Having our hopes built up and then having them pulled away from us can be devastating. When tragedy strikes, people sometimes hope against hope that their loved one or friend survives. Sometimes, we deceive ourselves into believing something is true when it is not. When the truth finally hits us, we come crashing down. Therefore, we need to be careful that we do not build false hope either into ourselves or into others.

Unfortunately, in our spiritual lives, most people are living with a false hope. They are convinced that what they are doing is correct and they can relax and ride comfortably to Judgment Day. False religion, false teachers, and improper practice will cause many to be lost. Few, though, will ever realize the danger of doing that which is false.

We must all understand that this is the only opportunity we will have to prepare ourselves for an eternity with God (Hebrews 9:27). It is important that we follow God’s word correctly and live, as he would have us. Building false hope is the cruelest thing a person could ever do.

Jesus teaches us that there will be those who go before God who will be deceived by false hopes. These folks will believe they have prophesied in Jesus’ name, have cast out devils in his name, and have done wonderful works in his name (Matthew 7:22). These will be told to depart from Jesus, as they are workers of iniquity (Matthew 7:23).

Why were these people told to depart by Jesus? Did not these people believe they were doing the right thing? Did not these people believe they were saved? These people were lost because they were not doing the will of the Father in Heaven (Matthew 7:21). Like many today, they had been deceived into thinking that all they needed to do was believe in Christ and to believe they were working for him. They had not been taught they must do all that Christ commands. They had a hope of going to Heaven, but this hope was false.

There are many working today to deceive people and building false hopes. The New Testament record constantly warns us to not be deceived. Jesus taught that many would come claiming to be him and would deceive many. These are false prophets and are not to be believed (Matthew 24:4,5,11,24). Many will work to deceive with fair speeches (Romans 16:18). Others will deceive...
with vain words (Ephesians 5:6). The caution from God is to “Let no man deceive you …” (1 John 3:7,8).

We must also remember to never deceive ourselves. We must not be overtaken by the things of the world (1 Corinthians 3:18). There will be many “doctrines” taught. Much will be said that will sound good, yet will be false. We are not to be “…tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine …” (Ephesians 4:14). False teachers are known by their works (Matthew 7:15-20), and we must put all to the test so we will know who is false (1 John 4:1). False teachers give us false hope that leads to the wrong place.

False religious groups bring much of the false hope that people have today. These groups offer various ideas on how to obtain salvation. They cause people to obey doctrines that are comfortable and pleasing, but are not based in scripture. A list of some the teachings of these groups is found at the end of this paper.

People are taught that all they need to do is have faith. Some are taught that grace only saves. To make it more pleasing, many are also taught they can never lose their salvation once they have it. These are not taught the whole plan of salvation as given by God – Hear the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 10:33); Believe that message (Acts 8:12; Acts 18:8); Repent of our sins (Acts 2:38; 3:19; Luke 13:3,5); Confess the name of Jesus (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9,10); be baptized in water for the forgiveness of our sins (1 Peter 3:21; Mark 16:16); AND, live in obedience to God’s will (Revelation 2:10; Matthew 7:21; Ephesians 2:10; Galatians 6:9).

The possibility of becoming a Christian and then losing their salvation is foreign to the teachings of many religious groups. However, the Bible teaches us the possibility is there and that many will walk that path that leads to destruction, even after they have obeyed Christ (Hebrews 6:4-6; 2 Peter 2:20-22; 1 Corinthians 15:33).

It will be a sad day for most of the world when they stand before God in Judgment and hear they are lost. They will cry out like those in Matthew 7:22,23, but they will still be lost. They will have been deceived into believing that which gave them false hope.

Members of the church are not immune to those who would give them false hope. We are also not immune to deceiving ourselves. Many members of the church will practice their Christianity falsely, and will continue to believe they are saved. They will get mad at those who will teach them otherwise. These so-called Christians have become accepting of the worldly things and are now comfortable in their beliefs. They do not wish to examine themselves by the scriptures and will work against those who would try to correct them.

What kind of things do members of the church practice that will lead them to destruction?

1. They will attend when they see fit and think they are righteous. They know the Bible teaches us to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25), but have all kinds of excuses for not attending. They think nothing of playing their recreational activities during
worship times. They will stay home with family when they are in visiting. They will keep their children home from services so they can get their homework. School activities, social activities, and work activities will be more important to them than attending the services of the church.

