

Poor scholarship underlies “Acts 28” theory



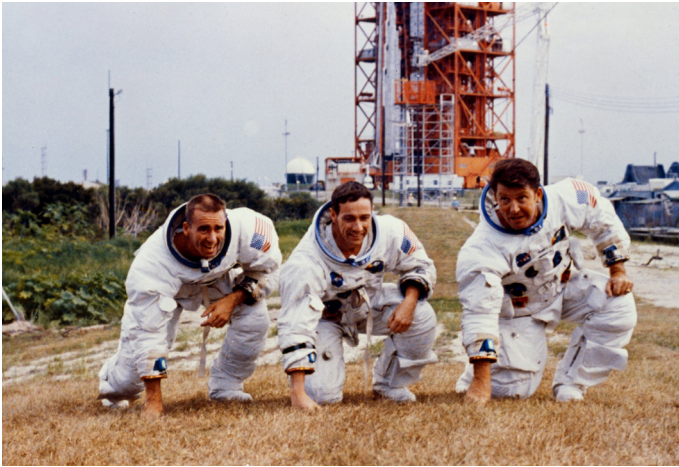
A great deception continues being foisted upon the public via the *Bible Student’s Notebook*. The deception is that Paul’s special ministry to the nations, for which he was called by Christ, did not begin until a few years before his death, when he was a prisoner in Rome. This would be a strange time for Paul to *begin* his ministry—especially as Paul says

he was “entrusted with the gospel of the Uncircumcision” as early as his letter to the Galatians (2:7)—but many things about the Acts 28 theory are strange; this is consistent with the rest. Half of Paul’s letters, therefore, do not apply to us. (This, to me, is the most damaging aspect of the deception.) These letters would include Romans, both Corinthian letters, both Thessalonian letters, and Galatians. According to the theory, these letters are consistent with Israel’s calling—notwithstanding the fact that, in Romans, Paul himself declares to be writing “to the nations” (Romans 11:13), and calls himself, in the same passage, “the apostle of the nations.” In another early letter (1 Corinthians 4:1), Paul calls himself and his co-workers, “deputies of Christ, and administrators of God’s secrets.” (No re-hashing of Israel truth there.) These facts do not deter Acts 28 theorists, and I’m unclear as to why not.

I have yet to understand *why* Acts 28 theorists want to work so hard—that is, to ignore so many clear passages of Scripture—to make half of Paul’s letters irrelevant. They have to ignore clear passages and strain to apply murky ones. Both things are hard. What is to be gained? I can’t find a motive.

FLY ME TO THE MOON

One thing Acts 28 theorists have in common is that they all seem to abhor a snatching away for the body of Christ. The very idea that Christ is coming to get us nearly makes them spit. This, I do not understand. Is it because Christianity has so twisted the snatching away as to re-name it “the rapture”? Christianity has also twisted salvation, but we still believe in salvation, do we not? Likewise with many other topics. Screwing up truth does not eliminate truth. Acts 28 theorists love the thought of appearing before Christ in heaven, but scorn the notion that God has revealed to us how living people will get there: they will be snatched away. It’s like



embracing a trip to the moon while despising the rocket that will take you there: “That rocket is for someone else. Ignore the rocket!” My response: “But the rocket is *documented* to be for you. It’s got your name on it. Its sole purpose is to take you to the moon.” Their response: “Never mind. We hate that rocket. We’ll go to the moon without it.”

Ah, but you won’t.

I SWEAR I DIDN’T DO IT

Underlying the Acts 28 theory is poor scholarship and demonstrable lapses of logic. This is what I mean by people having to work hard to believe it. Many of the “proof texts” I have seen promoting the Acts 28 theory are patently ridiculous. Attempts to link the “proof texts” is many times farcical. The latest example of this is an article by Danny Russino. A few people have told me, “Martin, you have already made your point. You have already disproven the Acts 28 theory with Scripture, logic, common sense. What more can you do? Get back to your Romans series.” This is great advice, and I would have taken it except that a brother from Poland wrote me a few weeks ago, alarmed, saying, “Martin, your name is being put to this theory, as though you support it.”

