

Truth On Fire

The Pastor's Pen Archives 2012-2013

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Table of Contents

Delusion.....3
Forgiveness in the Current Public Discourse.....5
Help Is On the Way!.....7
Hugo Chavez: A Sober Reminder.....9
Commonality.....10
Controversy!.....12
Dust and Rib.....14
Glideslope.....16
God Is One!.....18
Got Credentials?.....20
The Kerry Gospel.....22
Led By Fools.....24
None Other Name.....26
Small-Mindedness.....28
The Cross.....29
Can Our Salvation Be Undone?.....31
 Justification.....31
 Regeneration.....31
 Redemption.....32
 Conclusion.....33

Delusion

Advances in astronomy over the centuries have enabled sky watchers to identify the planets. The basic technique is taking daily (periodic) pictures of the same portion of the sky and comparing them.

The 'stars' are those heavenly bodies whose positions were 'fixed' and never changed. Objects that appeared to 'wander' (change position) across the sky in relation to stars were called planets. The word 'planet' comes from a root that means 'to wander' (verb) or 'wanderer' (noun).

In the epistle of 2 Thessalonians, Paul described for his readers a unique phenomenon that would occur in the last days. He said: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie" (2:11).

In the context, the phrase "for this cause" refers to humanity rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ and His Gospel. The word "delusion" refers to a wandering of mind and morals in contradistinction to the mind fixated on TRUTH! 'Delusion' and 'planet' share the same root. A rejection of truth (a fixed commodity) makes the embrace of a LIE inevitable!

The "lie" in the context is the claim by "the man of sin" (antichrist) that he IS God. In the last days, a godless humanity will be delusionary by virtue of its rejection of truth.

The Democratic National Convention is a showcase of delusion. The brouhaha that erupted over the platform exclusion-reinsertion of 'God' and 'Jerusalem' is an example. The vote to amend took place at 2 p.m. with most delegates absent. The vote to amend FAILED, but the Moderator deemed it PASSED...clearly to avoid a 'godless' indictment and national embarrassment.

Last night Prevaricator Bill Clinton delivered one Lie and Distortion after another in an effort to commend the Liar-in-Chief for four more years. It was vintage Clinton – the feigning of fervent sincerity and biting the lower lip. The faces in the crowd indicated they were believing his Lies. I have no desire to twist an eschatological text into a political one. I'm simply saying that the delusionary behavior we observe at the DNC is symptomatic of and a precursor to the larger delusion to come. And we know that it extends far beyond the DNC venue to include tens of millions of Obama lovers as well as Marxists, Humanists, et al.

The question NO ONE can answer with certainty is whether this delusion is 'God-sent' or just an expression of minds darkened with bad information. If the latter, perhaps we can change things by flooding darkened minds with light. But IF this delusion is an indicator of God's displeasure with and judgment upon America, NO political outcome will be able to stop it.

In my mind, the reelection of Obama will confirm that judgment is underway. The ONE thing we all CAN do is ensure that our hearts and minds are fixated upon the Lord Jesus Christ, who shed his precious blood for our sins and rose again the third day. DON'T let Delusion happen to you!

Forgiveness in the Current Public Discourse

The public discourse about Newt Gingrich's personal life has fostered a level of discussion about forgiveness and reconciliation. Newt claims to have experienced them both. After his victory in SC, it appears that many (excepting his second wife Marianne) have granted Newt the same forgiveness.

Just what is forgiveness? The Greek word is **aphesis**. It signifies "a release from imprisonment or bondage; a pardon, a letting go." Forgiveness is a release from liability. It is setting the offender free as if he or she had never committed the offense. ALL sin is against God. SOME sins involve both God and men. Thus EVERY sin must be dealt with on a Divine level. And where those offenses include flesh and blood, we are obligated to seek the forgiveness of the one(s) we have offended before we petition God for the same.

In Psalm 51, David is seen pouring out his heart to God for the sins of adultery and murder. He sinned against Uriah the Hittite and his wife Bathsheba. But in the BIG scheme of things, it was his God that he had ultimately offended with his actions. Therefore he cried: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (51:4). The word 'only' calls attention to the magnitude of David's transgression Godward in relation to their manward impact. Do you think David ever asked Bathsheba's forgiveness for abusing his power as king to induce her to break her marriage vows? Did he ever ask her forgiveness for the subsequent death of their son? I like to think he did. But getting this matter settled in the Court of Heaven was the BIG deal! So it is with us!

There are four vital truths about forgiveness we must remember. First, it took the very blood of God Incarnate, the Lord Jesus, to atone for our sins. The scripture says: "And without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). The other side of that coin is found in the next chapter: "Now where the remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (10:18). Jesus shed his precious blood ONE time for ALL time. Forgiveness is a free gift. But it cost God everything.

Secondly, there is NO forgiveness apart from faith in Jesus Christ. When we believe, God imparts spiritual life. Life and forgiveness ALWAYS come together. One is impossible without the other! There are many who warm to the idea that God will ultimately forgive their sins because of his love. But they resist the idea of having their lives governed by the One who bestows everlasting life. It is one thing to profess forgiveness, but quite another to possess it. Possession ALWAYS changes the life. Profession alone seldom changes anything!

Thirdly, the capacity of God to forgive sins committed against Him is infinitely greater than our ability to forgive those who have offended us. When God forgives, he forgets! When we forgive, we almost always remember. But remembering has its practical value. Hear Moses' admonition to Israel: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 25:17). Now, there is no record that the Amalekites ever received forgiveness for their sins against God's people. But if they had, the admonition to remember would still have been applicable. It is possible to release one from liability and still have the

wisdom to remember the offense so as NOT to give the offender a second opportunity to commit it. If you borrow \$20 from me and fail to repay it, I will forgive you the debt and release you from liability, but will likely NEVER loan you another \$20. Forgiveness does NOT necessarily imply a restoration of trust!

