

GALATIANS

Chapter 5

Christ Has Set Us Free

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. 3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. 5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. 7 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. 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.” 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

Ch 5 “By the Word [the Spirit] works and promotes sanctification, causing this congregation daily to grow and to become strong in the faith and its fruit, which He produces” (LC II 53). (TLSB)

5:1-12 Gal 5:1–12 serves as a transition from the first four chapters to the remainder of the letter. That transitional role is especially clear in 5:1. Older commentators tended to divide Paul’s letter into a historical or apologetic section (chapters 1–2), a theological section (chapters 3–4), and a practical or paraenetic section (chapters 5–6), but one should not assume that Paul’s primary theological arguments are present only in the first four chapters of the letter and that Galatians 5 and 6 are merely tacked-on ethical admonitions of little importance. Such assumptions would overlook that Paul has not to this point even mentioned the Galatians’ consideration of circumcision. After laboring over Moses’ Law in the preceding chapters, with 5:1–12 Paul finally broaches the sensitive topic of the Galatians’ interest in circumcision, and he will return to the matter in 6:11–17. Certainly Galatians 5 and 6 include significant paraenetic material as Paul outlines the shape of life in the Spirit apart from circumcision, but Paul’s letters do not divide neatly into theological and exhortative sections. In Galatians 5–6 he is developing several strands of thought from the first four chapters. Recognizing the continuity of these various strands helps to avoid the difficulty scholars have had in identifying whether a supposedly discrete paraenetic section begins at 4:12; 4:21; 5:1; 5:2; 5:7; or 5:13. (CC)

Gal 5:2–12, in many ways, parallels 1:6–10:

1. Severe tone—1:8–9; a curse; 5:10: will bear the judgment; 5:12: emasculate themselves
2. Desertion from the one who called them—1:6; 5:8
3. Apostasy from the grace of Christ—1:6; 5:4
4. “Again”—1:9; 5:3
5. Doubled curse—1:8–9; 5:10 (judgment); 5:12 (emasculatation)

These parallels do not prove that 5:2–12 is the climax of the letter. They do, however, underscore the importance of this paragraph. At the same time, 5:2–12 also parallels the conclusion of the letter in 6:12–17:

1. Observance/non-observance of the Law—5:3; 6:13a
2. “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision”—5:6; 6:15
3. A relationship between circumcision and persecution—5:11; 6:12 (CC)

The links between 5:2–12 and 6:12–17 draw attention to 5:2–12, but they also create an *inclusio* around the intervening material (5:13–6:10). The final two chapters of the letter in their entirety represent the critical moment for Paul’s letter to the Galatians. (CC)

The admonitions against circumcision in 5:2–12 and 6:12–17 frame the intervening, positive section on life with the Spirit. The point is that freedom in Christ does not lead to licentiousness; rather, the believer *fulfills* the Law thanks to the empowerment of Christ’s Spirit. Paul is contrasting two approaches to human existence: living with the power of the Spirit versus living in the desire of the flesh. Christians enjoy true freedom as they walk responsibly in virtue. Regardless of what the rivals might think in their advocacy of the Law, the Spirit will provide all the guidance the believer needs!¹⁸ Thus 5:2–12 sharply contrasts Christ with the Law as epitomized by the rite of circumcision (see esp. 5:1, 2, 4, 6). (CC)

The clear focus on circumcision in both 5:2–12 and 6:12–17 demonstrates that Paul is fighting on only a single front against the determined Jewish-Christian advocates of gentile circumcision and Law observance. Were Paul also combating libertines with an excessive sense of “freedom in the Spirit,” he would not have wanted to fuel the fire of such “spiritual” types by admonishing the Galatians to walk by the Spirit (as he does in 5:16). Paul would also have been more guarded in his affirmations of freedom in 5:1. No, Paul remains thoroughly occupied with the rival advocates of gentile Law observance, who, in their zeal, have overlooked the only genuinely viable approach to the Christian life. (CC)

The Spirit of Christ (4:6) brings to life a community that bears the character of Jesus’ own life. Christ’s love and self-giving (1:4; 2:20) becomes the paradigm for those crucified with him (5:24). Love stands at the head of the Spirit’s fruit (5:22–23) and is the expression of faith’s activity (5:6). Christ has been formed within the believing community (4:19), a community of members clothed in Christ through Baptism (3:27). “Paul envisages the corporate life of the Christian community to be the social embodiment of the self-giving Christ. The faithfulness of Christ provides the context out of which arises the characteristics of the new-world order of Spirit-enabled love and self-giving [cf. 6:14–15].” Ultimately, such Christ-like behavior exposes Law observance for the sham that it is. The power of the Spirit is irreplaceable and only available in Christ. Those who choose the path of the Law will be forming a very different sort of community, the community of the “flesh.” (CC)

5:1 τῆ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν· στήκετε οὖν (“for freedom Christ set us free; stand firm, then”)—This reading is well attested externally (including κ^* A B P 33) and can account for the other readings. The variants may be grouped into three categories: (1) Some variants include a relative pronoun (ἧ) with or in lieu of the article (τῆ) with ἐλευθερίᾳ (“freedom”): τῆ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἧ ἢ or ἧ ἐλευθερίᾳ. (2) Some variants change the position of ἡμᾶς (“us”) in the sentence: ἐλευθερίᾳ Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς or Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν ἡμᾶς (Theophylactus [ca. 1077]). (3) Other variants move οὖν (“therefore”) forward, from after στήκετε (“stand firm”) to after ἐλευθερίᾳ (“freedom”), or they omit οὖν altogether. The move of οὖν

(“therefore”) after ἐλευθερίᾳ (“freedom”) exemplifies the smoother and less abrupt nature of the variant readings: “Therefore, with the freedom by which Christ freed us, stand fast.”

στήκετε (“stand firm”)—This imperative is from στήκω, a present tense formed from the classical perfect ἔστηκα and the lexical equivalent of ἵστημι (BDF § 73). (CC)

Call to Freedom (5:1) (CC)

For freedom Christ set us free; stand firm, then, and do not be burdened again with a yoke of slavery. Commentators have remained divided over whether 5:1 concludes the preceding paragraph (4:21–5:1; 5:2–12) or opens a new paragraph in the letter (4:21–31; 5:1–12). The rationale for taking 5:1 with what precedes is strong. Paul has just identified the Galatians as the children of the free woman, in contrast to the children of the slave woman (4:21–31). The juxtaposition of freedom and slavery continues in 5:1; Gal 5:2–12, on the other hand, makes no reference to the key concepts of 4:21–5:1: slavery, freedom, mother, birth, children, or inheritance. The sharp “Look! I am telling you” in 5:2 signals a break and a new phase of the argument (cf. 3:15), whereas 5:1’s “then” follows from the preceding verses. Both 4:30 and 5:1 have imperative verbs (one in 4:30 and two in 5:1), whereas there are no imperative verbs in 5:2–12, a section which describes the “indicative,” the new reality in Christ. (CC)

On the other hand, excellent reasons suggest taking 5:1 with what *follows*. Gal 5:1 lacks an ordinary connecting particle (such as γάρ or δέ) that would link it to 4:21–31. The lack of a particle indicates that 5:1 begins a new section. Although freedom is not mentioned in 5:2–12, the concept of freedom recurs in 5:13, a repetition which has led many commentators to conclude that 5:1 with its “for freedom” (τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ) introduces a paragraph even as 5:13 with its “to freedom” (ἐπ’ ἐλευθερίᾳ) introduces yet another. At the same time, no conjunction or particle links 5:1 to 5:2 either. In many ways, 5:1 stands isolated from its context. Gordon Fee rightly labeled it a “janus” verse. The public reader of the letter likely would have noticed the lack of syntactical connections and would have paused at the break signaled by the abrupt exclamation coming in 5:2: “Look!” The pause would have signaled to the audience a matter of importance. “The predominance of long vowels in the Greek and repetition of the theme of freedom (noun [‘freedom’] and verb [‘set us free’]) would also serve to give the exclamation the resonance and forcefulness of a slogan or epigrammatical summary which brought to focus the burden of the whole letter.” The imperatives of 5:1 thus represent a key moment in the letter. The Galatians must stand firm in the freedom that Christ won for them. (CC)

The repetitive “for freedom Christ set us free” appears emphatic. On the other hand, a Delphic inscription from antiquity reads: “Apollo the Pythian *bought* from Sosibius of Amphissa, *for freedom* [ἐπ’ ἐλευθερίᾳ], a female slave, whose name is Nicaea.... The purchase, however, Nicaea hath committed unto Apollo, *for freedom* [ἐπ’ ἐλευθερίᾳ].” The repetition of freedom in 5:1 is therefore with precedent. “For freedom” in the sacral manumission procedures indicated goal or purpose. If 5:1’s “for freedom” is likewise taken as goal or purpose, the phrase would parallel “to freedom” (ἐπ’ ἐλευθερίᾳ) in 5:13; Gal 5:13’s purpose phrase is a different construction since it has a preposition (ἐπί, “to”) rather than the dative arthrous noun (τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ, “for freedom”) as in 5:1. A similar alternation of the simple dative with a prepositional phrase using ἐπί occurs in Rom 8:20, 24 (ἐφ’ ἐλπίδι, “unto hope”; τῇ ... ἐλπίδι ἐσώθημεν, “for hope we were saved”). Gal 5:1 and 5:13 therefore remain parallel in their declarations of freedom. If Paul is indeed echoing the language of the sacral redemption of slaves (cf. 3:28; 4:3, 8–9, 21–31), in such transactions the deity would, by a legal fiction, do what the slave could not do for himself in offering money from the temple treasury to initiate a legal purchase. In this instance, Christ would be that god (note the potentially high Christology involved), and the transaction would no longer be based on a mere legal fiction. Unfortunately, Paul does not spell out the specific metaphor he has in mind; any suggestion must remain tentative.³¹ The point is that a price has been paid for the Christian’s freedom. That freedom *is precious!* (CC)

