

# Martin Zender vs. standard-issue Christian on topic of eternal torment.



Greetings. To close out the year, I thought it would be fun to reprint a letter I received from a standard-issue Christian on the topic of eternal torment, and my response. This particular standard-issue Christian happens to be a Baptist, and Baptists happen to hold a standard-issue opinion on the topic of the destiny of the human race post-Calvary: they think the race is doomed! This letter is the same one featured on my website, but I thought it would benefit from an illustrated version. Additionally, it may receive a wider reception in this format. Perhaps some have never read it. I wrote this letter early in my career. I've been told that it's a classic. I hope this reprinting helps you combat the terrible teaching of eternal torment. I am calling my antagonist "Steve" because that is his name. I never heard from the guy again.

Is it not your abhorrence for the doctrine of "eternal punishment" that moves you to an abhorrence for any Bible, Bible teacher, or church that supports that doctrine?

It is true that I do abhor the doctrine of eternal torment and the mistranslated Bibles that appear to teach it, but I do not abhor people.

You speak as if you were on equal footing with the translators of the Authorized Version, 1611 - King James Bible. Have you ever read of their spiritual and scholastic qualities? Would you find common ground with William Bedwell as "the Father of Arabic studies in England"? Would your experience parallel that of John Boys (or Bois) - "he began to read Hebrew at age 5 and was admitted to St. John's College, Cambridge, when he was 14"? Does your scholarship equal that of Lancelot Andrews - "His knowledge in Latin, Greek,

Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic, besides 15 modern languages was so advanced that he may be ranked as on of the rarest linguists in Christendom”? These are just 3 of the 47 men that worked in active cooperation to produce the preserved translation to which all other translations or paraphrases are compared.

Anyone can look at a Young’s or Strong’s concordance and see the thousands (over 20,000 in fact) of inconsistencies of the King James Version. I am not impressed with the scholarship of the three translating heroes you mention when I can see with my own eyes that, for instance, they translated 14 different Greek words with the same English word “depart,” or that they took the same Greek word (*aion*, for instance), and translated it with six different English words—some with opposite meanings—or that their version contains a bona fide contradiction (compare Revelation 11:15 with 1 Corinthians 15:25). I would be much more impressed if Larry, Curly and Moe had translated with an actual system (the KJV translators had no system), and I could verify with my own eyes that their final product made sense.

You are mesmerized by diplomas. I say, drop your reverential awe and use your common sense; base your judgment on the result of the KJV translators’ work, not the age at which William Bedwell entered St. John’s College. It is a published fact that, as brilliant as these men may have been, they were forced to conform to the prevailing doctrines of the church of England. Many of the more conscionable translators used marginal notes to overcome this handicap. But alas, the marginal notes are not to be found in the modern KJV. The KJV was but a revision of the Bishop’s Bible, and the translators themselves noted in the preface that better translations would follow. But of course, the original preface has gone the way of the marginal notes. (Did you know that the foremost Hebrew scholar of the day, Hugh Broughton, when asked in 1611 to endorse the KJV, said, and I quote: “I would rather be rent to pieces by wild horses than have had my part in the urging of such a wretched version of the Bible on the poor people”)?

Do you read Greek? Do you own and use a copy of “The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament” by Berry? Have you completed any recognized courses of study of the Greek Language?

I do read some Greek. I have a Concordant Greek

Text (a Greek text restored from uncial manuscripts and their ancient editors with the variant readings in the super linear), which includes an ultraliteral English translation in the sub linear. It is based on the Weymouth Resultant Greek Text, which consolidates the best readings from the Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus and Codex Alexandrinus, the three oldest manuscripts existent. (The KJV translators, I should mention here, had access to only 8 manuscripts, none predating the tenth century.) I have studied many Greek courses, but do not have a signed certificate from any of them that I could impress you with; I pick this from this, that from that. My favorite is *The Greek Elements* by A.E. Knoch, but I also like *Summers’ Essentials of New Testament Greek*. I have three other helpful volumes from the likes of Reinecker, Cartledge, and Hanna.



“I would be much more impressed if Larry, Curly and Moe had translated with an actual system.”

You state concerning translation work -“A word can only have one meaning.” Do you really think that is so? If so, would you please give me the only meaning for the following word --”MEAN”. Can you do it without the context helping you determine the correct meaning of the 3 possible meanings? Go ahead and send me the one meaning for that word as I have used it in a sentence written on a piece of paper and stored in my desk drawer. The one meaning should fit - right? I will tell you whether you were right or wrong.

