

Sunday, December 2, 2018—Body Building: Provoking 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)
 - By love serve one another (Gal. 4:14)
 - **Should not** be biting, devouring, and consuming one another (Gal. 5:15)
- 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 their neighbor as they self.”

- Galatians 5:15—contrasts how believers should not be treating one another i.e., biting and devouring one another with how they should be treating one another in verse 13 “but love serving one another.” Verse 15 is a negative one-anothering, it deals with how believers should not be treating one another.
 - 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 our just seeking our own agenda at the expense of the rest of the body? Our we serving our own ends in the body of Christ or serving one another by love?
- This morning we will encounter two more negative one-anothering statements in Galatians 5:26, believers should not be provoking or envying one another.

Galatians 5:26

- Contextually Paul has been talking about not walking after the flesh but after the Spirit since verse 16.
 - Verses 19-21—outline the works of the flesh.
 - Verses 22-23—contrast the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit.
 - Verse 24—our flesh has been crucified and put to death along with its affection and lusts.
 - Romans 6:6—our old man is crucified with Christ that hence forth we should not serve sin.
 - Verse 25—therefore since believers live in the Spirit positionally we should also walk in the Spirit practically.
- *Let us not be desirous of vain glory*—in terms of walking in the Spirit as opposed to the flesh believers should not be “desirous of vain glory.” This is the only time the underlying Greek word occurs in the New Testament. It means, “glorying without reason, conceited, vain glorious, eager for empty glory.”
- The English word “vain” carries the following relevant meaning according to Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language*.
 - “Empty; worthless; having no substance, value or importance (I Pet. 1:18).”

- We need to face facts; our flesh wants to be recognized and desires “vain glory.” This is opposite of what we seen in our study of previously one-anotherings.
 - Romans 12:3—we need to point out once again that this statement comes after Paul’s admonition to renew the mind.
 - Philippians 2:1-4—the English word “vainglory” in verse 3 means “exclusive vanity excited by one’s own performances; empty pride; undue elation of mind.”
- Galatians 5:26—the flesh produces a desire within us for “vain glory” that is exactly the opposite of how believers ought to function.
- *Provoking One Another*—vain glory and empty conceit provoke other people to anger and hatred. The English word “provoke” carries the following relevant meanings:
 - “To call into action; to arouse; to excite; as, to provoke anger or wrath by offensive words or by injury; to provoke war.”
 - “To make angry; to offend; to incense; to enrage.”
- There are many verses in the Bible connecting provocation with anger.
 - Deuteronomy 32:21
 - I Kings 16:2, 26, 33
 - Ephesians 6:4
 - Colossians 3:21
- Galatians 5:26—as believers we are not to be doing things on purpose that we know other saints don’t like and appreciate as a means of provoking them. It is “vain glory” and desire to serve one’s own motives and agenda that provokes other saints.
 - Romans 14:19
 - Romans 15:2