Lastly, there is just one thing more desirable than forgiveness, and that is deliverance. The perfect scenario is for one to have the FIRST divine act forgiveness for a particular sin to be the LAST time he or she has to deal with it. But the reality is we all are prone to be REPEAT offenders. The forgiven man is blessed; but the delivered man is blessed indeed.

In some cases, forgiveness and deliverance are immediate, and the perfect scenario comes to pass. But in so many others, deliverance is a hard fought battle that must go through any number of iterations of forgiveness before the flag of conquest is firmly and finally planted in the ground of one's life! In Matthew 18:22-23, we find an exchange between Peter and Jesus regarding the extent to which forgiveness should be proffered to an offender. Peter inquired: "Seven times?" Jesus responded: "Seventy times seven." So, the math signifies 490 acts of forgiveness but the meaning suggests a capacity for forgiveness that is not subject to depletion. Now, can the God of grace that sets such an expectation for the Redeemed do any less as the Redeemer?

Is Newt a possessor, or just a professor? Only God and Newt know for sure. But the most important outcome of this public discussion is for us to ask ourselves the same question! Are we in possession of the forgiveness and life that can ONLY come through faith in Jesus Christ? Or are we simply going through the motions? There is NO greater concern in this life than that one!

Help Is On the Way!

One of the clarion sounds of our civilization is the siren. Every time I hear an ambulance in rescue mode, two thoughts cross my mind. First, someone is in trouble. Second, help is on the way! When spoken to a person in distress, those five words can be a great source of encouragement. It can be the difference between hanging on and letting go. But it's not enough to hear the words. At some point the help must show up!

Trouble is an integral part of life. Even when we don't look for trouble, trouble seems to look for and find us. In times of 'deep' trouble, we are sometimes overcome with a claustrophobic feeling that there's no way out. This feeling is common to the human race; believers are not immune. At points in their spiritual sojourn, every child of God experiences that same sense of helplessness. Whether the trouble is routine or rigorous, the child of God can rest assured that help sufficient to our need is on the way!

While that phrase is never found in scripture, it is certainly applicable to any number of situations where God stepped in to provide the help his people needed. Through the centuries the Lord has demonstrated, over and over again that he can handle loneliness, entrapment, intimidation, death threats and the deepest stains of sin!

On the sixth day of creation, Adam was observing what God had made (Genesis 2:19-25). The fellowship was splendid. The Lord brought to Adam the animals he created. Rather than name each one, the Lord deferred to Adam. The Lord brought them male and female to Adam for naming. It wasn't long before Adam discerned the pattern. Perhaps he deduced that God wasn't quite finished because "there was not found a help meet for him" (2:20). But help was on the way! Adam was one sleep cycle and a single rib away from meeting the love of his life!

After Moses and Israel exited Egypt, they found themselves encamped by the Red Sea, waiting for the next move (Exodus 14:9-22). When Israel saw Pharaoh closing in, they were overcome by entrapment fears. They saw no way to avoid death and burial in the wilderness. Hope was abandoned, but help was on the way. The Lord told Moses to command Israel to start marching 'forward' to the Sea, and to stretch out his rod to divide the waters. The walkover on dry land was beyond miraculous. Death and burial was definitely in the cards. But the Lord saw to it that his people were the observers rather than the receivers. Timely help, wouldn't you say?

Saul, as king of Israel, encountered Philistine intimidation in the form of their champion Goliath (1 Samuel 17:20-51). Goliath was the latest manifestation of Philistine provocation that had gone on for years. Twice a day for forty days he made his appearance and offered his challenge. Goliath was eighty-for-eighty in striking fear into the hearts of the Israeli army. Then came that pivotal day when David showed to check on his brethren. David heard Goliath taunt the army, and decided the giant must die.

In no one's eyes but the Lord's could this shepherd boy have been considered 'help'. But help he was! In fact, what a man is in the Lord's eyes is the sole criterion as to whether a man is a help or a hindrance! Israel was no more than a sling, a stone, and a sword away (all wielded by faith in a single day) from a headless giant and a scattered-defeated Philistine army. The help

God sent that day would endure and benefit Israel for the next half century. Does that sound like the kind of help America needs at this hour?

Death threats can sometimes develop into attempts to carry them out. That very thing happened to the Hebrew children Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego after their refusal to bow before an image king Nebuchadnezzar had erected for worship (Daniel 3:1-25). The resolve of these three young men is the stuff of biblical legend! As they explained to the king, whether the outcome was miraculous deliverance or a martyr death, they would not bow!

A king "full of fury" ordered the furnace to be heated "seven times" its normal heat (3:19). I am convinced that the number '7' flashed in his mind the instant he heard: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us" (3:17). He figured their God was probably able to handle normal heat, but surely not seven-fold heat. So he ordered a heat level that he thought NO God could overcome. But help was on the way in the form of a Fourth Man like unto the Son of God (3:25). His presence enveloped those three men with greater effectiveness than the best fire suit known to man! No pun intended, but is that the kind of help you could live with?

Six hundred years later, the One who had helped Adam, Moses, David and three Hebrew children was hanging on a cross as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. While his critics mocked him for his inability to save himself, he reminded them that 'help' consisting of twelve legions of (72,000) angels was standing by (Matthew 26:53). Angelic help was available to deliver him from suffering, But his sinless suffering was the help sinners needed to atone for and purge sin's deepest stains! In that he suffered, died and rose again, we can now approach him in times of trouble as David did: "Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me: Lord, be thou my helper" (Psalm 30:10).

Hugo Chavez: A Sober Reminder

In September of 2006, Hugo Chavez addressed the U.N. in what became his infamous reference to George Bush as 'The Devil' who had left the smell of 'sulfur' lingering on the platform. He incensed Americans with his vitriol! Liberals, on the other hand, likely found themselves in agreement with the tin horn tyrant.

Now that cancer has taken this big mouth bully beyond the earthly realm, the temptation exists to celebrate his transfer into the infernal flames of Hell. Even the Drudge Report displayed his face with the caption: "Hell's A-Burning!"

Let us remind ourselves that Hell is no laughing matter and nothing to celebrate! Chavez may be receiving his just deserts. But the fact is we ALL deserve the flames of Hell because of our sins against a Holy God!

