

Dear Friend,

In Psalms 85:6-7, the psalmist cries out, "*Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.*" The writer surely had personal knowledge of a day similar to ours today. Spiritual lethargy seemed to be abounding and the experience of multitudes turning toward the salvation offered by God was something only spoken about in the past tense.

How awful it is when the testimony of grace has become dim and the nation is in decline. Yet, when you read the rest of the psalm, we realize that the writer knew how the God of past mercies will always be willing to be merciful again.

My dear friend, we must pray. The day and hour demands that those of us who still know the mercy of Jesus Christ begin to plead for this country. I believe that only a grassroots awakening of God's people can offer a season of reprieve from the very dark days just ahead of us. How wonderful it would be if the record of heaven stated that 2014 was the year in which you and I began to pray for the people of this land with a faith and intensity which only God could have given us!

We must, must pray! Start where you are able and trust Jesus for the strength to take it to where it needs to go from there.

Yours, in Christ,

Pastor Carter Conlon

A BISCUIT AT A BANQUET

by Carter Conlon

The book of Judges describes a time when Israel, God's own people who were called to be a supernatural testimony in the earth, began to deal deceitfully with His presence. They refused to walk honestly with God and grew casual in their worship of Him, if not casting off the worship of God altogether.

Dealing deceitfully with God will always result in powerlessness, which eventually gives way to the enemies of that society. By enemies, I am referring to those who do not know God, who have no desire to know Him, and who do not want anyone else in relationship with Him. You and I are living in a day very similar to that period of time in the Old Testament.

Imagine if the Lord were to come to you today and call you a mighty man or woman of God—would you believe it?

It was during harvest season that Israel's enemies, in this case the Midianites, came to devour everything that was being gathered by the people of God (see Judges 6:2-3). They intended to bring the Israelites to an impoverished place so as to render them unable to fulfill their God-given purpose on the

earth. Knowing that they were far outnumbered by the enemy, which the Scriptures actually describe as being so numerous that they covered the earth like sand, the children of Israel began to cry out to the Lord—as is beginning to happen in our day. God hears the cry of the single mother whose children are out on the streets; the cry of the father who doesn't know how he is going to provide for his family. He hears the cries of those who read the news and see the horrific crimes that are becoming a daily occurrence in this generation.

The Bible tells us that in response to the cries of His people, the angel of the Lord appeared one night to a young man named Gideon—the least in his father's house; his father's house the least in Israel. It is therefore no surprise that when God greeted him, addressing him as a "mighty man of valor," he was dumbfounded. Imagine if the Lord were to come to you today and call you a mighty man or woman of God—would you believe it?

If Gideon already had a hard time believing that, imagine his shock when God told him that he was being sent to eradicate the enemy—and that he was going to do so with an army of only three hundred! Obviously, an army that size up against a hundred twenty thousand Midianites was not very good odds in the natural.

However, there are certain seasons in history when God decides to do the supernatural again, typically through the most seemingly insignificant people. It has happened all throughout history, and His ways do not change.

■ A GREAT BANQUET

Before we continue in the story of Gideon, I would like you to consider a story Jesus told in the book of Luke. *“A certain man made a great supper; and he bade many; and he sent forth his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready”* (Luke 14:16–17, ASV).

We must choose to cast away all self-reliance and show up, just as we are, to an incredible banquet of God.

In other words, a man issued an invitation to his great banquet, much the same as the Lord invites you and me to come to His incredible feast of life and strength. Vision, direction, provision, and a future can be found there. Everything is ready.

However, those who were invited to the banquet began to present their excuses as to why they could not come. No doubt, some people simply did not want to go. Yet I cannot help but feel that some among them felt obliged to bring something to the banquet. Perhaps they were embarrassed at their own lack of resources, which ultimately led them to decline the invitation.

This is the same dilemma that you and I face today. God says, *“I want to do something through your life.”* It is an incredible invitation from

the Lord. Yet, for many people, there is an innate sense that they should be providing something. After all, it is common practice even in our society today that the gift one brings to a wedding should be of equal value to the meal that is being set before them.

Of course, knowing that the price of the banquet was the blood of His Son Jesus Christ, it is preposterous to think that you and I could ever bring something comparable to that price, even if we somehow felt obliged. It tends to take us a long time to get to the point of realizing that this is a “come as you are” banquet. The prophet Isaiah said, *“Come, those who have no money; come, those who have no skill; come, those who have no ability. Come and buy and be satisfied! Eat that which will truly fill and satisfy you”* (see Isaiah 55:1).

Nevertheless, we often are afraid of our own smallness, aren't we? We are afraid that we are incapable of meeting the great need that is all around us in this hour, and therefore many of us choose to stay home. Sure, we don't mind going to church and singing the songs. We would even gladly support some superstar preacher who would rise up and do the work for us. It is almost like Moses who might have initially said to God, *“What a great idea for You to set three million people free! I just want You to know that I am with whomever You send to do it.”*

But the Lord said to him, *“It is you I am sending!”*

“But I stutter. I have lost my power of speech,” Moses objected. *“And in case You haven't noticed, I am eighty years old now. All my natural strength is gone. I no longer carry a sword; I carry a stick. I no longer have access to Pharaoh's court, for I have been in the backside of the desert for forty years.”*

Now it is not unbelief to consider our own insufficiency. Jesus said in Luke 14:31, *“What king, going to make war with another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?”* (NKJV).