I turned to Issue 499 of the *Bible Student’s Notebook* to see Danny Russino’s contribution to the Acts 28 theory, followed by my endorsement of a book he’d written years ago. I didn’t like the subtle suggestion, which to me bordered on manipulation. The book I endorsed did not, to my knowledge, contain the Acts 28 deception. If it did, then shame on me for not reading closely enough. In any case, the publishers knew I would vehemently disagree with the article, but still put my endorsement of the previously-published book at the end, as though to

say, “See? Zender likes this guy!” Well, Zender does like the guy. Though I have not seen him in six years, Danny Russino is my friend. But because my attention was drawn to the endorsement, I could not resist perusing the article. I hope this is the last time I write on this topic—I’m sure you do, too. As this material will be included in an upcoming book, I need to cover my bases.

EXODUS 19 A “GUIDE” TO 1 THESSALONIANS 4?

If the setting in Exodus 19 is Israel’s typical deliverance, then it is safe to say that 1 Thessalonians 4 is not the deliverance of the church today. The setting in Exodus is a guide to 1 Thessalonians 4.

—Danny Russino

How Thessalonians Fits in the Purposes of God for the Earth, Contrasted with God’s Present Purposes; BSN Iss. 499

This is the first time I have heard of the rocks of Sinai becoming a guide to the grace of a lovely Pauline epistle. In my opinion, this analogy alone—misguided and destructive—disqualifies its inventor from teaching on Paul’s gos-



pel. The analogy's inventor misses the fundamental point: Paul was the administrator of a new gospel to the nations, called to this purpose as early as Acts, chapter 9. The appearance of Paul's name at the beginning of his thirteen letters authenticates his evangel. Paul wrote his thirteen letters to the body of Christ. Anyone failing to distinguish the body of Christ from the bride of the Lamb (Israel), or grace from law, or the gospel of the Uncircumcision from that of the Circumcision, has compromised his usefulness as a teacher to the body of Christ. Worse, such a person is now dangerous because he inadvertently deceives people on a vitally important topic.

Danny Russino's statement quoted above presumes the conclusion it seeks to prove, namely, that 1 Thessalonians is for Israel. This is a logical fallacy known as "circular reasoning," and Danny's article abounds with it. Even if Exodus 19 were typical of Israel's ultimate deliverance—it isn't; it's the opposite; it's the curse that *contrasts* the future deliverance—why does that make it "safe to say" that 1 Thessalonians 4 is not the deliverance of the body of Christ? The presumption here is that 1 Thessalonians is an Israelite message. This is a two-for-one special in the logical fallacy department: Danny's statement comes simultaneously packaged with another fallacy known as *non sequitur*, a Latin term meaning, "it does not follow." *Non sequitur* is an inference or conclusion that does not follow from established premises or evidence. By inserting the faulty logic of Danny's statement into another example, the fallacy is clearly exposed:

"If Magna Carta was written by a group of 13th-century barons to protect their rights and property against a tyrannical king King John of England, then it is safe to say that the Declaration of Independence was not the deliverance of the American colonies."

THE SO-CALLED EVIDENCE

The evidence offered for Exodus being a guide to 1 Thessalonians is introduced in the article's eighth paragraph—

Exodus 19 verses ... are practically point-by-point repeated in 1 Thessalonians 4 and other New Testament passages which deal with Israel's future glory.

Here are the "point-by-point" similarities offered to support this claim:

1. Both passages use the word "cloud."
2. Both passages use the word "trumpet."
3. In Exodus, the Lord came down and Moses went up.
4. The people of Israel were gathered to meet the Lord.



