

## The Great Changer of Minds

Hey, Martin. Do all return to God for eternity *despite* their belief system? Isn't belief important? —Greg F., Idaho

Good question, Greg. Yes, believe is important. But God has no trouble changing people's belief system. Just as there was a day on which God changed your mind about God, so He will just as easily change other people's minds. It's all a matter of timing. It's you now, them later. ■



# Martin Zender's Clanging Gong News

"If I know all mysteries and all knowledge, but have no love, I am a clanging gong" --1 Cor. 13:1-2



Two out of three isn't bad.

## Special Q&A Issue!

### WHY CAN'T I LET GO?

Thank you for the freedom of Christ that comes through your writings. I feel like I'm free and in such a wide-open space. There is so much freedom and I know it's real but I'm afraid (really) to let go. I have my family and they need me. How do I really let go and really let God have His way in my life? I'm so afraid to really give Him control of my life. "What if I make a mistake," is a constant fear of mine. "What if my kids' lives are ruined?" I'm always so afraid. I really wish I didn't have to be. I so very much want to trust Him, but—

Anyways, this is no news to the Lord. What a messed up kid I must be to Him. Thank you very much for listening. I think it helped to write this and to know it is being read.

—Cindy S., Wisconsin

Dear Cindy, Letting go is hard. Have you considered that maybe you should let go of the need to let go? I say, be more forgiving of yourself and the fact that you are still fearful. I once made a tape called "At Peace With Not Being At Peace," and this is one of the greatest revelations I've ever enjoyed. It is this: We need to be more accepting of our not-so-perfect



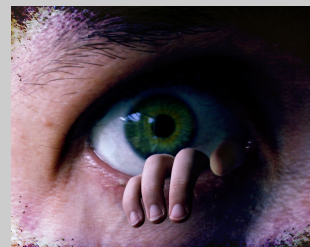
frames. You need to say: "God, I know that only You can give me the strength to really let go and let you have Your way in my life. But I also know that, at the moment, me being afraid *is* Your way for my life. If You could see clear, please deliver me of my fear, because I don't like being this way. But if being afraid is for some reason part of Your present calling for me, then let me be at peace with not being at peace. All is of You!"

In other words, Cindy—as strange as this sounds—you may need to let go of your desire to let go. Forgive yourself. When God is ready, He'll do a marvelous work in this department. Keep asking God about it, but keep telling Him that you are willing to be the weakened vessel He needs you to be. ■

## CONDEMNED!

Hi, Martin. How does this verse fit into your view that there is no eternal torment: Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be *condemned*" (Mark 16:15-16). That's a pretty strong word there, "condemned." —Jamie M., Florida

Hello, Jamie. People read things into that word because they assume Jesus is talking about an eternity of fiery torment. But there are no flames on the premises (that is, in the context). The word "condemn" is translated from the Greek word *katakrimo*. This is a two-part Greek word; *kata*=down, and *krino*=judged. The literal meaning of this word, then, is "down judge." It is an adverse judgment. For example, a bank robber is condemned to ten years in prison (a "down-judgment") as opposed to being made president of the bank, which would be a favorable judgment. What happens to him after his condemnation? After ten years in jail, he gets out. The word condemnation itself carries no suggestion of eternal consequence. Thanks for writing! ■



## Jesus Christ and the spirits in Tartarus

**Y**o, Martin. I have been tearing my hair out trying to reconcile the scriptures regarding the state of the dead (“the dead know nothing”) with 1 Peter 3:19 where Christ descended to preach to disobedient spirits in prison. There seems to be some controversy regarding who these spirits are. As I understand death, the spirit returns to God and the soul no longer exists, or is said to be in Sheol/Hades. So if the dead are dead, how did Christ preach to them if they are men?



Maybe these spirits are not the spirits of men? If they are the spirits of men, how can it be? I also thought that without a soul there is no consciousness. Any help with this will be greatly appreciated!!

—Alex H., California

**H**appy to help you out on this, Alex. The spirits referred to in 1 Pet. 3:19 are not the spirits of men. These are the same spirits of 2 Peter 2:4 who were disobedient in the days of Noah. The King James Version, I believe, calls them “sinning angels.”

Dead humans are never referred to as spirits; they are referred to as souls. This term (“spirits”) applies to immortal celestial be-

ings that have never taken flesh. Apparently, these spirits were involved in events prior to the flood (see 2 Peter, chapter 2) and have been thrust into the “gloomy caverns of Tartarus” (Concordant Literal New Testament), “to be kept for chastening judging” (CLNT).

