

Dear Friends,

This past month I had to prepare a presentation to the Times Square Church congregation of how TSC Missions projects around the world are developed from start-up to self-sustainability. As I worked on the video clips that were to be shown during the service, my mind wandered over the years I had been working with these projects—in some cases over 15 years—and I realized how hard it is to really give anything more than a general overview of how these projects grow to maturity.

One element, however, is common to all: it had been a hard and lonely journey for all the missionaries involved. One of dashed expectations, directional changes and personal challenges that at one time or another led them to question their call and ask themselves whether the work was really the Lord at all.

In every instance the opposition drove them to seek the Lord even more and He, in turn, used the hardship to help steer them in the direction that He wanted them to go. This is the story that the video clips do not tell, but that God knows intimately as He shapes not only these projects but the lives of all those involved.

Be encouraged! God knows what He is doing and the opposition that you may be facing, as all these missionaries faced at some point or another, will strengthen you and lead you even closer to the center of His will.

Treg McCoy
Missions Director

EATING THE BREAD OF OPPOSITION

by Carter Conlon

"Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not" (Numbers 14:5–9).

What an interesting statement—they are bread for us! What exactly did Joshua mean when he described the enemies of the Israelites in this way?

First of all, this statement was made in reference to everything that stood in direct opposition to the inheritance God had expressly promised the Israelites. Today you and I must understand that we, too, will not enter into the full life of Christ without opposition—there will always be forces from within and without trying to rob us of the blessings of God. As you know, we all have a fallen nature called the flesh that resists the things of God. It is the part of us that does not want to pray in the morning,

does not want to read the Bible, does not want to respond with kindness when somebody says a nasty word to us. Then there are the forces from without opposing us as well, generally manifesting through other people.

I believe that the church of Jesus Christ is on the edge of something incredibly profound.

That is exactly what was happening here. The children of Israel had come right to the border of the place of promise where they were to be a testimony in the earth. They had been delivered from captivity by the miracles of God; they had seen the seas part and their enemies vanquished. For many of us, that is our testimony as well. By the power of God, we have been freed from places we never could have escaped in our own strength, and now we have come to the border.

I believe that the church of Jesus Christ is on the edge of something incredibly profound. Although nobody knows the exact day or hour, we are clearly in the season of Christ's return, and I do not see

it written anywhere in Scripture that His church is going out in defeat. There was a marvelous outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and I believe the glory of the latter temple will be even greater than the former. I see a people who lay hold of the full covenant of God in Jesus Christ—sustained by the Spirit of God, moved by the knowledge of God, speaking by the empowerment of God, loving with the tenderness of God.

The opposition will sustain us; it will nurture and feed us.

However, we will first find ourselves in that valley of decision—standing just as the Israelites did on the edge of something incredible, wondering, “Do I go in or do I stay where I am? Do I take the next step or do I settle for church attendance? Will I be able to face all that is opposing me?” All the while, in our hearts we know God is beckoning us to something profoundly deeper in our generation.

■ A SOURCE OF STRENGTH

Think for a moment of all that opposes you today and stands in defiance of your inheritance in Christ. Perhaps it is the words that were spoken over your life when you were young. “You’re stupid!” “You’ll never amount to anything.” “I am leaving because you are not worth staying for.” No matter what was said, or the nature of the opposition that you are currently facing, just keep in mind that it is all simply trying to stop you at the border of this incredible life of Christ.

Joshua said to the people, “Do not be afraid of them, for they are bread for us.” In other words, the opposition will sustain us; it will nurture and

feed us. Of course, this is contrary to the way the natural man thinks. We consider opposition to be an awful thing, larger than we are. It makes us feel like grasshoppers in its sight; it threatens and intimidates us. So how exactly does it feed us?

