



## Q & Hey

Thanks for asking about stuff that I know.

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HOW DOES A PERSON OBTAIN EONIAN LIFE? AND WHAT ABOUT BAPTISM?

Hi. I've read much of your written material and listened to many of your shows and have come to accept what you have said about the Bible. My question to you is: how does a person obtain eonian life? I have seen many places that say to repent and accept Jesus into your life and you shall be saved. What do I have to do/believe to get eonian life? Also, what are your thoughts on baptism? Is it necessary? Thanks.

## Hey

Thanks for writing. You ask good questions.

Eonian life is a gift of God (Rom. 6:23). Even your belief in Christ (Phil. 1:29) is graciously granted you. That being said, in order to enjoy eonian life, simply believe that Jesus died for your sins and was roused from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Now, it may seem like I have just contradicted myself by telling you that eonian life is a gift, then telling you that you must do something to have it. Consider this carefully. If you have been designated beforehand for the place of a son (Ephesians 1:5), then you will believe. Romans 8:30 says, "Now whom He designates beforehand, these He calls also." If you have been designated beforehand, God will bring someone into you life to acquaint you with the evangel—namely, that Christ died for your sins—and you will believe it; in fact, you must believe it. Thus, your belief is a result of you being chosen to believe. Contrast this with the Christian message that belief must come first. *They* teach that you're damned until you decide to believe. Scripture teaches that belief is a result of having been chosen beforehand to believe.

One of the verses you may be referring to is the Philippian jailer to Paul and Silas in Acts 16: 30, "Masters, what must I be doing that I may be saved?" Now they say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household." In the Concordant Version, the verb "saved" has a superior vertical line in front of it, meaning that it is the incomplete verb form. That is, it is ongoing action. It literally reads, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be being saved." Believing brings a person into a practical appreciation of his or her salvation. We have been saved (complete verb form) since the death of Christ for our sakes (see Ephesians 2:8). Believing brings us into a practical experience of our salvation,

causing us to be *being* saved (incomplete verb form).

I hope this makes sense to you.

Water baptism is totally unessential. In fact, it's an insult to our completeness in Christ (Colossians 2:10). Water baptism was only a shadow pointing toward the substance (Christ), much as the sacrificed lambs pointed to Him. When someone asks me when I was baptized, I say, "Two thousand years ago." This is the true baptism. "Or are you ignorant that whoever are baptized into Christ Jesus, are baptized into His death?" (Romans 6:3).

I hope this response has been helpful. I love making sense for a living. —*Martin*

## "THE INDIGNATION OF GOD"

**Q** Do you have an explanation for John 3:36? It seems to refute the salvation of all.



**Hey** In the Concordant Version, John 3:36 reads: "He who is believing in the Son has life eonian, yet he who is stubborn as to the Son shall not be seeing life, but the indignation of God is remaining on him."

One of the keys to this passage is correcting the faulty translation, "everlasting." The underlying Greek word here is *aionian*. As the root noun of this adjective

is *aion*, and as *aion* is regularly pluralized, and as an adjective (*aionian*) cannot mean more than its noun (*aion*), it is impossible for this word to suggest anything resembling eternity. It is a time word. The correct translation, above, solves the problem. The reason this passage at first glance seems to undo the truth of the salvation of all, is because the inaccurate and therefore troublesome (ultimately God-defiling) translation, "everlasting."

Note that the "shall not be seeing life" of the stubborn, parallels the "has life eonian" of those who are believing. The limit of the scope of this passage is the eonian times, which are temporary. Since I am insisting that the "shall not be seeing life" is temporary, am I also insisting that the "eonian life" of believers is also temporary? I certainly am. The eonian times takes us to a time when God becomes all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28). This occurs at the consummation of the eons, when death is abolished (1 Corinthians 15:26). When death is abolished, there is nothing but life. At this time, everyone ever created enjoys an eternity with God.

Everyone has eternal life with God by virtue of the cross of Christ, but not everyone enjoys eonian life. Even the enjoyers of eonian life give up the title "Enjoyer of Eonian Life" when the eons end. It is an assumption to suppose that, because eonian life ends, therefore life itself ends. This is ridiculous. It is like insisting that, because Sunday ends, days themselves end. "Eonian life" is a special kind of life that gets one to the Consummation of the eons, when there is nothing *but* life. If you have only enough water to make it to a well, do you therefore die of thirst when you get to the well?