What do you mean? Why are you being so mean? The English language is corrupt, which is why God did not choose English to reveal Himself—not to mention that it had not been invented yet. There are hundreds of identically-spelled words in English that have different meanings. And if you don't believe that, I'll wind my watch in the wind and swat your bat with my bat. The Greek and Hebrew languages (to which I was referring) are another story. Yet even in these languages we must distinguish between meaning and usage. Each Greek word in the divine vocabulary has only one meaning, though the usage may vary. (I trust you understand the important difference between meaning and usage. A plane that lands at the



airport, the plane that the carpenter uses, and the plane tree are different usages of a word that have the same basic meaning: flat or level as a surface—an airplane has flat undersides to its wings, the carpenter makes things flat with the plane, and the plane tree has large, flat leaves.) Find me two Greek words in the divine vocabulary that



mean exactly the same thing. Then find me one Greek word in the divine vocabulary that has two different meanings (don't confuse meaning with usage!) I will tell you whether you are right or wrong.

You say -"Eternal torment is the unreceivable". Do you really think that not receiving a truth makes it invalid? Do you really think that not believing a truth makes it go away?

You missed my point. Eternal torment is unreceivable by normal people. People have to be brainwashed to receive it. Certainly I agree with you that the rejection of a truth has no bearing on whether or not truth is truth. You're a perfect example of that: You don't believe that Jesus Christ will save everyone, but that does not change the fact that He will.

Do you believe in eternal life?

Yes, I believe in eternal life, but the Bible does not speak of such, with this term. Jesus never did promise "eternal life" to his followers, but rather "eonian life." (He used the Greek adjective *aionion*. We have a nearly perfect English equivalent, a near transliteration, which is "eonian," having to do with eons, which are periods of time.) Is this to say that I do not believe I will live forever? It does not. But if I want to prove that I live forever, I cannot do so with the adjective *aionion*, but with the noun *athanasia* (literally UN-DEATH), found in 1 Corinthians 15:53 and translated "immortality." This verse says that our mortal bodies must "put on immortality." Immortal people can't die—thus, they live forever. Again, all *aionion* proves is that one lives for the eons. Not everyone has eonian life (not everyone is chosen or called), but everyone has eternal life (based solely on Jesus' blood shed on their behalf at Calvary).

Do you believe in "a new heaven and a new earth" to come? Where did you get this information? Do you believe in a "purgatory place" for unbelievers? Where does the soul and spirit of an unbeliever go at the point of death (separation)?

Yes, I believe in a new heaven and a new earth to come. I got this information in Revelation, chapter 21. No, I do not believe in a "purgatory place" for unbelievers. Upon death (which I hope you believe to be the cessation of consciousness), the souls, bodies, and spirits of believers and unbelievers alike go to the same place they came from: the soul returns to the unseen (Gr. *hades* Hb. *sheol*, literally UN-PERCEIVED, Psalm 16:10), the body returns to the ground (Genesis 3:17-19), and the spirit returns to God (Ecclesiastes 12:1-7). I hope you



understand that there is no consciousness (that is, no soul), apart from the joining of the spirit with a body (See Genesis 2:7). If you do believe this, then you are rare, indeed. Hardly anyone believes that death is death these days, content rather to believe Satan's first lie: "You shall not surely die."

"The salvation of all is the only outcome worthy of God" (your quote). Do you believe that eventually we will be enjoying our heavenly existence with the likes of Herod, Hitler, Arafat ... etc ???

