

INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ WE TURN OUR ATTENTION TO THE NEXT SECTION OF PHILIPPIANS, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ a very brief paragraph made up of 1:27-30, ~ which is a single, ~ hard to understand sentence in the Greek text.

▷▷ And in this sentence, ~ Paul gives a brief talk about opposition to the gospel.

▶▶ In verses 27-28a, ~ which we'll look at today, ~ we find, ~ I would suggest, ~ four exhortations for believers.

▶▶ What's more, ~ since Paul spends much of the sentence referring to fighting for the faith, ~ believers' opponents, ~ and suffering, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ these four exhortations are most likely instructions for how believers are to behave in the face of opposition to the gospel. ~ ~ Can range from mild (mocking) to severe pers.

(DISPLAY 27-28a) IN HIS FIRST EXHORTATION, ~ PAUL CALLS ON BELIEVERS TO let our "manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ."

I.E., ~ IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION, ~ PAUL CALLS ALL BELIEVERS TO LIVE IN A WAY that brings honor to the good news about Jesus.

▶▶ Now we should keep in mind that even though Paul specifically has how to conduct ourselves in the face of opposition in view here, ~ living in a way that brings honor to the gospel is also a general command for believers.

▷▷ Recall what Paul said in Eph. 4:1. ~ ~ "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called."

↪↪ Paul calls believers to live the type of life that brings honor and glory to God.

▷▷ And then in Eph. 4:1-6:9, ~ he spelled out what that life looks like. ~ ~ This covers all of life, ~ not just when we are being opposed because of the gospel.

▶▶ But specifically, ~ here in Phil. 1:27a, ~ Paul calls us to live in a way that brings honor to the gospel when we are facing those who oppose the gospel.

▷▷ IOW, ~ don't give our opponents any ammunition to use against us other than the fact that we are Christians. ¶ 1/7

IN HIS FIRST EPISTLE, ~ PETER GIVES US A MUCH FULLER PICTURE OF WHAT PAUL IS talking about here.

▶▶ In 1 Pet. 2:12, ~ Peter writes, ~ "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles [unbelievers] honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

▷▷ Peter calls us to always live properly among our unbelieving neighbors, ~ i.e., ~ in a way that brings honor and glory to God.

▷▷ We are to do so for this purpose, ~ Peter says, ~ so that when they accuse us of doing wrong and speak against us, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ they may see our honorable lifestyle "and glorify God on the day of visitation."

▷▷ Peter's point here in [verse 12](#) is an evangelistic one.

↳↳ His primary idea is that in the midst of people speaking against us "as doing evil," ~ some unbelievers will come to Christ through the witness of our honorable lifestyle ~ ¶

→→ and be there to join in the celebration when Jesus returns.

↳↳ So we see that there is a definite connection between our lifestyle and our evangelism. ~ Perhaps question, ~ "How good an evangelist"

▶▶ And in 1 Pet. 3:13-17

▷▷ Just for being Christians we can find ourselves facing opposition.

▷▷ So again, ~ we should not supply our enemies with ammunition by also breaking the law or acting and speaking in an evil way.

▷▷ If our lives are above reproach, ~ Peter says that those who speak against us will end up being ashamed when they see what a good life we live because we belong to Christ.

▶▶ Considering what Peter has to say on the subject, ~ no wonder Paul calls us to live in a way that brings honor to Jesus when we are facing those who oppose the gospel.

(Display 27-28a) IN HIS SECOND EXHORTATION, ~ ¶¶

PAUL CALLS BELIEVERS TO STAND FIRM IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION.

▶▶ "stand firm in one spirit." ¶¶ 2/7

▶▶ The word translated "stand firm" described a Roman military formation in which the soldiers stood shoulder to shoulder and back to back, ~ with their shields up and their spears outward.

▷▷ It was the strongest possible defensive position.

▶▶ The word was also used of a soldier who defended his position at all costs, ~ even to the point of sacrificing his own life.

▶▶ To stand firm means to hold ground regardless of the danger or the opposition.

▶▶ Figuratively, ~ it means to hold fast to a belief, ~ a conviction, ~ or a principle without compromise, ~ regardless of personal cost.

▶▶ Paul wants believers to hold their ground regardless of the danger or opposition or personal cost.

▷▷ He doesn't want us to compromise in doctrine or conduct, ~ no matter what we're going through.

↪↪ He doesn't want us to go AWOL from the faith when things grow difficult.

▷▷ In the face of opposition, ~ Paul does not want us to downplay our Christianity.

▷▷ We must not compromise or hide our witness in order to be accepted by those who oppose us or to escape opposition.

BUT THE BELIEVER IS NOT TO STAND ALONE. ~~ WE ARE TO STAND FIRM "IN ONE spirit."

▶▶ It looks like the phrase "in one spirit" is talking about unity. ~~ In standing firm, ~ we as a church, ~ need to stand together.

▶▶ In the face of opposition, ~ Paul is calling the local church to figuratively form that Roman military formation in which the soldiers stand shoulder to shoulder ~ ∩∩

▷▷ and back to back ~ with their shields up and their spears outward.

▶▶ Standing shoulder to shoulder and back to back, ~~ helping each other not compromise, ~ holding each other accountable, ~ encouraging one another, ~ praying for one another.

▷▷ This is an extremely strong defensive position a church can take. ∩∩ 3/7

▶▶ This is another reason why it's so important to heed the exhortation in [Heb. 10:24-25](#).