It is true that whoever is stubborn as to the Son shall not be seeing life, and that the indignation of God is remaining on him. But to use a parallel example, it is also true that whoever is stubborn as to exercise shall not be seeing good health, and that layers of fat are remaining on him. But all this changes as soon as the person starts eating right and exercising. In the Scriptural example, all of this is true as long as the person remains stubborn. When God removes the stubbornness—*voila!*—life comes and the indignation of God melts away.

Everyone was once stubborn; Romans 11:32—"God locks up all together in stubbornness." The purpose? Same verse: "So that He may be having mercy upon all." Before we were believers, none of us could see life. Faithless people "shall not have eonian life." But as soon as God gives them faith, they enter into it.

In John 1:38, Jesus is in Bethany and His disciples asked Him, "Where art Thou remaining?" He is saying

to them, “Come and see.” And so, “they came, then, and perceived where He is remaining, and they remain with Him that day.” Does the fact that Jesus was then *remaining* in Bethany require Him to stay there forever? No, because verse 43 of the same chapter says that the next day Jesus went into Galilee. The “ing” ending on verbs indicates the incomplete verb form; it’s ongoing action that is true as long as it is happening, i.e., “I am writing.” Six minutes from now, I may not be writing, I may be eating an orange. Thus also with the “remaining” of John 3:36. The indignation of God remains on a stubborn person until the moment it doesn’t. What facilitates such a miracle? “God locks up all together in stubbornness, that He should be having mercy upon all” (Romans 11:32).

#### DO YOU EVER GET LONELY AND DISCOURAGED?

**Q** Dear Martin, I know you’re very busy, and I don’t mean to take up your time, but if you ever get a minute, I would



be interested in knowing if you’ve ever had this experience we’re going through of being isolated, and feeling discouraged. We don’t have a writing ministry or a series of speaking engagements, or a bi-weekly group to meet with. It’s just us, here at home, with no contact, no feedback, no opportunity to share—nothing. It has been this way for fifteen years, and we’re just feeling very forgotten, forsaken, and useless. Did you ever go through anything like this? Just wondering.

## Hey

Dear Wondering, Yes, I have severe bouts of feeling isolated and discouraged. I wish my writing ministry and speaking engagements and YouTube show protected me from it, but they don’t. In fact, the writing ministry and speaking engagements sometimes get me into more trouble, which only increases my misery. I think it’s the constant swimming upstream that wears me out. This makes my fins hurt.

You are not alone, is what I’m saying. I’m convinced that these ill feelings are normal for this course. This is the only thing that really encourages me, knowing that Paul had his fights with Barnabas, his clashes with Jerusalem. At one point, Paul actually wrote, “We were despairing of life.” This is 2 Corinthians 1:8. I take that to mean: “We were tired of living.” I’ll drink to that—and I mean this quite literally.

Sincerely Yours,  
—Martin

#### AM I ALLOWED TO DRINK BEER AT OLIVE GARDEN?

**Q** Martin, you make sense for a living, so maybe you can help me make sense of the whole “don’t do certain things because you may cause someone to stumble” doctrine that has been pushed on us. To me this falls into direct conflict of the concept of “freedom in Christ,” and therefore has never rung true in my mind. Furthermore, the “stumbling” concept is taken a step further by convincing the believer that he/she/ must somehow be responsible for the behavior of those around who may witness the believer doing some act. Example: Don’t go out and have a beer with dinner because there may be someone at a table nearby who struggles with alcohol abuse. If he/she/ even sees you enjoying that frosty brew, it could compel him/her to fall into alcohol abuse all over again. “Believer! Look at what you’ve done! You have a beer,



enjoy it, and yet you've managed to destroy a life in the process." I have been dying to take dead aim at this idea. It sickens me to think that people believe in a God Who is in total control of His creation, and yet they feel He can't control an evening at the Olive Garden.

## Hey

Thanks for sending along this good question. Yes, I can help you and I'm happy to. This is not a doctrine that has been pushed on people; it is Paul's teaching. It is not an idea, as you call it, but a way to walk in love and consideration of others. And yet, having said that, I will say that this is not as binding as you're making it. And it is certainly not in conflict with Paul's teaching of freedom in Christ.