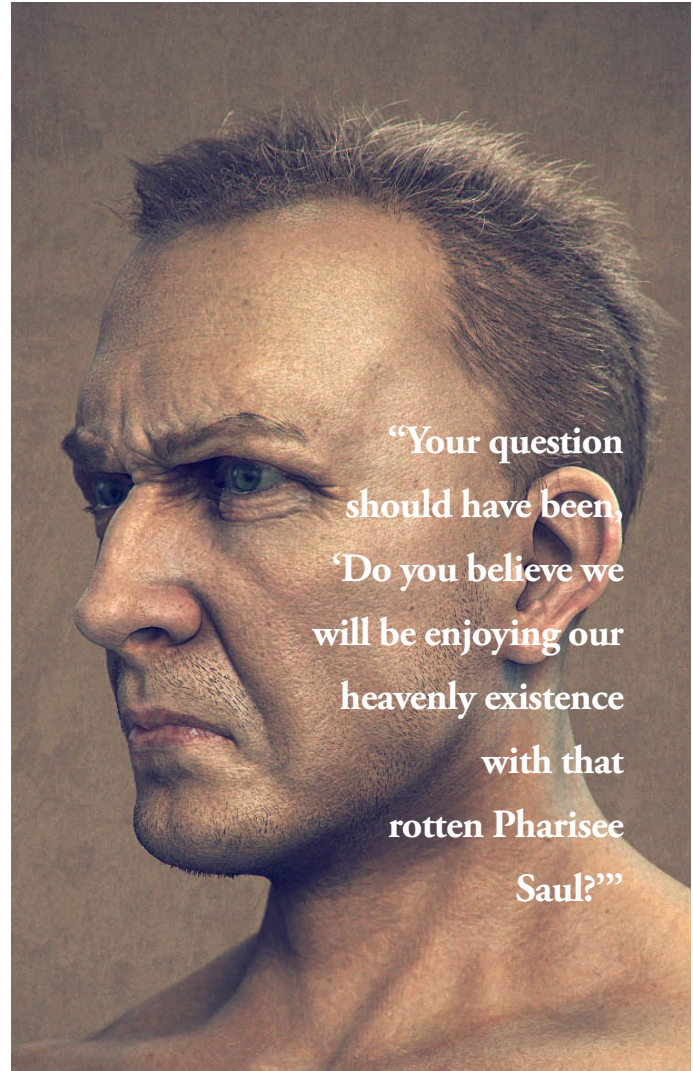
Yes, I believe that someday we will be enjoying our heavenly existence with the likes of Herod, Hitler, Arafat, perhaps even Mother Theresa. But these people will be changed, just as we were changed. I don't know if you've ever read what I'm about to write, but here goes: "In the grace of God I am what I am." Paul said that in 1 Corinthians 15:10. If not for the grace of God, you and I would have been Hitlers or Herods. Were you once a sinner? I'm guessing probably so. God changed you. Well, I was once a sinner, too, and God changed me, even though I still sin sometimes. Why do you mention Herod, Hitler and Arafat? Why didn't you just go to the world-champion sinner? The greatest sinner of all time was the apostle Paul when he was Saul (see 1 Timothy 1:15). What you should have asked, then, was: "Do you believe that eventually we will be enjoying our heavenly existence with that rotten Pharisee Saul?" Yes, I do, because God miraculously turned him into that man of God, Paul.

Do you think God's name is "Holy" or "Love"?

God's name is Jehovah (literally, "will-being-was"). His title is El (literally "placer"). I'm not getting your point with this question.

"For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:13) According to your doctrine of salvation, should the Lord Jesus have said, "all are chosen -- eventually"?

If you appreciated the difference between the evangels of the Circumcision and the Uncircumcision (Gal. 2:7-8), you would not ask this question. Yes, Jesus said that many are called and few are chosen—for the thousand-year kingdom. Certainly, not all are chosen for that kingdom, not even eventually. I was not speaking of the thousand-year kingdom where you quote me,



"Your question should have been, 'Do you believe we will be enjoying our heavenly existence with that rotten Pharisee Saul?'"

but rather of the vivification of all humanity (1 Corinthians 15:22-28), which occurs long after the thousand-year kingdom has run its course. Interesting to note that, in the evangel of the Uncircumcision (Paul calls it "my evangel" in Romans 16:25), believers are chosen first, then called. (Romans 8:30.) By the way, this is not my doctrine of salvation, it's Paul's (as he received it from Christ—see 1 Timothy 2: 6, 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, Romans 5:18-19, and 1 Timothy 4:10)

In Matthew 16:26, how could a person ever "lose his own soul"? And what's the big deal if he "loses his own soul" for a period of time -- he will eventually be a part of "all in all" ... right?

An Israelite would lose his soul, that is, he would forfeit the pleasures of the thousand-year kingdom. (Remember, when Jesus was on earth He was commissioned only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; Matthew 15:24.) It

was certainly a big deal to an Israelite to miss out on that kingdom. True, he would still be part of “all in all,” but that would not be an immediate consolation to an Israelite whose hopes and dreams were centered on that thousand-year kingdom.

