

The 7 Great Lies in the Church Today

Editor's Note: *Most Charisma readers remember Steve Hill as the fiery evangelist from the Brownsville Revival who has since continued to win countless souls for Jesus around the world. But what many readers don't realize is that Hill only recently came out of a three-year battle with melanoma. During that time, he received a prophetic vision warning the church of an impending "spiritual avalanche" that could kill millions. The following article on deception in the church is part of this timely message, now delivered in his latest book, Spiritual Avalanche.*

Years ago my wife, Jeri, and I were driving on the interstate when we were overcome by a white cloud of windblown snow. "I can't see a thing!" I shouted. We were experiencing a complete whiteout. I lost all sense of direction. I couldn't see the road or other cars. Everything had vanished, replaced by this strange, mystical blizzard of white. The only thing I knew to do was to slow down and pray that I was still on the road.

By the providence of God I came to a stop in the median, where we waited out the storm. When it lifted, I was shocked at what we'd gone through. Miles in front of me and miles behind were wrecks—too many to number. Massive trucks had slid off the road and turned over. Cars were everywhere. It was purely by the hand of the Lord that we survived.

A whiteout is a weather condition in which visibility is severely reduced by snow. The horizon disappears completely; there are no reference points at all, leaving the individual with a distorted orientation.

This is what's happening today in the church. Many are oblivious to the dangers on the horizon. In this spiritual

whiteout, the reference points—the ancient landmarks—have been covered. Erroneous teachings have merged together with truth, causing innocent believers to become disoriented—and blinded.

The Lord recently imparted to me a vision concerning the state of the church and what we must do about it. Those familiar with our ministry know we've never played games and have a deep, reverential fear for the work of God. Given this, I urge you to take heed to the following words. If you think I'm just letting off some steam, understand that I've just passed through three years of cancer treatments. I had been given only days to live. And as Leonard Ravenhill often reminded me, we must speak with the unction and urgency of God. We are all nothing more than dying men preaching to dying men.

In the vision I saw the church, depicted as a beautiful ski resort, with an enormous avalanche hovering overhead. The Lord immediately revealed the interpretation. This impending spiritual avalanche carried a threat that could destroy everyone. I've spent countless hours in the past attempting to rescue those who had fallen prey to false teaching. Now, in this visitation from God, I saw layers upon layers of snow steadily covering the solid, traditional truth of Christ. As with a whiteout, the truth had been lost in the flurry. No one who loves God willingly preaches deception, yet a spiritual whiteout of unhealthy, unbalanced, and in some cases, unbiblical teaching is blinding the body of Christ in America, and it is quickly spreading around the world.

How Has This Happened?

Unhealthy and destructive teaching can enter the church in various ways. Sometimes a biblical truth is taught to the exclusion of other biblical truths, producing a dangerous imbalance. At other times a biblical truth is taught in an exaggerated way, often going beyond what Scripture actually says, and in the end this does more harm than good. Many times clear, biblical warnings are ignored or reinterpreted so radically that they lose all impact or effect, leaving people

vulnerable and exposed.

Paul warned that the “time will come when [believers] will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Today’s church in America, as a whole, is dangerously close to turning aside to such fables. Millions have already succumbed to these false teachings. Before we lose any more souls, it’s crucial that we identify what I believe are the seven greatest lies that have infiltrated the church and have led to a whiteout of error.

1) Overemphasis of Prosperity

Undoubtedly, some adherents of the carnal prosperity message are motivated by greed. For them, preaching Jesus is a means of financial gain, something Paul rebuked in the strongest possible terms, speaking of men “of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain” (1 Tim. 6:5).

Yet many sincere believers embrace this message too—and back their case with Scripture. They point to the covenant blessings the Lord promised to Israel for their obedience, including financial prosperity (Deut. 28:1-13). They highlight verses in Proverbs and Psalms that link financial prosperity to generosity, hard work, godly living and faith (e.g., Ps. 112). They remind us of wonderful promises, such as those found in Proverbs 3:9-10—and how Jesus reiterated these in the New Testament with teachings such as, “Give, and it will be given to you” (Luke 6:38). And they quote Paul, who wrote about the financial principles of sowing and reaping (1 Cor. 9; 2 Cor. 8-9; Phil. 4:11-19).

