

Lions, Wolves & Sheep, Oh My!

Part 1: “Thy Rod & Staff Comfort Me”

(preached 4/24/22)

What the Western Charismatic Church is doing isn't working.

Our new rad, hip, woke, and deconstructionist doctrines aren't increasing our numbers, they aren't bringing people closer to Jesus, and aren't making true deeply rooted disciples.

THESE NEW IDEAS AND TEACHINGS AREN'T INSPIRING GREATER SANCTIFICATION, HOLINESS, REPENTANCE, AND AREN'T LEADING TO REVIVAL OR NATIONWIDE REFORM.

Let me share some statistics I gleaned from Lifeway Research.com:

- The Pew Research Center says that 63% of Americans identify as Christians, down 15 points from 2007 when the number was 78%.
- Gallup polling states that only 47% of Americans attend church, down from 70% in the year 2000.
- Only 3 in 10 unchurched Americans claim someone has shared the Gospel with them.
- Only 39% of Americans see pastors as honest.
- Only 37% of Americans have confidence in the church, down from 60% in the year 2000.
- Churchgoers are twice as likely to be 65 and older with fully 33% of most congregations being in that age group.
- From 2011 – 2021 50% Americans only read their Bibles 1-3 times per year. In 2022 that number has already dropped 11 points to 39%.
- Only 10% of Americans read their Bibles every day.
- Only 26% of American Christians consider the Bible to be the inerrant Word of God and meant to be taken literally.
- 64% of people brought up in the church drop out, normally in their 20's, up 5 points from 2011.

FAMOUS FALLING AWAY. I'm tired of reading another story about how some famous pastor or worship leader is falling away from the faith. Once upon a time such men were caught in adultery or stealing funds and then there would be a public show of crying, confession, and repentance, whether real or staged you be the judge.

RENOUNCING GOD. Nowadays it goes much further. When some famous person falls, they renounce the Lord and the inerrancy of His Bible, claiming to no longer even believe! Worship leaders who wrote songs exalting Christ now say they're atheists, authors who wrote books about the faith now say they're unbelievers, and pastors who planted churches and raised them up are stepping down in disgrace and sin.

WE'VE GONE MAD. Let's take a quick look at society in general: ***we've gone mad***. In modern America we have so many genders and sexual identities, it's like looking at the Periodic Table of Elements. If you dare to say that there is only male & female you aren't just called a bunch of names, but are actually accused of being anti-science.

GROOMING. What's more is that the powers-that-be, both government and big corporations, want to teach children starting with Kindergartners the same and even want to provide medical treatment for said kids to pursue whatever gender or non-gender they're feeling at the moment. The Lord says in His Bible that it's the responsibility of parents to raise and teach children the ways of God (*Deuteronomy 6, Proverbs 22:6*), but the Spirit of Antichrist so prevalent in western society is trying to steal, kill, and destroy our kids.

ABORTION. Right now, CA is trying to pass a bill to kill a child up to 30 days AFTER it's been born! The moral depravity of the world and American society makes me nauseous.

IT'S NOT WORKING. I repeat: what the modern American church is doing, and has been doing, isn't working.

- We're not producing long lasting disciples who cling to Christ and the faith through the very hardships Jesus prophesied would come.
- We're not impacting the culture with the Light of Christ, but rather remolding ourselves to look, talk, and act like it so that we're less offensive and more inclusive to the point of affirming what God calls sin.
- What about church culture? Too many aren't living lives of faith, discipline, holiness, and adherence to Scriptural truth. The newest woke "Deconstructionist" movement has the church conforming itself to the world and calling it Godly and loving.

BIG GOVERNMENT ENTERTAINMENT. ***The modern charismatic church has modeled itself like a big government entertainment center***, massing hundreds and sometimes thousands of people into a mega building and replacing the power of the Holy Spirit with gimmicks to dazzle their senses.

