

Introduction: When subtlety doesn't work

The Warning

*“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a **roaring lion** looking for someone **to devour**. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”*

1 Peter 5:8-9

Intimidation – “to make fearful, to compel or deter by acts or threats, to terrorize – causing alarm, fright, or dread with the apprehension of violence, injury or death. To induce fear through a sense of inferiority; to bully, or cow resulting in a broken spirit and loss of courage.”

(Webster's)

Isolation – “to set apart from others; to cut off, separate, seclude.”

(Webster's)

The Promise

“And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To Him be the power forever and ever. Amen.”

1 Peter 5:10-11

God's answer to intimidation and isolation: Acts 8

- **The Context** - Stephen martyred Acts 7
- **The Result** - Persecution and Dispersion Acts 8:1-8
 - Satan's strategy to _____ through _____ and isolation.
 - God's purpose to _____ through _____ and proclamation.
 - The Truth - Sometimes our worst times are God's best times to use our lives.
 - Application – Fear not! _____ the Word! Hebrews 4:12

The Confrontation: Good vs. Evil Acts 8:9-17

- Simon intimidates through demonic sorcery.
- Philip liberates through God's Word.
- The Truth - The power is in the _____, not the messenger.
- Application - Fear not! Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.

1 John 4:4

The Warning: Genuine vs. Counterfeit Faith

Acts 8:18-25

- The Truth – Intellectual ascent and external ritual does not constitute _____ faith.
- Application – Fear not! Settle the issue _____.

The Scope: God's plan unfolding

Acts 8:26-40

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and **you will be My witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Acts 1:8

- Philip obeys a _____ by the Holy Spirit.
- God had _____ a heart to hear.
- The Truth - God is sovereignly working in the lives of people all around you, all the time.
- Application - Fear Not! _____ share the Gospel every day, in every way.

◆ **Summary** = The Matthew 28:20 Principle

Application Questions for Personal and Small Group Use:

1. How aware are you that you are in a spiritual battle? What present difficulty might be a hidden opportunity to share Christ?
2. How has fear/intimidation kept you from boldly sharing Christ's love and message with others?
3. What new insight did you receive concerning how difficulty and suffering, even persecution, can be used by God to fulfill His plans?
4. Which of the four applications have "your name on it" to apply?
5. Who could you share your "next step" application with, to gain support and encouragement to follow God's plan for your life?