The Bible—the inspired Word of God and ONLY inerrant and infallible book on the planet—tells us (1) Heaven and Hell are real, (2) God robed Himself in humanity in the Person of Jesus for the purpose of providing a blood sacrifice for our sins that the Father would accept as payment in full, and (3) NO man can come to the Father BUT by Him!

The eternal destiny of a man is NOT determined by whether he is Good or Bad. It ALL depends on whether he is Dead or Alive...spiritually, that is! In John 3, Jesus told Nicodemus "Ye MUST be born again!" and proceeded to explain the "Look and Live!" principle of the Gospel!

When a man or woman believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, God imparts (restores) spiritual life and ALL the benefits that come with His salvation! It's ALL an unearned Gift of Grace!

Hugo Chavez may have been a Bad Man! The local clergyman may be a Good Man. But both of these men are LOST men and in jeopardy of Hell fire apart from the life-giving grace of God!

According to Jesus, Hell was prepared for the Devil and his angels. It was NOT prepared for the sinners for whom He died! Jesus died for Hugo Chavez as He did for YOU and ME! He has NO desire that ANY perish, but that ALL come to repentance!

The ONLY way for us to avoid following in Hugo's footsteps is to believe the Look-and-Live Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ!

It will do NO good whatsoever for a man to be 'Better' than Hugo Chavez if that man is just as spiritually 'Dead' as Hugo Chavez! A sober reminder!

Commonality

Something is 'common' when it belongs to or is shared by two or more individuals or by all the members of a group. It could be an attribute, something tangible (a dollar bill) or intangible (a belief). People who share things are said to have a commonality.

It is generally accepted that the more pervasive a thing is within a population, the more common it is (e.g., \$1 bills are more common than \$100 bills). For this reason, the phrase 'common man' has come to represent that segment of society wherein the most commonality can be found.

Commonality, however, can be found among uncommon men. Take billionaires Warren Buffet and Bill Gates. According to Forbes magazine, they have a commonality shared by only 1,424 other individuals on the planet. In terms of tangible items, billionaires transcend the common man with their uncommon riches.

Commonality is directly related to dilution: the more common something is, the less valuable it becomes. For example, publicly traded companies issue 'common' stock. If company ABC is worth \$1 million and issues 1 million common shares, the shares are worth \$1 each. If it executes a 2-for-1 stock split, it will have 2 million common shares worth \$.50 each. If ABC increases its shares by a factor of two, it reduces by half, or dilutes, the value of each share.

When we consider the matter of commonality with regard to intangibles, especially in regards to the spiritual, there is a different dynamic at work. The principle of dilution no longer applies. In the spiritual realm, a common man is able to accrue uncommon riches. Even though millions of other men, both common and uncommon, come to accrue and share these same spiritual riches, there is NO dilution. Spiritual riches are infinite because God is infinite! Riches in infinite supply CANNOT be diluted!

In writing to his protege Titus, the apostle Paul spoke of commonality: "To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 1:4). The 'common' faith is a persuasion concerning Jesus Christ that is held and shared by EVERY believer! It's the belief that ONLY in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus can sinful man find the remedy for his sin and satisfaction Godward for the penalty thereof.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the 'uncommon' OBJECT of the common faith. He is the only begotten (one-of-kind) Son of God. The commonality of faith is the uncommon Savior. He is the way, the truth, and the life: NO man cometh to the Father, but by him" (John 14:6). Every believer shares this persuasion with every other believer!

Jude also addressed the issue of commonality: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). A common faith with a common Object ALWAYS yields a common salvation. Believers that share the same Saviour inherit the same spiritual riches! And because those riches are infinite, they can NEVER be depleted, diminished or diluted!

The common faith and its common salvation are theological themes. But they are very practical as well! It is God's design that the theological (foundational truth) drives the practical aspects of life. Those who share a common faith and a common salvation are eternally entwined with a God that's infinite! So if God's People NEED something, their God is ABLE to PROVIDE it out of his inexhaustible riches! That's a commonality worth sharing!

Controversy!

Have you ever been involved in a controversy? Controversy generally erupts when two or more parties that share a common interest have conflicting points of view on the issue. The result is debate and oftentimes a prolonged and heated disputation.

A classic example is our two-party political system. Both say they want to grow the economy but have conflicting points of view in how to best accomplish that. So now the debate rages over the matters of taxes and spending. The controversy has produced the infamous sequester.

As long as men and women are drawing breath on this planet, there will be controversy of one sort or another. In some respects, controversy is synonymous with life.

We normally think of controversy as existing on a human level...mano y mano. But the most weighty of controversies are those that occur between divinity and humanity...God and man!

God chose the OT prophet Hosea to illustrate to his people Israel their sin of spiritual adultery. So the prophet married a harlot as an object lesson to their unfaithfulness.

The prophet thus spoke: "Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land" (Hosea 4:1).

And again: "The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him" (Hosea 12:2).

The Hebrew word *controversy* signifies "a contention, a quarrel between adversaries, often in a forensic (legal) context."

It's one thing for two men to engage in a controversy. Nothing more than angry words may ever come of it. But when Almighty God tells us HE is our adversary, and has a quarrel with us on the forensic grounds of HIS holiness, we're in a HEAP of Big Trouble! That's what God told Israel.

The reason for the controversy between God and Israel was an abandonment of truth, mercy and the knowledge of God. The nation God had delivered from 400 years of bondage in Egypt, chose to be the repository of HIS truth and raised up to greatness under Kings David and Solomon had now become a TRUTH VACUUM!

Abandonment of truth ALWAYS leads to abundance of ERROR...Godless Error! It's inevitable! So when God takes an adversarial role in a spiritual controversy with man, man is ALWAYS on the losing end of that controversy! Punishment and recompense (pay back) are on the way!

America shares a common heritage with Israel of old. She was founded upon biblical TRUTH and religious liberty. God gave her greatness unlike any nation before her. She has been responsible for the liberation of tens of millions world-wide!