What of the Gospel? It's changed, radically. When I first got Saved in the late 90's, I heard plenty of preachers warn that it was "watered down." We've gone beyond mere dilution and added our own ingredients here in the 2020's! Once upon a time we told unbelievers the truth: ***that they're sinners destined for Hell unless they repent and turn to Christ.***

“EVERYTHING IS AWESOME!” Nowadays we tell them how awesome they are, how God unabashedly approves and affirms them, and wants them to be happy. Come to Jesus and be happy! You don’t need to change, don’t worry about your sins, the Lord just wants to prosper you in every way!

- Don’t worry about God’s plan, the Lord wants to advance yours!
- Your sins don’t grieve Him at all, only your unhappiness grieves Him.

None of this is working! Revival isn’t happening in these circles.

PLEAD FOR GRACE AND MERCY. God help us...I can only approach the throne of Grace and plead with Him that He continues to extend this window of grace and mercy, giving us a chance to repent and turn from any wicked way.

I will not pass silently into the night on these things. As long as I’m here as your Pastor I will stick with the Gospel as it was originally shared, I will continue to speak & exposit the Scriptures, and listening for the voice, leading, and prompting of the Holy Spirit.

I will not conform Gateway to the world and the modern day woke morals and ideologies which come from seducing spirits preaching the doctrines of demons.

And now I’m going to explain why.

PSALM 23. I assume most of you are familiar with Psalm 23, easily the most famous of all of King David’s writings. *Those blessed verses contain all the qualities the ultimate pastor should have and let’s go over them:*

GREEN PASTURES AND STILL WATERS is about a pastor feeding his sheep with God’s Word. Preaching, teaching, exhortation, prophesying, etc. A pastor is called to be a harvester of the inspired words of the Bible and his people the gleaners—those who receive said word.

HE RESTORES MY SOUL is a pastor who encourages, uplifts, sympathizes with, and prays for his flock. He mourns with those who mourn and rejoices with those who rejoice and helps bear their burdens.

LEADS IN PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS is a pastor who first leads a righteous life himself, turning from any wicked way and embracing holiness thus setting a good example for his flock. In turn, he calls upon his flock to do exactly the same and has the role of correction, rebuke, and discipline for the same reason.

ROD AND STAFF COMFORT is defense of the flock from predators, usually names young lions and wolves in the Bible. A valley is prime hunting grounds for predators, where they can look at vulnerable sheep from a lofty position and set up an ambush. As a shepherd himself,

David knew this and any experienced shepherd would be on their guard whenever they led their flock through a valley.

ROD & STAFF. The rod and staff are weapons of defense. The rod was a short piece of hardwood or metal the shepherd would throw at a predator attacking one of his sheep. The staff was a melee weapon the shepherd used once he closed the distance to whack the predator with.

THE REASON THE ROD AND STAFF GIVE COMFORT TO THE SHEEP IS BECAUSE THEY KNOW THEIR SHEPHERD IS PROPERLY ARMED TO DEFEND THEM.

PREPARING THE TABLE is victory over enemies and follows the rod and staff. The shepherd's victory is that of his flock—if he wins so do they!

JESUS FULFILLS ALL. Here's what you might have noticed: that Christ is the only Shepherd Who completely fulfills all these Godly qualities all the time and at the same time.

People like myself will fall short in one or more of these categories and be stronger in others.

RESTORATION MINISTRY. For example, Pastor Johnny Doe's strong point is the restoration of the soul. When you were sick, he called and checked on you. He came and visited you at the hospital and held your hand to pray for you before your operation. He remembered your birthday and sent a card, he stopped by when you were lonely and was good company.

MILK OF THE WORD. But his sermons are milquetoast and he won't take a definitive stand on some of the bigger moral issues in society. He's worried about offending people and tends to back down from a confrontation.

GREEN PASTURES MINISTRY. On the other hand, Pastor Tom really knows his Bible and he does a great job expositing the Scriptures in depth. You've gotten more out of his sermons in a year than you did the entire 10 years you were at Pastor Johnny's church! On the other hand, he's introverted and not much of a people person. You were out sick for weeks and never heard from him, he's standoffish and awkward in social situations, and doesn't connect with others very well.