Are you with me? I am not against you having money. But I am adamantly against money having you. The problem is, there’s more to the story that the carnal prosperity preachers fail to

mention:

- Jesus warned against storing up treasures on earth (Matt. 6:19-24) and covetousness (Luke 12:15).
- Jesus emphasized caring for the poor (Matt. 25:31-46).
- Paul and John both taught that we should not live according to this present age (1 Cor. 7:29-31; 1 John 2:15-17).
- Jesus did not die to make us financially wealthy but to save us from our sins (Matt. 1:21).
- God chose the poor to be rich in faith and kingdom heirs (James 2:5).

More importantly, the carnal prosperity preachers have ignored other biblical warnings, like Paul's powerful words to Timothy: "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness" (1 Tim. 6:9-11).

Carnal prosperity preachers encourage God's people to seek after riches—or to seek after God for the purpose of riches—often even judging your spirituality by the kind of car you drive. What does that have to do with the gospel of Jesus?

2) Exaggerated View of Grace

This hyper-grace teaching has become an epidemic (see "What's Wrong With Grace?" on p. 28). It has slipped in almost unnoticed and taken root like an unwanted weed—easy to get in but hard to get out of the Christian. I have personally dealt with many young people who were once on fire but fell under this "kicked-back" view of God. Now, instead of pursuing Him, they are partying. This "unmerited freedom," if not tackled and taken out, will spread to future generations, leaving us

with millions of lukewarm Christians who have traded their passion for poison.

Sadly, some hyper-grace preachers live in sin and ease their consciences by preaching about a God who is all love and who never condemns, a God who doesn't judge us by our conduct. Like the false teachers Jude confronted, they "turn the grace of our God into lewdness" (Jude 4). The New International Version describes such lewdness as "a license for immorality."

But not every hyper-grace preacher is looking for a way to justify sin. Some truly love Jesus but are simply preaching truth mixed with error. They've taken an undeniable, glorious truth about God and presented it in such an exaggerated form that they nullify all divine warnings and even claim that the words of Jesus don't apply to New Covenant believers. If this seems judgmental, then it's time to honestly line everyone's teachings—including mine—alongside the Word. Don't just go through the Word; let the Word go through you. Why are we so afraid in this godless generation to confront fallacies?

These hyper-grace teachers rightly emphasize that we are saved by grace and not by works (Eph. 2:8-9), that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Rom. 5:6-8), that we are no longer sinners but saints in God's sight (1 Cor. 1:2), that God's love for us is not based on our performance (Rom. 5:9-10), that having begun in the Spirit we can't become perfect by human effort (Gal. 3:3), that we are now sons and daughters of God, joint heirs with Jesus (Rom. 8:15-17), and more!

But they ignore mountains of other scriptural truths and draw wrong theological conclusions. For example, they rightly teach that Jesus died for all our sins—past, present and future—but wrongly conclude that as believers we no longer have to deal with sin (meaning we never have to confess sin or repent of sin, and the Holy Spirit no longer convicts us of sin). Aren't you tired of hearing of another backslidden brother? Trace his steps and you'll often find he was given permission to slip

away from the wonderful freedom of holiness into the bondage of humanism.

3) Antinomianism

Antinomianism—long word, simple meaning. The word literally means “against law.” It’s a short jump from an overemphasis on the grace message to complete antinomianism. In practice, it means that “anything goes,” since Jesus has set us free. The problem is, Jesus didn’t set us free to sin; He set us free *from* sin.

Jesus died for us and broke sin’s power on our lives so that now, by the Spirit, we can live out the righteous requirements of the law (Rom. 8:1-4). Yet purveyors of this poisonous teaching fail to realize that Jesus calls us beyond the requirements of the law in His teaching, stating, for example, that adultery refers to adultery of the heart and not just the physical act (Matt. 5:27-28).

God’s perfect, holy, glorious law is not the problem. Sinful flesh is the problem. Sin will take you farther than you ever wanted to go. Sin will cost you more than you ever wanted to pay. And sin will keep you longer than you ever intended to stay. Sin will promise you everything but leave you with nothing. Sin will love you for a season and curse you for eternity.

For all the antinomians out there who believe “anything goes,” the question is, where do you end up?

4) Deification of Man

Many false teachings today start with man rather than with God. In contrast, when Paul laid out the gospel message in Romans, he started with God and then went to man: God is holy and we are not; He is righteous and we are not; we are under His judgment and in need of mercy, and that mercy comes through the cross.

