

# Is the Great Falling Away Already Underway?

While in **prayer** over the vision God gave Steve Hill about the “spiritual avalanche that could kill millions,” an alarming question nagged my soul: Could the **great falling away** already be underway? Could we be witnessing the first fruits of the great falling away even now? Are we at least seeing a shadow of the Great Apostasy?

There is much talk about Christ’s soon Second Coming. But we know that Jesus will not return for a church without spot or wrinkle unless the falling away comes first ... (1 Thess. 2:3). Although it’s nothing entirely new, we are indeed witnessing a fast-progressing departure from sound doctrine and a holy life.

Even a quick comparison between what Scripture tells us about the last days and the manifest sin that has penetrated our generation should serve as a wake up call to every believer: Don’t ignore the signs of the times. In His discussions on the end of the age, Jesus warned us not to let anyone deceive us (Matt. 24). If it weren’t possible to get caught up in the Great Falling Away, Jesus wouldn’t have issued such a strong warning to His followers and left a record of it for you and me.

## Discerning Doctrines of Demons

Paul wrote, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth” (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

Some have indeed departed from the faith because they have engaged with **deceiving spirits** and embraced **doctrines of demons**. We've witnessed more than one man of God with a major ministry platform bow a knee to doctrines like **universalism**, deceiving and being deceived with this deadly heresy. Despite many in the church lifting their voice against heretical teachings, these deceived ministers hold fast to their demonic doctrine.

We've also watched famous pastors speak lies in hypocrisy—lies that left many hurt, wounded, and disillusioned—and yet they remain adored and adorned in the megachurches that made their name great. Clearly, the conscience of some influential church leaders has already been seared with a hot iron (see 1 Tim. 4:2). Some have become the proverbial blind leading the blind.

And would you believe it? Some modern-day, Spirit-filled churches even reserve the right to tell you whom you can or can't marry (along with many other details of your personal life). I've known folks who have nervously gone to ask the pastor for permission to marry another congregant, hoping that their request wasn't denied and their love wasn't dashed. And this wasn't during the **Shepherding Movement**, this was recent.

### **Living Idolatrous Lifestyles**

Paul wrote, "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" (2 Tim. 3:1-5)

Paul's laundry list of idolatrous ingrates is not particularly new, but the love of many has certainly grown colder. Many pastors ignore the homeless (and the widows and the orphans).

All the while, they spend multiplied thousands on sermon props and video announcements that rival MTV so they can entertain an idolatrous generation on Sunday mornings.

Some pastors offer a 20-minute sermonette and afterwards neglect the opportunity to lay hands on the sick, get people filled with the **Holy Spirit**, or otherwise open up the altar for believers seeking a touch from God. This form of godliness does not make room for God's power. Pleasure has taken its place.

### Scratching Itchy Ears

Paul also warned, "For the time will come when they 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).

We see some of this among congregations even now. Beyond universalism, there's the **prosperity gospel** that only demonstrates one side of the cross. There's the grace message that perverts the gospel. These are fables. Billy Graham once filled stadiums with his bold preaching on subjects like hell and holiness. Today, seeker-friendly preachers fill stadiums to hear a motivational message followed by a call to give. Many modern believers may cringe if they had to endure a Billy Graham sermon on hell. Again, some deny the existence of hell.

### The Great Falling Away

Victorious believers will overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony—and the fact that they did not love their lives even unto death (Rev. 12:11). I fear there may be fewer victorious believers at the end of the age than some may think.

The Bible tells us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). We need to get at it because this is

sure: Jesus is coming back for a glorious church without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:27). I believe the spots and wrinkles will fall away before His return. The gates of hell are trying to prevail against the church and will ultimately fail, but not before enticing some believers into heresy, idolatry and other sin.

I don't believe in once-saved, always-saved doctrines. I believe you can lose your salvation. I don't think it happens overnight. I think it's a slow progression down the slippery slope of deception. I often ask people who are deceived this question: "How would you know if you were deceived?" I've never met one who was deceived find an answer for the question. Rather, they insist that they cannot be deceived or that they would know if they were. If we don't think we could be deceived, we're deceived already. And if we are deceived, we wouldn't know it unless the Holy Spirit broke in and opened the eyes of our heart.

So is the Great Falling Away already underway? Only God knows. At the very least, I think we're seeing the shadow of this turning. We're seeing the hints of this apostasy. And I pray. I pray that the Lord would count me faithful, that I would not be deceived in these last days, and that I might be a pure vessel the Lord can use to sound the alarm. What about you?

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