Jesus did not preach to anybody or anything during the three days he was in the tomb. Indeed, the dead know nothing (Ecclesiastes 9:5), and that includes Jesus Christ. For three days, Jesus Christ did not exist. He was dead, and He would have remained dead had His Father not raised him. Read the text of 1 Pet. 3:19 carefully: “Being put to death, indeed, in flesh, yet vivified in spirit, in which, being gone to the spirits in jail also, He heralds to those once stubborn, when the patience of God awaited in the days of Noah.” Being put to death in flesh, yet vivified in spirit” is no more a simultaneous occurrence than “I was sick, yet I got better.” Our Lord was first put to death, and then three days later He was vivified in spirit. He heralded to these spirits *after* His resurrection—probably before greeting Mary in the garden.

You are correct about the state of the dead, and this passage, though it appears at first glance to overturn it, does not. ■

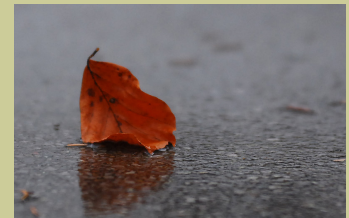
### WHAT A REVELATION!

DISCOURAGED AND LONELY?  
MANY SAINTS ARE IN  
THE SAME BOAT

**Dear Martin,** Have you 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?

—Janet B., Arkansas

**Dear Janet,** Yes. I wish my work protected me, but it doesn’t. In fact, my work sometimes gets me into more trouble, which increases the feelings of isolation. You are not alone in your misery. I’m hearing this from many people. What’s worse is being surrounded by people



(especially family) who think you’re crazy. If this is any comfort, these trials seem to be normal for our course. Think of the apostle Paul who at the end of his life wrote: “All those in the province of Asia were turned from me” (2 Tim. 1:15). Only Luke was physically with him at that crucial time (2 Tim. 4:11). And yet! Who stood by him at ALL times? *Christ!* “Yet the Lord stood beside me, and He invigorates me” (2 Tim. 4:17). Our Lord Jesus Christ is alive, awake, and as near as your meditations. Think about Him today! ■

## “Should I let my future wife take my future kid to church?”

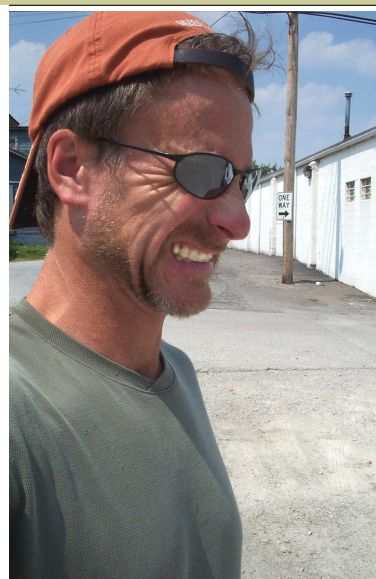
**M**artin, my girlfriend and I are thinking about marriage. She believes in Jesus and is pretty sure there is no eternal torment, but feels it is important to raise a child in church. I don’t know if I can convince her that our kid wouldn’t need church. What do you think? —Joe W., Texas

Hello, Joe. The organized, institutional church is detrimental to spiritual growth. If you and your girlfriend are serious, you need to tell her that, according to scripture, parents are responsible to teach their children

about God. Sending a kid to seminary-trained teachers to learn about God is like putting a kid in an Al-Qaida camp to learn about George Washington. Instead of speaking badly about church, however, tell your girlfriend that you would never trust your future child’s well-being to a man-made institution. Use the phrase “man-made institution” rather than “church,” as this may help introduce her to the ugliness of human religion. ■

# Rants & Stuff

The Apostle Paul says we should not murmur (Philippians 2:14). Therefore, I shall rant.



## Satan invented the standard church setting



I just have to chuckle when people tell me that Satan wants us to abandon the standard church setting. Someone actually said that to me recently. This person said, “Martin, Satan wants us to abandon the standard church setting. You advocate people quitting organized religion and the standard church setting, so you must be on the same side as Satan. Ha, ha. Got you on that one.”

I knew it would be rude to chuckle directly into this sweet person’s face, so I said, “Yes, you got me all right.” Then I went into my car and chuckled until the windows fogged.

Satan wants us to abandon the standard church setting? It’s precisely the opposite. Satan is delighted when people join churches. Church is where all the institutionally trained, seminary-produced preachers go. Seminary is where the standard, denominational, uncriticized, unanalyzed and darkest doctrines of Satan get taught. It is where Satan continues to distribute his greatest feats of deception, namely,

eternal torment and salvation by human will power. It is in church where people learn that salvation does not depend, ultimately, upon the sacrifice of Christ, but upon the will of human beings. It is in church where people learn that the love of God miraculously includes the burning of fathers and mothers and sons and daughters in eternal fire. It is in church where people learn to feel proud and smugly possessive of their accomplishments for Christ. And you say Satan wants us to abandon the church setting?

Why would he? He invented it. ■



### JUST BELIEVE THE OPPOSITE

by M. Zender



“To tolerate everything is to teach nothing.”

— Dr. F. J. Kinsman