[In Matthew 20:28, why didn't Jesus say he was to give his life a ransom for all \(“many”\)?](#)

Jesus gave His soul as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28)—speaking of the thousand-year kingdom—yet “He is giving Himself a correspondent Ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:6), speaking of the wider salvation. Your major stumbling block throughout this letter, Steve, is that you are confusing what Christ did and said concerning the thousand-year kingdom (the Israelite kingdom, when that nation will shepherd all the other nations), with what He will do with all humanity at the end of the ages. If you had this key, many of your questions would answer themselves.

[What does the phrase in John 3:36 mean -- “and he that believeth not shall not see life”?](#)

John 3:36 means just what it says; “He that believeth not shall not see life.” That used to be you, didn't it? Or did you always believe? Maybe you've always been a believer. Maybe you were never locked up in stubbornness. Maybe you have always been righteous. Maybe you have always sought out God. Maybe you were never an unbeliever—ever. Wow. You're lucky. Most of us aren't that blessed. We were once unbelievers and were not seeing life. But then God gave us belief and we saw life. God will eventually give belief to everyone, in the ages to come. He has to, or He cannot become all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

[Could you explain Revelation 19:1-3 and Revelation 20:14,15 and Revelation 21:8?](#)

Concerning Revelation 19:1-3, what is there to explain here? It's a scene of terrible judgment. Is it the end? Not hardly. The proper translation of verse 3 is, “...and her smoke is ascending for the eons of the eons.” Your KJV reads “forever and ever” which is an absurd translation of the Greek phrase *aionas ton aionon*, a translation which ignores both the plural of *aion* and the genitive case, “of the.” As for the Greek connective *kai*—“and”—it is not to be found in the Greek text. This is a scene of judgment. It is not the end, because after the eons run their course,

God becomes all in all. This happens at the consummation (1 Corinthians 15:22-28).

As far as Revelation 20:14-15 goes, these verses are self-explanatory. People are cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death. I believe that. You are assuming that this is their final end. Apparently, you do not believe that God is the savior of all humanity (1 Timothy 4:10), or that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15), or that all that



“Maybe you have always been righteous. Wow. You're lucky.”

came out of God returns to God (Romans 11:36), or that Jesus Christ justifies all who were condemned in Adam (Romans 5:18-19), or that the blood of Christ's cross will reconcile all to God, both that in the heavens or that on the earth (Colossians 1:20), or that death is to be abolished (1 Corinthians 15:26). Otherwise, you would have realized that Revelation 20:14-15 cannot be the end for these people.

It's the same with Revelation 21:8. The second death is not eternal. If you had an accurate Bible, or studied your Berry Interlinear with fresh eyes, you would know that.

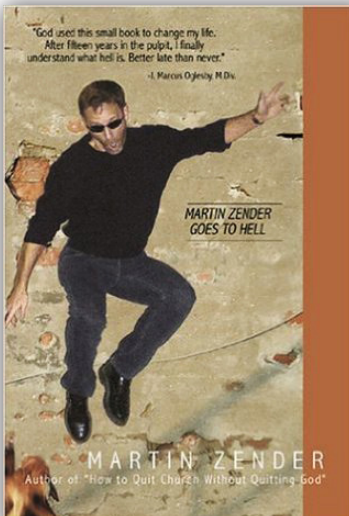
[What is the purpose of the account of Lazarus and the certain rich man found in Luke 16:19-31? Why did Jesus speak in these terms?](#)



The Rich Man and Lazarus is a parable. Jesus begins teaching a five-part parable in Luke 15:3, which includes (in chapter 16), the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The purpose of the five-part parable is not to teach what happens to a person after death, but to teach the Pharisees not to look down upon the publicans. Why did Jesus speak in these terms? Because He did not speak to the people apart from parables (Matthew 13:34-35). If you are using this passage to teach what happens to an unbeliever after death, you are

murdering the context and missing the whole point of a parable. You can read a detailed analysis of this passage in my book, *Martin Zender Goes to Hell*.

What is the purpose of “preaching the gospel to every creature” if every creature will somehow, somewhere, sometime believe?



People believe through the heralding. This is your first ridiculous question. It's like asking, “What is the purpose of inviting everyone to the party if it's God's intention that everyone accept the invitation to the party?”

You say, “...God will one day give you belief”. Do you have any Bible passages or principles to support this statement?

