

Sunday, September 17, 2023—Galatians 5:15 The Results of Liberty Misused

### Galatians 5:15

- **But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.**
- This verse is clear that there were problems amongst the Galatians. This is to be expected; false doctrine always stirs up debate and causes division.
  - Galatians 1:7-9, 3:1-3, 4:15-14, 5:7
- Certainly not all the Galatians had fallen prey to the Judaizers. Some saints had remained grounded in Paul's gospel or else there would have been no source for friction and contention.
  - Group 1: those who remained faithful.
  - Group 2: those who were seeking to add Law keeping to Paul's gospel.
- **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.”
- Noah Webster's *American Dictionary of the English* acknowledges 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.
- According to Noah Webster the English word “devour” means:
  - 1) to eat up; to eat with greediness; to eat ravenously, as a beast of prey, or as a hungry man;
  - 2) to destroy; to consume with rapidity and violence (*Webster’s 1828*).
- II Corinthians 11:20
- **Take heed**—is a present active imperative. Paul is warning the Galatians what will happen if they “bite and devour one another.”
- **Consumed**—the word “consumed” means: wasted; burnt up; destroyed; dissipated; squandered; expended. (*Webster’s 1828*)
- The word picture here is of believers cannibalizing one another.
  - 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 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?
- 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.