

ENCOUNTERING OPPOSITION

No one likes to be misunderstood, much less to be the target of unfounded rumors and false accusations. Opposition to our gospel work may surprise us when we first encounter it, followed by disappointment when we learn that the purveyors of rumors and accusations against us are predominantly our fellow believers in Christ. However, we should expect such opposition. Commenting on Mark 6:14-56, a passage that includes the martyrdom of John the Baptist, Witness Lee said, "We should not think that if we preach the gospel, present the truth, and minister life, we shall be welcomed. No, like John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, and the disciples, we should expect to be rejected also" (*Life-study of Mark*, 171)."

Our Attitude toward Those Who Oppose Us

Because we preach the truth and stand for the church, we have suffered much from the spread of rumors and false testimony against us. Even worse, many newly saved ones, gospel friends, and seeking Christians who are under our care have been exposed to the opposers' malicious speaking. How should we view those who spread rumors about us? From the outset we must realize that those speaking evil things about us are not our real enemies. Witness Lee's speaking on this matter is helpful:

[W]e must realize that no Christian or unbeliever is our enemy. The only enemy that we have is God's enemy, Satan the devil. We do not fight against any human being; our fighting is against the devil, God's unique enemy (Eph. 6:12). No matter how much certain believers oppose or accuse us, we must not consider them our enemies. Instead, we need to recognize that they are our brothers and sisters in Christ because they are genuinely saved. We must believe that most of these opposing ones are saved persons because they confess the name of the Lord Jesus and consider themselves to be fighting for Him. Hence, we should not consider them as enemies but as fellow believers in Christ. (*CWWL*, 1986, vol. 3, 169)

This is a matter of our apprehending the real spiritual situation. The humans opposing us are not our real enemies. We are not fighting against them but against the one behind their opposition, Satan, the accuser of the brothers (Rev. 12:10). The critical factor in our fighting is our interceding prayer (Matt. 12:29; Eph. 6:12).

Taking Grace to Respond in Love

Many of the rumors and accusations against us are disgraceful things that may insult and inflame us. It is difficult to endure this kind of evil speaking, especially when it is face-to-face. Our natural response is to be offended by the opposing ones and to react out of our offense. However, to properly contend with opposition, we must avoid being offended by them. This is indeed a difficult thing to do. How can we avoid being offended at disgusting charges thrown in our face? Brother Lee addressed this very issue:

[W]henver people oppose us, we need to do our best to receive the Lord's grace to not be offended. Since opposition is negative, it is difficult to not be offended when we are opposed. For this reason we must receive the Lord's grace to not be offended. If we are genuinely receiving the Lord's grace, the more others oppose or accuse us, the more we will respond in love. (169-170)

Brother Lee continued:

[W]e must receive grace to express what we truly are in the Lord. In the Lord's recovery we do not hate anyone. We hate the religious system in traditional Christianity, but we love all Christians. For this reason, when we pray concerning the opposition, we may pray, "Lord, bind the opposing

activity, but Lord, have mercy on all the opposers.” We love all people, including the sinners, because the Lord loves them. Whether or not others love or oppose us, we love them, and we have no enemies (cf. Matt. 5:43-48). (170)

The Lord’s grace is the factor that empowers and enables us to not be offended. The grace we receive from the Lord is Christ Himself imparted into us as life to enliven and empower us to live Him out in our daily living. It is by this grace that we can live under the attack of our opposers. We must come forward to throne of grace to find the grace as help in times of need (Heb. 4:16; John 1:4, 14-17; 14:6, 1 John 5:11-13). Brother Lee continued:

All people are objects of our love. Thus, we should never be offended. Whether or not this is a difficult task depends on our concept and our receiving of grace. If we would change our concept and realize that no human being is our enemy, we will see that their wrongdoing against the Lord’s recovery is not of them but of the evil one, who is behind them. Thus, we need to fight against the evil one behind the opposers, not by the flesh but by prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 4:24-31; Eph. 6:11-18). (170).

Contacting the Opposers

One practical matter is to arrange for future contact with the opposers. We need to get their contact information and we need to give them our information. Brother Lee commented “We need to be trained on how to contact people in a loving way, always contacting the dear opposing ones to present them something positive until they see the truth concerning the church life and even come into the church life” (170). Then he said:

[W]e should understand all the points of opposition. After writing these points down, in an attitude of learning, that is, with a genuine desire to be taught, we should go over the points with those who oppose us. We may tell them that we are seeking the truth and that we do not like to be deceived or to believe in any heresy. Thus, we would like to investigate the points of disagreement with them to confirm what the truth is. (171)

After studying the opposers’ points we may respond to their accusations. This should not be done too quickly and should be done in a spirit of love and in the hope that we would be able to minister something positive of the truth to the opposing ones. Brother Lee concluded:

[W]e do not need to respond to those who oppose us in a quick way. Instead, we need to give the opposing ones some time, and we need to give ourselves some time to pray for the opposing ones. Only in this way will the Lord have the opportunity to work in us as well as in the opposers before we contact them. We should never respond to opposition in a quick way; instead, we should remain humble and study the truth so that we can see the real situation. Then we may seek the Lord concerning how our future contact with the opposing ones should be conducted. Even while we are contacting the opposing ones, we should remain in a spirit of prayer to give the Lord a way to come in to exercise His authority over the situation. (171)

For us to endure the opposition with its rumors and accusations we must be lovers of humanity with no human enemies. Further, we need the Lord Jesus Himself as the grace given to us that enables us to encounter opposition without being offended (2 Tim. 2:25). If we are such people, living Christ out before men, we can learn how to contact those opposing us in the hope of ministering to them something positive of the truth (Titus 1:9).