

F A L S E

Hopes of Heaven

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Dr. Curtis Hulson

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ISBN 0-87398-279-7

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FALSE HOPES OF HEAVEN

By DR. CURTIS HUTSON

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.” -Matt. 25:1-12.

“Many will say to me in that day Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” -Matt. 7:22,23.

Many who think they are going to Heaven are going to be disappointed. All of the ten virgins went out to meet him; all thought they were ready but only five were ready. Jesus said to the others, “Verily I say unto you, I know you not!”

Matthew 7:22,23 teaches that many who think they are ready for Heaven will be lost:

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me....”

There is an old spiritual song that our black friends used to sing: “Ever’body talks about Heav’n ain’t goin’ there!” Those words are absolutely true. Many who think they are going to Heaven have only a false hope.

Dr. R. A. Torrey once said that a man is better off with no hope than a false hope. He went on to explain that if a man has a false hope, he will go through life thinking he is saved and never come to know Jesus Christ as Saviour. On the other hand, if a man has no hope at all, he is more likely to find the true hope, the only plan of salvation, and trust Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Now what are some of these false hopes of Heaven? There is no way that I can share them all, but I will call attention to some of the more popular ones.

One false hope of Heaven is

Good Works

Sometimes when I ask an individual, "If you die today, will you go to Heaven?" he responds, "I am trying:" But one is not saved by trying; he is saved by trusting. There is no way we can earn Heaven. Titus 3:5 says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us!" And Ephesians 2:8,9 plainly states, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast!"

Those referred to in Matthew 7:22, 23 thought they should be allowed into Heaven because of their works. "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" But Jesus said, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

If the Bible is clear on anything, it is on the matter that salvation is by grace and not by works; and it cannot be a combination of the two. Romans 11:6 says, "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work!"

Grace is God's unmerited favor toward Hell deserving sinners with no expectation of return. If it is unmerited favor, then there is nothing we can do to earn it. The fact that salvation is a gift shows that it cannot be of works. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death; but the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord:"

Jesus said to the woman at the well, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have **given** thee living water" (John 4:10). If someone gave you a new gold watch and required that you mow his lawn once a week, then it would not be a gift; you would have earned it by mowing the lawn. The only thing one can do with a gift is receive it.

I have often heard preachers remark at a funeral service, "Mr. _____ has gone on to his reward." But Heaven is not a reward; it is a gift. John 1:12 says, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God:" Philip R Bliss was right when he wrote:

**Once for all, O sinner, receive it,
Once for all, O brother, believe it;
Cling to the Cross, the burden will fall,
Christ hath redeemed us once for all.**

Those who work for salvation render the work ineffective through a wrong motive. The Bible teaches that the only service or work acceptable is that which is motivated by love. In I Corinthians 13:3 Paul said, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity [love], it profiteth me nothing:" Love is the proper motivation for service and good works. But the man who works in order to stay out of Hell is motivated by fear and thus renders the work ineffective.

Human reason tells us that we could never earn Heaven even if we had ten lifetimes in which to work. Most of us work a lifetime here and never get a home paid for; how can we expect to pay for Heaven? If we worked ten thousand lifetimes, we couldn't earn the golden street that runs in front of one heavenly mansion! Those who are trusting their good works have a false hope of Heaven and will hear Jesus say, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23)

Is there no place for good works in the Christian life? To be sure there is. Ephesians 2:10 says, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works!" Once we are saved, God expects us to serve Him, to perform good works; but we don't do it to be saved or to earn Heaven; we do it because we love Him and want to serve Him.

Someone once said:

**I would not work my soul to save,
For this my lord hath done,**

**But I would work like any slave,
For love of His dear Son!**

Oh dear reader, if you are trusting good works to get you to Heaven, I urge you to abandon your unscriptural plan of salvation and trust Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Another false hope of Heaven is

A Good Life

When I once asked a lady if she were sure she would go to Heaven when she died, she replied, "I live a good life!" When I asked a man that same question, he said, "Well, I'm not too bad!" Both were trusting their good life to get them to Heaven.

Now I am all for good living. One should live as clean, moral, pure and as righteous as he possibly can; but no one goes to Heaven on his own righteousness. The Apostle Paul said concerning his own people, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves, unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:2,3). He goes on to say in verse 4, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth!"

Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17). One would be just as safe trusting his sins to get him to Heaven as he would trusting his righteousness. The Bible says in Isaiah 64:6, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags!" Notice the language of this text, "...*all* our righteousnesses are as filthy rags!" God does not accept any of our righteous acts as a hope of Heaven. God didn't say our *sins* are as filthy rags; He said our *righteousnesses* are as filthy rags.

Suppose a man could turn over a new leaf and never sin again, that he could live righteous until the day he dies. Would he go to Heaven? Absolutely not! His righteous living today cannot undo his sinful past. The truth is, no one is righteous. The Bible says in Romans 3:10, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one!" And verse 23 says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God!" The only righteousness that God accepts is His own imputed righteousness. We read in Romans 10:3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

When we trust Jesus Christ as Saviour; God imputes to us, that is, credits to our account, the very righteousness of God. That is what the Bible means in Romans 10:10 when it says, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness!" The moment we trust Jesus Christ as Saviour; God accounts us righteous in His sight.

The Bible promises in Romans 4:5, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

One verse of my favorite song says,

**My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.**

One who is trusting in his good life or his own righteousness to be saved has a false hope of Heaven. If you are trusting in your own good life to get you to Heaven, then I urge you to pray and tell the Lord that there is no way you can be righteous enough to deserve Heaven; therefore, you will trust Him completely for God's imputed righteousness.

Another false hope of Heaven is

Ordinances

Multiplied thousands are trusting baptism to get them to Heaven. These people teach what is known as baptismal regeneration, that is, one is saved by being baptized.

We live here in Middle Tennessee where there are many Church of Christ preachers and people. These dear ones believe that one is saved by being baptized. They use such verses as Acts 2:38, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost!" They think the verse means be baptized in order to obtain forgiveness of sins, when it simply means be baptized because your sins have been forgiven. It is like saying, "Take an aspirin for your headache!" It doesn't mean take an aspirin in order to get a headache, but because you already have one.

One must remember that the Bible never contradicts itself, and over and over the Scriptures make it plain that one is saved by grace through faith. John 3:36 says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." It says nothing about baptism. John 3:18 says, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." It says nothing about baptism. Romans 10:13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." It says nothing about baptism. John 5:24 says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life!" It says nothing about baptism.

I could fill a small book with passages which state we are saved by simply believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, trusting Jesus Christ as Saviour.

A dear man asked me about Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned!" Notice the verse carefully. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"; but the rest of the verse says, "but he that believeth not shall be damned." It does not say, "He that believeth not and is baptized not shall be damned"; it simply says, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

One is damned for not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Believing is the determining factor not being baptized. That is like saying, "He that getteth on the jet plane and sitteth down shall fly to Jacksonville, Florida; but he that getteth not on the plane shall not fly to Jacksonville!" It is the getting on that gets you there, not the sitting down.

Now we preach that every Christian should follow the Lord in believer's baptism. But the man who is trusting his baptism is not fully trusting Jesus Christ. There is no promise in the Bible for those who partially believe on Jesus. The promise is to those who believe on Him. If a man trusts Jesus Christ 90% and his baptism 10%, then the 100/0 destroys the 90% because it indicates that the person is not fully trusting Jesus Christ.

The other Sunday morning while getting ready for church I turned on the television. There was a program on hosted by a Church of Christ preacher entitled, "The Amazing Grace Bible Class." To my surprise, they were singing:

**My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.**

**On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.**

I found myself saying, *I wish you believed that truth. I wish your hope was built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I wish you were trusting nothing else but Jesus Christ.*

The man's message contradicted the song. He taught that one was saved by being baptized. They should have sung, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness- and my baptism!" They are not trusting Jesus only; they are trusting Jesus plus their baptism. How strange that they should call the program, "The Amazing Grace Bible Class;" and then teach salvation by ordinances rather than by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

The man who is trusting his baptism has a false hope of Heaven because he is not fully trusting Jesus Christ. Thousands of people are going to Hell depending on the baptismal waters to wash away their sins, when the Bible clearly says in Hebrews 9:22, "Without shedding of blood is no remission!" How can a person sing:

**What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus**

and then teach that water in a baptistry washes away one's sins? Everyone who trusts Jesus Christ as Saviour should be baptized. Acts 2:41 says, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls!" But one is far safer not being baptized at all than he is trusting baptism to get him to Heaven. When we add anything to the substitutionary death of Jesus on the cross as a hope of our salvation, we are saying the death of Jesus Christ was not sufficient payment for our sins.

