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# No One Goes to Hell By Accident

Recently while praying for the salvation of men in prison here, the Holy Spirit surprised me with the following statement, "NO ONE GOES TO HELL BY ACCIDENT." As I pondered these poignant words, the Lord suddenly showed me a short film clip vision further illuminating the statement. A man was walking hastily to an appointment. He had papers in one arm and a cup of coffee in the other, rushing down the road of life, not paying attention to what was in front of him. Without warning, the man tripped over Jesus who was in the center of the road on his knees, praying and interceding in this man's behalf. The papers flew everywhere, the coffee spilled and the man crashed to the ground disheveled. As he looked back, he saw the cause of his problem, but didn't recognize that it was Jesus who caused him to stumble. Instead, he became angry with the man. He looked upon Jesus with disdain, got up, dusted himself off, picked up his belongings, kicked dust in the face of Jesus, spat on him, and rushed off about his daily activities. The Holy Spirit then repeated the statement, "NO ONE GOES TO HELL BY ACCIDENT."

I began to realize that, throughout our lives, God places Jesus in our paths to keep us from going to hell. I began to reflect on the various times before coming to prison that God tripped me up on my way to destruction. My car failing in route to an appointment (an appointment which I later discovered to be a set up, and my car's strange malfunction saved me from getting busted). A troubling dream that later turned out to be an accurate warning to avoid certain conduct. A Christian handing out tracts in the bar district one night when I was out drinking it up. Each time, I spurned Jesus in my path. I did not recognize that it was Him who was delaying me on my way to destruction. I remember speaking with disdain to those two young Christians handing out Bible tracts, telling them what they really needed was a drink instead of Jesus. I scoffed at their remarks about how much Jesus loved me and that He wanted to save me from my path to hell and destruction. "Hell!" I thought. "If there really is such a place, then all my friends will be there!" I turned on my heels and kicked up dust as I headed into the door of one of the bars to get another drink. I didn't know, at the time, that my lifestyle truly was the path to my destruction.

Several situations and events occurred over the next few years. I constantly tripped over Jesus, who continued to get in my path. A phone call from a Christian on my answering machine, "I just want you to know that for the last two weeks the Lord has laid you upon my heart heavily and I'm praying for you." "That's strange," I thought. "I haven't heard from that person in more than two years. Not since college, when she invited me to a party, that turned out to be non-alcoholic and full of people that seemed to be having all kinds of fun sober. Oh yeah, they were Christians. Aaaaaah, that's for them. I've got my own life, and starting to do pretty good at it, too." Again, I didn't recognize Jesus in my path. My Mother invited me to Church for Easter Sunday (several months in advance). I thought, "Oh, she'll forget about it by the time

Easter rolls around," so I agreed to show up. The night before Easter Sunday, I heard my Mother's voice on my answering machine, reminding me of the date. She had raised me to be a man of my word. Therefore, I drove to Knob Noster, Missouri and showed up late. I snuck in the back row of the small church of about 35 people.

The preacher stopped his sermon and called me out by name! Then, he began prophesying over me to return to the call of God on my life. He told me things that he couldn't naturally know about my present lifestyle. None of it was condemning, but all of it was very convicting! It made me shake! Then, he reminded me of the love of Jesus and told me to get off the path I was on or it would lead to destruction. He returned to his sermon. I didn't hear anything else he preached that day. His words continued to resound in my spirit as I sat in the pew and pondered them. Finally, the closing hymn was being sung. I knew this was my cue to "cut out of Church" early, as I had in my early teen years when my parents required my Church attendance. While walking across the street to my car, I noticed a little old lady in a dress and tennis shoes coming towards me, running as fast as she could. "Oh, no," I thought, "I gotta get out of here!" I picked up my pace, hoping to beat her to my car and get out of there! She somehow got there before I could get my hand on the door. Somewhat out of breath, she smiled and said, "My, what a nice prophecy the Pastor spoke over your life today. I've been attending church here for the better part of my 79 years and I've never been privileged to experience such a thing like that." I looked at her and thought, "Well, lady, if you were in as much sin as I am he'd probably speak to you from the pulpit, too." Instead, I just smiled. She invited me to the luncheon being held after the service. I politely declined. Then she invited me back to Church the following Sunday. I told her that it was quite a long drive to come all the way out to this country congregation, but that I would probably begin attending a church near my home. All the time, I was trying to get in my car. Finally, I was in. She was speaking to me through the window now. I tried to start my car. All the ignition would do was "click." The engine wouldn't even turn over! She said, "Oh dear, car troubles?" I replied, "No, it does this some times." I was lying, of course. My car had never once done this. I told her that everything would be okay. She smiled and told me that she'd be praying for me, then turned and walked off in that dress and tennis shoes.