I take it back. God may never give you belief in this life. Unless God gives you a realization of the truth before you die, it could be that you will be saved by sight way down the road at the Great White Throne judgment, when you stand before God and God is, at that time, obvious to you. (Today, He is hiding Himself from you.) To be saved by belief, one must be given that belief in the absence of sight, that is, in the present day when God chooses to hide Himself from most. “Belief” comes from the same root word as “faith”—*pistis*, in the Greek. Thus, Paul writes in Hebrews 11:1, “Faith is ... a conviction concerning matters which are not being observed.”

What if the multiplied millions of Christian evangelicals since the cross are right and you are wrong? If there is eternal punishment for unbelievers, then you will be humanly responsible for the fate of those who follow your teachings. Is that not so? Yes or No?

Why are you so impressed with “multiplied millions”? You are judging by sight, not by faith, nor by the Word of God. If there is eternal punishment for unbelievers, then will I be humanly responsible for the fate of those who follow my teachings? This is your second ridiculous question, assuming you think that such a scenario could be possible in the first place. God is responsible for the fate of humanity, not me. He laid the burden of saving the world and its inhabitants upon His Son, not upon Martin Zender. The evangel I teach is one of grace and redemption to sinners based on the blood of Christ shed at Calvary. The second bizarre aspect of this question is your assumption that anyone who adheres to the gospel of grace (the gospel I teach) would be eternally punished. You've got punishment on the brain, Steve.

“You’ve got punishment on the brain, Steve. You are the one teaching horrific lies about God.”

You are the one teaching horrific lies about God, not me, and so, if I were you, I would be far more concerned about that. In other words: *Mind your own teaching*. Your teaching of eternal torment belittles the cross of Christ. It sets eternal destiny on the shoulders of humanity, rather than on the shoulders of Christ. I don't say these things to condemn you, but only to warn you that your teachings are anything but safe. Your teachings are part of the “wood, grass and straw” of 1 Corinthians 3:12-13 and these will not survive the testing fires of God—assuming you will even be appearing at the dais of Christ. Read this passage, please, for here is the real fire you should be concerned with, not the fictitious flames of “eternal hell” where my disadvantaged readers are supposedly heading.

Imagine this ridiculous conversation between God and one of my poor, doomed followers:

**God:** *What?!* You believed in a message of total grace that gives My Son the final victory over sin and death for *all?! Where did you get that garbage?*

**Doomed Follower:** Martin Zender! It's all his fault! He told me about it!

**God:** *Zender?! Ha!* He doesn't even own the Interlinear Greek-English New Testament by Berry.

**Doomed Follower:** What are you going to do?

**God:** Well, let's just say that it has a lot to do with you and Zender burning in flames for eternity.

**Doomed Follower:** Please! I didn't mean to overestimate the positive effects of Your Son's death and resurrection. Honest, I didn't!

**God:** *Bah.* Go whine to Zender.

**Doomed Follower:** Is that a euphemism for 'Go to hell'?

**God:** It is now. Bye-bye!

**Doomed Follower:** *Nooooooooooooooooooooo!*

You are asking me a lot of questions, Steve, so you shouldn't mind it if I ask you but two: 1) Are you really pursuing truth—or do you wish only to uphold the traditions of your church? 2) Are you willing to change your viewpoint in the face of facts—or are facts a threat to your system of theology?

[Could it be that when you left the Catholic Church that you actually sought and found “another Jesus”, “another spirit”, and “another gospel”? II Corinthians 11:4](#)

Absurd. It was in the Catholic church that I heard of “another Jesus,” “another spirit,” and “another gospel.” It is after I came out of that man-made institution and began studying Scripture on my own that I became acquainted with the true Jesus, the true spirit, and the true gospel.

[Do you have a “saving faith” or a “satanic faith” \(belief\) -- James 2:19? Will these “devils” also be given the gift of belief and become a part of God's big, happy family?](#)

It's unfortunate that you feel it necessary to mock the very concept of “God's big, happy family,” because this is exactly what God will have in the end, although Paul uses the phrase, “that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28). I have a saving faith because I believe in Jesus Christ. Certainly demons—and Satan himself— will be saved by sight down the road, for they, too, must be reconciled to God through the blood of the cross (Colossians 1:20). What is so fantastic about that? All that came

from God must return to God (Romans 11:36). Jesus Christ did not shed his blood on Calvary for humanity only, but for all creation (Romans 8:20-21). We know that there are “spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials” (Ephesians 6:12). Do not they also need reconciled to God? Colossians 1:16-20 proves that all creation, “whether those on the earth or those in the heavens,” (Satan is in the heavens now) will be “reconciled to God through the blood of [Jesus Christ],” in whom I believe.