But in the latter half of the 20th century her leaders began to discard truth in favor of humanistic philosophy. The highest court in the land legalized infanticide. Homosexual perversion is in the process of being legitimized and our military is toying with the idea of criminalizing biblical

evangelism. God and his TRUTH are now unwelcome guests in the public domain.

Now, you tell me whether God has a controversy with America! In my mind, it's undeniable!

In his MERCY, God often gives a nation LESS than it deserves. In his GRACE, he gives them MORE than they deserve. But when God takes a forensic position against a nation based on his JUSTICE, he gives that nation EXACTLY what it deserves!

I am convinced that God has a controversy with America, The mercy and grace that he lavished on us in days gone by has now transitioned into a justice phase. In President Barack Obama, God has given America exactly what she deserves.

While a controversy with God can be be VERY painful and perhaps terminal, there IS a biblical solution: REPENTANCE! And if repentance was able to spare Nineveh, beginning with the king and spreading to the people, repentance can also save America! But time's running out!

Remember: Repentance is the ONLY way to resolve a controversy when a HOLY GOD is one of the parties involved!

Dust and Rib

Evolution is back in the Drudge headlines today. A survey by YouGov shows that (1) 37% of Americans believe that God created man in his present form within the last 10,000 years, (2) 25% believe that God guided the process of evolution from lesser life forms, and (3) 21% believe God had NO part in the development of humans.

The headline on CBSDC online reads: "Majority Of Americans Believe God Played Role In Human Evolution." The headline, no doubt formulated by a Liberal, is deceptive...unless you consider 25% a majority.

Creation and evolution are mutually exclusive concepts! I am somewhat pleasantly surprised that as many as 37% of those polled (nearly 4 in 10) agree with the biblical account in Genesis: however, slightly more than 4 in 10 (41%) believe that evolution played a role in the development of man.

The 25% who think God guided the evolutionary process do so in an effort to harmonize science with the Bible. But evolutionary theory is faux science. NO alleged scientist has EVER observed the evolution of a simple (or any) life form into a more complex life form. Evolution theory is the fruit of speculation, not observation...a fundamental of true science.

Secondly, what has been observed is the principle of atrophy. That is, life forms tend to devolve or break down from one form to a less-complex form. There is NO empirical evidence to suggest otherwise!

A few minutes of reflection upon the biblical account of creation will lead one to disavow any role for evolution in the appearance of man. First, the Bible states that God created man from the "dust of the ground" in full-grown form. How else can you explain the presence of nostrils?

But Adam was lifeless UNTIL God breathed into those nostrils the breath of life. Since he was NOT technically a life form UNTIL that first breath, it is impossible for Adam to have evolved from lifelessness! While atmospheric oxygen served to SUSTAIN Adam's life, only God could have STARTED his life, and did so in a moment of time!

Secondly, the Bible says God created the woman from the "rib" of the man. Whereas Adam was formed from lifeless dust, God used the living tissue of the man to create the woman, and did so in the time it took for Adam to take a nap!

These exercises in Bible-based logic destroy evolutionary theory. They should also put an end to the baseless "one day equals a thousand years with God" argument, which has two big problems. First, it represents the bastardization of 2 Peter 3:8, which was written to draw a contrast between time-conscious "scoffers" and the God who inhabits eternity, where time is meaningless!

Secondly, it is an intellectually dishonest exercise by those seeking to establish a bridge between the Bible and science. Question: IF a day could mean a thousand years, would that be a literal or figurative number? The fact is Evolutionists who claim to be Biblicists want that

thousand years to represent as many billions of years as they think necessary for human development. It's pure guesswork!

Bottom line: The theory of evolution depends on the development of increasingly complex life forms in order to bring man to the pinnacle of the evolutionary chain. But Adam had NO life form predecessors! Dust is NOT a life form! But Eve DID have a life-form origin: ADAM!.

Glideslope

Aviation buffs are familiar with glideslope systems. They enable an aircraft on final approach to communicate with a landing zone so that it achieves the appropriate airspeed, altitude and rate of descent relative to its distance from the airstrip.

Every day thousands of flights worldwide make successful landings via glideslope compliance. But if an aircraft fails to achieve the proper glideslope, it can come in too fast or not fast enough, too high or not high enough. A errant glideslope often results in an aircraft destroyed along with the lives on board.

Effectiveness of glideslope systems is dependent on the transmission of accurate data. Defective data sent or received can produce a massive disaster!

Glideslopes are absolutely critical to successful aircraft landings. But NO nation should want to see itself in glideslope mode. A nation on glideslope is in decline as it loses its cultural-economic altitude and airspeed. America is on such a glideslope trajectory!

I think all of us know this to be the case. While we acknowledge our nation's descent from its former lofty heights, we nevertheless hope for an incident-free landing. The problem is that our leaders are operating our national aircraft based on defective data. We are on a glideslope driven by error rather than truth.

The glideslope analogy came to mind as I heard reports that more states are considering joining CA and NJ in banning conversion therapy for homosexuals. As America continues on its current glideslope of Political Correctness, which harbors a contempt for truth, the eventual landing will not and CANNOT be a good one!

When a state imposes a BAN on an activity, it typically assigns a FINE and or other penalty for a violation. Since 'conversion therapy' for teens is likely to achieve 'Child Abuse' status, it will be CRIMINALIZED! At that point, a state that criminalizes attempts to 'convert' a homosexual will make a criminal out of EVERY man of God that preaches the WHOLE counsel of God!

What does it say about a nation that criminalizes those who deal in truth and expose error? If you read the OT, you will discover that prophets like Elijah, Daniel and Jeremiah (God's best) were so criminalized for speaking truth to power!

America's error-driven glideslope will likely take this 'therapy conversion' issue to the Supreme Court. If it decides to hear the case, it will likely uphold the right of individual states to impose a ban on activities it deems destructive to the common good.

If enough states jump on this 'ban' bandwagon, it may provoke Congress to codify the ban and send it along to the President for signature. It will be challenged again as to its constitutionality. The SCOTUS can then be expected to rule on the politically-correct side of things. Adherents to truth will then be criminalized on the Federal level.