Paul emphasizes freedom from the very beginning of the letter. He uses the word “freedom” or its cognates more than any other NT writer, and he employs the language of “freedom” more and in higher concentration in Galatians than he does in any of his other letters. Galatians is a letter of freedom! This is not the individual’s own doing, as if people could liberate themselves by their own efforts. No, *Christ* rescued the Galatians from the present evil age (1:4). In 2:4 the false brothers were spying on the believers’ freedom in Christ. The freedom that Christ brings releases the Christian from slavery under the Law and its curse (3:10, 13; 4:21–31). Christ has delivered the believer from the powerful, enslaving forces of evil that stand over the cosmos. (CC)

In the pagan religious systems at Galatia, the gods were enforcers of the moral code. The monuments regularly depicted the god Dikaios (“Just”) carrying a set of scales or the god Hosias carrying a measuring rod to weigh the deeds of the people. These two gods acted on behalf of all the gods in holding the Galatian people accountable to the divine law. Other gods would also participate in discipline. For instance, the god Men in one Galatian inscription struck a woman on her breast for failing to repay her debt for some wheat. Another lender appealed to a god for an unpaid debt, and the god struck the debtor dead. The gods Men Petraeites and Men Labanes punished parents for abandoning a child. A mother received help from the gods in punishing her son. The gods safeguarded morality and were feared by the populace.³⁴ “Every propitiatory stele erected to the gods of central Anatolia [Galatia] testifies to the fear of the people regarding divine retribution for ‘sin’ (ἁμαρτία).” What good news, then, that Jesus has given himself for their sins (1:4)! “They could live in the freedom of life in Christ (Gal 5:1). Although love, grace, and mercy do not characterize the [gods] Magna Mater, Mēn, Apollo, Anaitas, or any of the other gods in the propitiatory inscriptions, these virtues were the defining characteristics of the new God that the converted Galatians were now serving (Gal 1:3, 6, 15; 2:21; 5:4, 22; 6:16).” Jesus’ redemption brought a genuine freedom from the cultic rituals of their past and from the fears that those rituals were supposed to allay. The Galatians should be enjoying a confident relationship with the true God! (CC)

“Stand firm, then” (Gal 5:1). Paul often admonishes his congregations to “stand firm” or remain steadfast (1 Cor 16:13; Phil 1:27; 4:1; 1 Thess 3:8). Paul cries out “almost like a military commander rallying wavering troops.” Do not surrender in the midst of this cosmic conflict! Do not cave in to forces that wish to enslave you yet again! The apostle certainly set the example at Jerusalem (2:3–5) and in Antioch (2:11–14) by resisting the agents of slavery. A vicious battle is being waged in this world and in the lives of human beings. Powerful forces are at work seeking to draw believers away from Christ’s cross in order to place them back under the power of sin. Later in Galatians 5 Paul will make clear that the only effective force that can resist the enslaving powers of this age is Christ’s Spirit, not the Law (cf. 2 Cor 3:17). The Spirit is the Christian’s ally in this struggle to remain liberated. (CC)

In the latter half of the verse Paul warns against “a yoke of slavery.” The Jewish people referred to “the yoke of the Law” as a privilege (*m. ’Aboth* 3.5 [trans. H. Danby]; see also Mt 11:29–30 for Jesus’ teaching; Acts 15:10; Sirach 51:26: yoke of wisdom). Paul takes their prized yoke of the Torah and recasts it as a different kind of yoke, the yoke of a defeated people reduced to slavery (on the yoke of slavery, see, e.g., Lev 26:13; Is 9:4 [MT/LXX 9:3]; 10:24–27; 14:25; Jer 27:8 [LXX 34:8]; 28:14 [LXX 35:14]; Ezek 34:27; 1 Macc 8:18; BDAG, ζυγός, 1). How ironic that gentiles, who had at various point subjugated the Jewish people, are now setting out to obey the Jewish Law and in so doing becoming enslaved themselves. Such slavery is not the way of the Christ who died for *all* people and not just for a particular ethnic group. Paul’s mutation of the long-standing Jewish imagery of the yoke of the Law into a negative image of a yoke of slavery is only possible for him because he has come to know God’s grace in terms of what has taken place in Christ (4:8–11). So “do not be burdened again with a yoke of slavery” (5:1). One can only imagine the negative reaction Paul’s rivals would have had to his rhetoric in this verse: “dangerous and irresponsible.” Ironically, Paul would have applied the same adjectives to *them*. (CC)

When Paul says “do not be burdened *again*,” he has in mind primarily the yoke of the Law, but he also includes *any* of the “elements of the cosmos” (4:3) that had formerly enslaved the Galatians in 4:8–9 (note the lack of an article before ζυγῶν, “a yoke,” 5:1). The Law is only one of several enslaving elements (see 4:3, 9). Perhaps the Galatians have already begun observing some of the Torah’s commands and are considering further Law observance. The believer is no longer “under” the Law (3:23) but is rather “in Christ” (e.g., 3:26). The Christian therefore follows and imitates Christ. In a world in which slavery could often be brutal, freedom from slavery is an incredibly powerful image. As the early Christian commentator Marius Victorinus once wrote, one cannot stand as long as one is burdened by a heavy yoke!⁴³ The modern Westerner who enjoys freedom must try to imagine the awful experience of most people in slavery. Perhaps those who have suffered mightily in a workplace situation in which no other options were available might be able to relate, at least somewhat. After an oppressive situation, freedom is like a breath of fresh air. (CC)

Using a second person imperative Paul admonishes the Galatians to “stand firm.” The “then” relates the admonition in the second half of 5:1 to the indicative statement in the first half of the verse: “For freedom Christ set us free.” A genuine status of freedom always *precedes* and *grounds* the imperative. Christian behavior always results from a changed status and a relationship with God; Christian behavior does not earn that status. Maintaining both Paul’s indicative—who we are in Christ—and his imperative—how we are to behave in Christ—will prevent the twin dangers of self-righteousness and libertinism. Christ is the only agent capable of freeing people from the enslaving powers of this evil world. The indicative draws attention to Christ’s completed and sufficient work. At the same time, the imperative reminds the believer that he or she is still caught in the conflict between the two ages, the now and the not-yet. A reality is dawning in Christ that is not yet fully realized. Every believer can attest for himself or herself the daily fight against sin, but the decisive victory in this larger cosmic struggle has already been won. The justified believer must “stand firm,” then, “for freedom” (5:1). This is a freedom *from* slavery under the Law, but such freedom is also *for* a new reality, a reality which Paul will elaborate in the remainder of the chapter. (CC)

The Galatians who are addressed by the second-person imperative “stand firm” are either identical with the “us” group freed in the first part of the verse or a constituent component of that first-person group. This mixture of first- and second-person forms continues a trend from the preceding paragraph that likewise refers to both “we” and “you”: The Jerusalem above is “our” mother in 4:26 (see also 4:23), and yet “you” are “children” in 4:28. These first- and second-person pronouns are referring to the same group. Paul is not likely distinguishing Jewish believers from gentile believers in 5:1 either. He is simply emphasizing what the gentile Galatians now enjoy in Christ. Also, the plural forms serve as a reminder that this freedom must be exercised *within a community* of faith. Paul will develop that communal dimension shortly, and it is not optional. An individualistic expression of freedom, despite its popularity in modern Western society, is profoundly sinful! (CC)

The first verse of Chapter 5 is a hinge. It is a hinge that really in a sense reaches back into the argument of Chapters 3 and 4 and then moves us forward into Chapter 5. And in answering what that freedom is that we have in Christ Jesus, we can introduce the themes of Chapter 5. (Just – V-35)

LHM Devotion – *For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1*

Israel has an advanced system of communication that enables emergency crews to be located and contacted through their cell phones. That's good.

Unfortunately, the ultra-orthodox Jewish community believes operating -- or even answering -- a cell

phone on the Sabbath and other religious holidays is work and a violation of their beliefs. That's not so good.

After all, it's not much help if an emergency crew doesn't respond to emergencies.

Thankfully, Rabbi Levy Yitzhak Halperin has issued a new set of rules that now allow emergency personnel to answer their calls on specially designed telephones.

I'm not exactly sure how the procedure works, but the story from United Press International says the workers have to hold a small metal pin in their teeth and press the phone's buttons with that pin. I'm sure it works, but it does make for a pretty strange mental picture.

The mental picture created a number of thoughts for me. First, I applauded the faithfulness of the Orthodox. Second, I wished all Christians were equally concerned with their faith and how it reflects itself in their lives.

Most of all, I gave thanks the Savior has set us free from the Law. Jesus' perfect life, His *complete* obedience to the Father's will, has released us from the curse of the Law.

As our heaven-sent substitute, Jesus has done all that was necessary to forgive our sins, save our souls, and graciously grant us eternal life.

Now, in response to His love, we are free to live our lives in thanksgiving -- not because there is a law to do so. . . but because it's right and we *love* to do so.

THE PRAYER: Dear Savior, by grace I am saved through faith. Now, in that freedom, and in all I do, may my life reflect the forgiveness, the joy, and salvation You have given through Your wonderful sacrifice. In Your Name. Amen.

LHM Devotion – *For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1*

One of the most surprising things Pam and I found during our travels to Israel was the special Sabbath elevators.

All day long they go from the bottom floor to the top floor, from the top floor to the bottom floor. And they open up and stop at every floor in between.

When we first got on such an elevator, we thought some young child had gotten on and pushed all the buttons.

Then we figured out the rule. The Jewish law, halacha, says it is *work* to push a button on the Sabbath. People are not supposed to work on the Sabbath, so no button pushing is allowed. Those who need an elevator to get back to their condo or apartment have to take the stairs, or wait for someone to push the button for them, or . . . well, there was no other choice. Not until the fellow invented the elevator that stopped on every floor. Problem solved.

Until recently. Last month a rabbinical ruling came down which said these self-running elevators were also a violation of the law because the weight of the passengers increases the amount of electricity needed to power the lift.

Ninety-nine-year-old Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv is the scholar who made the controversial decision about elevators. It was not his last. Last September he decreed Jews could not wear Crocs (the shoes) on the Day of Atonement because they were too comfy for this serious day of fasting.

