my life to the whole question of "perspiration vs. inspiration" in writing. II Peter 1:21 opened my understanding in this area:

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were moved* by the Holy Ghost.

What a wonderful verse of scripture. When I first read and thought about it, I saw these holy men dramatically "moved". I saw their guts churn within them, saw them sit down with bold gestures and begin to write the Word of God. After all, they were inspired, right? Inspired by God, moved by the holy spirit upon them, right? Ah, to have such inspiration from God; ah, to let God do all the work and just turn my insides, giving me words in neat order, I thought. So, I waited around to be "moved" as my mind had initially pictured the process.

Such was my understanding of this verse. Then one day, with a deadline glaring at me from my calendar, having thrown away another and another and another meaningless false start on an article, my mind pathetically gray and blank, I remembered this verse.

Surely, as a believer with Christ in me, desiring to speak (or write, in this case) for God to God's people, I was like these "holy men who spake." Surely, if God could "move" them in those days, He could "move" me today. Why was nothing happening? Why was my mind dull as a desert? Why was I not inspired? Why did my guts not churn with something other than nervousness? Why was I not running to my desk with dramatic gestures to record words pouring out in ordered fashion through my mind?

As I scowled at these questions, I began to wonder what that word "moved" really meant. The more I thought about it, the more I realized I really had no idea. If I had no idea what it was to be "moved by the holy ghost," how on earth could I then recognize God moving in me?

As if by inspiration, I cast aside pen, paper, article, forgot the blankness of my recalcitrant mind, and ran for my Bullinger's Concordance.

What was it to be "moved by the holy Ghost"? This study so relieved and enlightened me that I desire to share this truth with you here. Yes, we are holy men and women today, filled with holy spirit. Yes, God works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

The word "move" (*pherō*) means to "carry" or "bear." This is the only time it is translated "moved." Most often, it is rendered "bring" (33 times), "bear" (eight times), "bring forth" (five times); twice it is rendered "endure," and it is translated "carry," "lay," "lead," "move," "reach," "reach hither," "uphold" and "go on" one time each. [Note: In Spanish in II Peter 1:21 it is translated "*inspirados*" = "inspired"].

I stared in amazement at this information. Where were my churning insides that I had so vividly pictured? Where were the emphatic gestures? Nowhere in evidence at first glance. What then did *pherō* really mean? I desired to know it accurately.

According to Bullinger, *pherō* is “to bear or carry a load (with the idea of motion;) to bear as fruit, to endure, bear with.” The word was rendered into Latin as *fero, fer* becoming the word for “iron,” the strongest known metal that could carry or bear or endure. The word *fer* comes from Latin into current English usage as anything having to do with *iron* – as in *ferrous* metals, *ferro* electric, *ferro* concrete, *ferro* magnetic and numerous other terms. “*Ferrous*” refers to anything containing *iron*. Such is the development of the word *pherō* in the last two thousand years. But what were the connotations? What is its meaning here in II Peter?

And so, I proceeded to look up every usage of the word – and to write down each verse where it appeared twinkling like a precious gem, beckoning me to plumb the depths of its very meaning.

I shall not render the complete study here. You may do that for yourself if your own curiosity is piqued sufficiently. But to give you some insight, let me share one passage where this word *pherō* glitters in profusion. Jesus Christ is speaking to his disciples (his words are spirit and they are life):

John 15:1-8

Jn 15:1: I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

Jn 15:2: Every branch in me that beareth (*pherō*) not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth (*pherō*) fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring (*pherō*) forth more fruit.

Jn 15:3: Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Jn 15:4: Abide (*menō*) in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear (*pherō*) fruit of itself, except it abide (*menō*) in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide (*menō*) in me.

Jn 15:5: I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth (*menō*) in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth (*pherō*) much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Jn 15:6: If a man abide (*menō*) not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

Jn 15:7: If ye abide (*menō*) in me, and my words abide (*menō*) in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Jn 15:8: Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear (*pherō*) much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

In this passage the context of the word *pherō* is the bearing of fruit. Now, there is a condition to this bearing of fruit, which is the other Greek word so often used in this passage: *menō*, here translated *abide* – meaning to remain, to stay, to rest. This is the one condition of *pherō*, bearing fruit.

In order to *pherō* (bear fruit), we must *menō* (abide, stay, remain on the vine, Jesus Christ). In verse 5: bringeth forth (*pherō*) much fruit.” And in verse 8: “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear (*pherō*) much fruit.”