While I have no prediction to make regarding our glideslope to societal disintegration, it is safe to say that the current path of descent will NOT end well for our country.

Corrective action, however, is possible! And that would be the reintroduction of truth into our glideslope calculations! Only TRUTH believed and obeyed has the ability to elevate America to its former heights and reverse the current glideslope!

God Is One!

A study in biblical theology is akin to trekking through a mountain range and negotiating the various peaks in your path as you seek to scale them. To say there are theological peaks more grand than others is just a manner of human expression. All truth that pertains to Almighty God is grand beyond description. But for me, there are some verses of scripture that reveal theological truth in a manner that simply astounds.

One of those verses is found in the book of Galatians: "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one (3:20).

The epistle of Galatians was written by Paul as a defense of the gospel of grace. In Chapter 3, he takes time to contrast the law and grace as mutually exclusive when considered in the context of salvation. In addition, Paul connects the faith of Abraham to the covenant of promise, which was in effect four hundred thirty years before God gave the law to Moses. Paul concludes that the law cannot disannul the promise that God gave to Abraham by faith (3:17).

Why did God give his law if not for the purpose of showing sinful man the WAY of salvation? It was given to show man his NEED of salvation and the REASON why he needed it! The law was "added because of transgressions" (3:19).

Romans 7:13 provides additional light: "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." The law is a good thing; sin is a bad thing! The good thing caused the bad thing to be seen in all its badness!

Let's suppose you're feeling ill. You visit Dr. Conscience, who has limited diagnostic tools. Yet his decades of experience, after a rudimentary exam, tell him you are a sick man. But he does not know HOW sick. He recommends his colleague, Dr. Law, who has all the tools necessary for an accurate diagnosis. After running his ten tests, he affirms the diagnosis of Dr. Conscience. "Sir!", he says, "You ARE sick...EXCEEDING sick...sick unto DEATH!

Therefore the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (3:24). There is the teacher, and there is the Savior. There is the Law, and there is Christ! The sinner properly instructed by Law will be driven into the embrace of Christ for spiritual healing! In the arms of Jesus, the sinner will find both the righteousness and life – the salvation – that the Law CANNOT provide (3:21).

The Law was ordained by angels in the hands of a mediator (3:19). Moses was the mediator, the go between, the one who represented God to Israel and Israel to God. By its basic definition, the mediator CANNOT function as such without two or more parties. He is NOT a mediator of one.

But God is one! What does this mean? It means that Jesus Christ, by means of incarnation and as God in the flesh, combined the two distinct roles of God AND Mediator into ONE Person! Thus there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

Galatians 3:20 is one of the great theological peaks in scripture. Mediators are mere mortals! In time they must be replaced. But when Jesus rose from the dead the third day, he enshrined for all eternity both God and Mediator in One Person. Therefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25).

Glory to God! What a truth! God is One! Oh, scale this theological peak. Contemplate and enjoy the view! Rejoice in it! For without it, our salvation would be an absolute impossibility!

Got Credentials?

Most of us conduct business online from time to time. It may be banking with a financial firm, purchasing goods or services or accessing pay-for-content websites to which we have subscribed. In most cases, these websites require data to authenticate you BEFORE it grants access.

These pieces of data are called credentials. Credentials typically consist of two layers of security: ID and Password. Depending on the propriety of website content, an online service might require a third layer requiring a Personal Identification Number (PIN) and perhaps a fourth layer that requires you to answer a security question.

Credentials are both personal and powerful. They open highly-secured doors of access for those who possess them. But without them, those same doors are impenetrable. That is exactly what credentials are designed to do.

Matthew 7:21-23 records the words of Jesus as he taught about the spiritual credentials for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. The single credential cited by Jesus was doing the will of the Father (7:21). Jesus was NOT teaching salvation by works, but rather the underlying, heart-felt desire of all those who know the Lord. A desire to do the will of God is the essence of repentance, without which no one can be saved.

Those who PROFESS to know the Lord will offer up multiple but empty credentials. First, they rightly address him as "Lord, Lord". Secondly, they have delivered prophecy. Thirdly, they have cast out devils. Fourthly, they claim to have performed many wonderful works. All of these credentials were done, they will say, "in his name" (7:22).

But the Lord rejects ALL of these credentials. He then delivers a profession of his own in response to their profession: "I never knew you!" (7:23). Kingdom access denied!

In Galatians 4:8-9, Paul ask this question: "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements...?"

Salvation is the transition from NOT knowing God to knowing him. But Paul is careful to point out that while knowing God is important, being "known of God" is the overriding issue. These two sides of the salvation coin are credentials that determine kingdom access! They're the ONLY credentials that matter!

Jesus taught that men can preach great sermons, cast out devils and do wonder-inspiring works APART FROM a personal knowledge of the Lord! Credentials such as this almost always garner the notice and approval of men. But God dismisses them as non-factors for kingdom access IF they are not grounded in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. One day we'll find out how many 'televangelists' and 'religious icons' lacked the basic credentials God requires!

In his synagogue sermon at Antioch, Paul made this reference: "He raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the [son] of

Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will" (Acts 13:22).

The cardinal credential David possessed was a desire to do the will of God. We know that David violated that will at least twice. But the underlying desire of his heart, in time, lead him to repentance, confession, cleansing and restoration. And it will do the same for EVERY one who knows God!

Credentials are critical to functioning in this world. But God is looking for credentials that are far more critical. Those credentials are (1) knowing God, and (2) being known by him. Got credentials?

The Kerry Gospel

Arguments are like arrows in a quiver. The more arrows the archer has to release at his target, the greater his chances of hitting and killing it. For a bow hunter, it might make the difference between eating fresh venison or PBJ sandwiches.

The Syria war resolution Obama is seeking overcame its first obstacle when the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted to approve it by a thin margin. Now it's on to the full Senate for debate and vote.

John Kerry came armed with several arrows (arguments) in his quiver to make the case for attack on Syria. One of those arrows was the Good News (Gospel) that neighboring Arab nations would pay the freight for our military campaign against the Assad regime.