Now I share this not to criticize or disparage. Indeed, on one level I greatly respect any group of people who are so deeply concerned with following their faith and doing right.

On the other hand, I rejoice in the freedom the Savior has given to me and all those who follow Him. Jesus' fulfilling of the laws we have broken has set us free from the condemnation of those laws.

Now, in thanksgiving to the Savior, we are forgiven and saved and freed to live a life of thanksgiving and appreciation.

In short, our lives are no longer lived fulfilling ongoing obligations; they are filled with heartfelt gratitude for our blood-bought, God-given liberty.

THE PRAYER: Dear Lord, once we were under sin's rule and conviction. Now, because of Jesus' perfect life, we have been set free. May the Holy Spirit direct our gladdened hearts to live our days in gratitude and thanks for this divine gift. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

LHM – Devotion – *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1*

There is little chance that most of the Daily Devotion readers are going to eat a meal at the 30-seat Sydney, Australia restaurant: WAFU. That may be a good thing.

You see, WAFU's chef, Yukako Ichikawa, has instituted a set of rules which make the restaurant rather unique. "What kind of rules?" do I hear you ask?

How about rules like this:

- You get a 30 percent discount on your meal if you eat all the food on your plate.
- If you *don't* eat all the food, with the exception of lemon slices, sushi ginger, and wasabi, the wait staff will tell you to choose another restaurant the next time you're hungry.
- You must eat all your vegetables. WAFU's rules say: ". . . vegetables and salad on the side are *not* decorations; they are part of the meal, too."

So far, I haven't heard if there is a waiting line to get into WAFU. Now it's highly unlikely St. Paul was thinking about the rules at WAFU restaurant when he wrote to the church in Galatia. Even so, St. Paul wanted to make sure God's people didn't get caught up in man-made laws.

Please understand that Paul had a high regard for -- and was faithful in -- enforcing the Lord's Ten Commandments. It was man-made rules that caused problems for him and the church in every generation.

You know the kind of rules I'm talking about. They are the kind of rules the Pharisees had unilaterally placed on God's people. They are the kind of rules which keep people away from the Church because they think Christianity can be summed up with the words, "thou shalt not." They are the kind of rules based on tradition and not the Lord's commands. They are the kind of rules from which the Savior's sacrifice has

freed us.

It's true. We are freed. Jesus' sacrifice has eliminated the Law's condemnation. We are freed. Not free to sin (Romans 6:1-2), but we are free to glorify God for His great gift of grace as it has been given to us in Jesus.

THE PRAYER: Dear Lord and Savior. Although I cannot fulfill the Law, it sometimes seems easier to live in a world where I'm told just what I can and cannot do. Help me love the freedom of Jesus. Help me love it and live as if it were a precious gift of grace. In Your Name. Amen.

freedom.† Emphasized by its position in the Greek sentence. The freedom spoken of here is freedom from the yoke of the law. An alternate translation for the first sentence is: “Christ has completely set us free.” (CSB)

Freedom of conscience because of Christ’s forgiveness. (TLSB)

Now, what is it freedom from? We've seen that in the exegetical section. This is why it's a pivot. It's freedom from the law. We are no longer enslaved to these elemental powers. These elemental spirits. These fundamental powers like sin and death and law and flesh. This is what we have been freed from in Christ. And this is the realm. It's like a kingdom. We are delivered from slavery. This is the space created by God who in that space is setting us free by making right what has gone wrong. That's justification. In other words, you could say freedom is the realm in which justification is happening. (Just – V-35)

stand firm – Now, Paul goes on here in this verse. He says more than simply for freedom Christ has set us free. He says -- and here is an imperative -- stand firm therefore and do not again submit yourselves to the yoke of slavery. Now, this is a command. Stand firm. This is the language of Jesus. You know, when you see the Son of Man coming, don't run, but stand firm. Lift up your heads and look. Because your salvation is drawing near. When you live in this realm of freedom, stand there. Stand firm. Do not budge. And I think he tells you why. Because you are not to submit. And that sense of yoke comes from the Gospel. My yoke is easy, my burden is light. The yoke of slavery, however, is not easy. That's what the Pharisees are accused by Jesus of putting on people. That's what these opponents of Paul have done. They have put the yoke of the law on them. And this has submitted them into a state of slavery. (Just – V-35)

“Hold your ground.” (TLSB)

do not submit. In classical Greek the verb meant “to be caught or entangled in.” (CSB)

yoke of slavery. The burden of the rigorous demands of the law as the means for gaining God’s favor—an intolerable burden for sinful man (see Ac 15:10–11). (CSB)

Figurative of a burden. “Ordinances instituted as though they are necessary, or with the view that they merit grace, are contrary to the Gospel” (AC XXVIII 50; see FC Ep X 6). (TLSB)

Freedom or slavery. Those are the choices. And they are not a choice that we can make. Freedom is something that we can't choose. God chooses it for us. Slavery we can choose. And the Galatians who were pagans lived in the slavery of unbelief. In the slavery of sin. Do they now want to exchange that for a slavery of circumcision, a slavery of living under the law, of having to make oneself right with God by

their works? If you have been set free by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, why don't you want to live in that freedom, in that space where God is continually setting you free? And so what is going to happen now in the next two chapters is Paul is going to describe daily life looks like in a world that has been set free through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Just – V-35)

5:2-12 Now, starting in Verse 2 through Verse 12, Paul is going to throw a lot of impressive images at us. He's going to use images that are very common to life. And that's good. That's a good preacher. These are images that anybody can identify with. For example in Verse 4 he's going to talk about losing our footing. Falling. And you know how when you're falling, you lose sense of reality. He's going to say: Don't do that. Christ will ground you. In Verse 7 he's going to talk about running a race. That's a very common image in Paul. In Verse 9 he's going to talk about leaven and that's very common in the gospels particularly in the teaching of Jesus. And he's talking about now a world that is post cross, post resurrection. And post law. That if the law has in fact been brought to fulfillment in Christ, then Christ is what defines the world, not the law. (Just – V-37)

A Warning: The Consequences of Circumcision (5:2–6) (CC)

5:2 οὐδέν (“no ... at all,” literally, “nothing”)—The direct object of ὠφελήσει, “will be of benefit,” is the accusative ὑμᾶς, “you.” οὐδέν is a second, adverbial accusative. (CC)

Look! I, Paul, I myself, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you at all. Paul opens 5:2 sternly: “Look!” (ἴδε, the imperativ form of εἶδον), “Mark my words!” “I, Paul, I myself, am telling you” (ἐγὼ Παῦλος λέγω ὑμῖν). The Galatians are going to have to choose between the rivals and Paul, the one who fathered (mothered?) them into the faith (4:19–31). He has placed the full weight of his personal apostolic authority before them. He cannot emphasize enough what he is about to say. The authority with which he speaks is on par with the Scriptures (which likewise speak [4:30]). As willing as the Galatians have been to listen to the Law’s witness (4:21), so must be their willingness now to heed Paul. (CC)

After demanding the Galatians’ attention with the opening of 5:2, Paul mentions for the first time in the letter their entertainment of circumcision: “If you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you at all.” The third class conditional signals a greater degree of contingency than first class or second class conditionals.⁴⁷ In view of Paul’s stern admonitions, it is likely that at least some of the Galatians have yet to undergo the rite of circumcision. Although Paul has not raised the issue of the gentile Galatians’ circumcision until this point, he has been preparing for this moment from the very beginning of the letter. Already in chapter 2 Paul recalls his resistance against the “false brothers” demanding Titus’ circumcision (2:3–4). The extensive discussion of the role of the Law in chapter 3 offers a broader frame of reference on the specific issue to which Paul now turns. (CC)

When an individual was included in an ancient Near Eastern covenant, the individual would receive the sign of the covenant relationship, which included the covenantal curses for disobedience of the terms of the agreement. Since the male organ of reproduction was associated with life, circumcision symbolized the potential cutting off of one’s own life and even the lives of one’s descendants for violation of the Mosaic covenant. Although Paul is not overly keen to speak about a “covenant” or covenantal blessings lest the Galatians draw the wrong conclusion that the Mosaic covenant has life-giving benefits, he is ready and willing to remind them of the covenantal curses (3:10). If they submit to the yoke of the Law and circumcision, they will be responsible for obedience to the Law in its entirety, and, having abandoned Christ, they will have no effective means of atonement for their sins. By their adoption of the Law, the Galatians will have rendered Christ of no benefit. The curse of the Law will afflict those who are no longer “in Christ”—not only at the final judgment, but also in the present and within their churches. (CC)

circumcision. As a condition for God’s acceptance. (CSB)

Lit, “have oneself circumcised.” Paul, for the first time in the Letter, brings into the open the specific issue confronting the Galatians (cf 2:3; 6:12–13). (TLSB)

So look at how he begins this section. He says: Look. You know, another imperative. I, Paul, am saying this to you. If you accept circumcision -- and I think the one to translate this is if you make circumcision the center of your reality, then Christ avails you nothing. Now, these are high stakes. You can either go with Christ. Or you can go with circumcision. If you're going to define your world, if your realistic life in the future is going to be defined by circumcision then Christ is out of the picture. He avails you nothing. Yeah, this translation says: Christ will be of no advantage to you. Now, those are high stakes. And he is saying very clearly that there's two ways here. And then in Verse 3, he continues this. He says: I am testifying to you that everyone who accepts circumcision, then he is obligated to keep, to do, the whole law. (Just – V-37)

severed from Christ – Paul is profoundly moved, and in great zeal and fervor of the Spirit he speaks sheer thunderbolts against the Law and against circumcision. In his anger over the great wickedness of it all, the Holy Spirit wrests such passionate words out of him, as though he were saying: “Behold, I, Paul, etc. I, I say, who know that I have the Gospel, not from men but through the revelation of Jesus Christ; I, who know for certain that I have a divine commandment and authority to teach and define doctrine—I announce to you a judgment that is indeed new but is sure and true, namely, that if you receive circumcision, Christ will simply be of no advantage to you.” This is a very harsh judgment when Paul says that receiving circumcision is the same as making Christ null and void—not indeed simply in Himself but for the Galatians, who were deceived by the tricks of the false apostles into believing that in addition to faith in Christ circumcision was necessary for believers, and that without it they could not obtain salvation. (Luther)

The principle set forth in 2:21. Acquiescing to the Judaizers’ demands renders Christ useless. (TLSB)

5:3 πάλιν (“again”)—The omission of πάλιν in some of the manuscripts (D* F G 1739 [a tenth-century miniscule] vg goth arm) eliminated the difficulty of whether Paul is alluding to an earlier visit when he first said this or is merely emphasizing what he said in 5:2 (cf. 1:9).