When you're at Olive Garden, you have no idea who is sitting around you. You are not purposely flaunting your freedom in Christ in order to show off how liberated you are. So go ahead and drink the beer in peace and enjoyment. I believe Paul is speaking here of purposely flaunting a freedom in front of someone who you know to be weak of faith and who will stumble at it. Paul begins Romans 14 this way, "Now the infirm in the faith be taking to yourselves." The only way we can practice what Paul teaches in Romans 14 is if we know whether or not someone is infirm in the faith. Therefore, this teaching cannot apply at Olive Garden, or to any public place where we don't know anyone.

Verse 19 of this chapter is the key: "Consequently, then, we are pursuing that which makes for peace and that which is for the edification of one another." Paul's use of "consequently" tells us that he is summing up his teaching. "One another" refers to fellow members of the body of Christ. Therefore, this teaching does

not refer to casual onlookers, or people in adjoining booths at Olive Garden. Being careful of the scruples of our fellow Body members does not mean we can't try to expand their faith. There is a fine line, however, between challenging someone and offending them. It's an art form, I suppose.

Here's how this works in my own life: I can be paging through a *Maxim* magazine at the bookstore and it doesn't matter to me who sees me because I have the freedom in Christ to enjoy looking at pictures of beautiful females and I have the faith that this is not a sin for me. But let's say that I am with a believer whose sensibilities are hurt—religious, spiritual, soulish or otherwise—when I do this. He thinks that it's a grave sin to look at pictures of sexy females—and here he is, standing right over my shoulder. Certainly, I am not going to purposely upset this person by opening the magazine. I am not going to flaunt my freedom. It is my privilege, then, to abstain from my freedom in this man's presence. Am I being a hypocrite? No. I'm being considerate of this man's scruples. Thus, I am pursuing that which makes for peace and edification. If the guy says, "Just a minute, Zender. I've got to add another quarter to the parking meter," then I will probably page through *Maxim* while he's out fooling with his car. You see? It's all about offending someone *personally and immediately*. It has nothing to do with losing my freedom in Christ, or with offending strangers, or even respecting the scruples of another who is not even physically present. My freedom in Christ is as intact as ever and I seek every opportunity to enjoy its expression.

That God controls every situation is absolute truth—so don't worry that God's going to lose someone because you drink a beer. The relative truth, however, is that God chooses to enact His control through human beings. It's no less His control. Absolutely, God is responsible for everything. Relatively—and only relatively, you're responsible. This is not a free will teaching, but rather a teaching on practical care of each other. For instance: Are parents responsible to change their baby's diaper? Yes. Does this mean God is not in control of it? No.

If you're confused about the absolute versus the relative viewpoint, listen to my "Potter and the Clay" talks on ZenderTalk section of my website.<sup>1</sup> To refuse to page through *Maxim* for the sake of another's happiness is

<sup>1</sup> [http://martinzender.com/ZenderTalk/The\\_Potter\\_&\\_the\\_Clay/potter\\_firhtm](http://martinzender.com/ZenderTalk/The_Potter_&_the_Clay/potter_firhtm)

known as acting responsibly. Does this mean I'm *ultimately* responsible? No. It is still "God operating in me to will as well as to work for the sake of His delight" (Philippians 2:13). I hope this has helped, and thanks for the good question. —*Martin*

#### SINCE GOD ALREADY KNOWS WHAT HE'S GOING TO DO, WHY PRAY?

**Q** Martin, you don't know me, but you know my grandmother. I'm 25 years old and can't remember if I ever believed in the orthodox view of God. I have enjoyed many of your writings over the past few years, and I understand. All of it.

As a matter of fact, I used to be such a staunch advocate for the supreme and total sovereignty of God that I would debate with anyone; and I was good at it. (The point of this



is email is to ask you something that has been bothering me in my faith, but only recently). Like I said, I believe in the sovereignty of God, and a purpose for us being here, but I'm conflicted, in ignorance I suppose, about prayer. I used to think that what happened was God's will, and that was the end of it.

I felt that if we asked for what God's will was, He would tell us. But we see this poses two problems: first, if it is God's will, then it will happen anyway regardless of what we say or do. Second, what would be the point of petitioning God for something? It would be cruel for God to have us assume that we could sway Him if it weren't true. I ask because for the first time in my life I am questioning the line between sovereignty and our perceived influence.