Think about the subtle power of that argument. Companies use it routinely to incentivize a buyer who's straddling the fence on a purchase. That \$30,000 set of wheels looks formidable price wise until the dealership throws in a \$5,000 rebate. That bit of good news could seal the deal and start up the paperwork!

So John Kerry, like a seasoned car salesman, injects this incentive into the dialogue. For Senators who might argue a BANKRUPT nation cannot AFFORD to fight another war, Kerry offers them this gospel: "Hey guys, we can kill Assad-friendly Syrians for FREE!" That incentive, that it will COST US NOTHING to bomb Assad, was intended to bag the votes necessary to seal the deal.

The Kerry gospel is preached just as insidiously in other areas of our culture. Take, for example, the single woman who incurs an unwanted or unexpected pregnancy. She finds herself wrestling between the sanctity of life and all the 'inconveniences' (including career disruption) that a baby brings. Then she hears the Planned Parenthood gospel: "Eradication of that encumbrance in your womb will COST YOU NOTHING!"

Have we become so unprincipled in this nation that MONEY can make the difference between killing or not killing other human beings? "Oh...well...if we can kill for FREE, let's go for it!"

In stark contrast to the Kerry gospel is the Gospel of Grace! Instead of the COST-FREE killing of MANY, it tells the story of the COSTLY killing of One on the behalf of the Many. Yes, God the Father killed his Only Begotten Son, Jesus of Nazareth, God in the flesh, as a blood sacrifice and atonement for OUR sins.

The salvation from sin and eternal life that God offers to us simply by believing on his Son, the Lord Jesus, while it COSTS US NOTHING, did cost a loving God EVERYTHING he had!

While the Kerry gospel argues that we can KILL FOR FREE, the Gospel of Grace proclaims that God KILLED his Son on our behalf in order that we might be SET FREE!

It teaches us that BANKRUPT sinners who approach a merciful God by faith with EMPTY hands can become Joint Heirs with Christ endowed with all the spiritual RICHES of God in Christ Jesus! What a Gospel!

Led By Fools

A fool is generally defined as one who exercises poor judgment and or lacks intelligence. Most of us know someone who fits that description. It may be that all of us at some point in our lives have conducted ourselves in a foolish manner, using poor judgment in the decisions we made or feeling we did things where we should have known better.

It should be noted that a lack of intelligence is NOT the same as a lack of education. Education is the process whereby an individual amasses information. Intelligence is the innate ability to make the proper and practical use of that information. A 'Ph.D.' behind one's name is indicative of an education. But folks with Ph.D. degrees can lack the basic intelligence required to act wisely. In other words, a Ph.D. can be as dumb as a rock!

The Bible has somewhat to say about fools and foolishness. The apostle Paul wrote these words to the church at Rome: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:22).

In the context, Paul provides a broad summary of the kinds of activities in which fools engage themselves. They "hold" (suppress) the truth in unrighteousness (1:18). The truth suppressed is the knowledge of God the Creator planted within the hearts of his creatures (1:19). This knowledge includes his 'eternal power and Godhead' to which creation testifies. Men are therefore inexcusable for rejecting the Creator (1:20).

Fools refuse to give God the glory that is due him. This indifference Godward is the breeding ground for ingratitude. Their imaginations become vain (empty). And since God is light, and the fool makes no room for him, the godless imagination results in a darkened heart (1:21).

The darkened heart eventually embraces idolatry, where the invisible Creator is supplanted by the visible creature (1:23). Thus the creation (nature, the environment) becomes the mother of us all and the object of worship and service (1:25). The disconnect of God from the life of a fool, which erases any sense of accountability, leads to unshackled sexual lust with no contemplation of spiritual consequences (1:24).

Unbridled sexual lust eventually crosses natural boundaries into homosexual perversion where men burn toward other men and women burn toward other women (1:26).

Perhaps the worst thing that can be said about a fool is that God eventually gives him or her over to their untoward lust (1:24, 26, 28). When God abandons the fool, there remains NO HOPE of salvation!

In the fellowship of fools, sin abounds. Examples are fornication, covetousness, malice, murder, deceit, gossip, pride, disobedience to parents and the breaking of contracts (1:29-32).

The Bible has just described, to a great extent, the American culture. We murder babies in the name of women's rights and call heroes those who 'come out' to make known their perverted, same-sex lust. Many leaders have made environmental health more important than the health of

humanity. Saving the planet at the expense of human life has become a viable proposition!

Has God given America over to her lusts? Only God knows whether that's happened. But there is NO DOUBT our nation is being led by fools, who by their professed wisdom believe they're taking us into a more enlightened 21st Century! But on her present course, America can expect MORE darkness down the road!

None Other Name

Today is the first day of a new week. The Lord Jesus rose from the dead on that day (Mark 16:9). Subsequently, the first day of the week became the day that the disciples of Christ came together to break bread and hear the Word of God preached (Acts 20:7). In that context, the first of the week was the time disciples collected financial offerings for the support of the ministry (1 Corinthians 16:2).

The time lapse between the resurrection of Christ and the event in Acts 20, where Paul preached to the disciples until midnight, was roughly 25 years. This tells us that the first day of the week had become a well-established church tradition...in the good sense of that word. And still today the disciples of Christ gather to worship and celebrate the risen Christ and his glorious name.

That glorious name is "Jesus Christ of Nazareth", who was crucified by men, raised by God from the dead and is now the cornerstone of God's kingdom (Acts 4:10-11). The story of his death and resurrection on behalf of sinners is the gospel that brings salvation to those who believe and call upon the name of Jesus (Romans 10:13).

Thus "neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). God has highly exalted Jesus Christ, and given him a name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).

The Bible reveals other names for Jesus, such as Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus referred to himself as the Bread of Life, the Door, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life. But the name of Jesus is the ONE name that embodies ALL these glorious attributes! When a sinner embraces Jesus, he hits the mother lode of GRACE and TRUTH (John 1:14).