God wants us to *pherō* – to bear fruit. For when we bear fruit, we glorify Him. The only way we can bear fruit is to abide. This is the condition. Shall we abide in Him, and let His words abide in us? If we abide, remain, stay faithful to His Word, WE CANNOT HELP BUT bear fruit (*pherō*).

How much groaning do you hear from the apple trees outside in early summer? How much travail, how much effort do they show in bringing forth their fruit? Why, none at all. The apple tree bearing apples

just grows. The fruit simply appears in due season. No strain. No sweat. No groaning. If the tree is alive and it happens to be a fruit tree, the fruit simply comes.

Here then is the proper connotation of *pherō*. Yes, holy men of God spake. They spake. They wrote down the Word, as they *were moved (pherō)* by the holy ghost. The Holy Spirit raised them up. God carried them. God bore them up. God held them up. Now, in order for God through His holy spirit to have done that, they must have *abided* in Him, *remained, stayed faithful, rested* in Him. And as they *abided*, He raised them up to the due season, when the fruit was the prophecy, the written prophecy, the Word of God we read today.

How clearly we can see this in the lives of God's men throughout the Word of God. Take Moses, for example. Did not God have His hand upon Moses in Egypt, when as a newborn baby he floated down the Nile in a reed basket, where he was found by Pharaoh's daughter and then raised in Pharaoh's court as a son? Did not God have His hand upon Moses after he had killed an Egyptian and fled into the wilderness, finding his way to the Midianite camp? Did not God then speak to Moses directly, lead him, raise him, carry him, guide him, bear him up through His holy spirit upon him, so he could return to Egypt, confront Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt? Did not God have His hand upon Moses through forty years in the wilderness, through a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, through talking to him face to face and mouth to mouth?

Was not this man born, carried, raised up by the holy spirit to that place where in due season he sat down and wrote the Word of God? And that writing must have come as apples on the tree in midsummer. But all along, throughout his life, he was *moved (pherō)* by holy spirit, and the fruit, the writing, was a "natural" outcome of the holy spirit carrying him, bearing him up.

Because the Word says so in II Peter 1:21, this must be how God worked with all His holy men who spake – wrote the Word – for Him. He brought them up, carried them by His holy spirit, and they *produced* the fruit – writing – in due season. These men must have been *abiding* in Him, must have *stayed* their minds on Him.

And this is our great key also as writers in this administration. Our responsibility is to *abide* in Him and to let His Word *abide* in us – then He shall raise us up also, carry us up to where the writing comes as a natural result of our living and thinking with Him. So let us *abide* in Him, and let Him raise us up.

This word study on that wearisome day enlightened my understanding. I had then to restructure my thoughts to agree with truth. Out went the churning insides, the lightning bolts, the dramatic gestures, for I saw that God did not move in His holy men in that way. And neither would He move in me in that way.

My responsibility was simply to *abide* in God. He had carried me this far, even all those years when I had not known Him. He had put in my heart a desire to write, had opened doors for me to develop through assignments, through publication. And He had carried me to this place also where I had a responsibility and a deadline (which He knew, too) to write an article. Would He desert me here? No. He cannot desert us. He is faithful. And so, the ideas would have to appear, sparkling, dancing like the fruit on heavily laden boughs in the warmth of glowing summer.

And guess what happened? I relaxed. I stopped trying to work my way to glory. I set my priorities straight: I simply *abode* in Him. I began again. An idea appeared in my mind, a simpler way to organize.

And then another, another thought, so obvious I wondered why I had not seen that before. Yes, that was good right there, and the words followed meekly one after another in simple sentences, paragraphs, sections and it was done. I liked it. It was good – simple, straight, edifying.

I have shared this incident and some of my mental struggles because I believe it will help you. Not just the rearranging of priorities, putting God first in everything; but because the most significant exhortation of this incident is our constant, continuous, crying need to go to God's Word to set our thinking straight and to receive our inspiration for doing anything. Our works (writing, the other arts, anything) need to spring directly, naturally, as it were, from our life with God, our fellowship with Him. Let us **abide** (*menō*) in Him and let His words **abide** in us. Then we also shall be **moved** (*pherō*), brought up, carried, borne by Him to **produce** fruit in due season.

Let us now consider more closely the question of why we write. I have already given answers from the Word of God regarding what our writing does for others.

Luke 1:4

That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

Habakkuk 2:2

And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make *it* plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it...