The recruitment strategy of God has never changed—He calls the unqualified to do the supernatural.

It is not wrong to say, *“But I am weak, and I am not a good speaker. I do not have any royalty in my blood, I have no access to power, no resources in the bank.”*

It is not wrong to be realistic in analyzing these things, but the danger comes when we then draw a wrong conclusion. That is what the children of Israel did when they came out of Egypt. They reached the very border of the Promised Land, and the men who had been sent in to spy out the land came back and reported, *“It is everything that God said it is. But there are giants there, and we seem so small in the sight of what we are going to have to fight against—not only to conquer the land but to maintain and keep it. I don't think we can do it”* (see Numbers 13:27–33). They rightly estimated themselves, but they came to the wrong conclusion.

Jesus continued in Luke 14:33, *“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”* That does not mean you have to give away your house, empty your bank account, and quit your job.

Jesus was essentially saying that you must give away your own thoughts of ever doing this in your own strength. The forces against the testimony of Christ in this generation are too powerful. The social trends are going in the opposite direction of the Word of God. The battle is too strong, and our natural resources are insufficient to meet the need. That is why we must choose to cast away all self-reliance and show up, just as we are, to an incredible banquet of God.

You may feel like a biscuit at a banquet, but understand that God is inviting you to come with your struggles, your frailties, your confusion, your pain. There is something He is calling you to do in this hour, far beyond what you could ever imagine possible. You see, the recruitment strategy of God in the Church of Jesus Christ has never changed—He calls the unqualified to do the supernatural. That means that you and I qualify! But that also means that you and I must not refuse the invitation to partake of this incredible banquet of God's strength.

■ A BUNCH OF BISCUITS

As God calls us to walk in the supernatural—in the things that we consider ourselves unqualified for—it is likely that fears may arise in our heart, as was the case with Gideon. And so the Lord instructed him: *“And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host [to the camp of the enemy]; for I have delivered it into thine hand. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host: And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host”* (Judges 7:9–11).

In other words, if you are afraid, go down to the enemy's tent. You are going to hear what they are saying, and it will give you strength

to go into what, in the natural, is a suicide mission.

***You and I
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“Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host” (Judges 7:11–14).

You would expect the Lord to come up with something a bit more extraordinary, perhaps with the Midianite saying, “I saw chariots of angels coming down, thousands upon thousands! They were angry, and they killed us all. Let's get out of here!” No, instead, he saw a loaf of bread roll down a hill, and it just flattened their whole camp. And from that the other man immediately concluded, “Well, this is none other

than the sword of God and the sword of Gideon! He has given the whole host into the hand of Gideon!”

How did the enemy know it? They knew what we forget because they had been on the receiving end time and time again. They knew what happened when suddenly even just a few of God's people got up and decided to go forward. They knew what danger was posed to the kingdom of darkness when a barley loaf came rolling down the hill!

Do you know what a barley loaf is? It is nothing more than a bunch of biscuits that get together and decide to move as one! You and I are living in an hour when we must surrender our pride and our human reasoning; we must surrender wanting to be seen as someone greater. No, we are all biscuits invited to a banquet—every last one of us! I have always been nothing, I am still nothing, and I will always be nothing. All I have is what God chooses to give me.

■ THE SWORD OF THE LORD

“So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.” (Judges 7:19–21).

The whole host of the enemy fled before Gideon and his three hundred! At the sound of the trumpets, the Israelites broke the pitchers in their hands—representing the breaking off of all human reasoning, all human frailty, all sense of self-loathing and

unworthiness. They smashed it all and held up the torch that was inside the clay vessel, which was a symbol of the power of God.

God's Word through a surrendered and believing heart is all that is needed to make the difference.

"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" they shouted. That means the power of God through people who believe Him. You see, when you decide to stand in a public place, refusing to let the testimony of God be hidden, God will do for you what He did for Gideon and his army—He will send confusion into the ranks of the enemy! The Bible tells us that the Midianites started turning and fighting with each other. Confusion ensued because a visible testimony of God had arisen in the earth again—through people who simply believed God in spite of their weakness and frailty.

And so the same incredible victory is available to you and me today. All that has ever been necessary is for someone—or perhaps ten or twenty or fifty or a hundred—to rise to their feet and declare, "I believe God! I believe that God can take my life and make a difference. I believe He can put compassion in my heart and make me a voice in this generation. I believe Him even in my insufficiency. I know that I do not have much to bring

to this banquet, but I believe God will provide everything that I need at that table!"

In the natural, it may look like a suicide mission for God to send you. But when you declare, "The sword of the Lord and the sword of Gideon!" on that hill, watch and see what God will do. God's Word through a surrendered and believing heart is all that is needed to make the difference. This has always been God's answer to such moments in history.

And so it is time for a bunch of biscuits to get together and roll down the hill one more time! We as the people of God potentially have the power to flatten the camp of the enemy. Even now I imagine that all hell is trembling, for the enemy knows what happens when you and I dare to believe a word like this!

Carter Conlon
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CARTER CONLON

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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	Prayer Service	
Friday	7:00PM	The Gate*	

*Youth and Young Adult Service

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