The Bible, the Inspired AND Preserved Word of God, is the ONLY source of Divine Revelation on the planet. Among the names whereby God has chosen to reveal himself, the name of 'Allah' CANNOT be found. There is NO redemption power in that fictitious name simply because there is no personage behind it. Allah is the satanic concoction of a false prophet.

In today's world, the religion of Islam is the embodiment of evil and blasphemy. Unspeakable atrocities are committed by Islamists in the name of Allah, their non-existent god. Anyone with a lick of sense knows that Satan, the god of this world, is behind all this wickedness.

The Muslim Brotherhood is the poster child for virulent Islam. This is the group that President Obama endorsed and supported in Egypt. Any astute observer of Obama over the last five years knows full well that he is a card-carrying member of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Do you not find it both abominable and alarming that America, whose roots are eminently Christian, is now being governed by spiritual blindness and pure wickedness in the White House?

While Islamic RADICALISM has infiltrated our government at the highest level, Liberals and the MSM – also enveloped in spiritual darkness – are accusing patriots of RACISM in support of the Destructive Force that is Obama...a pathological LIAR! He is a LOT more than that in terms of evil, but suffice it to say that he has NO relationship with the TRUTH.

Centuries and seasons have come and gone since Jesus came out of that grave on the first day of the week. False religions and bad ideologies have repeatedly raised their ugly heads to lead men astray.

But the ONE immutable and blessed reality is that there is NONE other name under heaven, that being the name of JESUS, whereby we sinners MUST be saved! Thank God he made a way whereby we CAN be saved!

Small-Mindedness

The more Pope Francis pontificates, the more outrageous he sounds. I have known twelve-year-old kids who possessed more biblical knowledge and conviction than this man. In his latest release of verbal sewage, he said the Church was “too focused” upon the issues of abortion and homosexuality. “Small-minded rules” is the way he described biblical convictions against these moral perversions. According to the Pontiff, the Church will “crumble like a house of cards” if it continues on this path of small-mindedness.

The God that Pope Francis claims to know led the apostle Paul to write these words:

“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator [big umbrella that includes illicit extramarital sex, adultery, homosexuality] ...with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without [the Church]? do not ye judge them that are within [the Church]?...Therefore put away from among yourselves [remove from the Church fellowship] that wicked person” (1 Corinthians 5:11-13).

The biblical text is truncated with bracketed comments added to make the point. God teaches us in His Word that it is the responsibility of the Church to keep overt practitioners of sexual sin OUT of the Church fellowship. God is HOLY and demands PURITY of His people!

So here we have Pope Francis advocating INCLUSION of those whom the God of scripture has ordered EXCLUSION. Pope Francis has set himself in direct opposition to Almighty God! The alleged ‘head of the Church’ has become its enemy...and the enemy of God himself!

Pope Francis has done something FAR more sinister than merely insulting and denigrating every 'small-minded' Bible believer. He has inferred that the one true God, who inspired these small-minded rules, is a small-minded God! The only conclusion one can draw from the Pope's unwitting insult of the Almighty is that he has the Bigger of the two minds! Friends, this is BLASPHEMOUS! If you will take the time to read 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12, you will discover that Pope Francis is exhibiting both the spirit of antichrist (the son of perdition) and the mystery of iniquity!

If any of my readers are members of the Catholic Church, please do not feel attacked by this article. You should, however, be greatly alarmed at what's occurring at the highest level of YOUR Church. In terms of spiritual impact, Pope Francis is emerging as the Most Dangerous Man on the planet!

The Cross

The U.S. Government is becoming more and more hostile to the Christian faith under the Obama regime. That's ironic since the President whose minions are giving Christians a hard way to go claims to be one. But the problem is greater than any man or administration.

The gravamen of the Christian faith, the crux of its message, is the Cross of Christ. It was there that God the Father laid upon God the Son the INIQUITY of the entire human race (Isaiah 53:6).

Therein lies the offence of the Cross (Galatians 5:11). For it tells the story of the extent to which God who created man had to go in order to save man from his sins. There was NOTHING that men who were dead in trespasses and sins could do to save themselves! The eternal God stepped into the confines of time and space as the man Christ Jesus and tasted death for every man! The wrath that was due man for his transgressions was poured out upon the Son of man.

Sinful men have two BIG problems—the guilt of their sins and spiritual death. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ solves those two problems. In his death, Jesus atoned for the sins of ALL men with his divine and sinless blood. God was propitiated; that is, he accepted the death of Christ as the full satisfaction of his holy demands to punish sin (Romans 3:25, 1 John 2:2, 4:10). In his resurrection, Jesus conquered death.

So when sinners come to Jesus by faith with empty hands, believing what Jesus did for them and calling upon him to save them, he forgives and washes away their sins and imparts spiritual and eternal life, so they are 'Born Again' by the grace of God! They become a child of God, who clothes them in the very righteousness of Christ as the result of justification (Romans 5:1). They are saved!

Jesus is the ONLY way to the Father (John 14:6). God has NO 'Plan B'. Salvation is in a Person. God rejects ANY and ALL efforts to gain his favor by ANY other means – keeping the law, memberships in churches or religious organizations, good works or benevolent deeds. For NONE of these efforts or credentials can atone for sin or give spiritual life (Galatians 3:21). Salvation is in Christ ALONE! ONLY in the Lord Jesus can a sinful man find the solution to his two big problems...which is why Peter referred to him as a "rock of offence" (1 Peter 2:8).

The exclusivity of the Gospel and total inability of man to get to God WITHOUT going through the Cross of Christ is offensive to lost men. They stumble over it. The EGO of man, apart from the gracious enablement of the Spirit of God, will not allow him to abandon self-effort – or any other avenue BUT Christ – in order to be saved!

So when the Christian faith is attacked by humanists, atheists, feminists, communists, socialists, Islamists and other religionists, it should come as no great surprise. It's offensive!

We Christians in America have been blessed to have constitutional protections that believers in other countries either have not had or do not have. Christians are routinely butchered by Muslims in countries where Sharia Law is the standard.

