

Self-Opposers

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In his second letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul urged his spiritual protégé to meekly correct “them that oppose themselves” (2:25). This statement is a striking one, and provokes the question, “Why would one be so foolish as to oppose himself?”

The uninformed reader might immediately think Paul was describing those who were contemplating suicide. However, the context reveals that Paul’s reference is to certain ones who mishandled God’s Word, engaged in ungodly speech, perverted the resurrection doctrine, and lived unholy lives (vv. 14–23). These, he declares, were **opposing themselves**, because all of these behaviors were contrary to their own spiritual welfare and best interests.

Contextually, the apostle’s meaning is that the self-opposers were working against their **spiritual** self-interests. When one gives the subject some thought, his description is an apt one for various other behaviors, including some that involve both one’s physical and spiritual wellbeing. Consider:

- **Those who use tobacco products** (smoking, chewing, dipping) can hardly be unaware of the grievous health risks involved, but millions continue to thus “oppose themselves,” slowly committing suicide. Also, such abuse of one’s body does not glorify God and thus wars against his spiritual self-interest, as well (1 Cor. 6:19–20; cf. 2 Cor. 10:5).
- **Those who consume drugs**, whether legal alcoholic beverages or illicit narcotics, invite disease, disgrace, dementia, and death in their physical self-abuse (not to mention the lives and property of others they destroy while intoxicated). They also oppose themselves spiritually, for such will forfeit Heaven if they do not repent (1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21).
- **Adulterers and fornicators** oppose themselves by inviting disease and death. Such behavior causes married folk to forsake solemn vows, destroy their homes and happiness, and bring heartache to their families. They also oppose themselves

spiritually, for impenitent adulterers and fornicators will not enter Heaven (1 Cor. 6:9a-10; Gal. 5:19, 21).

- **Male homosexuals** constitute a large majority of HIV/AIDS patients in our nation and have a life span of thirty years fewer than heterosexual men. They obviously oppose themselves physically. However, both male and female homosexuals face spiritual doom if they do not repent (Rom. 1:26-28; 1 Cor. 6:9b-10), thus opposing themselves spiritually.

In the final analysis, it is correct to conclude that every sin in which men engage is an exercise in self-opposition.

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