ἀνθρώπῳ (“individual”)—Paul’s choice of ἄνθρωπος, which can have the generic meaning “person, human being,” instead of the gender-specific ἀνὴρ, “male,” signals the relevance of this issue for more than just the males at Galatia.

τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι (“to do the Law”)—The variant πληρῶσαι (440 1505 syr^b Marcion), “to *fulfill* the Law,” appears to be a later harmonization with 5:14. (CC)

I declare again to every circumcised individual that he is obligated to do the entire Law. The solemn “I declare” (μαρτύρομαι) that begins 5:3 continues 5:2’s appeal to Paul’s personal authority as an apostle. The “again” (πάλιν) most likely serves to link this verse with 5:2 as 5:3 restates the sentiments of 5:2 in a different manner. Paul offers another reason why the Galatians should not be circumcised.⁵³ A key link between the two verses is a play on words: The Galatians would lose the *benefit* (ὠφελήσει, *ōphelēsei*) of Christ (5:2) and become *debtors* (ὀφειλέτης, *opheiletēs*) to the whole Law (5:3). The benefit would tragically be replaced by a debt—note the wordplay. The Law is not some piecemeal affair with optional elements. The Mosaic Law is a comprehensive and indivisible whole. That fact should cause the Galatians to pause. (CC)

When Paul dramatically switches from second person plural pronouns (“you”) in 5:2 to third person language (“he”) in 5:3, he is signaling that this is a warning to *every* (παντί) individual about the Law. To

be circumcised, O Galatians, means to take on “the *entire* Law” (5:3; see *m. ’Aboth* 2.1; 4.2; 4 Macc 5:20–21; Sirach 7:8; 1QS I.13–14; James 2:10). Gal 5:14 may be emphasizing the *totality* of the Law, whereas 5:3 may be stressing performing every individual pronouncement of the Law. The rivals most likely viewed circumcision as a necessary component of the Law-observant way of life. They did not likely think that a person could be circumcised and yet ignore the Law’s other commands. Paul, for his part, stresses the difficulty of that obligation. The Galatians will be obliged to do *all* of it, every single command (cf. 3:10). James D. G. Dunn, writing from the “new perspective,” objected: “No Jew that we know of thought of the Jewish way of life as a *perfect* life, that is, without any sin or failure. Rather, it was a *total* way of life which, through the cult, its sacrifices and atonement, provided a means of dealing with sin and failure.” Dunn then cited Paul’s description of himself as “blameless” with respect to the righteousness of the Law in Phil 3:6. The problem with Dunn’s reasoning is that in Philippians 3 Paul also considers his former “blamelessness” worthless or rubbish compared to what he now enjoys in Christ (Phil 3:7–8). Paul has been fairly clear earlier in Gal 1:4 and 3:10, 13 that he considers Christ to be the only solution for sin and failure. The Law simply offers no effective means of atonement for sin; otherwise the Galatians would not have needed Christ (2:21; 3:21). Since God’s grace and mercy are available solely in Christ, Paul can pose the seriousness of the Law’s obligations as a warning for his audience. They will have to obey the Law in its entirety, and that is an impossible task for those who are without Christ’s Spirit and subject to the flesh (see the commentary on 3:10 and 5:16–26). For a gentile Christian to get circumcised or for a Jewish Christian to advocate gentile circumcision would imply saving value in circumcision, as if salvation were not possible through faith in Christ by itself. Such insistence on supplementing Christ’s death is, for Paul, a complete denial of the saving value and benefits of Christ’s death (cf. Luther’s comments [AE 27:9]). Sadly, what was intended as a ritual of entry is in reality a rite of exit. (CC)

obligated to obey the whole law. The OT law is a unit; submission to it cannot be selective. (CSB)

Submission to circumcision and thus in principle to the Law for salvation, necessitates keeping all the Law’s precepts (3:10–14). (TLSB)

Old pastor on death bed – “would care more.”

Now, this is a truth that we have seen before. This is the way it is. You can’t just pick and choose in the law. If you’re going to go with the law, you’ve got to go with the whole thing. If you join the Mafia, you’re in it for life. That’s just the way it is. And I think he’s saying a truth here that flies in the face of what the opponents are saying. You can pick and choose. Pick the laws you want. We’ll give you the ones we think are absolutely necessary. You don’t have to worry about those other things. But Paul says no. You go into prison, you know, debtor’s prison, you’re never going to get out. This is where they lock the door and throw away the key.

Now, that’s just the way it is. And he said that’s reality. That’s a realistic statement to you about the future if you go the way of circumcision. (Just – V-37)

5:4 οἵτινες (“who”)—Paul commonly uses the generic relative plural pronoun, literally “whoever,” as the equivalent of the simple relative pronoun “who” (οἷ).

δικαιοῦσθε (“you ... are trying to be justified”)—The sense is conative (“trying”) since the Law does not actually justify (cf. 2:21; 3:21). (CC)

You who are trying to be justified by the Law were estranged from Christ; you fell away from grace. After stating the general principle in 5:3 in the third person (“he”), Paul returns in 5:4 to direct, second person plural address with stress on the first and last Greek words of the verse: “you ... were estranged,” “you

fell away.” The verbs are aorist and proleptic as they describe for those considering circumcision the dire future consequences as though they had already happened. Gal 5:3–4 may indicate that some of the gentile Galatians have already been circumcised. The first verb (καταργέω) ordinarily means “to make ineffective” and is used twenty-seven times in the NT; twenty-five of those instances are in Paul’s letters, including Gal 3:17; 5:4, 11. In Lk 13:7 an unfruitful tree “renders” the ground in which it was planted “ineffective” or “useless” (καταργεῖ). The passive form of the verb means to be parted or released from something, as is the case in Rom 7:2, 6 (καταργέω with ἀπό [!]): a wife is “released from” (ἀπό) the Law and its jurisdiction when her husband dies. The prepositional phrase (ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ) in Gal 5:4 likely modifies the verb: the Galatians have been “released” or “removed from [ἀπὸ] Christ,” that is, from the sphere of his saving benefit, even as the wife of Rom 7:2–6 is released or removed from the jurisdiction of the Law. On this current course, Christ will be of no benefit to the Galatians at the final judgment. As for the other verb, “fall away” (ἐκπίπτω) “from grace,” the basic notion is to “lose” one’s “grace.” In 2 Pet 3:17 this verb refers to “losing” one’s stability. The Galatians are in danger of losing God’s gracious favor in Christ. (CC)

Sometimes Paul writes as if the Galatians have already adopted the path of the Law (e.g., 4:10; 5:4). At other points, he describes the Galatians as seriously considering such a path (e.g., 1:6; 4:21). “There is also some rhetorical advantage to treating the community now under one assumption, now under the other. It lets Paul pronounce the severest of judgments on the Galatians without closing the door on their future in Christ.” Paul is effectively outlining two separate paths with very differing outcomes. Justification by the Law and by grace/faith in Christ (cf. 1:6; 2:16) are mutually exclusive alternatives. To take one path is to break decisively with the other. Indeed, even to *try* or to *begin* to walk down the path of the Law (a nuance of Paul’s present tense δικαιουσθε, “trying to be justified”!) is a decisive break from Christ (the aorist tense of κατηργήθητε, “you ... were estranged,” and ἐξέπεσάτε, “you fell away,” 5:4). The tragedy is that by circumcision the rivals’ adherents have cut themselves off from the blessings in Christ and his Spirit. What they sought to avoid in the rite has instead become a reality.⁶⁴ They have failed to recognize the new age that has come in Christ and his Spirit. They have replaced the gift of grace with their own failing efforts. (CC)

The Scriptures soberly recognize that believers may stubbornly choose to apostatize. At the same time, the Spirit bears credit for his fruit (Gal 5:22–23). The logical tension between sincere warnings against the choice of apostasy on the one hand and the Lord’s effective preservation of the believer on the other hand must be maintained with integrity. Scripture upholds both sides of the equation. Extreme positions that affirm “once saved, always saved” or self-determination in matters of salvation must be avoided. (CC)

severed from Christ. Estranged from Christ. The same Gk term is used in 3:17 (“make ... void”) and 5:11 (“removed”). (TLSB)

you would be justified by the law – Here Paul expounds himself by showing that he is not speaking simply about the Law or about the act of circumcision but about the confidence or presumption of justification through it, as though he were saying: “I do not condemn circumcision or the Law as such. I am permitted to eat, drink, and associate with Jews in accordance with the Law; I am permitted to circumcise Timothy, etc. What I do condemn is the desire to be justified through the Law, as though Christ had not yet come or as though, while present, He were not able to justify by Himself. This is being severed from Christ. Therefore he says: “You are severed”; that is, “You are Pharaohs, namely, free of Christ. Christ has stopped being and working in you. You have no more of the knowledge, the Spirit, the attitude, the favor, the freedom, the life, and the working of Christ. You are utterly separated from Him, so that He has no more dealings with you or you with Him.” (Luther)

fallen away from grace. † They have renounced God’s promises of forgiveness by grace through faith and have thereby placed themselves outside the scope of divine favor, because attempting to gain God’s favor by observing the law and receiving it by grace are mutually exclusive (see 2Pe 3:17). (CSB)