We are now witnessing a full frontal assault on the Christian faith in America. Bibles placed in

plain view on work desks, Ten Commandment plaques posted in public places, the mention of Jesus in a conversation or at the end of a prayer, or sharing the Gospel with a fellow human are ALL deemed potentially offensive to others and therefore banned where possible.

Jesus warned his disciples that the same world that hated him would hate them as well (John 15:18-20). We've had a good run here in America. But now "It's On!" as some would say. And the Cross is the reason!

Can Our Salvation Be Undone?

The scriptures teach that the Lord Jesus imparts everlasting life to those who believe on him. Eternal life means just that: life forever! There are no conditions or caveats given in scripture whereby one can forfeit eternal life or that would cause God to take it back.

It is impossible to lose the salvation that God gives us by his grace. Call it 'Eternal Security' or 'Once Saved, Always Saved.' It matters not. I think of it as 'Once a Child, Always a Child!'

Yet some argue that our salvation can be undone. They claim 'Once Saved, Always Saved!' is a false doctrine. For the sake of argument, if it was possible for one to lose the salvation that God gave him, then there are several divine operations integral to our salvation that God would have to UNDO in order for us to be lost again.

Justification

When a sinner believes on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31), God imputes unto him the righteousness of his Son and reckons it to his account. With the righteousness of Christ imputed, God declares him righteous.

This is a divine declaration that happens one time for all time. It is NOT contingent upon what the believer does afterward. God NEVER reverses his decree, NOR debits the righteousness of Christ he credits to us. In order to lose salvation, God would have to remove that righteousness and UN-justify one of his own.

The scripture says we are "justified freely by his grace" (Romans 3:24). The adjective 'freely' is dorean (in gift-like manner, undeservedly, without a cause). If God finds NO cause in a believer as the basis for justification, but rather finds the SOLE cause in his grace, then it stands to reason that God will NEVER find cause in the same believer to reverse that decree of righteousness! If it is God's grace that justifies us, then it is God's grace that keeps us justified!

Moreover, the scripture declares: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). The verb 'being justified' is a past participle that serves as antecedent to "we have peace" in present tense. Expanded translation: "having been justified by faith one time for all time, we are in possession of peace with God." Again, once God issues a declaration of righteousness for a believer, there is no retracement of that decree!

Regeneration

Jesus said: "Ye must be born again!" (John 3:3,7). In that context he gave an OT illustration (serpent in the wilderness) that depicts the manner in which the new (or second) birth takes place. When a sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, looks to Jesus in faith as the remedy for his sins and spiritual death, God literally raises him to spiritual life.

This impartation of spiritual life is called regeneration. It is the work of God. It can be neither done nor undone by man. Therefore ONLY God would be able to UNDO a spiritual birth. But there is NO scripture that suggests that God EVER does that!

In addition, the new birth, or regeneration, makes one a child (son) of God. To suggest that one can lose salvation puts God in the position of spiritually 'killing' one of his children, whom he raised from the dead, back into the hands of the enemy. What would this say about the power or love of God as a Father? It's the ultimate insult to suggest that God is capable of such a thing!

Moreover, regeneration makes the believer the habitation of God through his Spirit, who takes up his residence in the child of God (Ephesians 2:22). The Holy Spirit becomes the unbreakable seal of our salvation (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30) as well as the earnest (down payment) of our inheritance (2 Corinthians 1:22). In other words, God gives his very self as earnest money. If a child of God lost his salvation and failed to get the full inheritance God promised, then God would forfeit the earnest of the Spirit. God would have broken his promise, lost his integrity and existence as God. If just ONE saved soul is EVER lost, then EVERY human soul will be lost and doomed!

From an exegetical perspective, Jesus taught us that one who hears and believes on him "hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). The verb 'hath' is present tense, signifying the actual possession of eternal life. In another text, Jesus said the unbeliever is "condemned already" (John 3:18). If faith in Jesus delivers one from the condemnation under which he languished as an unbeliever, he has the guarantee of his Savior that NEVER again will condemnation mar his future!

The verb 'passed' is the perfect tense of the Greek verb **metabaino** ('to pass over from one place to another'). The perfect tense signifies an action with permanent or finished results. The passing of a sinner from death unto life is a finished work that cannot be undone! A saved man or woman can NEVER pass from spiritual life unto spiritual death! According to Jesus, it's an impossibility!

One more thought on the indwelling Spirit. If one could be saved and then lost again, it would mean the Holy Spirit vacates the premises. Could that newly created God-vacuum go unnoticed? Wouldn't a Spirit-indwelt person know when that rapid departure took place? Imagine that you are swimming in the deep end of a swimming pool when all of a sudden the water evaporates and leaves you lying on your belly on the pool bottom. The departure of the Spirit would be no less dramatic!

Redemption

The salvation of a sinner involves the purchase of his soul by the blood of Christ, which is the very blood of God himself (Acts 20:28). The child of God is no longer his own (1 Corinthians 6:19). We are bought with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The title deed of our eternal soul belongs to God. He has CLEAR title with NO liens. In order for one to lose his salvation, God would have to relinquish ownership of his child and sign the title back over to the former owner – the devil. It would signify that the blood of Jesus, while sufficient to accomplish the initial act of redemption, lacks the potency to KEEP a sinner saved and God's title clear! And if that be the case, the reasonable mind MUST ask whether the blood of Christ has the potency to keep ANY sinner saved for eternity.

The doctrine of redemption is rooted in the Cross of Christ, his vicarious death for the sinners he

loved. The blood Christ shed in his death was the total satisfaction for God's wrath toward our sins. That blood is efficacious to accomplish our redemption. If it is possible for one to lose the gift of salvation, it would mean that something MORE than Christ is essential for us to keep it.

Conclusion

The various arguments against 'Once Saved, Always Saved' may appear noble. But the implications are devastating. In order for a lost sinner to be saved and then lost again, the God of our salvation would have to undo Justification, undo Regeneration, undo Redemption and then undo himself! That God, my friends, does NOT exist on the pages of holy scripture!