▷▷ "24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

(Display 27-28a) **IN HIS THIRD EXHORTATION, ~ PAUL CALLS BELIEVERS TO STRIVE "side by side for the faith of the gospel in the face of opposition."**

THE "FAITH" HERE IS THE BODY OF GOD'S REVEALED TRUTH THAT SCRIPTURE contains and the apostles preached.

▶▶ What Paul says is basically the same as what Jude exhorts us to do in [Jude 3](#).

▷▷ "Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for ~ [or, ~ defend] ~ the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

▷▷ Jude was writing in the context of warning about false teaching. ~ Paul was writing in the context of opposition to God's truth.

▷▷ But the call is the same.

▷▷ When opposition arises against the church, ~ believers are to defend the body of God's revealed truth that Scripture contains and the apostles preached.

↪↪ In the face of opposition, ~ the church is not to surrender or retreat, ~ but to take action.

▶▶ And let's consider this.

▷▷ From our discussion of Paul's report from prison, ~ we know that God turns the tables on our enemies, ~ that persecution really serves to advance the gospel, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ and that the exact opposite of the intended effect on the part of our persecutors occurs.

▷▷ So we can also know, ~ and can be assured, ~ that defending the faith is not a lost cause, ~ no matter how fierce the opposition.

▶▶ And think about this, ~ since opposition could arise at any time, ~ we need to be ready to defend the faith. ~ And this is exactly what Peter tells us to do. ¶¶ 4/7

▷▷ In 1 Pet. 3:15, ~ Peter calls upon believers to always be "prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you."

↳↳ Notice the comprehensiveness of this exhortation.

→→ It refers to not only defending the faith in the face of opposition, ~ but also to innocent inquiries about the faith.

▶▶ But in order to always be prepared to defend the faith, ~ we need to be well-versed in it.

▷▷ So it is incumbent upon all believers here to study the Scriptures, ~ both personally and corporately.

▷▷ Now, ~ obviously those of us who preach and teach here can help everyone with the corporate aspect.

↳↳ But each individual believer is responsible for their personal study of God's word.

(Display 27-28a) COMING BACK TO PHIL., ~ WE SEE THAT, ~ LIKE STANDING FIRM, ~ the believer is not to be alone in defending the faith.

▶▶ "with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel."

▶▶ The word translated "striving side by side" gives us our English word "athletics."

▷▷ The word means "competing together as athletes."

▷▷ Paul pictures the church as a team, ~ and he reminds believers that it is teamwork that wins victories.

▷▷ In this case, ~ we play as a team to defend and advance the truth of God and promote His kingdom.

▷▷ And it is teamwork that will enable us in the face of opposition to victoriously contend for the body of God's revealed truth that Scripture contains and the apostles preached.

▶▶ One of Aesop's fables is about a father who had seven sons. ~~ To each son he gave a stick. ~~ Each was asked to break his stick. ~~ No problem there; ~~ it was easily done.

▷▷ Then the father took another seven sticks and bound them together. ~~ He then asked each of his seven sons to break the sticks.

▷▷ Not one of them could break the sticks which had been bound together as one. 📖 5/7

▶▶ Solomon presents us with the same idea in [Eccles. 4:9-12](#)

▶▶ On our own you and I will be snapped in two by Satan and our opponents.

▷▷ I.e., ~ we could easily abandon or compromise the faith when opposed.

↪↪ We need the accountability, ~ encouragement, ~ comfort, ~ and everything else that comes from being in community with other believers, ~ 77

→→ in order to victoriously defend the faith.

↪↪ Yet another reason to follow Heb. 10:24-25. ~ Not neglecting to meet

(Display 27-28a) **IN HIS FINAL EXHORTATION, ~ PAUL CALLS BELIEVERS TO NOT BE frightened in anything by our opponents.**

NO MATTER WHAT OUR OPPONENTS DO, ~ NO MATTER HOW FIERCE THE OPPOSITION, ~ Paul says don't be alarmed or intimidated.

▶▶ And believers have good reason to not be alarmed or intimidated in any way by our opponents.

▷▷ Because the Lord is with us, ~ and goes through times of persecution with us, ~ and strengthens us to stand courageously.

↪↪ As we alluded to when we looked at Paul's report, ~ the Lord was empowering Paul to be a courageous witness.

→→ And He will empower us as well.

▶▶ Consider a few of the promises we have from our Lord.

▷▷ [Is. 43:2](#), ~ "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

▷▷ [Heb. 13:5b](#), ~ "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

↪↪ Quoting [Josh. 1:5](#), ~ "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you."

▷▷ And [Matt. 10:16-20](#) 11 6/7

CONCLUSION.

MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST, ~ THIS NATION IN WHICH we are temporarily residing is becoming more and more opposed to the gospel.

▶▶ So it is extremely important, ~ now more than ever, ~ to heed and carry out Paul's exhortations.

▶▶ To live in a way that brings honor to the gospel, ~ to hold our ground regardless of the danger or opposition or personal cost, ~

▷▷ to defend the body of God's revealed truth that Scripture contains and the apostles preached, ~ to not be alarmed or intimidated no matter what our opponents do, ~ no matter how fierce the opposition, ~

↪↪ and to stand together, ~ shoulder to shoulder and back to back.

▶▶ Furthermore rest assured today and every day. ~~ The Lord is with us. ~~ He is on our side.

▶▶ And each one of us, ~ my fellow . . . ~ can declare along with Paul in 2 Tim. 4:18, ~ 77

▷▷ "The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

LET'S PRAY 7/7