

“Cannibals in the Church”

Galatians 5:13-15

Introduction: Cannibalism is the act or practice of humans eating the flesh or internal organs of other human beings. The word came from a Spanish name for the Carib people, a West Indies tribe formerly well known for their practice of cannibalism. Cannibalism has been well documented around the world, from Fiji to the Amazon Basin to the Congo to Māori New Zealand. Cannibalism was widespread in the past among humans in many parts of the world, continuing into the 19th century in some isolated South Pacific cultures, and to the present day in parts of tropical Africa. In a few cases in Melanesia, indigenous flesh-markets existed. Cannibalism has been occasionally practiced as a last resort by people suffering from famine. A famous example of this is the crash of Air Force Flight 571, after which some survivors ate the bodies of dead passengers. Not only is cannibalism recorded in history and literature, but it is also recorded in the Bible. Note:

1. God told Israel prophetically what would happen if they rebelled against Him.
 - a. Leviticus 26:29- *“And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.”*
 - b. Deuteronomy 28:53-57
2. During the Siege of Samaria II Kings 6:24-29
3. Jeremiah’s Prophetic Warning of the Babylonian Captivity Jeremiah 19:9- *“And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.”*
4. Jeremiah’s Prophecy Fulfilled Lamentations 4:10- *“The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.”*
5. Ezekiel’s Testimony of the Babylonian Captivity Ezekiel 5:10- *“Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds.”*

Body: Although this may seem gruesome and disgusting, it is exactly what the Apostle Paul was describing in Galatians 5:15. Where love is lacking, there will be problems. The believers at Galatia became cannibals biting and devouring one another. Ultimately, people were consumed. This is referring to all of the arguing, backbiting, backstabbing, badmouthing, blabbering, complaining, criticizing, gossiping, grumbling, mudslinging, murmuring, running someone down, slandering, spreading of rumors, and whispering the Christians in the church were doing. These things ought not to be done by God’s children. Notice two things about cannibalism in the church at Galatia.

- I. The Ruthlessness of Cannibalism- *“But if ye bite and devour one another...”*
 - A. Notice what the Apostle did not say.

- B. Acts 20:29- *“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.”*
- C. Paul suggests that they, being sheep, were playing the part of wolves devouring one another.
- D. What would it take for one to be a cannibal?
1. A Bite
 - a. It all starts with a bite. Then, it leads to another bite. Before you know it, you have consumed a whole carcass.
 - b. “Bite” means to break or pierce with the teeth.
 - c. II Corinthians 12:20- *“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”*
 - d. Gossip is like mud thrown against a clean wall: it may not stick, but it leaves a mark.
 - e. Also, “bite” can refer to a serpent’s bite.
 - f. Matthew 12:34- *“O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”*
 - g. James 3:8- *“But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”*
 - h. Psalms 140:3- *“They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders’ poison is under their lips. Selah.”*
 - i. Romans 3:13- *“Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips”*
 2. A Fire
 - a. Proverbs 26:20-23- *“Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly. Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross.”*
 - b. A gossip usually makes a mountain out of a molehill by adding some dirt.
 - c. There is so much good in the worst of us,
And so much bad in the best of us,
That it hardly behooves any of us
To talk about the rest of us.
 - d. James 3:6- *“And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.”*

- II. The Results of Cannibalism- *“...take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”*
- A. If you bite and devour others, you will experience the same. Unjust criticism reciprocates unjust criticism.
- B. “Consumed” means to waste; burnt up; destroyed; dissipated; squandered; expended.

- C. Proverbs 18:21- *“Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.”*
- D. Notice the destruction we create when we allow our speech to attack someone else.
- E. *“The tongue is but three inches long, yet it can kill a man six feet high.”*
- F. For every word in Hitler’s book, *Mein Kampf*, 125 lives were lost in World War II. Our own words may not have caused wars or wrecked cities, but they can break hearts and ruin reputations.
- G. A fire reportedly started in the O’Leary barn in Chicago at 8:30 P.M., October 8, 1871; and because that fire spread, over 100,000 people were left homeless, 17,500 buildings were destroyed, and 300 people died. It cost the city over 400 million.
- H. Proverbs 10:19- *“In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.”*
- I. WE NEED TO WATCH OUR MOUTH!!!
- J. Only a baby is admired for opening his mouth and putting his foot into it.
- K. Plastic surgeons can do almost anything with a nose, except keep it out of other people’s business.
- L. A slip of the foot you may soon recover,
But a slip of the tongue you may never get over. (Benjamin Franklin)
- M. *“Lord, remind us often that a gossip’s mouth is the devil’s mailbag.”* (Welsh Proverb)
- N. Proverbs 17:27- *“He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.”*
- O. Psalms 141:3- *“Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”*
- P. Psalms 39:1- *“I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.”*
- Q. Job 2:10- *“...In all this did not Job sin with his lips.”*
- R. When Jesus has control of our heart, He has control over our mouth.
- S. Matthew 12:36- *“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”*
- T. Luke 12:2-3- *“For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.”*

Conclusion: Many a church member goes home from the Sunday morning service and through unloving comments has fried pastor, deacon, Sunday school teacher, or fried church member for lunch. Once the meal is cooked, they begin to devour that individual. God uses His Word, prayer, worship, and fellowship to build us up in Christ. We can have the first three, but without this fourth element, fellowship, the church will become cannibalistic. The Bible demands repentance from such actions that fellowship could remain. Will we allow cannibals to roam the aisles of the church, or are we going to put an end to them?