VICTORY MINISTRY. Pastor Clarence is fiery and isn't afraid to speak directly and passionately about things. He's a fighter, takes firm biblical stances, and doesn't care who gets offended! On the flip side, he tends to come off as angry, a little too blunt, and sometimes says things that cause people to feel alienated and judged.

JUST EXPLAINING. Do you see what I mean? I say none of this to justify myself or any other pastor from recognizing his weakness and addressing it, but rather to explain the why.

WHERE I FALL. So I'm going to tell you where I believe I fall and the motivation behind this sermon series, others I've shared, and my presentation—I tend to place emphasis on the Rod & Staff aspect, which is the defense of the flock. My purpose isn't to highlight me, but so that you'll understand where I believe God has gifted and leading me, therefore us,

NOT PHYSICAL. Both Jesus and the Apostles dealt with flock defense, and let's be clear the defense they were referring to wasn't physical but symbolic toward a false gospel and false teaching. Don't get me wrong, if someone came here and got violent I would certainly rush forward to defend anyone in this church from them.

PROTECT FROM BAD FOOD. Yet my area of concern is the same of that of Jesus and the Apostles: to protect the flock from eating bad food that will make them spiritually sick.

WILDLIFE—WHO GETS TARGETED? Have you ever watched the nature shows about wildlife? Whether its deer, buffalo, wildebeests, or what have you...which one do the predators attack? The ones who are sick and therefore isolate themselves from the herd or are lagging behind. Have you ever had food poisoning? I hate it!

Eating bad spiritual food causes a sheep to get sick and isolate itself from the truth, from God, and from the flock.

Said bad food is offered up by spiritual predators who wait for a sheep to get sick and then pounce.

APOSTLES BROUGHT CORRECTION. One thing you'll note about the NT epistles is the Apostles spending a significant amount of time bringing doctrinal corrections to their congregations: both calling out falsehood and reminding of the truth. One of the most pointed examples was Paul's letter to the Galatians:

Galatians 1:6-10 (ESV)

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—

⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

¹⁰ For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

FALSE TEACHERS. In the first century, the Apostles spread out from Jerusalem and began planting churches in various parts of the known world. What would happen is that others—wolves in sheep’s clothing—would come along behind them and preach something different. False apostles, false prophets, and false teachers would show up at these churches and claim to have the truth. They would preach something different than what Paul, Peter, and John were and it caused great trouble, confusion, and even some leaving the church.

HERESY. We’re not talking minor points of doctrine here, either, but “heresies” (which simply means a falsehood that divides people). In the case of the Galatians, someone came and said circumcision and other works of OT Law were still required to be Saved. Paul spends most of this 6 chapter letter calling out the falsehood, reminding them of the truth, and giving them a dressing down at the same time.

ANGELS CAN PREACH. BTW did you notice that both humans and angels can preach? Evangelize? Share a “gospel” that leads people in a certain direction? Are you aware that almost all religions other than Christianity claim that an angel or some godlike angelic being appears and shares a gospel? Mohammed claimed it was Gabriel that gave him the gospel of Islam, the Mormons say it was Moroni who gave them Mormonism, UFO cults says advanced aliens claiming to be “Elohim” our creators appear to them and give them the way to salvation.

RAPTURE ALREADY HAPPENED. In Paul’s 2nd letter to his church at Thessalonica, chapter 2, he rebukes the congregation for forgetting what he taught them and believing a lie. Someone told them the rapture had already happened and they missed it! The result was fear, worry, and self-condemnation. Look what Paul says to them:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 (ESV)

¹ Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers,

² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

³ Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

⁴ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

⁵ Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

“I ALREADY TOLD YOU!” Paul reminds them of the proper order of things and look at verse 5: he’s basically said “I already taught you all this when I was there last time.” In other words, when they received a letter from some false teacher saying the rapture had already happened,

they should have fallen back on the teachings of Paul vs. believing this poisonous rumor that cause them all to get a bit ill. When they read said letter, someone should have stood up and said “wait a minute! Paul said the Antichrist was coming first and that hasn’t happened...this letter is bunk!”