As I sat in my car, I said one of the few prayers uttered during my wayward years of sin. "God, I know I'm in sin. I know I need to get right with you. I promise that if you'll help get my car started I'll begin going to Church." I turned the ignition, and "Vroom!" Instantly the car turned over. I sat there stunned. I knew it was God's hand at work. I put the vehicle in drive and pulled from the parking lot. The further I got from the Church, those Church people, and that church experience, the more my conviction began to fade. My acknowledgement of God's Hand began to lift. My promise to God also began to wane. My pager went off. I looked at the number. It was a drug transaction! I looked at the pager several times over the next few minutes. Should I return this call or not? A drug deal on Sunday? I'd made them before, why would it matter today? Besides, sin is sin, regardless of the day of the week one commits it. God doesn't group things into Friday night sins versus Tuesday morning sins. Therefore, I can't be penalized any more for sinning on Sunday after church than on Monday morning. There! It made sense. I'll call back and take care of this business right away. No reason to put this one off until a less holy day comes around. So, I did.

I never returned to Church. I stumbled across Jesus that day, but went about the business of my life, missing my day of visitation. No one goes to hell by accident! "Before every man there lies a wide and pleasant road that seems right but ends in death" (Pr. 14:12, LVB). "The faithless will be fully repaid for their ways" (Pr. 14: 14, NIV). It would be three more years before I was finally arrested and sentenced to more than 20 years in the Feds without parole. "Because God does not punish sinners instantly, people feel it is safe to do wrong" (Eccl. 8:11, LVB). In retrospect, I honestly believe that my Mother's prayers protected me from arrest any earlier. She was a prayer warrior all those years. Finally, one day she told the Lord, "Father, I give my son to you. Do with him what you see best, but don't allow him to lose his life. Bring him to salvation." Twenty-four hours later, I was arrested. Go figure. Aaah, the power of a praying Christian. (I

kind of wish she would have prayed that prayer a few years earlier. It could have saved me from a longer sentence.) We must reap what we sow in life (Gal. 6:7), and I had planted several fields full of sin. My harvest came in with interest. That was 1989. God did get my attention. In addition, he answered my Mother's prayer. I did come to salvation, and I didn't lose my life, just a lot of years of my freedom. I've been in prison ever since.

A man in the county jail told me, "If you have to go to jail to avoid going to hell, it's worth it!" When I got to prison, another man told me something that stuck with me. "If you leave prison the same way you came in, you've failed jail, and you have to repeat the class." I looked around the prison and noticed all the second-, third-, fourth-, and fifth-time losers, some of them doing life without the possibility of parole. They would die in prison. No more chances, and they still hadn't repented. Their lives were effectively over. Without a miracle from God, many would never see freedom again. Still, they sat at the card tables gambling for stamps and commissary, smoking cheap cigars, and drinking prison liquor when they could find it or doing drugs when they could get up enough money to buy them. They were in and out of the "hole" when caught, spending as much as several months in solitary confinement each time. Each "time out," they tripped over Jesus in their path, the man praying for them in the middle of the road, trying to deter them from their roadway to destruction. "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death" (Pr. 14:12, RSV). Jesus just keeps praying for us, even though we kick dust in His face, spit on Him, curse Him, and reject the counsel and advice of Christians He sends to speak into our lives. We allow the Bible He provides us to sit unread, on a shelf or in our locker. "No one goes to hell by accident."

Television and sports activities are more important to us than Church. Magazines take priority over God's word. We can quote scores from around the league, but can't quote three verses from the Bible. We can tell you the latest scandals with our NBA, NFL, or movie and music stars and starlets, but are unable to properly converse about God's heroes from the Bible. Who was Hezekiah anyway? Asa? Deborah, the prophetess? Did they ever have a hit CD? Ever score a touchdown? Win a Super Bowl? No, but they did stand in the paths of many who were on their way to destruction, and turned them back to the path of life everlasting. They are heroes in God's eyes, and in the eyes of those men and women who they saved from the pathway to hell.