Jettison the “Christ alone” principle and you also throw out “grace alone,” the only means by which sinners can stand before God (cf 1:6; Rm 5:2; 1Pt 5:12). “Outside of this Christian Church, where the Gospel is not found, there is no forgiveness, as also there can be no holiness” (LC II 56). (TLSB)

But then he keeps going on. In Verse 4 he says this: You are severed from Christ. You who want to be declared righteous by the law. You have fallen away from grace. Now, I think that language of severed from Christ is the language of circumcision. If you cut off the foreskin of the flesh, you have cut yourself off from Christ. If that's the way you want to be justified. And if you are, you are losing your footing in Christ. You're falling away from Christ. (Just – V-37)

Now, that's a frightening thing. I don't know if you know this but there are three things in the world that are usually thought of as being places where Satan can be located. Darkness, total darkness, lack of any differentiation. You know, that's complete nothingness, that's Satan. Snakes. You feel a snake. Nothing feels like a snake. That's why Satan is represented by a snake. And then falling, you know, when you fall, you're out of touch with reality. If you lose Christ, if you sever yourself from Christ, you're out of touch with reality. You know, gravity -- you're afraid. That's a frightening thing. That's why we say that we fall in love. We lose touch with reality when we fall in love. I mean, that is true. But if you fall away from Christ, you are not in reality. And if you go with the law, you are severing yourself from Christ. So you're not in touch with reality. You can see that Paul is really making a point of what is true life like. What is real life like in Christ. (Just – V-37)

5:5 *For we by the Spirit on the basis of faith eagerly await the righteousness for which we hope.* Gal 5:5 offers a supporting reason (“for,” γάρ) why those seeking to be justified (δικαιοῦσθε) by the Law are cut off from grace (5:4): the hope of righteousness (ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης) is through the Spirit by faith (5:5). Paul employs *second* person forms in 5:4 but *first* person forms in 5:5: “For we ... await.” The pronoun “we” (ἡμεῖς) is emphatic (the Greek verb alone would have sufficed) and draws attention to itself at the beginning of the sentence. Some scholars are convinced that in 5:1–10 Paul is distinguishing “we” Jewish Christians from “you” gentile Galatians. Witherington, for instance, summarized 5:5: “The point is that even ‘we’ Jewish Christians through the Spirit by faith eagerly await the hope of righteousness. If this is the case, how much less should the Gentile Galatians expect to receive such benefits through covenantal nomism, through obedience to the Mosaic Law.” Two serious difficulties prevent acceptance of this proposal. First, earlier in the letter Paul emphasized *the Galatians’* reception and experience of the Spirit (3:2). The Galatians would therefore have *identified* with the emphatic “we” in 5:5 who by the Spirit enjoy the hope of righteousness. Second, in 5:6 Paul is adamant that in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything. Such a statement would make little sense had Paul just distinguished “we” (5:5) circumcised Jewish Christians from “you” uncircumcised gentile Galatians (5:2–4). The majority of commentators are correct: by “we” Paul at this point is simply identifying with his audience as he writes. Gal 5:5 therefore offers a supporting reason why seeking justification by the Law entails a fall from grace. The “we” with the Spirit is emphatic over against any who would seek justification by the Law. Paul is coaxing “you” who are entertaining justification by the Law back into a “we” group with Paul of those who enjoy a true hope. Thus the positive affirmations of 5:5–6 contrast with the negative statements of 5:2–4. Paul could not leave matters on a negative note. (CC)

A handful of commentators have questioned whether the “Spirit” of 5:5 is the human spirit or Christ’s Spirit. The lack of a Greek definite article is not indicative of itself (cf. 3:2–3; 5:16–18, 22, 25). “Spirit” (πνεῦμα) in 5:5 is used alongside “hope” (ἐλπίς) and “we eagerly await” (ἀπεκδεχόμεθα). This eager awaiting is, in Paul, always for what God will bring about in the future (Rom 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Cor 1:7; Phil

3:20). Rom 8:18–30 presents a similar context with the same three elements as in Gal 5:5: the Spirit, hope, and eager awaiting. In Rom 8:23–24: “We eagerly await [ἀπεκδεχόμενοι] for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope [ἐλπίδι] we were saved.” In Rom 8:26–27: “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought.... The Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” In Romans 8, a context very similar to Gal 5:5, the Spirit “of him who raised Jesus from the dead” (Rom 8:11) is clearly distinguished from the individual believer. Paul is therefore speaking of the Holy Spirit in these passages. (CC)

Does Paul posit a relationship between the Spirit and faith in Gal 5:5? Is he saying the “Spirit” comes “from/on the basis of faith” (ἐκ πίστεως, adjectival)? Paul may be alluding to the point he made in 3:2, 5, 14 (cf. 3:22) that the promised Spirit is granted with faith and not through the Law or its works. Some would object to an adjectival use of the prepositional phrase “from/on the basis of faith” because of the absence of a Greek article that would more firmly connect the prepositional phrase to the noun (πνεύματι τῷ ἐκ πίστεως). The objection does not withstand closer scrutiny: the article is required only when the adjectival prepositional phrase defines, restricts, or limits the substantive it modifies (attributive position: “the Spirit which is from faith”). That is not the case with the Spirit in 5:5. Paul therefore places the adjectival prepositional phrase in the predicate position (“the Spirit, which is from faith”). This phrasing is yet another reminder that the Galatians did not and never will receive the Spirit by means of the Mosaic Law.⁷² God’s creation of faith (3:2, 5) therefore brings the promised Spirit. (CC)

Another possibility is that “from/on the basis of faith” (ἐκ πίστεως, 5:5) is adverbial, modifying “we eagerly await.” Even as Paul links the Spirit’s reception with faith in 3:2, 5, 14, he links an instrumental faith to justification/righteousness in 2:16; 3:8, 11 (cf. 3:9, 12, 22). In an adverbial translation, the Galatians await (righteousness) “by the Spirit” and “on the basis of faith.” Prepositional phrases tend to be more often adverbial, as is the case in 2:16; 3:2, 5, 22. That observation provides a slim advantage to the adverbial translation adopted here. (CC)

The relationship between hope and righteousness is difficult to discern with precision. The genitive noun “of righteousness” (δικαιοσύνης) could be objective: “hope for righteousness,” “a hope which has righteousness as its object.” The genitive could be appositional: “what is hoped-for, namely, righteousness.” The objective and appositional genitive interpretations view righteousness as a *future* declaration (i.e., on the Last Day; cf. 6:15: new creation). The genitive noun could be subjective: “the hope which righteousness produces,” “the hope which derives from righteousness.” In this case, righteousness is a *present* reality. Most commentators take the genitive as objective: “We eagerly await a hope which has righteousness as its object.” Paul regularly treats righteousness as a present reality as he did earlier in 2:21; 3:21. Righteousness has a present component as an acquittal and yet may also refer to the future benefits of that acquittal (see 6:7–10). Gal 5:5 has those hoped-for realities in view with its emphasis on eager expectation; “we eagerly await” (ἀπεκδεχόμεθα) “expresses the character of Christian existence as one of suppressed excitement, as of an adolescent awaiting her/his coming-of-age birthday, or of a family awaiting the homecoming of a dearly loved but long absent member.” “The whole of the Christian life is the present possession of blessings which will be realized in fuller measure in the life to come.”⁷⁹ Paul uses this verb for the eager expectation of the fullness of future realities (Rom 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Cor 1:7; Phil 3:20). (CC)

Since Paul has the future realities and benefits in view, the implication is that one can indeed fall “from grace” (5:4). God’s grace does not yet endow the individual with an irreversible benefit. Paul’s warning is in earnest. The future hope is not yet fully realized and can be jeopardized by the foolish actions of any who would seek justification by the Law. To stave off any misunderstanding, Paul begins the verse emphasizing “by the *Spirit*” and “on the basis of *faith*.” The Spirit remains the empowering agent who guarantees for the believer those future blessings of justification. (CC)

Those who understand the prepositional phrase “on the basis of faith” as adjectival have it modifying the Spirit. This potential description of the Spirit as derived “*from/on the basis of faith*” has motivated the suggestion that Paul is referring by “faith” not to the individual’s believing but rather to Christ’s own “faithfulness.” The gift of the Spirit would be based on Christ’s faithful death. In 3:13 Paul resolves the problem of the Law’s curse by means of Christ’s own bearing of the curse. He then immediately turns to the Spirit in 3:14. The conjunction of Christ’s saving death with the granting of the Spirit in 3:13–14 offers some justification to a reference to Christ’s faithfulness in 5:5. Faith’s “working/expressing itself” (ἐνεργουμένη) in 5:6 would be Christ’s activity even as God has been the subject of “working” in 2:8 and 3:5. Furthermore, Paul contrasts circumcision and uncircumcision with Christ’s saving work in 6:11–18, even as Christ’s saving work remains central to 5:2–6. The prior use of “love” (before 5:6) referred to Christ’s own “love” in 2:20 (the verb ἀγαπάω). At the same time, the reference to “hope” in 5:5 along with “faith” and “love” in 5:6, a triad for Paul, provides a counterindication in favor of the believer’s own trust, as is the case in the other instances of this triad (see the commentary on 5:6). To ascribe the Spirit to faith is not contrary to the Spirit’s role in creating faith. Paul speaks of children whose birth is the result of the Spirit, even as sonship grants the privilege of the Spirit in 4:6, 29. Nevertheless, a reference to Christ’s own faithfulness is difficult to dismiss. (CC)

wait. Believers await the full realization in heaven of the present gift of justification (Rm 5:1–2; cf 1Co 1:7–8; Php 3:20–21). (TLSB)

for the hope of righteousness.† A reference to God’s final verdict of “not guilty,” assured presently to the believer by grace through faith, a gift of God (Eph 2:8–9), accomplished by the Holy Spirit through word and sacrament. This is one of the few eschatological statements in Galatians. (CSB)

And here he's going to speak to them very, very directly. He says: For through the Spirit by faith we, ourselves, eagerly await the hope of righteousness. (Just – V-37)

