



Awakened to Opposition

Message Notes, September 17, 2017

We have been talking about how God's Spirit moves when we are willing to be stretched. A rubber-band's strength and impact is only recognized when it is *stretched*, so it is with the people of God.

The North American church is mostly consumed with 2 things: salvation and comfort! Salvation is certainly vital, but it is not the END. **Discipleship** is the end, and salvation is an essential part of this transforming process. The end is to become more like Jesus, engaging in our world to advance His kingdom.

Opposition is one of the points of stretching for us that unleashes our strength and impact in the world.

There is a cycle to this Movement/Opposition dynamic: God's people cry out → Holy Spirit moves → Opposition comes → Kingdom results follow.

Acts is replete with examples of this cycle:

- **Acts 2** – Disciples wait and pray → Holy Spirit poured out (Pentecost) → Many accuse them of being drunk → Thousands believe (and the church is born).
- **Acts 3** – Peter heals a lame beggar → Pharisees challenge and arrest them → Peter and John boldly declare their commitment to proclaim Jesus, and the disciples are filled with *greater* boldness and power.
- **Acts 4** – The believers are generous with their possessions → Greed/dishonesty arises (Ananias and Sapphira; God deals with them severely) → Their community grows and flourishes.
- **Acts 5** – The apostles heal many → They are arrested again → They are miraculously freed from jail and continue preaching and teaching → They are brought before the Sanhedrin and are flogged → They continue preaching!
- **Acts 7/8** – Stephen is filled with the Holy Spirit and boldly proclaims Jesus crucified and risen → He is stoned to death, followed by great persecution against the followers of Jesus → The believers are scattered and "preach the word everywhere they go" and the gospel spreads to Samaria, where revival breaks out.
- One of the converts is a magician named Simon. He is saved but young in his understanding. Peter and John come and begin praying for new believers to receive the Holy Spirit → Simon, in his ignorance, tries to purchase the power to do this himself (a form of opposition) → Peter calls him to repentance, and Simon repents and asks them to pray for him.

So what of us, here in Columbus in 2017? It helps us to understand where opposition comes from so we are better prepared to face it.

Opposition comes from:

1. The enemy, Satan. However, he does not have the power to *make* us do anything. He can only try to tempt, distract, and put up obstacles.
2. The religious – those consumed with Law rather than love and grace; consumed with rules rather than relationship – we are called to be Christ-followers, not rule-keepers.
3. The uninformed – people like Simon who simply have not heard or do not understand. This is why discipleship is essential.



4. Self – our fleshly bent to selfishness and comfort. We need to guard against labeling as “opposition” our own bad choices.

The Backside of Opposition (When we respond with faith and surrender)

1. Unusual Movement. The Holy Spirit is always moving, and moving us – like a river, not a lake.
2. Uninhibited Prayer – and prayer that moves us to deeper faith, hope and joy.
3. Unwavering Boldness
4. Undying Worship

Reflection Questions

1. Are you experiencing any form of opposition right now? What is the source of this opposition?
2. How can you respond to this with “uninhibited prayer”?
3. What “unusual movement” or “unwavering boldness” might this opposition be bringing?
4. Can you look to the Lord with trust and “unwavering worship” in the face of this opposition?