

Galatians 5:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

Analysis

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. Paul warns against internal church conflict. "But if ye bite and devour one another" (ei de allēlous daknete kai katesthiete, εἰ δὲ ἀλλήλους δάκνετε καὶ κατεσθίετε)—if you bite and consume each other like wild animals. Daknō (δάκνω) is to bite, gnaw; katesthiō (κατεσθίω) is to eat up, devour. Vivid imagery of vicious mutual destruction. Present tense indicates ongoing action—they're currently doing this.

"Take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (blepete mē hyp' allēlōn analōthēte, βλέπετε μὴ ὑπ' ἀλλήλων ἀναλωθῆτε)—watch out, beware lest you be completely consumed/destroyed by one another. Analiskomai (ἀναλίσκομαι) means total consumption, annihilation. The controversy over circumcision created bitter division. Instead of love serving one another (5:13), they were attacking and destroying each other. Doctrinal controversy, without love, breeds vicious infighting that destroys churches. Paul's warning: your mutual attacks will consume you all. Love must govern even theological disputes.

Historical Context

Church conflicts over doctrine and practice have often degenerated into vicious personal attacks, character assassination, and community destruction. The Galatian controversy wasn't abstract theology but created real division, with believers choosing sides and attacking opponents. Paul previously commanded

love and mutual service; now he warns that their actual behavior is the opposite—mutually destructive. This pattern continues: theological disputes without love destroy churches. Truth matters, but so does how we contend for truth. Bite-and-devour religion isn't Christianity regardless of doctrinal correctness.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Paul warns against 'biting and devouring'—where are you engaging theological disagreements in ways that wound rather than build up?
2. The mutual destruction ('consumed one of another') assumes both parties are attacking—are your disputes characterized by mutual aggression or patient truth-telling?
3. When does defending gospel truth cross the line into personal animosity and flesh-driven conflict?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	δὲ	ἀλλήλων	δάκνετε	καὶ	κατεσθίετε	βλέπετε	μὴ
if	But	another	ye bite	and	devour	take heed	not
G1487	G1161	G240	G1143	G2532	G2719	G991	G3361
ὑπό	ἀλλήλων	ἀναλωθῆτε					
of	another	consumed					
G5259	G240	G355					

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 3:3 (Parallel theme): For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

Galatians 5:26 (Parallel theme): Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

2 Corinthians 11:20 (Parallel theme): For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.

2 Corinthians 12:20 (Parallel theme): For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

Isaiah 11:13 (Parallel theme): The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

Philippians 3:2 (Parallel theme): Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.