[Why did the Apostle Paul put himself through such physical and emotional pain to “preach the gospel” if eventually all will believe? Why would a loving God lead him to do that if it doesn't matter if a person leaves “this lifetime” in a state of unbelief?? Do you think if you would have lived back then you could have spared him all that grief? Would you have counseled him in a home scripture study to continue his life as a sincere Pharisee who went about bashing Christians \(Acts 9, Acts 11:26\)?](#)

This ridiculous question is related to your other one. Why didn't you just ask, “Why did Paul put himself through such physical and emotional pain to preach that God is the Savior of all mankind (for this was Paul's gospel, see 1 Tim. 4:10), if eventually all will be saved?” That all will be saved *is* the gospel. Or a part of it. Apparently, you think that Paul preached the false gospel that your church preaches, namely, that human beings must exercise sufficient willpower to be saved. No. Paul based



salvation on Christ, not on humanity's willpower. Paul based salvation on the blood of the cross, not on a man or woman's ability or inability to appropriate that work. The cross saved. And yet it appears that you believe that the cross did not save, but rather merely provided humans with an opportunity to save themselves by believing. It does matter whether or not a person believes in this lifetime; it is a matter of eonian life and eonian death. But this belief comes from God, not the human, otherwise we would have salvation by human willpower, a doctrine to which you apparently adhere. Paul wished that all would believe in this lifetime.



And yet he did not know who God had set ahead of time for eonian life (Acts 13:48). I assure you that those who were chosen beforehand for eonian life will be called to it in this lifetime (Romans 8:30) and given the faith to believe it (Romans 12:3, Philippians 1:29).

\* \* \*

I do not get the impression, Steve, that you are actually seeking knowledge from me by your questions. I wish that were the case. If it is the case and I have misread your intentions, please forgive me. But it seems to me that you are hoping to trap me, to get me to scratch my head and throw up my hands at the impossibility of ever answering such questions as yours—as if I have never seen them before. But I have seen them before. Lots of times. I'm not saying these questions aren't good. Your questions (except for two) are good, and yet they are easily answered by 1) recognizing the difference between the thousand-year kingdom and God's plans for humanity at the consummation of the eons 2) translating the Greek word *aion* and its adjective *aionion* correctly, and 3) rightly distinguishing God's processes (his judgments) from His goal (salvation).

We all have lots to learn. Someday, you will learn that in grace, through faith, you have been saved, and that this faith did not come out of you, but that it was the gift of God. What a great day that will be.

Thank you for your correspondence,

*Martin Zender*

Produced by Martin Zender/www.martinzender.com  
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Dear brother, The fellowship I get from watching your shows is priceless to me and your perspectives on the "Unveiling" reflect your lifelong accumulation of serious thought, filled with boundless energy of heart and mind. I love and respect your spirit, knowing that what we have is only what we have both been given at any time in our journey.

\* \* \*

Thank you so much for sharing with us your fellowship with other believers and continuing to do the videos. Like others who do not get the chance to fellowship, this keeps us going and even though the Father keeps me rooted and grounded in faith, it gets pretty damned lonely. Like you, I just love people and want to spend time with them.

\* \* \*

I have been getting hit with heavy trials that I need to go through. It's amazing how, when I start to lose hope or faith and the pain grows, God always has His spirit rescue me and bring me back. His love we really cannot resist. God has to take my desires from me. He knows that part of me is crushed because He has taken away dreams of mine. But slowly He is giving me His desires for me. Every time these trials—physical as well as emotional—are making me grow. I am learning that He is saving me from the world and from people who would otherwise eat me alive. I think about everyone in the body of Christ and how they are doing. I know the pains of feeling alone, being hurt, being betrayed, and sometimes it seems like the bad breaks just won't end. But I know they will. I give you a lot of credit because God trusts you with a very big job. Never forget that He uses you and the other teachers to give peace and hope to broken-down humans like me. You have no idea how valuable it is to have these truths in the midst of attacks by Satan. Keep your head up, my friend!