Remember when Jesus was ministering in Samaria and the disciples went to get food for Him? They returned to Jesus and encouraged Him to eat, but He replied, *“I have meat to eat that ye know not of”* (John 4:32). Jesus was essentially saying, “I have a source of strength that you are not aware of yet. You have not tasted it; you do not know what it is or how it can nurture you.” The disciples then turned to one another and asked, “Okay, who brought Him something to eat?” But Jesus explained, *“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work”* (John 4:34). In other words, “This is my meat; this is what feeds my life—facing all that stands in direct opposition to the will of God and conquering it in the power of God.”

The strength of God is found in reaching the lost of this world and bringing them to the finished work of Christ on Calvary.

Jesus continued, *“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest”* (John 4:35). I do not know how many times I have heard Christians say that

the harvest is coming—a great day is coming when many will come to Christ. But here Jesus was telling His disciples, “Listen, lift up your eyes, the harvest is already here, ready to be harvested!”

“And he that receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that receapeth may rejoice together” (John 4:36). He who goes out to harvest will receive wages, and these wages are the provision and strength of God. They will be given to the one who says, “Lord, I give you the reins of my life. I am willing to do the work of God no matter what opposition I must face, for this is where my nourishment will be found. I understand that the work of God is not Jesus simply coming to enhance my career. Rather, it is that Jesus indwells me as His physical temple on the earth, and through me continues His work of bringing mankind to redemption.” This is where the strength of God is found; there is no true strength in anything else. Today we have seminars and conferences on how to gain strength. If only we could understand that the strength of God is found in reaching the lost of this world and bringing them to the finished work of Christ on Calvary.

■ A NECESSARY INGREDIENT

Consider all that Jesus had to endure—the scorn, the beatings, the mock trial, the rejection of those He had walked with and even fed in the desert. Think of the cross; the violence and the fury of the opposition that Satan sent in attempts to destroy the work of God. Little did the enemy know that he was actually supplying the necessary ingredient to secure its success. According to the Scriptures, *“...without shedding of blood is no remission”* [of sin] (Hebrews 9:22). Those who oppose the work of God are bread for us! There had to be violence, there had to be a cross,

there had to be a death. It says in 1 Corinthians 2:8 that if the rulers of this age had known what they were doing, they never would have crucified the Lord of glory!

Do not be afraid of opposition. It is a necessary ingredient in our lives.

Recall the time when Peter and John approached the gate of the temple called Beautiful and took a lame man by the hand—a man who had spent many years begging while the religious crowd simply passed him by. Nobody had a problem with his powerlessness until Peter and John lifted him up in the name of Jesus, and God miraculously healed him.

You would think that the temple officials would have rejoiced—“This is awesome! This man used to be lame, but now he is among us praising God! Let’s give God glory!” Instead, they began to threaten Peter and John, forbidding them to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

Beloved, do not be afraid of opposition. It is a necessary ingredient in our lives; it is bread for us. Peter and John were called before the council of religious leaders and threatened twice. Yet what was the result of this threat? “*And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is*” (Acts 4:23–24).

We see here that opposition had ignited a prayer meeting! Instead

of bowing to the threats, the disciples bent their knees to God and began to pray, “*And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus*” (Acts 4:29–30). It was the healing of this lame man that brought all this trouble upon them, so they turned around and asked God to give them more boldness, more power, more healings! Opposition is bread—it sends us into the presence of God where all our strength is found. Without opposition the church gets lazy and turns inward, seeking power without purpose—a formula for spiritual delusion.

I thank God for this time we are living in and for the opposition we will have to face, for I believe it is going to spark prayer meetings again in the house of God. We will be driven to the presence and promises of God, saying, “Lord, we ask for boldness to stand and speak in the power of the name of Jesus Christ. God Almighty, raise up hundreds and thousands of people in this generation. Touch those who are sick, release those who are in prison, give sight to those who are spiritually blind, heal those who have been bruised in heart. Let the kingdom of God come with power again to our generation!”

“*And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with boldness*” (Acts 4:31). The constant cry of my heart is, “Lord, shake the place where we are! Do not let us settle for anything less than our full inheritance in Jesus Christ. Do not let us fall short of the calling of God on our lives.” That must be your personal prayer as well as our collective prayer as the body of Jesus Christ.