Now, this is a phenomenal statement. One is because it's the only occurrence in Galatians of hope. And hope is always the future reality. That's why we talk about realistic things in the future. And it's the hope of righteousness. The hope where righteousness now comes to its complete fulfillment. If you want to see kind of real life brought to its final end, this is talking about heaven, it's talking about where we're with Christ completely, then you live by the Spirit by faith. Not by works of the law. But by the Spirit by faith. Now, this is a profound statement. That we do look forward to that fulfillment when all things are right in Christ. And there is no barrier because of sin or because of the virus that has infected us, death in those kind of things. We live fully in Christ when we realize the hope of where everything now is made right. And there is no wrong. (Just – V-37)

5:6 Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (“Christ Jesus”)—B Marcion and Clement omit “Jesus,” a later alteration to conform with “Christ” (alone) in 5:1, 2, and 4. (CC)

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is capable of anything, but rather faith expressing itself through love. The first half of 5:6 further explains (“for,” γάρ) the impossibility of justification by the Law (“righteousness,” 5:4–5). Paul places “in Christ Jesus” at the beginning of 5:6 for emphasis, and the alternative of circumcision in 5:6 stands over against the Spirit and faith (5:5). In the realm or sphere of Christ in which the believer dwells, circumcision and uncircumcision are utterly ineffective in producing what is only possible by faith. Thus 5:6 reinforces (again, note “for,” γάρ) the claim that justification cannot come by means of the Law (5:4). At the same time, the utter ineffectiveness of circumcision and the Law are not limited for Paul to the realm of justification. “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision” brings to mind “neither Jew nor Greek ... neither slave nor free ... no male and female” in 3:28 with the dissolution of the Law’s distinctions. Even as 3:28 obliterates any division within humanity “in Christ,” 3:28–29 also affirms those in Christ as “one” and “Abraham’s seed.” Gal 5:6

has a similar structure as it closes with a positive affirmation of “faith expressing itself through love.” This verse in its context provides a fuller perspective on how Paul envisions life in the undivided new humanity (3:28) expressing itself in action. (CC)

“*Faith* expressing itself [ἐνεργουμένη, literally, ‘working’] in *love*” in the latter half of 5:6 further explains (“for,” γάρ) the believer’s *hope* for righteousness in 5:5. Faith, hope, and love are a trio for Paul (Rom 5:1–5; 1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thess 1:3; 5:8). The participle “expressing” or “working” requires some comment. This participle is most likely in the middle voice: “expressing itself” or better, “*working*,” through love. Love proceeds from faith, and not the reverse. Paul consistently writes of the believer’s being justified through faith and never through the individual’s own expression of love. He never countenances being justified by faith *and* love. Even if one translates the participle with a passive sense, “faith energized by love,” the love would be the sacrificial love of *Christ* mentioned already in 2:20. Paul is not departing from a firm sense of *sola gratia*, by grace alone! Faith receives God’s gifts, but, at the same time, a faith that lacks love is not a genuine faith. (CC)

Who needs circumcision or uncircumcision in view of the “working” (ἐνεργουμένη) of faith? Mere physical markers are incapable of what faith accomplishes. Faith unites believers to Christ (3:27–29), and they become *as* Christ in love (2:20). Such love expresses itself for the neighbor (5:13) even as Christ bore the curse on behalf of humanity (3:13). The warmth of Christ’s sacrificial love characterizes the believer in action! Throughout this letter God has consistently been the one “working” in believers (see 2:8 and 3:5). Faith’s working in love is really the work of God! Unlike the works of the Law that are purely human actions apart from the sanction of God, faith is an expression of God’s *own* activity. It is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in and is being formed in believers (2:20; 4:19). (CC)

“Love” (ἀγάπη) was not used extensively in extrabiblical Greek (or the Septuagint) prior to the second or third century AD, but the word is used one hundred sixteen times in the NT and became characteristic of the early Christian movement and its Lord.⁸⁷ When Paul says that faith works in love, the most frequent use of “love” by Paul is of believers toward other believers. Whereas no one can see a person’s faith in God, that faith gives evidence of itself in how an individual acts toward others. Love expresses itself in a *community* (see 5:13–14). The Spirit of God’s Son (4:6) enables the believer to love as Christ loved. Love is the fruit of the Spirit (5:22–23: the first in the list is *love!*). The other-centeredness of Christian love reflects Christ who “loved” us and “gave himself” on our behalf (2:20). Gal 5:6 in its immediate context (along with 6:15) therefore expands on how the new reality in Christ expresses itself in action. The Galatians have entered into a new, end-time, apocalyptic reality. Paul’s language about the penultimacy, or better, nullification, of circumcision is rather radical for a Jew of his day. For those gentiles giving thought to the rite, the message would have been clear. (CC)

An alternate interpretation of this verse stems from Paul’s prior use of “love” in this letter in reference to Christ’s saving work (2:20). Even as one could argue that the Spirit is the result of Christ’s own faithfulness (5:5), likewise, Christ’s own faithfulness expresses itself in love. In this interpretation, Paul does not turn to the believer’s own expression of love until 5:13–14. Perhaps Paul has in mind both Christ’s love *and* the believer’s love, with Christ’s love as the basis for the believer’s. (CC)

neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. See v. 2; 2:21; 6:15; 1Co 7:19. (CSB)

Circumcised or not, one’s physical condition has no impact on one’s relationship to God. It is irrelevant. (TLSB)

And that gives birth to the statement we’ve talked about already. For in Christ Jesus, notice that in Christ Jesus. In connection with Christ. You know, that’s that baptismal language when you are in Christ Jesus and he is in you. Circumcision isn’t an issue. Uncircumcision isn’t an issue. What’s an issue is how faith

is actively expressing itself in love. Why is that? Because Christ is in you. And his love is now in the world through you. That's what your faith does. Is it embodies Christ. And his love. So that you're showing actively in your person Christ's faithfulness unto death and your faith in Christ. And you're showing it in expressions of love. Now, remember love is charity. Love is giving. Love is gift and forgiveness and mercy and compassion. That's the life of Christ. That's what the Christian is in the world. That is what faith is. Simply being Christ in the world. (Just – V-37)

faith working through love. Faith is not mere intellectual assent (see Jas 2:18–19) but a living trust in God's grace that expresses itself in acts of love (see 1Th 1:3). (CSB)

Gk *energeo*, in the active sense. Luther: "Faith ... is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God... O it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good incessantly" (AE 35:370). "Love ought to follow faith" (Ap IV 111). (TLSB)

Rebuke and Judgment (5:7–12) (CC)

5:7 [τῆ] ἀλήθειᾳ ("[the] truth")—The article τῆ is absent in κ* A B but is present in ℱ⁴⁶ C D G 33 1739 and others. The article may have been missing in the original text and then added by a scribe to bring 5:7 into conformity with the arthrous ἀλήθεια, "the truth (of the Gospel)," in 2:5, 14. The readings are not significantly different in meaning.

μὴ πείθεσθαι ("so that you are not persuaded")—This shorter reading, an infinitive construction, is well attested. The insertion of the imperative construction μηδενὶ πείθεσθε after μὴ πείθεσθαι, is supported only by F G it vg. The imperatival construction was a means of resolving the relationship between the earlier question τίς ὑμᾶς ἐνέκοψεν, "who hindered you?" and the infinitive construction (μὴ πείθεσθαι). The variant that includes the imperative construction makes the infinitive a clarification: μὴ πείθεσθαι μηδενὶ πείθεσθε, "obey no one in such a way as to disobey the truth," since "persuade" (πείθω) in the passive (both πείθεσθε and πείθεσθαι are passive) may also be translated as "obey" or "comply."

The infinitive πείθεσθαι should more likely be translated as "be persuaded" than "obey" because of the persuasion language in the ensuing verses: πεισμονή, "persuasion," in 5:8, and πέποιθα, "I am persuaded/confident," in 5:10. The present tense of the infinitive πείθεσθαι conveys a progressive, continuing activity. The Galatians may have been *originally* persuaded of the truth, but that may not still be the case. (CC)

You were running well. Who hindered you so that you were not persuaded regarding the truth? Gal 5:7 lacks a particle connecting it to 5:1–6. The rhetorical question signals a shift. Nevertheless, Paul's concerns in 5:7–12 remain the same as in 5:1–6: the Galatians are being persuaded to circumcision and justification by the Law. Paul is expressing his exasperation. James D. G. Dunn has observed that "the tension [in 5:7–12] is at its sharpest and most nerveracking—marked by a series of brief sentences, without elaborate syntax, or connectives (prior to verse 10b)—a series of abrupt expostulations, like snorts of indignation, betraying Paul's extreme anxiety that (as at Antioch, ii.11–14), he might lose out in Galatia also." (CC)

Paul loves athletic imagery (Acts 20:24 [Paul's speech]; 1 Cor 9:24–27; Gal 2:2; Phil 2:16; 3:14; 2 Tim 4:7; cf. Heb 12:1). Athletic imagery was also popular among the philosophers to express the goal of the philosophical life. Philo could speak of "athletes of virtue" (*Prob.* 13 § 88; Colson, LCL). The Galatians "were running well" (ἐτρέχετε, imperfect tense) according to 5:7. The Galatians were disciplined and determined in their race. They had been freed or stripped of any encumbrance to race toward the finish line, but suddenly someone "cut in on" or "hindered" them (ἐνέκοψεν, aorist tense). Rules prohibited contestants from tripping or breaking the stride of another runner in a Greek race. Paul's rivals are guilty of unsportsmanlike conduct, but the injury is far more serious. They are tripping and "hinder" God's own people. They are hindering the work of God! In Rom 15:22 Paul was hindered from visiting the

congregation. Perhaps a better parallel is in the much darker 1 Thess 2:18, where Satan blocked or “hindered” Paul’s way. The apostle does not expressly say that the rivals are in league with Satan, but he comes close when he says that they are bewitchers (Gal 3:1) under God’s curse (1:8–9). The agent of hindrance in 5:7 is contrasted with God as the agent of calling in 5:8: they are opposing *God*. The verb “to hinder, cut in on” (ἐγκόπτω) has the same root (κόπτω, “to cut”) as “to mutilate” (ἀποκόπτω, literally, “cut off”) in 5:12. The similarity in the words’ roots connects 5:7 and 5:12: the rivals are hindering or cutting in *by means of* their advocacy of cutting off (circumcision). The result of this activity is that the Galatians are not persuaded by the truth.⁹⁴ So they will not obey the truth, the Gospel message that Paul presented (2:5, 14; 4:16; cf. 1:10). (CC)

were running well. Before the Judaizers hindered them. Paul was fond of depicting the Christian life as a race (see, e.g., 2:2; Php 2:16). (CSB)