### **WHAT IN HELL DO YOU WANT?**

What in hell do you want? The party has been cancelled due to fire. There are no appeals courts there. No change of address labels at the post office. No exit signs. "...man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment..." (Heb. 9:27, NIV). There are no second chances in hell. What in hell do you want?

### **WHO IN HELL ARE YOU?**

"And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" for eternity (Mt. 25:30, NKJV, Mt. 8:12, Jude 1:13). Who are you in hell? Just another soul who didn't pay heed to the warning signs. Not even the devil is running anything in hell. "He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore..." (Rev. 20:2, NIV). The devil's not running anything in hell. Neither are his servants. "But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur" (Rev. 19:20, NIV). "...the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur..." (Rev. 21:8, NIV). The Bible tells us, "Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near" (Rev. 1:3, NIV). So, who in hell will you be? Nobody, the same as everyone else who chose the low road and missed the salvation Jesus offers.

## **DON'T GO TO HELL FOR ANYBODY**

Men, don't go to hell for a woman. "But I love her!" Solomon warns us, "For a prostitute will bring a man to poverty, and an adulteress may cost him his very life" (Pr. 6: 26, LVB). "...her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave...Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house" (Pr. 5: 3-8, NIV). Jezebel almost cost King Ahab his soul. Delilah cost Samson his eyes! Ladies, this applies to you as well! Take heed to the warnings God places in your path. Break off that unholy relationship today. Don't go to hell for **any** one!

## **DON'T GO TO HELL FOR YOUR FRIENDS**

"But I want to fit in with the crowd!" Your friends may tell you, "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow you die." In other words, "Hey, you only live once, enjoy life to the fullest. If it feels good, do it!" The Bible tells us, "It is appointed for man to die once, and then face the judgment" (Heb. 9: 27). Many people end up in hell because they wouldn't break unholy ties with their friends, their gang, their drug and drinking buddies, club compatriots, false religion pals. They just wanted to be accepted by the crowd. In hell, there are no more parties. Domino's pizza doesn't deliver. "...Here will be wailing and grinding of teeth" (Mt. 8:1; Lk. 13:28, NAB). If you are in prison and reading this, maybe your good friends helped you get to the slammer. Have they sent you any money, or helped out your family, or written you a letter? Good friends, huh? Having fun yet? Me either. If you don't like prison, then you really won't like hell. There's no commissary there. Won't be any TV or NFL games to keep you from Church on Sundays. Can't find the MTV or Rap videos to pollute your mind with your old lifestyle; no more distractions to keep you from God's salvation. Only one problem – it's too late. Eternity is set and your friends are too busy crying like banshees and grinding their teeth to have fun with you anymore.

## **DON'T GO TO HELL FOR ANYTHING**

"Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love these things you show that you do not really love God; for all these worldly things, these evil desires--the craze for sex, the ambition to buy everything that appeals to you, and the pride that comes from wealth and importance--these are not from God. They are from this evil world itself. And this world is fading away, and these evil, forbidden things will go with it, but whoever keeps doing the will of God will live forever" (1Jn. 2:15-17, LVB). "But I have to make money to live!" Jesus will provide, through an honest living. "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you..." (Mt. 6:33). He clothes the lilies of the field and He can certainly take care of you (see Mt. 6:25-33). Don't end up in hell for anything. "And how do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul in the process? Is anything worth more than your soul?" (Mt. 16:26, NLT). Jesus is in your path today; will you curse Him or embrace Him? Do not let the things of this world distract you. Don't go to hell for **anything**.

## **TWO ROADS**

There are two roads in life, the narrow road and the wide road. "Heaven can be entered only through the narrow gate! The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide enough for all the multitudes who choose its easy way. But the Gateway to Life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a few ever find it" (Mt. 7:13-14, LVB). All our friends from the world are on the wide road. "If it feels good, do it!" is the motto on the wide road. "You are the captain of your own soul" people on this road will tell you. What they don't ever mention is where the road leads. Hell is too hot to spend eternity in. Jesus told a parable about a rich man that spent his entire life on the wide road. The road, at death, led to hell.

