

Resigned to Eternity in Hell

Flippantly she said regarding eternity, "I don't want to go to heaven, because none of my friends will be there!" Nothing my mother has ever said is more memorable (and lamentable) than her stated resignation to spend eternity in a devil's hell. Unfortunately, from what I have been able to observe, and glean from the Bible, the dear woman who bore me, nursed me and reared me in this world, seems determined to act out her self-fulfilling prophecy.

No, not one of either my wife's or my parents, brothers or sisters affectionately embraces the Gospel of Christ. Once my grandfather, who is now deceased, literally covered his ears against the Truth. Our folks and their friends worked hard, lived hard, played hard and died hard -- outside of Christ. Though not acknowledged in this life, Jesus will not be ignored in eternity (Romans 14:11-12; Revelation 1:7).

Aside from the myriad of souls who delude themselves with a false hope of heaven (Matthew 7:21-23; Romans 10:2-3), besides perhaps billions now living who may have never even heard of Jesus (Romans 10:13-17), vast multitudes who ought to know better have no aspiration of going to heaven. Included in that number are many erring Christians (Romans 10:16, 18).

A few years ago, I was called to a city several hours distant from my home to visit a preacher friend of mine. I became painfully aware that (1) he had ceased to preach, (2) he moved out and left his wife and son, (3) he abandoned the church, too, and (4) he preferred the companionship of another woman.

I intercepted him between his factory job and the commencement of his after-hours employment as a pinsetter at a bowling alley. Later, we were able to talk under the awkward circumstance and heavy noise of crashing bowling balls and pins. There was absolutely nothing that I could say to my friend of which he was not already aware. Further, this dear Christian brother resigned himself to hell. He also realized his actions virtually guaranteed that his non-Christian son would never obey the Gospel.

It is hurtful to know that one's family members refuse the Christ and the Gospel he brought; even our Lord felt the pain of rejection as the Christ by his earthly family (John 7:5). Often the children of God are among the least able to convert their own families (Matthew 10:21; Mark 6:4). For many the price of loyalty to God is the sacrifice of earthly, family relationships (Matthew 19: 27-30). Thankfully, the joy of heaven somehow will overpower such grief (Revelation 21:4). Faithful and caring Christians must let themselves off the proverbial and emotional hook regarding unconverted family members (Romans 10:1).

It is a devil's lie that one cannot sin so as to be lost after becoming a Christian. Apostasy with its attendant condemnation is an ever-present danger -- for both individual Christians (1 Peter 5:8; 2 Peter 2:20-22) and congregations (Acts 20:28-30; Revelation 2-3). It is right to attempt to rescue fallen brethren (James 5:19-20), howbeit with carefulness to avoid the same sins (Jude 23). Much to our disappointment, though, not every Christian can be recovered (2 Timothy 4:10).

Even if we may have contributed to the demise of a brother (Acts 8:1-3; 26:10-11), beyond repentance (Acts 8:22) and redeeming the remaining time (Ephesians 5:16; 1 Corinthians 15:10), we may be able to do little more to undo some wrong. Individual accountability (2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12-15) and a promised avenue of escape for every temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13) somewhat mitigate one's culpability for the sins of others.

For sure, there is no gladness in the loss of family and friends. Instead, I rejoice in the Lord always (Philippians 4:4). Forgive us our sins, dear Lord, and come quickly (Revelation 22:20).

Dear Reader, are you outside of Christ and have you resigned yourself to a devil's hell? Or, are you a Christian, but through sinful devices have nevertheless consigned yourself to eternal torment? Who are you influencing against Christ? Whoever you are, wherever you find yourself spiritually, take courage with the knowledge that each of us can triumph over sin and its bitter reward. Heavenly bliss awaits every weary, loyal pilgrim. Let's make this journey together!

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