Athletic metaphor of running a race, like a runner striding smoothly forward (cf 1Co 9:24–27; Php 3:14). (TLSB)

Now, Paul builds on that. This is the realm now that you live. And you're the Christ in the world. How does the world see Christ in you? And so he goes on. He says: You were running well. Who has prevented you from being persuaded by the truth of the Gospel or literally obeying the truth of the Gospel. You know here is that race imagery. The truth is the Gospel. Obeying the Gospel. Obeying the truth. Who has prevented you? The opponents have. They are the ones that are keeping you from running the race well. (Just – V-37)

Who hindered you. Lit, “cut in front of,” to break a runner’s stride and impede progress. The Judaizers in effect tripped the Galatians. (TLSB)

5:8 ἡ πεισμονὴ οὐκ (“that persuasion is *not*”)—D* it Origen Ephraem omit the negative: “That persuasion *is* from the one who calls you.” That scribal change is understandable as the Greek πεισμονή, “persuasion,” was often understood in the positive sense of conviction or obedience. The immediate context, however, is negative. (CC)

That persuasion is not from the one who called you. According to 5:8, *that* particular “persuasion” (ἡ πεισμονή; note the article of previous reference: the false persuasion of 5:7) does not come from the one who called them (God). This is the first known instance of this word for “persuasion” (πεισμονή) in Greek literature and may refer either to persuading activity or to the condition of being persuaded. The word is not used elsewhere in the NT. In this particular context, “persuasion” has the sense of empty rhetoric or flattery as opposed to the “truth” (ἀλήθεια, 5:7) Paul proclaimed. Paul is implying that his persuasion is of divine origin. Through him God is calling, inviting, the Galatians to the truth. Paul treats that call as effective in bringing about its intended result (e.g., Rom 4:17; 9:11–12; Gal 1:6). The paradox is that the Galatians are resisting God’s call. How is this possible after all the Galatians have experienced (3:2)? Salvation is entirely the result of God’s effectual call just as disobedient resistance is entirely a human affair; to attempt to resolve the paradox is to depart from Paul’s teaching. (CC)

persuasion. By the Judaizers. (CSB)

The false teachers’ rhetoric urging circumcision, however persuasive, did not originate with God. (TLSB)

He says in Verse 8: The one who is persuading you is not the one who called you. Who is persuading you? The opponents. They are great rhetoricians. But they are not the ones who have called you. And what they have done. (Just – V-37)

5:9 ζυμοῖ (“leavens”)—The Latin manuscripts in particular (D* it vg goth Marcion Marius Victorinus Ambrosiaster et al.) replace “leavens” with δολοῖ, “adulterates.” The change may reflect an attempt to interpret the proverb by drawing upon Paul’s use of it in 1 Cor 5:6 in a context of sexual sin. (CC)

A little leaven leavens the whole batch of dough. Paul quotes the same proverbial saying in 1 Cor 5:6. Leaven was commonly used as a metaphor for the spread of corruption or evil (cf. Mk 8:15; Plutarch, *Quaest. rom.* 289F; Ign. *Magn.* 10.2; Philo, *Congr.* 30 § 169; Philo, *Spec.* 1.53 §§ 291–93; Justin, *Dial.* 14). Only a little leaven is needed to ruin the whole batch. Paul is pretty harsh in 1:8–9 in calling God’s curse upon his rivals. He commands the Galatians to expel the rivals from their midst in 4:30. Now he is further warning them against the corrupting influence of bad company. In the Greek he even places the object of his verb (ἅλον τὸ φύραμα, “the whole batch of dough”) *before* the verb (ζυμοῖ, “leavens”) for emphasis. Paul’s focus in 5:9 with leaven is primarily on the false teaching of the rivals (cf. Ign. *Magn.* 10.2–3), even as his subject in 5:8 is their “persuasion.” (CC)

The point of 5:8–9 is that *any* deviation from the truth is utterly poisonous and destructive. Churches today may be commended for their desire to spread the Word of God and to reach out to more and more people with the Gospel message. Danger looms when missionary-mindedness is severed from the Pauline emphasis on truth, the whole truth. Pastors and Bible teachers these days typically emphasize one or the other, but both evangelism *and* the truth of the Gospel need to be of equal priority, as the apostle Paul’s own ministry demonstrates. Such paradoxical tensions characterize the Christian faith and must be balanced with integrity. If the truth of the Gospel is compromised by pastors or teachers in even the tiniest part, those pastors and teachers then become part of the problem. As Luther once wisely articulated:

In philosophy a tiny error in the beginning is very great at the end. Thus in theology a tiny error overthrows the whole teaching.... On this score we cannot yield even a hairbreadth. For doctrine is like a mathematical point. Therefore it cannot be divided; that is, it cannot stand either subtraction or addition....

Therefore doctrine must be one eternal and round golden circle, in which there is no crack; if even the tiniest crack appears, the circle is no longer perfect....

One doctrine is all doctrines and all are one, so that when one is lost all are eventually lost, because they belong together and are held together by a common bond. (AE 27:37–38) (CC)

At the same time, genuine “orthodoxy” entails “orthopraxy,” right practice and life, as Paul’s use of the leaven metaphor in 1 Cor 5:6’s context of sexual sin indicates. The Gospel of Christ always entails a Christ-like manner of living! “Dead orthodoxy” is simply not orthodoxy. The church must maintain godly integrity in its confession, in personal lifestyles, and in corporate practices. (CC)

A proverb used here to stress the pervasive effect of Judaism. When the word “yeast” in the Bible is used as a symbol, it indicates evil or false teaching (see note on Mk 8:15), except in Mt 13:33. (CSB)

This metaphor shows the insidiously corrupting power of a seemingly small error. Cf 1Co 5:6, where this proverbial saying is applied also to moral failure. Luther: “In theology a tiny error overthrows the whole teaching” (AE 27:37). (TLSB)

Verse 9, Says they have infected the whole lump with a little leaven. And that leaven is the law. You put a little law in -- it's like being a little bit pregnant. It doesn't work. A little law, the whole thing is law. You can't just do a little bit of it, it's all or nothing. Now, you can see here where Paul is again being polemical with them because he wants to make his point. (Just – V-37)

5:10 ἐν κυρίῳ (“in the Lord”)—Manuscript B omits these words, probably by accident.

ὅστις ἐάν ᾗ (“whoever the person may be”)—The particle ἐάν often replaces the classical particle ἄ after a relative pronoun (here ὅστις). Cf. ἐάν after a relative also in Acts 3:23; Gal 5:17; 6:7. (CC)

I myself am persuaded in the Lord about you that you will not think otherwise, but the one who is disturbing you will bear the judgment, whoever the person may be. Paul turns from the warnings of 5:8–9 to express encouragement in the first part of 5:10. The perfect tense of πείθω, “persuade,” carries a present meaning, and the pronoun ἐγώ, “I,” is emphatic and expresses Paul’s own confidence: regardless of what others may think, “I myself am persuaded.” Note the play on words in the Greek: The Galatians “are not persuaded” regarding the truth (μὴ πείθεσθαι, 5:7), and “that persuasion” is not from Paul (ἡ πεισμονή, 5:8). Paul, however, is “persuaded” (πέποιθα, 5:10) that the rivals’ persuasion will not ultimately persuade. Paul’s confidence or persuasion is “in the Lord” (ἐν κυρίῳ). The Lord’s power is greater than that of the rivals. No matter how dire the situation may be from a human standpoint, Paul recognizes that no situation is impossible for the Lord! The Christian life is always characterized by hope in what God can do. (CC)

When Paul says he is persuaded that the Galatians “will not think otherwise,” he may be saying that they should not think otherwise with respect to what he just said in 5:9 or with respect to 5:8–9. In either case, the apostle is coaxing them to his side of the dispute. Paul, who is “in the Lord,” stands opposed to “the one who is disturbing you” in the latter half of the verse. The one who disturbs the Galatians will suffer “the judgment” (τὸ κρίμα—divine punishment; Gal 1:8–9; 1 Thess 2:16; cf. 2 Cor 11:15 [τὸ τέλος]). The Greek article suggests “*the* judgment,” presumably that which takes place at the Last Day (cf. also the future tense of βαστάσει, “will bear”), but certainty on this point is not possible—only on the inevitability of God’s sentence (Rom 2:2; cf. Rom 3:8). The last time that Paul referred directly to the troublemakers, in Gal 1:8–9, he pronounced God’s curse on them! (CC)

Some have compared “the one who is disturbing” in 5:10 (a *singular* participle, ὁ ... ταρασσῶν) with the people who “are confusing/disturbing” the Galatians in 1:7 (οἱ ταρασσόντες, a *plural* participle of the same verb; cf. 4:17; 5:12; 6:12) and have concluded, often tentatively, that Paul must think there is a ringleader among the rivals. Although the apostle was not shy about singling out Cephas at Antioch (2:11–14), it appears to have been customary in antiquity to leave one’s opponent(s) unnamed and thereby avoid any unnecessary promotion of the opposition. On the other hand, the added words “whoever the person may be” (ὅστις ἐάν ᾗ, 5:10) renders the conclusion probable that Paul is employing a generic singular and is not referring to any particular individual. Paul may not have known who these people were, or he *deliberately* left them unnamed. “‘Whoever he may be’ communicates a studied disregard for the authority the Missionaries claimed.” The language serves as a warning not just against the rivals in Paul’s day but also against *any* who would teach contrary to the truth of the Gospel. (CC)

confidence in the Lord – It is as though Paul were saying: “I have warned, encouraged, and rebuked you enough, if you will only listen. Yet I have confidence in you through the Lord.” Here the question arises whether Paul did right in saying that he had confidence in the Galatians, especially since Sacred Scripture forbids confidence in men (Ps. 118:8). Both faith and love have confidence, but their objects are different. Faith has confidence in God; therefore it cannot be deceived. Love has confidence in men; therefore it is often deceived. (Luther)

take no other view – “Namely, no other view of doctrine and of faith than the one you have heard and learned from me; that is, I am confident that you will not accept another doctrine, one that differs from mine.” (Luther)

those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves – This is a verse in which he’s talking about the future for the Galatians, the power of Christ to shape their future. And that the power of Christ is greater than the teacher’s persuasion. This is what he says: I have confidence in you in the Lord. In the

