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Salvation in the Face of Opposition

Focus Verses: Acts 8:14-17 - **14** Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: **15** Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: **16** (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) **17** Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

Lesson Text: Acts 8:1-17
Truth About God: God uses opposition to spread the message of salvation.
Truth For My Life: I will partner with others to proclaim the message of salvation.

Often in life we face resistance. James 4:7 commands: "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*." The early church did not simply remain firm in the midst of persecution; the church grew and flourished during "**great persecution**" and were "**scattered abroad**" to **Judaea and Samaria**" (Acts 8:1, 4). Also, Paul had persecuted the early believers and stood watching as Stephen was murdered for his faith. Once he converted, Paul faced opposition when walking through doors God had called him to, including imprisonment and a martyr's death. As believers we also face spiritual and physical adversaries when we follow the voice of God. But the same God who was with the New Testament church will be with us.

Believers should expect to face difficult situations. Persecution is not a possibility; it is a promise. In Paul's final letter to his son in the gospel, Timothy, he wrote a dire warning: "*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" (2 Timothy 3:12). Even when we are suffering, we are called to proclaim the gospel.

God confirmed His Word with miraculous signs (Acts 8:5-8). **We should seek for people to develop a relationship with God and a love for the truth**. However, Satan's counterfeit was exposed (Acts 8:9-11), "*when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women*" (Acts 8:12). When the sorcerer Simon saw the true power of God on display, even he wanted it (Acts 8:13). We must not hunger for power. **We must hunger for a relationship with God**. Peter and John visited Samaria after the Samaritans received the gospel (Acts 8:14), and worked along Philip to help with the revival. They laid their hands on the believers who had been baptized, God poured out His Spirit on the Samaritans.

God will be with all of us who follow His calling. Even though we may face opposition, or perhaps even persecution, we must stand firm in the conviction that the God who called us will walk with us each step of the way. God will not lead us somewhere and abandon us there. Even if we face persecution, we must trust God sees us and is allowing it for a purpose.

Matthew 5:11 proclaims a blessing over the persecuted. Jesus Himself called out to all who heard Him: "*Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake*." When we are harassed or rejected for the gospel's sake, God commends us. Though we may feel rejected and cast off, our Lord is with us, and He calls us blessed. Though many of us hope for blessing instead of persecution, God brings blessing out of persecution.

In Ephesians 3:13, the apostle Paul told the Ephesians believers: "*Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you*." Paul faced tribulation because of his work for the Lord at Ephesus, yet he loved the Lord and was unwilling to deny the burden for the Ephesians, which God had placed in his heart. Just as Paul faced troubles because of his obedience to the call of God, so will we. **The question is not whether we will face opposition**. Rather, the questions are: when will we face it, and what will we do when it comes?