

## **TO HELL AND BACK**

### **A spoof on the weird version of Hell**

My 8 year old granddaughter phoned to tell me a school friend had just informed her she was going to Hell if she didn't go to church.

It really scared her, too, which made me wonder what ghastly visions of Hell these kids are getting at that age, and where they're getting them from. To deal with such nonsense, I wrote the following story.

It's an imaginary trip my granddaughter and I take together in Hell, picturing Hell in the way her friend probably pictures it, like the fiery furnaces of Middle Earth in Lord of the Rings. I don't believe such a fearsome place exists, but even if it did I wanted to show my granddaughter that condemning people to it forever for not attending church is a ridiculous notion. There is nothing, therefore, for my granddaughter to fear.

But since her friend had condemned her to Hell already, we might as well check it out!

As we entered Hell and gingerly stepped past the boiling cauldrons, I asked my granddaughter if anyone had ever read John 3:17 to her.

No, she replied, no one had. A pity, I thought, as we plunged into a vat of boiling lava. The lava made reading John 3:17 a little difficult but I managed to croak out, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

My granddaughter croaked back, "I wish someone had told my friend that."

Yes, it would've been nice, I thought, being able to tell that poor, fearful child that God doesn't want anyone in any kind of Hell if he can help it, and he said so in 2 Peter 3:9.

"So where did your friend get this crazy idea that God sends kids like you to Hell in the first place?" I gasped to my granddaughter.

"From Sunday school," my granddaughter squeaked in reply.

Well, that didn't surprise me. I'd heard only the other day of a child crying her eyes out because she'd been told in Sunday school that her Dad was going to Hell because he wasn't a Christian. So much for the gospel being good news, I thought.

A demon then began poking us with his pitchfork toward some barrels, into which other demons stuck us head down and roasted our feet with red-hot pokers. Fortunately, our heads poked out the bottom of the barrels so I was able to turn toward my granddaughter and silently mouth "John 3, verses 14 and 15." I think she got it because she winked and smiled, realizing she could escape any time she liked for believing what those verses said.

But we were here in her friend's imaginary Hell for the experience, so we waited to see what other horrors it had to offer.

Instead, we were given a break, so I whipped in quickly with Revelation 1:18. "Any idea what that means?" I whispered. "Yes," she whispered back, "Jesus can get us out of this place any time he likes."

A pity her friend didn't know that too, I thought, but no more could be said on that subject because another demon jabbed us onto our feet and pushed us forward. Break-time was obviously over. What was coming next, we wondered?

It was a face-to-face with the Devil himself.

We were ushered into his throne room on beds of hot coals laced with several highly corrosive acids. The Devil smiled a most becoming smile and told us he was terribly sorry about all the pain we'd gone through, but there was a way to end it. All we had to do was assist him from now on and our pain would end. And, what's more, he'd give us the power to end other people's pain, too. Agreed?

I was about to say, "That's a bit too close to Matthew 4:9 for my liking," but before I could say a word a little voice piped up, "But doesn't it say in John 3:36, that anyone who believes in Jesus has got eternal life already, so why would we want what you've got to offer?"

Wow, I thought, that's done it, the Devil's not going to like that. He didn't, either. Rumbblings from somewhere down below burst into thunderous roars and a gigantic sheet of flame lifted us off the hot coals and acid, and shot us straight out of Hell, into the open and back down to Earth again with a crunch.

We sat there for a moment gathering our thoughts as a leftover drop of acid hissed its last.

"That was interesting, wasn't it?" I said.

"Not my cup of tea, exactly," my granddaughter replied.

"But think," I said, "we've been to Hell and escaped it because it's not our going to church that determines our eternity, it's our belief in Jesus, right?"

"Yes, I got that, Granpy," she replied, "but how do I tell my friend that?"

Good point, I thought; how does one tell one's friends that?