“*And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common*” (Acts 4:32). Not only were they filled with the Spirit of God and given new courage, but opposition had also moved them to divine compassion. Suddenly there was a turning away from self and a focus on others. Generosity had come into each person’s heart, for they were aware that God had been generous to them.

“*And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all*” (Acts 4:33). Look at all that happened because of the opposition—a prayer meeting, new courage, divine compassion, and great power and great grace was upon them. Opposition is bread!

GOD IS PREPARING A TABLE

In Psalms 23:5 David said, “*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies...*” Where? Right in the middle of the opposition! Everyone around you will be wondering, “Why can’t we break this guy? Why is he still singing? Why do our threats just seem to make him happier?” But you will be sitting at this table, and the only thing you will be able to say to your enemies is, “Would you please pass the biscuits and butter?” Hallelujah!

“*Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over*” (Psalms 23:5). This is where the anointing is found. When you choose not to shrink back from all that God has promised you, He will anoint your head with oil in the presence of everything that attempts to silence your voice and kill your Christ. He will pour something of heaven upon you that cannot be studied nor procured in the flesh; it will come from God and God alone. Your cup will run

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over, and you will not be able to stop singing or speaking His name!

I encourage you to thank God for your enemies.

God will give you an understanding that does not come to the natural man, and you will be able to walk through the valley of the shadow of death knowing that all of this opposition is working to produce something that will sustain you. Think about the time when Samson went down to Timnath and a young lion roared against him (see Judges 14:6–9). Suddenly the Spirit of God came upon Samson, and he tore the lion in two with his bare hands. Passing by that way later, he found honey in the carcass of the lion, which he took for himself and for his parents, as well. A threat that should have killed an ordinary man turned out to be used for his nourishment!

GIVE THANKS FOR YOUR ENEMIES

Perhaps you have been groaning in prayer for weeks, “Oh, God, deliver me from this ornery boss! Take this person out of my life! Oh, Lord, get me out of this situation!” But do you know what you are actually praying? You are saying in essence, “Oh, God, take the bread out of my cupboard; take the drink out of my refrigerator! Take away my strength, take away my anointing, take away my cup!” You have no idea what you are actually praying. If God were to give you everything you asked for, you would become a couch potato with a Bible on your lap. No! In His great wisdom, God is going

to increase these challenging situations and turn you to Himself.

Now this may seem like an odd suggestion, but I encourage you to thank God for your enemies. Of course, that is not an easy thing to do, but you must realize that the Lord has allowed them in your life for a reason, knowing how spiritually lazy you would become otherwise. Remember, if the opposition drives you into the presence of God, it is bread for you!

Today you may find yourself surrounded by whole wheat enemies, seven-grain enemies, or perhaps some that are pita—but they are all feeding you. They are all sending you to a place of nourishment and strength in God, a place where you can say, “Lord, if You are allowing this opposition in my life, then I am going to let it drive me into the prayer closet so that I can partake of this bread. If there are voices saying that I can’t, then show them that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. If they are calling me weak, then empower my voice to speak in Your name. Whatever it is that comes against me, counter it with Your presence and Your power!” Praise God!

Carter Conlon
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This newsletter is an edited version of “EATING THE BREAD OF OPPPOSITION” a sermon given on May 15, 2011 in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in New York City. Other sermons are available by visiting our website at tscnyc.org. You are welcome to make additional copies of this sermon for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission existing copyright laws apply. This sermon cannot be posted on any website or webpage without permission from Times Square Church. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are from the King James Version.

CARTER CONLON

Carter Conlon is senior pastor of Times Square Church, where he has been on the pastoral staff since 1994.

TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

Times Square Church was founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of “The Cross and the Switchblade.” It is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday	10:00AM	3:00PM	6:00PM
Tuesday	7:00PM	Church Service	
Thursday	7:00PM	Prayer Meeting	
Friday	7:00PM	Church Service	