Oh dear friends, the blood of Jesus Christ is never inadequate. It never needs an additive.

**Hallelujah, 'tis done!
I believe on the Son.
I am saved by the blood of the crucified One.**

When the redeemed gather in Heaven, they won't sing, "The baptistry is worthy" but, "Thou art worthy ... for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9).

Jesus is the Saviour yet He never baptized anyone. "Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples" (John 4:2). If baptism saved, then Jesus saved no one because He baptized no one.

Baptism is a beautiful ordinance, and every believer should obey the Lord and be baptized, but it has absolutely nothing to do with our salvation.

Another false hope of Heaven is

Church Membership

When one man was asked if he were going to Heaven when he died, he replied, “Yes, I joined the church when I was eleven years old.” Many think they are going to Heaven because they belong to a church. But many church members are lost.

One of our texts says, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity!” The people in this text were evidently members of a church. They even prophesied, or preached, in Jesus’ name. Some claimed that they had cast out devils in the Lord’s name. They were not only church members, but they served in the church. Yet Jesus said unto them, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Billy Sunday used to say, “Getting into a church will not make you a Christian any more than getting into a garage will make you an automobile.”

Now we are for church membership; and every person who is saved should join a good, Bible-believing church where he can be taught the Word of God, grow in grace, and become a mature, effective, fruitful Christian.

The order is given in Acts 2:41, “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls!” The order is: believe, be baptized, belong.

God is not going to ask for the roll of every church in the world to determine who is going to Heaven. That is determined by what we do with Jesus Christ. The Bible plainly says in John 3:18, “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” The person who has trusted Jesus Christ is not condemned; that is, he is not under sentence; he is not going to Hell. But the person who is not believing on the Son is condemned; he is under the sentence because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Church membership is good, and we urge every person who has trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour to join a good, Bible believing, soul-winning church; but it is not a prerequisite to Heaven. Faith in Christ is. Make sure that you don’t equate church membership with salvation. They are two different things.

Some churches urge everyone to become a member whether he has trusted Christ or not, thinking that association with church people will eventually lead to salvation. But that kind of teaching and thinking is not scriptural. No one should join a church until he has first trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour. Preachers should be careful lest they lead people to believe that joining a church is the same as trusting Jesus Christ as Saviour.

When I was pastor of the largest church in the state of Georgia, we were careful to see that every individual who responded to the invitation was properly dealt with, making sure that he had trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour before accepting him as a church member.

The person who thinks he is saved because he has joined a church has a false hope of Heaven.

Love the church, pray for the church, attend the church, support the church, but don't trust church membership for salvation.

Another false hope of Heaven is

“I Was Raised in a Christian Family”

Some think they are going to Heaven because their mother and father and kinfolks were all Christians. I have often had people say to me, “I think I'll go to Heaven; I was raised in a Christian family.”

Salvation is not inherited. John 1:13 says, “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God!” That expression, “not of blood;” means that salvation does not come to one through his family. Each individual must trust Christ for himself. Every man must make his own decision. People are not saved in groups, but one at a time as they personally trust Christ.

The Bible says in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” God loved the world and gave His Son to die on the cross that all could be saved. But it is “whosoever believeth in him” who is saved.

The death of Jesus Christ on the cross was sufficient for all, but it is efficient only to those who trust Jesus Christ as Saviour. We are not going to Heaven because our mother; father, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, wife or husband was a good Christian. We are going to Heaven because we personally trusted Jesus Christ.

Another false hope of Heaven is

The Sacraments

Many dear people are trusting their confirmation to get them to Heaven. A Catholic priest once told me that the seven sacraments were seven channels of grace and that one had to receive all seven sacraments, including the last rites, in order to be saved.

How sad that men should trust so many different things when the Bible clearly says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). How could one trust anything else when Jesus clearly said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

The same Catholic priest said no one was good enough to go to Heaven. I agreed with his statement and wanted to hear what else he had to say. He went on to explain that no one who dies is ready for Heaven. He then explained his belief about purgatory saying that the Catholic who dies with unconfessed venial sins goes to purgatory and remains there until he is purged from all unconfessed venial sins; then he moves into Heaven. Many well-meaning Catholics pray for their departed loved ones in hopes that they will not have to stay long in purgatory. The person who is trusting his sacraments and trusting the fires of purgatory to purge him from any unconfessed sins has a false hope of Heaven.

