

Choose today ... build or destroy ... The opportunity of a lifetime ... literally ... our only opportunity ... one life ... one time to honor Christ and stand against the darkness.

OUTLINE & TEXT FOR GALATIANS 5:7-15 ...

- (Galatians 5:7-13a ESV) **You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?** 8 This persuasion is not from him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump. 10 I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. 11 But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. 12 I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves! 13 For you were called to freedom, brothers.

1. WE CAN NOW OBEY THE TRUTH: Christ set us free from our sins and calls us to freedom, 5:7-13a.

Our time here on Earth is very brief, so we need to be wise and make the best use of our time.

- (Psalm 90:10 ESV) **The years of our life ... are soon gone, and we fly away.**
- (Ephesians 5:15-17 ESV) Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, **making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.** Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.
- (James 4:14 ESV) Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. **What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.**

- (Psalm 39:4-5 NLT) LORD, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered—**how fleeting my life is. ... at best, each of us is but a breath.**
- (Job 8:9 NLT) For we were born but yesterday and know nothing. **Our days on earth are as fleeting as a shadow.**
- (1 Chronicles 29:15 NLT) **We are here for only a moment,** visitors and strangers in the land as our ancestors were before us. Our days on earth are like a passing shadow, gone so soon without a trace.
- (Psalm 102:11 NLT) **My life passes as swiftly as the evening shadows.** I am withering away like grass.

Two Choices: Having been freed from our sins, we now have two choices and only two. We must realize this. There are not other options. We will choose to serve others and build, or we will choose to serve ourselves and destroy.

- (Galatians 5:13b-14 ESV) Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

2. WE CAN CHOOSE TO OBEY & BUILD: We are called to use our freedom to through love serve one another, 5:13b-14.

We have been freed from our sin and now have a base of operation to serve God. This was previously

impossible.

Our base of operation is the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Our message is the cross. We are to through love serve (slave ourselves to) one another.

This is God’s plan, his simple directive, and the choices are clear. Serve one another and build. Or serve our flesh (ourselves, our sinful nature) and destroy. (Using the principle of antithetical parallelism, we can deduce that if we serve ourselves, we will destroy, and then antithetically if we through love serve one another, we will build and not destroy.)

- (Galatians 5:15 ESV) But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

3. OR WE WILL CHOOSE TO DISOBEY & DESTROY: If we disobey God and do not through love serve one another, then we will be in danger of destroying one another, 5:15.

How do we bite each other? How does that happen? Most often in our social context we bite with our words. We grumble and criticize and gossip. We pick, pick, pick at a person until there’s nothing left. We drive them away, and sometimes this is very intentional. We wanted them out of our lives and out of our church. And we won, and they are gone.

Meanness: We bite with our mean words, whether subtle, cutting words or an outright attack.

Never believe the old nursery rhyme. “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never break me.” [Or “names will never harm me.”]

But we all know that isn’t true. Words kill.

- (James 3:6 ESV) **And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness.** The tongue is

set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.

Selective Kindness: Here is another variation on how we bite. We don’t necessarily use mean words, but we are selective in using words of grace and kindness, and sometimes selective in our forgiveness. A condescending tone can be a dagger to the heart.

And sometimes we don’t need words. A finely tuned snub works just fine. Or merely excluding the person to send a message. Turning our back to them as they approach. We can be so good at hiding the hate in our hearts.

- (Ephesians 4:29 ESV) Let **no corrupting talk** come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give **grace to those who hear.**
- (Ephesians 4:31-32 ESV) **Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.** 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Secretly Hating: Leviticus 19:17-18 is so very insightful as it presents the context for the “love your neighbor” teaching. Loving our neighbor means not hating our neighbor in our heart which means speaking openly and honestly to each other, something that is a spiritual “taboo” in many fellowships. “Don’t talk about our problems.”

- (Leviticus 19:17-18 The Message) **Don’t secretly hate your neighbor.** If you have something against him, get it out into the open; otherwise you are an accomplice in his guilt. 18 **Don’t seek revenge or carry a grudge** against any of your people. Love your neighbor as yourself. I am GOD.