Today’s gospel, especially in America, has a very different

ring to it; rather than being all about God, it's all about me. Just as the American way is to make everything bigger and better, the American gospel says that Jesus came to make you into a bigger and better you. That is not the gospel!

Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matt. 16:24-25).

We are in grave danger worldwide as millions upon millions gaze upon man rather than God. Just take a look at our political system. Words like *messiah*, *lord*, *savior* and *anointed one* are tossed around like candy. I cringe at heaven's response. This is a setup for the Antichrist; as we become so accustomed to worshipping man, it will be a simple maneuver for the Antichrist to move into position.

5) Challenging the Authority of the Word

The challenging of God's authority goes back to the Garden of Eden, starting with the serpent's challenge to Eve: "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" (Gen. 3:1). This satanic challenge was twofold: First, did God really say that? And second, God didn't really mean what He said. After all, you won't die if you eat from the tree (vv. 1-5).

That twofold challenge continues to assault us today. Best-selling authors tell us the biblical text isn't reliable, that the biblical manuscripts we have in our possession are hopelessly contradictory, and that we can know little or nothing about the real, historical Jesus. Other authors tell us that the Bible is no more than a collection of religious traditions and that God Himself is nothing more than a religious myth.

For the most part, though, the challenge to the authority of

the Scriptures is subtler, and some of it flows out of the deification of man, which says, "The Bible must live up to my standards. I will judge the God of the Bible based on my morality rather than the God of the Bible judging me based on His morality." In short, when the Scriptures contradict our feelings and preferences rather than crucify our feelings and preferences and bow down before God and His Word, we question God's Word.

6) Rejecting Hell

Nowhere is this questioning of God's Word seen any more clearly than when it comes to the subject of hell and future punishment. And because we preach an imbalanced gospel—emphasizing God's love and ignoring His wrath, emphasizing His mercy and ignoring His justice—we no longer have room for hell and future punishment in our theology.

Why did Jesus use such strong language in talking about the fire of hell and about people weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth (see Matt. 8:12)? And why did He teach that "it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell" (Matt. 5:29)? And why do other New Testament writers warn us repeatedly about the wrath to come (see Eph. 5:1-6)?

It's one thing to debate the exact nature of the future punishment that awaits those who reject the gospel. It's another thing to downplay or eliminate it. Whatever legitimate debate we may have on the precise nature of the coming judgment, this much is clear from the Word: it will be irreversible, dreadful and of eternal consequence.

Revelation 20:11-15 clearly warns about the coming Great White Throne Judgment. Yet modern-day heresy teachers have taken it upon themselves to erase the judgment. The result, if believed and followed, will be too devastating to mention.

7) Universal Reconciliation

Universal reconciliation promotes a get-out-of-jail-free mentality—that in the end, everyone will make it into heaven because of Jesus’ death on the cross. (In contrast, universalism teaches that all paths lead to God.) There may be future suffering, but it will be purging rather than punishment, and ultimately everyone will be saved.

Proponents of universal reconciliation point to verses that teach that God reconciled “all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Col. 1:20). And they point out that just as in Adam all die, in Jesus all will live (Rom. 5:12-21).

What would you say if someone attempted to persuade you that Adolf Hitler was in heaven? “Abomination!” you would scream. “You’re deranged!” Yet that’s a sample of the fundamental false teaching of this layer of “avalanche snow.” Added to other layers mentioned previously, we will find the believer’s foundation deteriorated, and when the storms come, the house will come crumbling to the ground.

During this season when we celebrate the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, let’s determine to glorify Him by staying pure. A gentle breeze of false teaching has become a strong wind of serious error, some of it downright heretical, and a storm of doctrinal deviation has become a massive deadly whiteout. Amid this whiteout, stay committed to His teachings. Don’t permit any false teaching to subtly weave its way into your life, bringing down an avalanche that could destroy everything you hold so dearly. I won’t let it happen. Not in my lifetime and not in yours.

I urge you to open your heart and read *Spiritual Avalanche*. Revelation will be imparted from its pages. This 30-minute, full-color vision shook me to the core. I wept as I saw it and

wept as I wrote the book. I love the church and will do everything possible to prepare her to meet the Groom. She isn't ready, but she will be!

Yes, Jesus said in the last days even the elect could be deceived. But not you! You're too smart for that!

Steve Hill is founder of Heartland World Ministries Church in Dallas. He is widely known for preaching the uncompromising message of Christ throughout the world.