These are also fallacies of the *non sequitur* variety. Just because the word "cloud" appears in both Exodus 19 and 1 Thessalonians 4, it does not follow that 1 Thessalonians 4 is a fulfillment of Exodus 19. Clyde himself continually makes this same mistake of reaching false conclusions based on similar wording. Making such a fuss over "cloud" and "trumpet" is akin to insisting that, because Jesus Christ is called "Lord" in both the Circumcision evangel and in the evangel of the Uncircumcision, therefore these evangels are the same and the body of Christ is the fulfillment of Israel's prophecies. In Exodus 19, I also find the word "hallowed," or "holy" (verse 23), referring to Mt. Sinai. In Ephesians 1:4, the saints are to be "holy and flawless." Does the presence of the same word, "holy," make it "safe to say" that the saints of Ephesians are *not* holy because they are people rather than mountains? It does if we follow the logic of Acts 28 theorists.

UNCOMMON GROUND

In Exodus 19 the Lord descended out of heaven to the earth in clouds. He descended to the earth with a trumpet blast, and there was thunder, lightning and earthquakes. He was accompanied by angels (Psalm 68:17), and all of Israel saw Him and were gathered together in one place. The Lord spoke with a voice and Moses went up to meet the Lord. Does this sound familiar?

No, it does not. Danny Russino makes much fanfare out of some incidental similar wording in these passages—"cloud" and "trumpet"—so I will make

significant noise over the obvious differences, which comprise the larger point. The difference between God descending to Sinai with a dispensation of death and condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:7-9) meant for Israelites in the midst of thunder, lightning, earthquakes and angels, and Jesus Christ secretly descending to earth in grace, love and peace to gather to His body to Himself, could not be more pronounced. How dare this artificially construed analogy be foisted upon unsuspecting saints and presented as truth. To think that the snatching away of the body of Christ is the fulfillment of God's program of law for Israel is, to me, so twisted as to deserve this rebuke. To say that the analogy is misleading is an understatement. The descent of Christ for His body brings immortality. Contrast this with the descent



of Yahweh to Sinai:

Then Yahweh said to Moses: Go to the people, and you will hallow them today and tomorrow; let them rinse their raiments and come to be prepared for the third day; for on the third day Yahweh shall descend on Mount Sinai before the eyes of all the people. Also you will set a boundary for the people round about, saying: Guard yourselves concerning ascent into the mountain or touching its outmost part. Everyone touching the mountain shall be put to death, yea death. Not hand shall touch him, for he shall be stoned, yea stoned or shot, yea shot; if whether beast for man, he shall not live. When the alarm horn draws forth, they may ascend onto the mountain. —Exodus 19:10-13

The coming of the law to Sinai was accompanied by fear and the threat of death. God forbade the Israelites from even touching the mountain, let alone ascending it. Anyone touching it was executed. Even beasts that inadvertently breached Sinai's precincts were killed. This being said, how can we now be called upon to think of Exodus 19 as a guide to the coming of Christ for a people practically jumping into His arms in love? The difference between these two passages is the difference between death and life, darkness and light, law and grace. It is the difference between the gospel of the Circumcision and the message of ultimate deliverance brought to the nations via Paul. To say that one is suggestive of or a fulfillment of the other is a mistake of the highest order.

When the Lord descended to Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19), it was the beginning of Israel's typical kingdom. This beginning is a picture of Israel's future kingdom glory. Just as the Lord descended to them, so in 1 Thessalonians 4 He descends to Israel at the beginning of their future kingdom. *We have identical elements and characters in both Exodus 19 and 1 Thessalonians 4.*

—Danny Russino

I beg to differ.

DOES THIS SOUND LIKE THE
NEW COVENANT TO YOU?

At Mt. Sinai, the Lord descended to equip His people further with the Law. In the future, at the last trumpet, the Lord will descend in like manner *and plant the New Covenant in Israel's heart as Jeremiah prophesied (Jeremiah 31:33).*

—Danny Russino

We arrive, finally, at the heart of what the Acts 28 theorists suppose the snatching away truly is: *It's the planting of the New Covenant into Israel's heart, as Jeremiah prophesied.* Let's compare the pertinent passages and see if we reach a similar conclusion.

