

BELIEVERS AND THIS FALLEN WORLD; PHIL. 2:14-18 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ WE LOOK AT THE NEXT SECTION OF PHIL., ~ 2:14-18.

- ▶▶ In this paragraph, ~ Paul deals with believers in relation to this fallen world.
- ▶▶ Recall, ~ 1-11, ~ believers in relation to one another in our local fellowship. ~ Call to unity and to adopt the same attitude toward one another that Jesus had.
- ▶▶ 12-13, ~ believers in relation to our individual walk with the Lord
- ▶▶ And now in this next section, ~ 2:14-18, ~ as noted, ~ Paul deals with believers in relation to this fallen world.
 - ▷▷ Primarily, ~ we find three exhortations showing us how we are to conduct ourselves in this fallen world, ~ specifically in the presence of unbelievers.
 - ↳↳ 1st, ~ Verse 14, ~ "do all things without grumbling or disputing."
 - ↳↳ 2nd, ~ Verse 16, ~ hold "fast to the word of life."
 - ↳↳ And 3rd in verses 17-18, ~ Paul calls believers to be glad and rejoice in face of opposition, ~ even if it potentially involves martyrdom.

EXHORTATION #1. ~ VERSE 14

REMEMBER THE CONTEXT OF THIS PARAGRAPH, ~ HOW BELIEVERS ARE TO CONDUCT themselves in the midst of unbelievers.

- ▶▶ Complaining and arguing hurt Christ's cause among those who do not know Jesus.
- ▶▶ If all that unbelievers know about a church is that its members constantly complain and argue, ~ or if that's all they know about believers they're acquainted with, ~ ↴↴
 - ▷▷ they will get a bad impression of Christ and the gospel.
- ▶▶ They will then perhaps feel justified in criticizing believers, ~ and might conclude that there is nothing to our Christianity.
- ▶▶ So it's clear that complaining and arguing are not helpful to the spread of the gospel.

▶▶ Spreading the gospel is to be of top priority for us. ~ Commission.

▷▷ Recall Paul's attitude toward those believers who were sharing the gospel with impure motives.

↳↳ Despite people's motives, ~ Paul rejoiced because Christ was being preached.

↳↳ His focus was on what is most important. ~ And i.e., ~ the advancement of the gospel.

▷▷ Paul understood that the spread of the gospel was of top priority.

▷▷ We need to understand this as well, ~ and do nothing that will hurt or hinder the spread of the gospel. ~ And complaining and arguing will do exactly that. ~ So

▶▶ Not saying we can do this in front of each other

IN VERSE 15a, ~ HE GIVES US THE PURPOSE FOR THIS 1st EXHORTATION.

"THAT YOU MAY BE BLAMELESS AND INNOCENT, CHILDREN OF GOD WITHOUT blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation."

▶▶ The purpose for us doing everything without complaining and arguing is to conduct ourselves properly in front of unbelievers.

▶▶ Paul's overall concern goes beyond

▷▷ His overall concern is that believers live lives that are glorifying and pleasing to God in this present evil age.

▶▶ Peter says something similar in 1 Pet. 2:12.

▷▷ "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" ¶¶ 2/6

▷▷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 ~ 7

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

▶▶It's likely that Paul had been thinking along the same lines in his concern that believers live lives that are glorifying and pleasing to God in this present evil age.

▷▷And that is, ~ some unbelievers will come to Christ through the witness of our honorable lifestyle and be there to join in the celebration when Jesus returns.

▶▶Both apostles teach us that we should never underestimate the importance or the impact of a godly life.

[IN VERSE 15b, ~ PAUL INSERTS A PARENTHETICAL, ~ BUT EXTREMELY IMPORTANT, ~ comment. ~ 15b](#)

[I.E., ~ AMONG UNBELIEVERS, ~ BELIEVERS SHINE LIKE LIGHTS IN A DARK WORLD.](#)

▶▶Basically, ~ Paul is saying here, ~ "And by the way, ~ among unbelievers, ~ you, ~ believers, ~ shine like lights in a dark world."

▶▶What's he saying? ~ The Lord has made it so believers stand out in this fallen world. ~ We are seen. ~ We are being watched.

▷▷This is exactly what Jesus tells us. ~ [Matt. 5:14-15](#)

▶▶So, ~ the issue is not go and shine our light, ~ because we're already shining. ~ The issue is how are we displaying that light.

▶▶What's Paul implying with his by-the-way comment?

▷▷Well, ~ Paul's concern in the immediate context is that believers live lives that are glorifying and pleasing to God in this present evil age.

▷▷So with his parenthetical comment, ~ Paul is implying this.

↳↳"And by the way, ~ among unbelievers, ~ you, ~ believers, ~ shine like lights in a dark world. ~ So make sure you are displaying your light in the proper way."

▷▷Jesus makes this explicit in [Matt. 5:16](#) 3/6

IN VERSE 16, ~ WE FIND PAUL'S SECOND EXHORTATION SHOWING US HOW WE are to conduct ourselves in this fallen world, ~ especially in the presence of unbelievers.