My father died four years ago. If I believe that he could

have been healed during the week he lay in a coma, then that means that when we prayed, one of two things was true. One, that our prayers were not good enough, were not done properly, or did not contain enough faith, all of which I do not believe. Two, that it was against God's will to bring my father back; and if that was the case then there was no point in petitioning God's healing in the first place and we could have saved our time and breath. I know that sounds harsh, but sometimes I feel like God is just letting everything just "happen," and He doesn't really care if or when you or I die, lose a limb, run a red light, kill someone, kill 40 million babies, etc.

Is it possible that we are so egocentric that we think God cares if we have a bad thought or even if we do something wrong? Is it possible that there is no definite path for us in this life, and that God is just waiting till the consummation of the ages to come down here? Whether we die at 80 years old or as a fetus—does God really care? Does it make a difference to Him?

I know God talks to people in the Bible, but when do *we* get to hear from Him? Or are we supposed to continue telling people that "God spoke to my heart, as clear as day!" Sometimes I feel led to pray about something and feel that God has spoken to my heart, then later on I feel let down, and I find myself making excuses. "Well I guess God decided to do something else." Why? Why do we continue having faith if the only thing we can rely on is that the outcome is never going to be determined by us and apparently God has no problem breaking our hearts after He has "led" us to pray about something.

Wow! I didn't realize that I was this frustrated about it. One thing I fully believe is that God's ultimate plan for us is to know Him, and—as you say—this requires a backdrop of contrast. This is evident in human nature as we are creatures of contrast, and so this makes wonderful sense to me. It also provides evidence as to the purpose of Satan. I pose a question to Christians, sometimes, that they cannot answer and it is this: *If God is all-powerful, and the devil is God's adversary, then why doesn't God just destroy him?* It is a foreign thought to them, and the way they react, you'd have thought I'd started yelling at them in Mandarin or something.

Anyway, I'm sorry for writing so lengthy and taking up your time, and, to be honest, I don't even know why I'm writing this to you. (I don't mean that in a bad way, it's just that I haven't discussed this with anyone really and it just—came out). I am sure you are busy but if you get a chance to write back I would appreciate it.

Thanks.

# Hey

Hello. I don't know you personally, no, but I feel as if I do. Your grandmother has spoken of you many times, and highly, I might add. I'm glad you wrote to me.

I have had the same struggles with prayer. It is very difficult for me nowadays to pray out loud, and especially difficult for me to ask God for things. I hardly ever do it. I do have answers for you. First of all, banish all thoughts that God doesn't care about the details. He IS the details. Ephesians 1:11—"God is operating all in accord with the counsel of His own will." It sounds kind of clinical, I know, but it only *sounds* that way; God loves operating all in accord with the counsel of His will. Acts 17:24 makes this more intimate: "In Him we are living and moving and are." Acts 17:25 is more intimate still, "He gives to all life and breath and all." I like the action word "gives." It means that God isn't just passively watching things go by, but He is actively doing things for the good (the eventual good) of all.

There is no real line between sovereignty and perceived influence. Sovereignty is the only solid thing. The key is in the word you used: "perceived." God is always sovereign, that is, He is always influencing. Perception is not a thing; it's the knowing about a thing. The real thing is God's sovereignty, and that never changes. Only our perception comes and goes. So the only "line" is our awareness that God is doing all. I put "line" in quotation marks because it's not really a line at all. That is, there is no point where God's sovereignty ends and ours begins. It's all God's sovereignty. There are just times when we feel God doing things and when we don't.

As for prayer, you're making a mistake in assuming that petitioning God necessarily means asking for something. It could mean that, but most often prayer is a letting go of frustrations and needs. It's a "giving it to God." Thus, when Paul says in Philippians 4:6, "In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made know to God," he doesn't mean that we pray thinking we're going to get what we ask for. If he did mean this, then his next statement would be, "and then God will give you what you request." But instead Paul says, "and the peace of God shall be garrisoning your hearts..." The purpose of prayer, then, is to give us peace. We unload our requests to God because it makes us feel good to put the ball in His court.

In the case of your father (he is resting in peace now), you said to God, "Heal him! Make him well!" all the time knowing that God was going to do what He was going

to do. But it did you good to make your request known, because then you could be at peace, knowing that you laid out what you wanted. It's more a "relieving of pressure and responsibility" thing, rather than a "pray the right way and get what you want" thing. I did the same thing when my dad died four years ago. I petitioned God to heal him, then followed up with, "yet Thy will be done." In no way did I feel my petition was a twisting of God's arm, and I'm sure you were the same way. But it felt good to let God know what I wanted. After that, the situation really felt off my shoulders. I knew it was off my shoulders anyway, but the point of prayer is to make it *feel* that way to us, and to participate in God's will.

