

JANUARY 16, 2024 TUESDAY - DAY 9

# PRAY THAT WE WOULD NOT BITE/DEVOUR/CONSUME ONE ANOTHER

GALATIANS 5:15

During Oliver Cromwell's rule in England, a serious shortage in coins developed. The order went out to mint new coins, but they found that the only silver in the land was in the statues of the saints in the churches. When the situation was explained to him, Cromwell exhorted, "Well, let's melt down those saints and put them into circulation."

## BITE AND DEVOUR

While there is much to be said in favor of believers being put through "melt down" experiences broken, shaped, molded this is never to be done in a vicious, vindictive way. To the contrary, we are instructed to avoid such activity when the purpose is to destroy another. Two common Greek verbs often used together in New Testament days to describe the activity of wild animals are translated "bite" and "devour". Not simply "bite," which indicates sudden anger and abuse and the inflicting of pain, but "devour," meaning literally, "to gulp down" or leave no room for anything, which implies continuing in an evil state of mind. Nothing in the text tells us the specific reason for such behavior.

It could have been any number of things. Today we might say they were fighting like cats and dogs. The story goes that two vicious snakes had grabbed each other by the tail and each swallowed the other. The result was the destruction of both parties involved! Not so common in Bible times was to see sheep biting one another.

## CONSUME

The words contain a strong expression of partisan hatred resulting in actions that lead to mutual injury. "Consume" means to spend. It was sometimes used in that day to mean "consumed" as by fire.

Used only here and in Luke 9:54, the tense indicates the action has not yet taken place but is potential if conditions continue as is. By "consuming" one another, Paul does not mean that they will lose their status as Christians, but that such activity within the church will eventually destroy the organic community life of the church and eliminate any possibility for Christian fellowship.

Paul does not mean that they will lose their status as Christians, but that such activity within the church will eventually destroy the organic community life of the church and eliminate any possibility for Christian fellowship. The more sacred the institution which is disturbed, the more difficult it is to restore harmony.

**The closer the relationship between wounded individuals, the more difficult it is to restore broken fellowship.**

The Old Testament writer of the Proverbs states as much, "**A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city**" (Proverbs 18:19).



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## COOPERATION

Several years ago at the Special Olympics in Seattle, the one hundred meter dash had nine entrants. The gun sounded and they all started running as fast as they could. Then one little boy stumbled and fell on the track and began to cry. Hearing him sob, the eight other runners stopped, turned, and looked at him. Seeing him on the ground in tears, everyone abandoned the race and walked back to him. Everyone! One little girl kissed his leg, "There," she said, "that should make it better." Then all nine put their arms around each other and walked together to the finish line to a standing ovation.

When will we learn that, within and between churches, we are not in competition, but in cooperation? When one of us hurts, we all hurt. When one of us advances, the whole kingdom advances.

Of thousands of letters and calls Wedgwood Baptist Church received after the tragedy, only a paltry few sought to cast guilt or blame. One said the death of these youths was God's punishment for the style of music we were playing. That is what it means to "devour one another." Thankfully, thousands of churches sent money, gifts, people, and, most of all, heartfelt prayers for healing, grace, protection and provision.

A denominational brochure heralded the annual program theme from Galatians 5:13, "through love serve one another," but inadvertently listed the Scripture as Galatians 5:15. A speaker rose to read the text in a prominent meeting, had everyone turn to Galatians 5:15, and proceeded to read the wrong text, imploring listeners to not "bite and devour one another." If you knew the denomination,

you would know how appropriate the mistake was. Children chant, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Nothing could be farther from the truth. Words can bite, consume, devour, sting, wreak havoc, and destroy. Pray that we would not bite/devour/consume one another.

**But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you are not consumed by one another.**

**Gal. 5:15**

## PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER

1. Pray that a "Kingdom Attitude" seeking the benefit of all God's churches would pervade your heart and that of your church.
2. Call several neighboring churches and ask how you might pray for him.
3. Pray for the well being of individuals who may have wronged you in the past. Ask God how you might invest in their lives.
4. Do what you can to establish an interdenominational worship service in your community. Begin by sharing with your Pastor.

**The nature of understanding is linked with a patient spirit towards one another.**