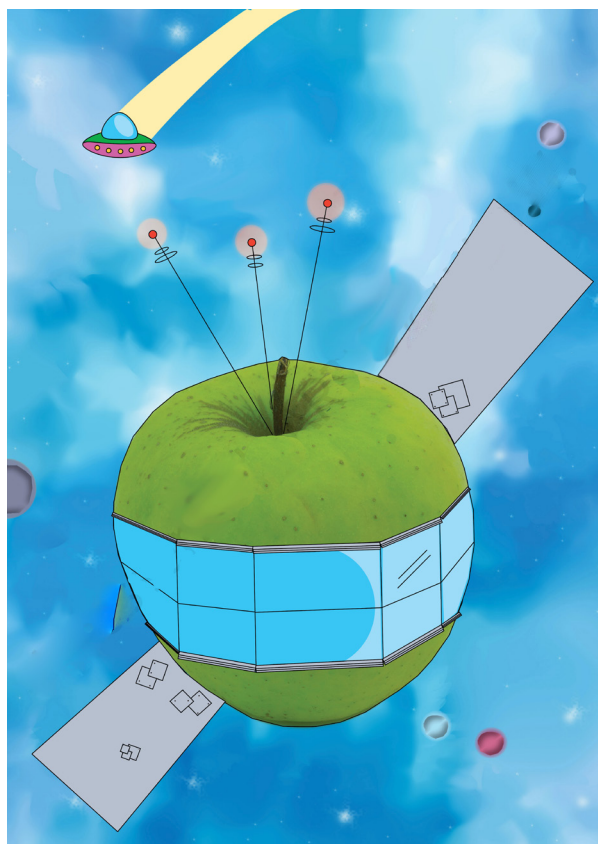
Jeremiah 31:33—

For this is the covenant which I shall contract with the house of Israel after those days, averring is Yahweh: I will put My law within them, And I shall write it on their heart; I will become their Elohim, And they shall become My people.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17—

Now we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are reposing, lest you may sorrow according as the rest, also, who have no expectation. For, if we are believing that Jesus died and rose, thus also, those who are put to repose, will God, through Jesus, lead forth together with Him. For this we are saying to you by the word of the Lord, that we, the living, who are surviving to the presence of the Lord, should by no means outstrip those who are put to repose, for the Lord Himself will be descending from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the Chief Messenger, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall be rising first. Thereupon we, the living who are surviving, shall at the same time be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And thus shall we always be together with the Lord.

Where is mention of the law in 1 Thessalonians? Where is mention of a covenant? Where is mention of the house of Israel? These passage are as disparate as can be. This isn't a comparison of apples and oranges, but apples and outer space objects. To even pretend to see the fulfillment of law to Israel in the 1 Thessalonians 4 context is to already be heavily predisposed to it.



“MEET”

I commented upon this word and its manipulation when analyzing one of Clyde's articles, but here it comes again. The Acts 28 theorists make much to-do about the simple word “meet” (*apantēsis*) in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, as in we will “meet the Lord in the air.” It's a simple word, yes? It means exactly what one might think it means, yes?; to go and be together with someone? Not according to the Acts 28 theorists. This contingent is so desperate to make the snatching away an Israel event, they must force the participants back to earth. Anyone going to heaven would make the snatching away a body-of-Christ event and crash the entire Acts 28 premise. As there is nothing said concerning a return to earth in the 1 Thessalonians context, Acts 28 theorists kidnap the word “meet,” tie it to a chair, and perform unspeakable perversions upon it. From Danny Russino's article in the *BSN*:

In every case this word “meet” does not mean continuing on into the place from where the one being met came. On the contrary, it means to go out and meet the one coming to the place from which those meeting him came. In other words, 1 Thessalonians 4 is about that company of that time going up from the earth to meet the Lord in the air as He descends to the earth out of heaven.

