

Sunday, November 25, 2018—Body Building: Biting, Devouring, and Consuming One Another

### Introduction

- Ephesians 4:16—the body of Christ was designed to edify itself. The focus of our current series has been on the self-edifying nature of the body of Christ. How does the body edify itself?
- Romans 12:5—in our first study in this series, I introduced you to a concept that I am calling the one-anothering principle. The phrase “one of another” is a translation of a plural pronoun which means: “reciprocally” or “mutually.”
  - Reciprocal—“Mutual; done by each to the other” (Webster’s 1828)
  - Reciprocally—“Mutually; interchangeably; in such a manner that each affects the other and is equally affected by it.” (Webster’s 1828)
- Thus far we have observed the following one-anotherings:
  - Kindly affectioned one to another (Rom. 12:10)
  - Preferring one another (Rom. 12:10)
  - Not judge one another (Rom. 14:13)
  - Likeminded one toward another (Rom. 15:5)
  - Receive ye one another (Rom. 15:7)
  - Admonish one another (Rom. 15:14)
  - Salute one another with a holy kiss (Rom. 16:16)
  - Same Care One for Another (I Cor. 12:25)
- Galatians 5:13—last Sunday we were looking at Paul’s next one-anothering statement, “by love serve one another.” In doing so we observed that believers were not given liberty under grace so that we could sow to the flesh. Rather, we were given liberty under grace so that we can “by love serve one another.”
  - *Motivator*—“love”—Believers are to be serving each by “by love.” Our natural programming however is to serve ourselves and our own interests. How can we learn to serve others by love?

- I Thessalonians 4:9-10—if we allow him to God almighty will teach us how to love one another.
- *Action*—“serve”—the verb “serve” is a present active imperative in other words it is a command. The word translated as “serve” in verse 13 is elsewhere translated “bondage” in Gal. 4:8 (“service”), 9, 25. Instead of being in bondage and serving the law, Paul wanted the Galatians to use their liberty to serve on another.
- *Target*—one another
  - Ephesians 4:16

### **Galatians 5:14**

- Leviticus 19:18
- Matthew 22:37-40—if mankind had perfectly loved God and his neighbor there would have been no need for the Mosaic Law in the first place.
- *Golden Rule*—“treat others as you yourself would like to be treated.” Just as we see to the needs of our own well-being; likewise, believers are to love other members of the body of Christ with the same care we direct towards ourselves.
- Galatians 5:14—Paul’s statement here means that the basis for the whole law can be summed up in the word love. Under the law if Israel had perfectly kept God’s precepts, she would have done what love dictated. If the Galatians who were so worried about keeping the law would use their liberty to “by love serve one another” they would actually be fulfilling what the law required, namely to “love they neighbor as they self.”
  - Romans 13:8-10—the liberty of grace gives believers the spiritual ability to fulfill the law.
- Ephesians 5:2—just because we have been freed from the law, we do not have license to sin but liberty to walk in love.
  - Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17; 2:1-2
  - Romans 12:1—we are to be a living sacrifice unto he Lord. When believes “by love service one another” we fulfill the righteous requirements of the law and are a “sweet-smelling savor” unto the Lord.

### **Galatians 5:15**

- *Bite*—the Greek word translated “bite” in verse 15 occurs only one time in the Greek text supporting the KJB. According to *Strong’s Concordance* the word can mean one of two things:

1) “to bite with the teeth” (in a physical sense) or 2) “metaph., to wound the soul, cut lacerate, rend with reproaches.”

- English dictionaries also acknowledge a literal and figurative meaning for the word “bite.”
  - “To break or crush with the teeth, as in eating; to pierce with the teeth, as a serpent; to seize with the teeth, as a dog.”
  - “To reproach with sarcasm; to treat with severity by words or writing”
  - “To injure by angry contention” (Gal. 5:15). (Webster’s 1828)
- Paul is clearly using the word “bite” in a figurative sense in Gal. 5:15. He is talking about believers tearing into each other verbally with their teeth.
- *Devour*—this word has many potential meanings in both English and Greek none of which are particularly positive.
  - Matthew 13:4—“To eat up; to eat with greediness; to eat ravenously, as a beast of prey, or as a hungry man.” (Webster’s 1828)
  - I Peter 5:8—“To destroy spiritually; to ruin the soul.” (Webster’s 1828)
  - Revelation 20:9
- Given that the biting is figurative/metaphorical it would follow that the devouring would also be figurative/metaphorical. Paul is talking about believers bringing other believers to ruin by the infliction of injuries. Notice how biting and devouring one another is set in direct contrast to serving each other by love.
- *Take heed*—is a present active imperative. Paul is warning the Galatians what will happen if they “bite and devour one another.”
- *Consumed*—they will be “consumed one of another” i.e., “wasted; burnt up; destroyed; dissipated; squandered; expended.” (Webster’s 1828)
  - Luke 9:54
  - II Thessalonians 2:8
- Galatians 5:15—the word picture here is of believers cannibalizing one another. Cancer cells eat up and consume healthy tissue. Cancer cells are rough cells that work against the health of the body. What kinds of cells are we in the body of Christ? Are we healthy

mutually reinforcing cells that seek and work to the benefit of the surrounding tissue and organs? Or are we cancerous cells that are just seeking our own agenda at the expense of the rest of the body? Are we serving our own ends in the body of Christ or serving one another by love?

- False doctrine had stirred up debate and caused division among the Galatian saints. Believers are not to be biting, devouring, and consuming one another but rather serving one another by love.