This answers the question of why pray at all when God's going to do what He's going to do. First of all, prayer is meant to be somewhat desperate, I believe. It's not that we "take time to pray," but that we're pouring out our frustrations and desperate desires to God. Second of all, prayer is like God letting us touch the steering wheel of His car. He's driving, of course, but it's a privilege to participate in what He's doing. It's His idea to let us touch the steering wheel. Only idiots think that a child touching his father's steering wheel is actually driving the car, but many Christians do think this way.

There are many places in Paul's writings where Paul asks people to pray for things that God already told Paul would happen. When Paul was in Rome, for instance, he wrote to the Ephesians (6:19), "Pray for me, that to me expression may be granted in opening my mouth with boldness, to make known the secret of the evangel." Why would Paul ask for this prayer when God already told Paul way back in Acts 26:11, "For as you certify to that which concerns Me in Jerusalem, thus you must testify in Rome also." Because Paul knew it was a privilege for people to touch the steering wheel of God's car. People who say that



“Jesus spoke to me clear as day,” or “Jesus walks with me every day” drive me crazy. If we say that now, what will we say when Jesus *really* walks with us and talks with us? Let’s face it: God doesn’t talk to us now. And where is Jesus? He hasn’t been to earth in 2000 years. That’s why we have the Scriptures. Such manifestations of “Jesus speaking to me” and “Jesus appearing to me,” are false. This is not the day for that. The Scriptures, during this time of the administration of the grace of God, brought us by Paul, take Christ’s place. Yes, we still have His spirit, but He speaks through words He has already written.

This is a time for faith. It should not surprise you, then, that God and Jesus do not show up or audibly speak now. We are going to be vastly rewarded someday for believing by faith. People talk to me all the time about how they wish they could see or hear something, and I always tell them that I don’t want to see or hear anything until the resurrection, because I want the reward that comes for believing without seeing and hearing. “Blessed are they,” Jesus said, “who have not seen and yet believe.” I want to be among the blessed. I hope this has helped. I’m glad you wrote; you asked an incredibly mature question. Don’t hesitate to write, ever.

Yours in Christ, *Martin Zender*

## HOW DO I TITHE?

**Q** Dear Martin, If I don’t attend church, then how do I tithe? You may argue that we are free from the law, but tithing comes before the law—Genesis 14:20. Also, people in the church I used to attend claimed that because they tithed, good things happened to them, like one lady got a great price on a new home. Maybe you might discuss this topic one day on your daily show. Thanks.

**Hey** Hi, and thanks for the letter. “Tithe” is a generic term that means “a tenth.” It is not exclusive to the Law of Moses and can apply to anything, which explains its appearance in Genesis. The law, as you know, carries a curse upon all who do not do all the things written in it. So I’m pretty sure you don’t want to be under a curse, but would prefer freedom in Christ. To follow your logic, even though we’re free from law we should still offer sheep to God because that’s what Abel did in Genesis. Is that what you want us to do? I don’t think so. God inaugurated the Law of Moses



tithe to support the Levites and the temple. Because there are no acting Levites and no temple today, this purpose no longer exists. Not even Israelites can tithe today. No one is commanded anywhere in Scripture to support a church with tithes. Ministers are twisting Scripture and taking it out of context in order to make people think this is a Scriptural requirement. Again, this was an Israelite command for the provision of the Levites only. It has nothing to do with modern churches. I believe that good things will happen to people whether they tithe or not. The lady you speak of was blessed, possibly, because of her generosity, not because she tithed; it’s the generous heart, not the tithe, that God notices.

If I asked for tithes to support my ministry, I’d have starved long ago. People have given above and beyond the tithe, not because they’re ultra-tithers or because I require payment or contributions of any kind (I don’t; most of my material is free online), but because they’re gleeful givers who love the gospel of grace and how I teach it—and they want me to keep doing it. They give from the heart, gladly, rather than compulsively, from a command. The Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:7 that God loves the gleeful giver. No one in Israel was handing over his or her tenth gleefully, I’m betting. They *had* to do it—or else. Giving ought to be gleeful, not guilt-ful. Thanks for the suggestion, and keep listening! Yours in Christ, —*Martin*

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