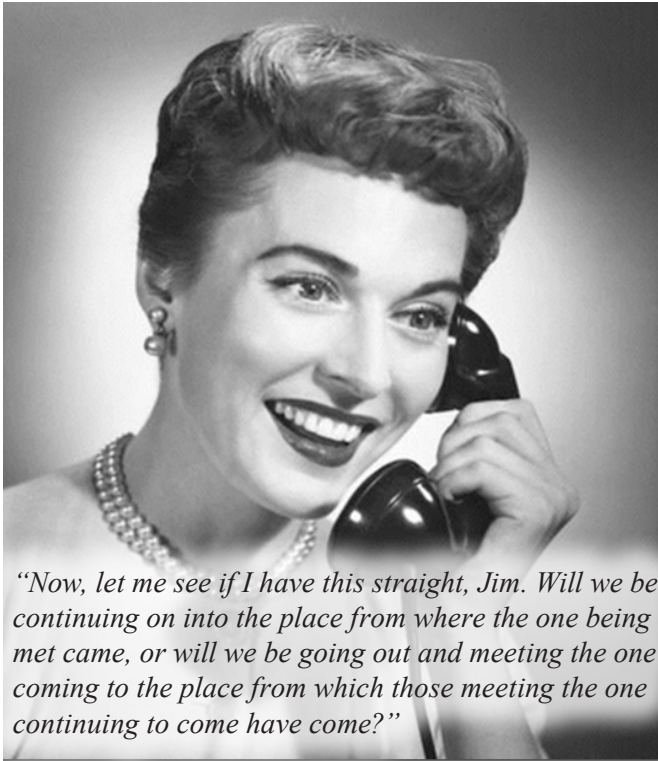
I've seen fewer tangles at kite flying contests. Here is the simple definition of *apantēsis* in *Strong's Concordance*, word #529:

apantēsis (pronounced ap-an'tay-sis) from 528; a (friendly) encounter:—meet.

Here is the definition according to *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*—

apantēsis 1) to meet one

In the first place, whoever suggested that “meet” means “continuing on into the place from where the one being met came” ought to be removed from polite society. Secondly, who could possibly construe “meet” to mean, “to go out and meet the one coming to the place from which those meeting him came”? Talk about torturing a word to promote an agenda. Allow me to insert this so-called definition into another *apantēsis* passage—Acts 28:15—and see what happens. First, here is the passage as it reads in the *Concordant Literal New Testament*—



And thence the brethren, hearing about us, come to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Taverns, perceiving whom, Paul, thanking God, took courage.

Simple, yes? The brethren came to see Paul; to meet him; to greet him; to come together with him in a friendly encounter. There is no distracting nonsense here about who is going where with whom. The word "meet" doesn't care about any of that. It doesn't care where one was before, or where one goes after. It only cares that people are coming together; it's only duty is to describe a meeting. Everything else is decided by context. Here is the steroid-injected definition dropped into Acts 28:15—

And thence the brethren, hearing about us, go out and meet us, coming to the place from which those meeting us came, as far as Appii Forum and Three Taverns, perceiving whom, Paul, thanking God, took courage.

The fake definition ruins the passage, providing not only superfluous but misleading information. Why burden a simple sentence *unless* an ulterior motive demands it? Even in the presence of an ulterior motive, the desired effect fails upon application. If it fails here in Acts, then I expect it to also fail in 1 Thessalonians 4. In the Acts

passage, Paul is coming to Rome in order to be jailed. Did the Roman brethren who greeted Paul come from prison? Did they go with Paul *to* prison? Case closed. In Thessalonians, the saints meeting Christ in the air originated from the earth. Based on the warped definition of "meet" they present us, Acts 28 theorists assume that Christ returns to earth, for that is where those meeting Him came from. But as demonstrated in Acts, this definition fails to satisfy context. In 1 Thessalonians 4, nothing about coming to earth is even suggested. Contrary to the extraordinary new definition of a common word, we get no clue from *apantēsis* itself as to who is going where next. As I wrote in a previous edition, we must look to other passages of Scripture to discover the destination and destiny of those suspended with their Savior in the middle of the air.

RANDOM QUOTES OF RANDOMNESS

Throughout the article, Danny Russino makes outrageous claims and expects the reader to believe him simply because he has made them. I did not find a single proof of a single claim. What I found were inferences, bad logic and strained analogies. Here are some of the claims:

The hope of the Thessalonians is not ours today. Thessalonians is a context of Israel's prophecy. When Israel was finally put aside at Acts 28, the hope of the Thessalonians was postponed.

