

ἐπιθεία comes from *ἐπιθεύω* which means to spin wool, or work in wool. It came to be used for "electioneering for office, courting popular applause by trickery and low arts. In usage, its meaning varies widely, but it has the general thrust of "base self-seeking."⁸

It may be reading too much into Paul's use of it here to see it as a reference to the activity of an offended party who is "canvassing for position"⁹ among the members of the Galatian congregations. Thus it would refer to the spreading of the strife from the individual parties involved to the formation of a group of sympathizers around each of the opponents.

This is certainly the course that conflict takes in many cases. In the list found in Galatians chapter five, *ἔρις* and *ἐπιθεία* are separated by two other terms. These terms explain the reason for the spread of the strife from quarreling to the attempt to form supporting parties. (*ζῆλος* and *θυμὸς*)

ζῆλος the third word in the list is often translated simply "zeal" (John 2:17; Rom. 10:2; 2 Cor. 7:11; 9:2; Phil. 3:6; Col. 4:13). When focused upon others and what they possess, it may still have a good sense as well as a bad sense. In the good sense *ζῆλος* is the desire to emulate, to acquire what belongs to or is characteristic of another by legitimate means. In the negative sense it means

⁸Gerhard Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 661.

⁹Cole, Epistle of Paul to Galatians, p. 163.