2. They have no problem in joining into worldly things such as gambling, drinking, dancing, dirty movies, or vulgarity. Raffles and lotteries are viewed as O.K. by them. They will watch the latest movie regardless of its rating. These will justify their activities by calling it a social function. In their minds, because they do not see anything wrong with it, there is nothing wrong with it. They have never put their activities to the Biblical test of proving all things and holding fast only to those things which are good (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

3. These Christians see no problem in supporting false religious organizations. Two of the biggest that I have seen Christians involved with are the YMCA and the Salvation Army. Both of these groups are religious organizations that spread false religion throughout the world. But because they do “good” things, many Christians have no problem with helping them. Sometimes, Christians will buy at denominational garage sales or support raffles held by denominational groups. We seem to have forgotten that these groups are our enemy and we are to have no fellowship with them (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

4. These people will have an irreverent attitude towards the worship of God. They may or may not participate. They will usually dress down for the worship of God. They will consider Sunday morning to more important than Sunday evening or Wednesday services. It is usually difficult to ascertain if these people came to worship God or were going to some kind of recreational activity. They will lay back in their seats and chew gum and eat candy just like they were spectators, and not participants in reverent worship to God.

5. These people will dress immodestly and justify such by claiming the weather is too hot. They will work to justify immodest apparel by saying this is what you wear when you do this activity. Many a soul will be lost over sporting activities, not because of the sport itself, but because of the immodest apparel worn when playing that sport. God still expects Christians to dress modestly (1 Timothy 2:9,10).

6. These people will call themselves good Christians but will never lift a finger to help restore a soul to Christ (Galatians 6:1). They see nothing wrong with getting mad at people, and losing their temper when someone tries to correct them. They show a tremendous lack of respect for others, all the while calling themselves godly. They will hold a grudge and never really forgive. These Christians need to read and apply Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3.

I am certain that I could list other areas in which members of the church err.

The problem here is two-fold: (1) Not only do people do these things; but, (2) many members of the church (including elders, deacons, and preachers) will tell them they are acceptable to God when they do these things. Those who would justify these types of actions or will ignore these things and treat
Building False Hopes

Charles Coats

everyone as if they are O.K. are building false hopes in people. Those who walk contrary to God’s word will be lost. Nothing that we do will ever make a wrong thing right.

A false hope is no hope at all. False hopes deceive. Those who trust in false hopes will be sadly disappointed when Judgment comes. Let us make certain that we are following God’s word and have the true hope that is the anchor of our soul (Hebrews 6:18-20). Let us not be as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

VARIOUS TEACHINGS ON SALVATION

Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their person as righteous; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God. (Paragraph 6.068, The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XIII, No. 1. As found in The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Published by The Office of the General Assembly, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202. 1991)

They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace: but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved. (Paragraph 6.094, The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XIX, No. 1. Ibid)

Therefore we justly say with Paul, that we are justified by faith alone, or by faith apart from works … (Confession of Faith, Article XXII. Doctrinal Standards of the Christian Reformed Church, as found in Psalter Hymnal Centennial Edition – Doctrinal Standards and Liturgy of the Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids: Publication Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, Inc., p. 11, 1959.)

We believe that through the disobedience of Adam original sin is extended to all mankind; which is a corruption of the whole nature and a hereditary disease, wherewith even infants in their mother’s womb are infected, and which produces in man all sorts of sin, being in him as a root thereof, and therefore is so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn all mankind. Nor is it altogether abolished or wholly eradicated even by baptism; since sin always issues forth from this woeful source, as water from a fountain; notwithstanding it is not imputed to the children of God unto condemnation, but by His grace and mercy is forgiven them … (Confession of Faith, Article XV. Ibid, pp. 8,9)

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort. (The Articles of Religion, IX. Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church, Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1952. p. 28)
We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace; through the Mediatorial offices of the Son of God … (No. IV, p. 47. Pendleton, J.M. *Baptist Church Manual*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1966)

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial penitent and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation. (No. VI, p. 49. Ibid.)

Question: What must we do to receive the sacrament of Penance worthily? Answer: To receive the sacrament of Penance worthily we must: first, examine our conscience; second, be sorry for our sins; third, make up our minds not to sin again; fourth, confess our sins to the priest; fifth, be willing to do the penance the priest gives us. (*The New Saint Joseph Baltimore Catechism*, New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1969, p. 141)

**Works Cited**