FORCED CONTEXT

At the end of his article, Danny Russino writes,

The "rapture" takes the hope of Paul's epistles for today, which have nothing to do with the earth, and forces it into an earthly context, thus blinding nearly all of Christendom to the hope for today.

For one thing, Danny, it's not the "rapture" being discussed here, but the snatching away. Trying to associate this magnificent event with Christianity may trick some people into discarding it, but it will not trick any of my readers; they are too astute. Besides, it is *you* who are forcing the snatching away into an earthly context. Where are you getting an earthly context from the 1 Thessalonians passage itself? You're setting up your own straw man, then burning him to the ground. Christendom is not blinded today because the so-called rapture is forced into an earthly context, as you claim in this quote. Christendom already considers the so-called rapture in a heavenly con-

text. Christendom is blinded because they perceive no distinction between the gospel of the Circumcision and the gospel of the Uncircumcision, given to Paul. They believe an anathema gospel (Galatians 1:8-9). Along this line, you are adding to the confusion by erasing critical distinctions between these gospels, telling us that half of Paul's letters belong to the Circumcision. Thus, *you* are doing the very thing you claim to detest: taking the hope of Paul's epistles—his six early letters—and forcing them into an earthly context. In this way are you unwittingly contributing to the blindness of Christendom.

GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

I am shocked, really, that Clyde would print such an article as this in the *BSN*. I thought he was more discerning. He must believe Danny's arguments to be sound. I can think of only one upside: A brother wrote to me and said, "I have read Danny Russino's articles on this topic, and they have only convinced me of the error of the position."

Amen. The best evidence *against* the Acts 28 theory is the evidence offered *for* it. —MZ



FROM THE MAIL

ZWTF Volume 4, Iss. 29,
"What is a Believer?"

Dear Martin, I just checked my e-mail before turning in for the night, glad I did. Be of good cheer dear brother, stand firm. I am sure there are many of us scattered all over the planet who are 100 percent behind you, because we too cannot deny what Christ has given us through Paul our Apostle. We must love our enemies, yes, and we do. Many a friend has turned darkness into light, only to find in the end that the "light" was still the deepest darkness of all, denial twisted into human and emotional reasoning. The truth is that they really do not believe God or trust Him, His sovereignty, over every life He has created. It is the same old song, with different lyrics. From Eden to the year

2015, the earth is saturated with false belief just as it has been designated. Everything Paul warned of 2,000 years ago is still relevant, even perhaps more so now because of the exposure of God's Word to a dying and corrupted world. There are literally millions of copies of every type of Bible translation and many millions of "Christian" cults and Churches, as we know, and yet they call proper members of the Body of Christ, "cultish." We must not let that worry us. Soldier on, Martin. Do all that Paul instructs. It is part of the calling. You are NOT ALONE, and even if you were the last man standing, literally, you are NEVER alone in Christ, because He and Father have your back!

* * *

Hi Martin. I give thanks to God for you, to whom I am forever in debt. As you said, a true believer will not settle upon a false doctrine. It is just because God Himself will not allow that. To me, those who for a time seemed to believe in Paul and now are recklessly changing that so as to get more people in the ranks, never truly believed and were never truly in the body of Christ.

While we are in this body and this eon hasn't ended, people will believe anything, teach it, and others will accept it. To me, that is how God wants it. Father has reduced it (the ranks) even more for our benefit; it truly is confusing that people with different ideas and doctrines and behaviors could be called the "Body of Christ." Father, for our benefit, has given us the truth, gradually and through the years, so that we can actually see how special we really are to Him. The time is ever closer; I am so excited. There is a lot of hypocrisy in this group that is known as "the Body of Christ," and it is my opinion that many do not truly belong there.

Your teachings have not only given me the truth, but have helped me to be a better person—toward others and especially toward myself. The truth is that, when someone hears the truth and truly (not feignedly) believes it, he/she becomes a better individual in every sense.