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ died for all our sins-past, present and future. Isaiah 53:6 says, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." And I Peter 2:24 says, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree!" We read in II Corinthians 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him!"

Dear friend, nothing could be clearer. All the sins we have ever committed or ever will commit were laid on Jesus two thousand years ago. And while Jesus Christ bore our sins in His own body, God punished Him in our place to pay the debt we owe, so that when we die we won't have to pay it. And those who accept Jesus and His finished work have everlasting life. On the other hand, those who will not accept Him and His finished work "shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

Jesus Christ, the Only Sure Hope of Heaven

Jesus Christ is the only sure hope of Heaven. When the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" they answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Believe" means to depend on, to rely on, to trust. We must trust Jesus Christ to take us to Heaven just like we would trust a pilot to take us across America in a jet airplane or just like we would trust the captain of a ship to take us across the ocean.

To trust Jesus Christ means the same as trusting a family doctor. When one gets sick, he puts himself in the physician's hands. He depends on the physician to perform the necessary operation to make him well. Trusting Jesus Christ means the same thing: I come to Christ admitting that I'm a sinner and admitting that I should pay for my sins. It means I believe the Bible story that Jesus loved me, and that 2,000 years ago He died for me on the cross to pay my sin debt. Then I put my case in His hands. I fully depend on Him 100% to take me to Heaven when I die. My only hope of Heaven is the fact that Jesus Christ died for me, and I am trusting Him to take me to Heaven when I die. I have no other hope. I want no other hope. I need no other hope.

**Should I at the gates of Heaven appear
To answer the challenge, what claim hast thou here,
What hast thou to offer? Yea, what is thy plea?
With blessed assurance my answer would be,**

**Of all earthly treasures nothing I've brought,
No great deeds of merit have I ever wrought;
Tho' vile and unworthy as mortal could be,
I've nothing to offer, but this is my plea,**

**My sins they are many, my virtues are few;
The blood of my Saviour will carry me through;
When Christ in my place died on Calvary's tree,
Hallelujah! that opened God's Heaven to me**

**All that I have is Jesus,
All that I claim is Jesus,
All that I want,
All that I need,
All that I plead is Jesus**

I have been a preacher for thirty years, but I am not trusting the fact that I'm a preacher to get me to Heaven. I have lived a pretty good life, but I am not trusting my good life to get me to Heaven. I belong to a good, Bible-believing church; but I am not trusting my church membership to get me to Heaven. I was baptized as an eleven-year-old boy, but I am not trusting my baptism to get me to Heaven. I am trusting Jesus Christ, Him alone, and nothing else. If I died in the next five minutes and stood at Heaven's gate and there an angel asked, "Curtis, why should we let you into Heaven?" I would simply say, "I understand that I'm a sinner that Jesus Christ loves sinners and died for them at Calvary. I understand from the Bible that His death fully paid what I owe as a sinner and I am trusting Him. He is my only hope of Heaven.

In the final analysis, there are only two groups of people in the world: those who are trusting Jesus Christ and those who are not trusting Him. Jesus draws the line and divides the world into two groups. In John 3:36 He said, "He that believeth on the Son HATH everlasting life" -group one. 'And he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him' -group two.

Those who are believing on Him, trusting Him, relying on Him, have everlasting life - not are going to have it some day, but have it this moment. "Hath" is present tense. Those who are not believing on Him constitute the other group, and the Bible says they shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on them.

Dear friend, which group are you in? Are you trusting Jesus Christ? Is He your only hope of Heaven? If not, I urge you to trust Him now. If you are trusting anything other than Jesus Christ, then you are standing on sinking sand. If you are not sure you are trusting Him, then do it now. Pray this simple prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I'm a sinner. I do believe that You died for me. Here and now, the best I know how, I do trust You as my Saviour. I am fully depending on You to take me to Heaven when I die. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer and will write to tell me so, I have some free literature I want to send that will help you as you set out to live the Christian life. All you need do to receive your free literature is fill out the decision form below and mail it to me.

DECISION FORM

Dr. Shelton Smith
Sword of the Lord Foundation
P.O. Box 1099
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 371 33

Dear Dr. Smith:

I have read the message, "False Hopes of Heaven." Knowing that I'm a sinner and believing that Jesus Christ died to pay my sin debt, I here and now fully trust Him for my salvation. I admit that He is my only hope of Heaven and depend on Him to take me to Heaven when I die. Please send the free literature that will help me as I set out to live the Christian life.

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