JOHN. In the letters of John, the beloved Apostle spends a lot of time refuting the error of the Gnostics who had infiltrated the 1st century church, bringing in all manner of false teachings that were poisoning the sheep. For example, the Gnostics believed that Jesus wasn't flesh and blood, but more like a holographic projection. If Christ wasn't flesh and blood, then everything He did at the Cross and Resurrection was for nothing! His body needed to be broken and His blood shed for the remission of sins! This wasn't a minor doctrinal disagreement, but a heresy that threatened the eternal lives of the people eating it.

The corrections, clarifications, reminders and even occasional rebukes given by the Apostles to their sheep were acts of love, not harshness.

John 10:12-13 (NKJV)

¹² But a hireling, *he who is* not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.

¹³ The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

YELLOW ALERT. The shepherd equipped with the rod and staff must have discernment. I repeat: King David performed this job long enough to know when the predators were most likely to attack—when he was leading his sheep through a valley, any valley. As soon as he entered into the same, I can only imagine David going on “yellow alert” like they did on Star Trek. I can see him constantly looking up at the sides of the valley to see if he could spot any lions or wolves lurking about. I picture him glancing back at his flock, looking behind them, to see if anything was charging forward about to pounce.

DAVID DEFENDED. Indeed...when trying to convince King Saul to let him fight Goliath, David says this:

1 Samuel 17:34-36 (ESV)

³⁴ But David said to Saul, “Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock,

³⁵ I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him.

³⁶ Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.”

SEEKING GOD. I'm saying all of this to help you understand where I'm coming from and yes, I actively seek the Holy Spirit on these things—I'm not shooting from the hip. My hackles and antenna are up when it comes to false teaching, other gospels, deception, and manipulation. The moment I think any of you are being exposed to any of it, I grip my spiritual rod and staff and prepare for a fight.

DEFENSE FROM PULPIT. My defense of you comes mainly from this pulpit, just as it did with Jesus and the Apostles. I admit I'm weak in the "he restoreth my soul" department and I won't make any excuses for it.

WOLVES OF WOKENESS. My spiritual eyes are ever watchful of the hungry pack of Wolves of Wokeness that constantly lurk on the ridges of the valley, looking for an opening or weakness among us.

LACK RESTORATION MINISTRY. I'm honestly sorry that I lack in the restoration of the soul ministry, but please understand how seriously I take your defense. I'm not saying this so you'll think better of me, but only so that you will understand why I can be so loud and passionate from this pulpit.

BULLY TO JOSIAH. Josiah was once attacked by a bully in the park and his mom responded the right way by hugging him, dressing the wound, and telling him all would be well. She restored his soul! When I found out, I took 30 minutes and taught him how to punch. I told him not to stand there and take it, but to fight back. Rod and Staff.

NURTURING RESTORES OUR SOUL. THE ROD AND STAFF COMFORT US BY MAKING US UNAFRAID OF EVIL. BOTH ARE NECESSARY.

GOSPEL RESET. In this sermon series we're going to start with a Gospel reset...that's next week so please be here. We all need to hear this, including me. If you can't be here, catch it online. We'll see that when the true Gospel is shared, revival breaks out and said Gospel is the common denominator and started of ALL revivals.

EXPOSE DOCTRINE OF DEMONS. Then we're going to expose the doctrine of demons being preached by many predators today. We'll discern between a wolf who is outwardly one, and one that dresses up to look like a sheep. We'll also discuss sheep who've been deceived by wolves and are trying to act like them. That will be a very controversial sermon.

NO FEAR OR PARANOIA. At the same time, we won't be giving in to fear or paranoia. Some who gaze too long into potential deception fall into fear and see a demon or predator around every corner, because they've forgotten the hope of Christ. Not us! As I've preached to you on several occasions, we have nothing to fear because we are one with Jesus! We have His Holy Spirit as our Counselor and Teacher! We have the Bible which is God's inspired Word! We have each other for companionship and accountability! Our destiny is set and our future secure!