“Finally the beggar died and was carried by the angels to be with Abraham in the place of the righteous dead. The rich man also died and was buried, and his soul went into hell. There, in torment, he saw Lazarus in the far distance with Abraham. ‘Father Abraham,’ he shouted, ‘have some pity! Send Lazarus over here if only to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in these flames.’ But Abraham said to him, ‘Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted, and Lazarus had nothing. So now he is here being comforted and you are in anguish. And besides, there is a great chasm separating us, and anyone wanting to come to you from here is stopped at its edge; and no one over there can cross to us.’ Then the rich man said, ‘O Father Abraham, then please send him to my father’s home – for I have five brothers – to warn them about this place of torment lest they come here when they die.’ But Abraham said, ‘The Scriptures have warned them again and again. Your brothers can read them any time they want to.’ The rich man replied, ‘No, Father Abraham, they won’t bother to read them. But if someone is sent to them from the dead, then they will turn from their sins.’ But Abraham said, ‘If they won’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they won’t listen even though someone rises from the dead’” (Luke 16:22-31, LVB).

### WHAT ROAD ARE YOU ON?

Are you on the wide road or the narrow road? Are you headed for heaven or hell? “Jesus said: I am the Way; I am Truth and Life. No one can come to the Father except through me” (Jn. 14:6, NJB). Jesus is the doorway to the narrow road that leads to everlasting life. “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved” (Jn. 10:9, NAS). Jesus died on a cross and was raised from the dead for you and me. Will you believe? Will you receive Him as your Lord and Savior? Jesus is in your path again today. Will you respond to his voice?

### HELL WASN'T MADE FOR YOU OR ME

God never intended hell for you or me. He made hell specifically “for the devil and his angels” (2Pt. 2:4; Rev. 19:20-21; 20:1-3). In fact, hell doesn't even have room for you and me. For this reason, hell has to actually “enlarge itself” to make accommodations for the newcomers. “. . . but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands... **therefore hell hath enlarged herself**, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude [of men] and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it” (Is. 5:12-14, KJV). On the other hand, God made Heaven for you and me. Jesus declared, “In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. **I go to prepare a place for you**. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (Jn. 14:2-3, KJV). Where do you want to end up – Heaven or hell? The choice is solely yours; Heaven’s Holy Hilton or hell’s Motley Motel 666?

### PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

Jesus, I see you are the doorway to salvation. I need you as my Savior. I have been on the wide road for too many years. Today I am ready to change. I want you to take charge as Captain of my soul. I am sorry for my sins. I repent. I turn from my wicked ways. I choose you as Lord of my life. Thank you for dying on the Cross for me, and raising back to life on the third day. I believe. I receive you into my heart right now. Cleanse me from all my sin and unbelief. Give me a thirst and hunger to read the Bible. Fill me with the knowledge of your will so I may serve you the remaining days of my life; then spend eternity in Heaven with the real heroes of life – God’s children. Today, I choose life and enter the narrow road through Jesus Christ. Amen.

### FINAL WORD

Now that you are born again (Jn. 3:3), and have become “a new creation in Christ” (2Corinthians 5:17-18). God has “given you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you” (Ezekiel 36:25-26). He will now cause you, from the new nature within you, to begin keeping his commands and decrees. Your desires will

change. Walking on the narrow path will be easier than you ever thought possible. **Just keep looking for Jesus to lead you.** If you ever find yourself feeling lost again, simply call out to Jesus and he will show up. It may be through another Christian. A verse of Scripture may come to mind, giving you wisdom. Or, suddenly power will come upon you to overcome the situation before you. The power to overcome temptation always comes before you are tempted, not during or after. Use the power He gives you to say "No" and walk away. Go to church. Fellowship with other Believers. Read your Bible. If you don't have one, write this ministry and we'll send you one. God has wonderful plans for you from this day forward. In fact, God will even turn your past mistakes into something good over time. He will cause your family members to give you another chance. He will begin reconciling your family, or even give you a new one. That's what he desires to do for his children. The devil may have meant it for harm, but God turns everything for good, and for the saving of others from destruction (Gen. 50:20/ Rom. 8:28). You have become one of Heaven's heroes. And it's no accident you are going to Heaven! Jesus and his angels have been in your path for years! Congratulations! Welcome to the family of God. Angels are rejoicing in Heaven as we speak (Lk. 15:10)! Rejoice with Heaven. You are a child of God!