"HOLDING FAST TO THE WORD OF LIFE." ("holding forth." ~~ "holding fast")

▶▶ Command, ~ and can be read as, ~ "Hold fast to the word of life." ~~ I.e., ~ God's word.

▶▶ So Paul's second exhortation showing us how we are to conduct ourselves in this fallen world, ~ especially in the presence of unbelievers, ~ is "hold firmly to God's word."

▷▷ I.e., ~ continue to read it, ~ study it, ~ live it, ~ and obey it, ~ and don't ever compromise or abandon it.

▷▷ God's charge to Joshua is a charge for all believers.

↪↪ Josh. 1:8. ~~ NIV ~ "Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." ~~ Not worldly prosperity or success.

"HOLD FIRMLY TO GOD'S WORD," ~ PAUL SAYS.

▶▶ In the context of living in this fallen world, ~ there will be many temptations to compromise God's word. ~~ The following are some examples.

▷▷ On marriage. ~~ Sexual orientation. ~~ Abortion. ~~ To not be so "old fashioned."

▷▷ There will be temptations to compromise the teachings of God's word to fit in with the surrounding culture.

▷▷ The temptation to water down God's word so a church is more "seeker friendly."

▷▷ To present Jesus meek and mild, ~ and ignore the fact that Jesus spent more time warning people about the dangers of hell ~ than He did in comforting them with the hope of heaven.

▷▷ To present Jesus as being all and only about love, ~ and ignore the fact that when he returns he will completely destroy his enemies.

▷▷ The list could go on. ~~ But we get the point.

↪↪ In the context of living in this fallen world, ~ there will be many temptations to compromise God's word. ↯↯ 4/6

▶▶ Also in the context of living in this present evil age, ~ it is God's word believers are to hold firmly to, ~ not cultural attitudes, ~ norms, ~ or trends. ~~ And not worldly philosophy.

▷▷ In Colossians, ~ Paul warns us to not let anyone capture us with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, ~ rather than from Christ.

▶▶ On another note, ~ holding firmly to God's word is our protection against this fallen world.

▷▷ In Ps. 119:98, ~ the psalmist declares, ~ LEB ~ "Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, because they are ever with me."

↳↳ I.e., ~ because God's word was his constant guide. ~~ The implication is that we will not be wiser than our enemies if God's word is not our constant guide.

▷▷ And in the classic passage on God's armor, ~ Paul tells us to "take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." ~~ Of course the greatest example of this was Jesus.

IN VERSES 17-18, ~ WE FIND PAUL'S THIRD EXHORTATION SHOWING US HOW WE are to conduct ourselves in this fallen world, ~ especially in the presence of unbelievers.

PAUL CALLS BELIEVERS TO BE GLAD AND REJOICE IN FACE OF OPPOSITION, ~ EVEN IF it potentially involves martyrdom. ~~ I'll explain.

▶▶ Here Paul returns to his theme in 1:27-30 of how believers are to behave in the face of opposition to the gospel.

▷▷ I.e., ~ this 3rd exhortation showing us how to conduct ourselves in the presence of unbelievers specifically deals with our behavior when they oppose us.

▶▶ Recall from our study of Phil. 1:21-26, ~ that Paul expected to be released, ~ but still held the thought that it might not go the way he expected.

▷▷ It was not a prophetic statement, ~ when he said, ~ in 1:25, ~ he would remain and continue in this life. ~~ It was Paul's personal conviction.

▶▶ So, ~ most likely Paul's overall thought here in 2:17-18 is this: ~~ ¶¶

▷▷ "But even if I'm wrong about remaining and am martyred in the service of Jesus, ~ I am glad and rejoice and I want you to be glad and rejoice." ¶¶ 5/6

▶▶Paul was glad and rejoiced despite fierce opposition to the gospel and despite the prospect of being martyred in the service of Jesus.

▷▷Paul was an example of Rev. 12:11. ~ ~ "And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."

↪↪I.e., ~ they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die.

▷▷In the near prospect of martyrdom, ~ Paul had no gloomy thoughts.

↪↪Remember what he said in chapter 1? ~ ~ To depart and be with Christ is far better.

↪↪Death would not terminate his joy, ~ but accelerate it, ~ as it would admit him to realms where all is calm and joy and peace.

▶▶And he wants us to be glad and rejoice despite opposition to the gospel, ~ even at the prospect of our own martyrdom if it comes to that, ~ ¶¶

▷▷and to not feel sorry for those believers who give their lives for Christ.

↪↪Why? ~ ~ Death in service to Christ is never in vain. ~ ~ "to die is gain."

CONCLUSION.

THREE EXHORTATIONS SHOWING US HOW WE ARE TO CONDUCT OURSELVES IN THIS fallen world, ~ specifically in the presence of unbelievers.

▶▶Live lives that are glorifying and pleasing to God.

▶▶Hold firmly to God's word, ~ no matter what.

▶▶Be glad and rejoice in the face opposition to the gospel, ~ even when it potentially involves martyrdom.

▷▷My . . . ~ ~ let it be said of us, ~ "they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die."

LET'S PRAY 6/6