Love you, Martin. Keep on doing what you are doing. Many of us depend on your faithfulness in order to go on living normal lives. I don't mean to put any burden on you at all, I just want to highlight how important your work is.

* * *

Thank you for writing this Martin! I was struggling with this very issue yesterday as I was in disagreement with a Christian friend, realizing I myself was not very clear on salvation for all, and Paul's gospel. I knew I had hit pay dirt in your sentence, "... a knowledge of the salvation of all is not a knowledge of Paul's gospel." It was after midnight before my mind finally stopped trying to sort this out!

* * *

Wow, thank you Martin. This article helped remove a lot of confusion, and with some personal study it will be easier to more fully understand the distinctive nature of Paul's Gospel given to Him and us by God. Continue on in God's grace and teach as God would have you, with confidence and courage. God bless you and all who aid and support you!

* * *

Hi there, Martin. I just wanted to say thanks for the newsletter. It was like a breath of fresh air to me! Particularly because I have been affected a little bit by this dissension that is going on with us all. It had left me feeling a bit disillusioned and ungrounded, Scripturally. And what you wrote here really refreshed me! I believe that you are staying true to the Evangel and what it means, and that people are allowing emotionally-motivated ideas to sidetrack them from what the Evangel teaches. In a way, I don't understand their problem with the exclusivity (meaning that only a few are chosen and called) of the Evangel, since all will be saved sooner or later. It's just that we are being drafted, so to speak, into the "army of the Lord" for spiritual warfare in heavenly places. And just like people here who are drafted into the military and must be separated from loved ones for a while, so it is with us also. This is right and honorable. We, too, will be separated from the rest of humanity for a space of time because we have a *service* to perform for and with the Lord! And that service is for the sake of *everybody*. We will be working to bring about God's great purpose for the eons. Amen! Thanks again, Martin, and keep fighting the good fight!!—as our apostle put it.

* * *

Dear Martin, today's article on faith has helped me to reflect on the grace that has been afforded to me through my life. I'd like to share some of it with you as encouragement to you in your calling.

I never was convinced of man's free will. Women are another story. (I had to say that.) Even at an early age, it

never lined up. I was a fighter and I fought the forces around me long and hard enough to be forever suspicious of the idea that I was in charge...of anything!

However, I didn't live by that truth until my early 60's when a friend asked me if I believed in free will and I instinctively answered with the truth from inside. Then he gave me your book on the topic, and I was on my way to freedom from the lie of the free will doctrine.

I was never comfortable with the Trinity, or eternal hell-fire either. As a Roman Catholic, I was able to protect everyone from the dastardly hell doctrine (except Hitler and the likes) with sloppy reasoning and a sort of lazy intuition. That's how many Catholics deal with the insanity of an eternal place of punishment.

Then I met you guys—mainly you, Clyde, and Dan. I watched and listened carefully. I really wondered about you in particular as I watched God slam you around and knock you silly. Hmm, I thought, another one. I know what this feels like. I saw and felt the disagreements among the Universal Reconciliation proponents and wondered where it was coming from, since Paul's gospel seemed so rich and freeing. I was slap-happy about this newfound truth and wondered what the problem was.

But this time (as contrasted with the time when I entered born-again Christianity), I was going to do some thinking for myself and not adopt any doctrines without thinking them through and letting the truth land where it would. And it always does land where it will, without my will and without my willing. I am sure in my deepest parts that the truth makes itself apparent as it will, and that the spirit blows where it will.

So, I must be, or have been, a lazy generalist when it comes to the truth. I couldn't take it seriously because those clerics and other church leaders were so confused and inconsistent on so many points. I just let pieces of the truth fall in front of me and rolled along in a mild sort of spiritual inflammation. I didn't know the difference between the hard and soft of it. Not until I was introduced to your rigorous, take-no-prisoners approach to the truth. I didn't really understand the importance of it until today's article.

Another theme in my life has been the growing awareness of sloppy thinking in every area of human thought. There are very few geniuses of human thought. So what normal, average people seem to do is superficially string ideas together in hopes that their ornamental string will adorn them when they wear it out to play. If most people could see their "thought clothes" they'd look like kids who took garments out of mom and dad's closet and decided to dress up like adults.

