

Galatians 5:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

Analysis

I would they were even cut off which trouble you. Paul's shocking statement. "I would" (ophelon, ὄφελον)—I wish, would that. "They were even cut off" (kai apokopsontai, καὶ ἀποκόψονται)—they would cut themselves off, mutilate themselves. The verb apokoptō (ἀποκόπτω) means to cut off, amputate. This is either:

1. self-castration like pagan Cybele priests (shocking wordplay on circumcision),
or
2. cutting themselves off from the church/community.

Context favors the former: biting sarcasm.

"Which trouble you" (hoi anastatountes hymas, οἱ ἀναστατοῦντες ὑμᾶς)—those disturbing, unsettling, agitating you. If the Judaizers are so obsessed with cutting flesh (circumcision), let them go all the way and emasculate themselves! Paul's shocking language reflects righteous anger at false teachers destroying souls. This isn't petty vindictiveness but passionate defense of the gospel and protection of vulnerable believers. False teaching that perverts the gospel merits strong language and severe opposition. Nice tolerance isn't appropriate when souls and truth are at stake.

Historical Context

The cult of Cybele (mother goddess) was prominent in Galatia. Her priests practiced self-castration in ecstatic frenzy. Paul's wordplay: the Judaizers'

obsession with circumcision makes them more like pagan castration-cultists than true gospel ministers. This shocking comparison would jolt readers. Paul's willingness to use graphic, offensive language when defending the gospel challenges contemporary Christian niceness that avoids confrontation. Some battles require strong, even shocking, rhetoric. When the gospel is perverted and souls endangered, politeness is misplaced.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do you balance Christian love with appropriate anger and strong language against those perverting the gospel?
2. When is harsh rhetoric and confrontation necessary in defending truth, and when does it become sinful or counterproductive?
3. What contemporary false teachings merit Paul-like passionate opposition rather than tolerant accommodation?

Interlinear Text

ὄφελον	καὶ	ἀποκόψονται	οἱ	ἀναστατοῦντες	ὑμᾶς
I would	even	cut off	G3588	which trouble	you
G3785	G2532	G609		G387	G5209

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 5:10 (Parallel theme): I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

1 Corinthians 5:13 (Parallel theme): But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

Joshua 7:25 (Parallel theme): And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.

Titus 3:10 (Parallel theme): A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;

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