Today, I am thankful for your clarity of thought, your willingness to forge truth where you find it—instead of just mining it from other's thoughts. I can't wait to read your next book.

I am so thankful for the fight, the struggle, the jungle of the mind we must endure and the wisdom/humor of the Master as He brings us through.

Thanks for everything you are doing, Martin. This is a great ride we are on together!

* * *

Thanks to you, but especially to our Father who has called and drawn us to Himself. Thank you for heralding the evangel of Paul with ferocity. I praise God for your adherence to the truth. May our Father Almighty, the Creator of All, and His Son - our Redeemer resurrected from among the dead, the Firstborn, our Brother, Master and Sovereign - be praised for the glorious plan of salvation beyond our ken. And may you be comforted and encouraged by Him alone.

Thank you for your clarion call to the Remnant, those chosen from the foundation of the world.

* * *

Hi Martin. I know you are a very sensitive and humble man. The strength it takes to profess Paul's evangel comes from God, and you pay a huge price for it on a constant basis. Please know that I believe that God's sovereignty is complete. To think that man possesses free will completely negates God's sovereignty. To believe in the Trinity whereby Jesus is, was, and always will be God, negates everything Jesus as a man went through on the cross. To present God's sovereignty and Jesus' actual death to an unbeliever or feigned believer is like handing them a red hot poker. It's proof they do not accept God's sovereignty or Jesus' humanness prior to his death. It is a hard truth, but truth it is. As a herald, you do have the task of calling out those that do not speak the truth. My heart breaks for you and the pain this causes. I pray that God's peace and comfort surround you. Love to you.

* * *

Bravo, Brother. I find myself understanding what you are saying and yet find myself separated and even chastised for my simple beliefs in God, through Christ. I'm still learning, but I find God is not allowing me to accept or even listen to a lot of teachings that muddy the waters of truth with doctrinal arguments that confuse the issue of belief. You turned me on to Alan Hess and I'm also listening to him as he teaches the basics over and over and over again. I will continue to listen and support and cry out to Father for HIS truth and not the false hope that is coming from the church.

* * *

Dear Martin, please don't feel you must answer this. How you may even have time to read it baffles me. Your output is amazing. I just read yesterday's ZWTF -- "What is a Believer?" First, I am sorry and saddened that you have apparently been shunned and even mocked by people you love. I am sorry also that some people are willing to water down Paul's gospel. Jesus didn't go easy on the teachers of Israel. Teachers of Scripture must be held to the highest standard. Those of us who are serious students can be led astray pretty easily, unfortunately. Because we're human, we'd like to see an "easier" way to eonian salvation. I believed for some time that my family were brought into the body because of their association with me. I believed this because I wanted to believe it.

You are the first teacher who introduced me to the Truth. God led me to your videos one June day in 2013. I said, "Who in the hell is this guy?" I couldn't stop watching and listening, for weeks. I believe I know your heart. I believe you love Jesus and God way beyond my understanding. I believe you take your commission from God with the strictest seriousness, as you should. I believe that if you come to see that you're in error about something, you will readily say so. I trust you as much as I could trust any human being. I am sorry that you must receive the slings and arrows because you refuse to compromise. I think it hurts you more deeply than it would many people. But it's pretty clear that that's the price you must pay. I believe God is very happy with you, Martin. And so am I.

Much love.

* * *

Martin, Thanks for this hard-hitting exposition. I thank God that He has given you the insight and the courage to stand up and contend for the evangel. I know it is difficult in this time of apostasy, especially when even friends and family stand in opposition. Please know that you are not alone, though it must seem that way sometimes.

I pray for you often, asking the Father to strengthen and encourage you in your work. I pray also that our Savior will soon appear to snatch us out of this wicked eon and deliver us to our celestial allotment. The rapid increase in evil and corruption on all sides leads me to believe that glorious day is drawing near. God speed that day.

Until then, please continue to be a voice for the truth. Grace and peace.