Lord. Confidence. Here Paul is being the pastor. Showing them: I have confidence in you. That you will take no other view than mine. Because that's the Scriptures. Because I represent Christ. And because you know -- you know -- that I am speaking the truth. And he says this: And the one -- and he is speaking here of one person -- the one who is troubling you, the leader of these opponents, he will bear the judgment. Whoever he might be. Paul doesn't even want to name them. Everybody knows who he is. But Paul is not even going to give this man the respect to name him. The one who is troubling you, perverting the Gospel for you. The one who is causing you such anxiety. Who is actually making you doubt your faith, he is going to bear the judgment of the Lord if he continues to do this. And you know who he is. (Just – V-37)

Spoken rhetorically, though Paul likely has a particular Judaizer in mind. (TLSB)

5:11 εἰ περιτομὴν ἔτι κηρύσσω (“if I still preach circumcision”)—D* F G it and Ephraem omit ἔτι here (the first “still” in the verse), thereby eliminating the main interpretive difficulty of this verse, namely, to what time in his life Paul is referring. The omission may also have been accidental as the scribal eye jumped forward to the second ἔτι (“still being persecuted”). A scribal addition of the first ἔτι would not likely “have influenced so many subsequent manuscripts in different major families,” and the earliest manuscripts include it. The meaning of ἔτι in both instances is the more typical “still” and not the additive “additionally,” which makes little sense in the second instance of the word. The word order suggests that ἔτι is adverbial both times in 5:11.

ἄρα—This accentuation (“then/in that case”) takes 5:11d as a deduction, but the unaccented original may also be read as ἄρα, in which case 5:11d would be a question: “Then ...?” Although the sentence in 5:11a–c is a question, Paul regularly employs ἄρα as a means of concluding a section (e.g., 2:21; 3:29; 6:10). Gal 5:11d as a conclusion is more forceful and more likely in this context. (CC)

But if I, brothers (and sisters), still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the scandal of the cross has been abolished. The contrast between Paul and his rival(s) in 5:10 continues in 5:11 (note the emphatic ἐγώ, “I”). After concluding 5:10 with the rivals, he turns to himself in 5:11 (“but,” δέ) as a countermodel. The tone is a little defensive: “But if I, brothers (and sisters), still [ἔτι; as in the past] preach circumcision, why am I still [ἔτι; now] being persecuted?” The first “still” refers to Paul’s past activity, while the second “still” to a situation of persecution in the present. The protasis of a first class conditional (the kind of sentence here) frequently states what is not actually the case in reality. Paul may *or may not* have preached circumcision in the past. (CC)

The real puzzle of this verse is to determine *when* in Paul’s life he might potentially have preached circumcision. A number of possible interpretations have emerged over the years, several of which may be dismissed, while others (the seventh and the eighth) are more plausible. (CC)

1. One possibility is that Paul may have preached in favor of circumcision when he was at Galatia. Were that the case, however, he would need to explain the subsequent change in his position more fully. (CC)

2. Paul could be responding to libertines—a group *distinct* from the Jewish-Christian rivals—who thought that he had not left behind his former advocacy of circumcision. Against this hypothesis, no firm evidence exists for a second, distinct set of rivals in this letter. Paul’s focus remains on the advocates of circumcision. (CC)

3. Paul’s Jewish-Christian rivals were not familiar with his circumcision-free Gospel to gentiles and thought he was continuing to preach circumcision. The problem with this line of reasoning is that, had they not known much about Paul prior to their arrival at Galatia, they certainly would have become

familiar with his position after their labors in Galatia. The gentile Galatians would surely have informed the Jewish-Christian rivals of Paul's teaching and of the fact that he had not encouraged the Galatians to be circumcised. Paul may not even have mentioned circumcision. (CC)

4. Paul is envisioning the circumcising of gentiles *in the future*: "If I am *yet* to preach circumcision (which I have not yet done), why am I *still* (or yet despite this) being persecuted (now)?" This approach requires Paul to use the same word, ἔτι, "still," with two radically different senses within the same immediate context and with no signal of a change of meaning. While it is grammatically possible to translate the first ἔτι as "yet" in reference to the future, the repetition of the word later in the verse, where it must refer to the present time and mean "still" (or something similar), suggests otherwise. Further, the same Paul who vehemently claims that receiving circumcision would be an alienation from Christ and a falling away from the faith would never have entertained gentile circumcision or have been interpreted as doing so (5:4; cf. 1 Cor 1:23). (CC)

5. Another approach to this verse has been advocated by Peder Borgen, a specialist in the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Philo. Philo insisted on the rite of circumcision against fellow Jews who were apparently spiritualizing the rite. These other Jews were taking circumcision as a symbol of the excision of the passions and pleasure of the flesh. Since the "flesh" of the foreskin was associated with sensual pleasure and impulses (Philo, *QG* 3.52), how appropriate, then, that the removal of the foreskin should symbolize the excision of one's passions, desires, and evil inclinations (Philo, *Spec.* 1.56 § 305; cf. 1QpHab XI.13–14; 1QS V.4–5). Philo agrees with these Jews that a person must be circumcised in the heart, but at the same time, he averred that one should not conclude from the ethical dimensions that the rite itself is somehow unnecessary (Philo, *Migr.* 16 § 92; so also Philo, *Spec.* 1.2 § 9; Philo, *QE* 2.2). When Paul writes in Galatians 5 against fleshly desires, his rivals may have interpreted his teaching as promoting the ethical aspects of circumcision and may have insisted, like Philo in response, that the Galatians must also receive the physical rite which accompanied the circumcision of the heart (cf. Rom 2:29). They may very well have understood Paul to be a genuine preacher of circumcision even though the gentile Galatians had not yet been circumcised. Perhaps they saw themselves as "completing" Paul's (ethical) circumcision with the physical rite itself. Paul, of course, objects that he is *not* still preaching circumcision. Christ's cross and the Spirit—not Moses' Law and circumcision—offer the only real power against fleshly desires. (CC)

Borgen's approach, while interesting, does have its weaknesses. Paul has been consistently referring to circumcision in the sense of a physical rite. He never hints at the possibility of any other understanding of circumcision throughout the letter. Had Paul been preaching or even accused of preaching an ethical or spiritual form of circumcision, he could not have proceeded to the rather Philo-like warnings against the flesh in the ensuing verses without some clarification to avoid potential confusion.¹¹³ Also, Galatians 5 may not articulate Paul's admonitions against the flesh in the same way as in his original preaching at Galatia. Borgen simply assumed that Galatians 5 parallels Paul's original teaching. Borgen's approach depends on too many questionable factors (including excessive mirror-reading) to be persuasive. (CC)

6. Paul, as a Christian, *did* advocate circumcision for a time and then later changed his mind. Would such a switch from a circumcising to a non-circumcising "Gospel" explain the peaceful meeting with the Jerusalem leaders in Galatians 1 and then the conflict with the Jerusalem leadership in Galatians 2? Perhaps. In Acts 16:1–3 Paul permitted the circumcision of Timothy, but Timothy was of a Jewish lineage (*m. Qidd.* 3.12; *m. Yebam.* 7.5; *b. Yebam.* 45b: "if an idolater or a slave had cohabited with the daughter of an Israelite the child [born from such a union] is legitimate" [Soncino ed.]; Cicero, *Nat. d.* 3.18 § 45). For Paul to agree to the circumcision of Jews does not imply that he would have encouraged gentiles to be circumcised. Even more significantly, Paul narrates a dramatic change in his life to go from the persecutor of Christ-believers to an advocate of Christ (Gal 1:11–17), but surely to abandon circumcision for his gentile converts at some point would be worthy of some narrative explanation had

that been the case. No evidence has been forthcoming that Paul, as a Christian, ever preached gentile circumcision, which was precisely why he was (still) being persecuted! (CC)

7. A more plausible possibility is that Paul may have been known for circumcising Jews (e.g., Timothy; Acts 16:3). If so, some may have found it confusing that he would now be so adamant against the circumcision of others. He seems to have said one thing at one moment and another thing the next. He does say in 1 Cor 9:20–21: “To the Jews I became as a Jew in order that I might gain Jews. To those under the Law [I became] as one under the Law (though I myself am not under the Law) so that I might gain those under the Law. To those without the Law [I became] as one without the Law (though I am not without the Law of God, but with the Law of Christ) so that I might gain those without the Law.” After all, Paul is *free* in this regard! Circumcision and non-circumcision are matters of indifference. Paul’s circumcision of Timothy and his vehemence against the circumcision of others, albeit gentiles, might have led observers to think he was being inconsistent. His past actions may seem to belie his words. False rumors may have even circulated that Paul had circumcised gentiles: “Despite what he says, Paul *still* advocates circumcision when it suits his purpose.” Paul may also have come across as indifferent on circumcision when he said that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counted for anything (Gal 5:6; see also 1 Cor 7:18–19). His rivals or others may have interpreted his perceived indifference on the matter as tacit support for gentile circumcision. Corroborating evidence is unfortunately lacking for these conclusions. (CC)

8. A final possibility is that Paul is referring to a *pre-conversion* advocacy of circumcision: “Why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision (as I did before I became a follower of Christ)?” James D. G. Dunn has objected to this approach since Paul would be comparing his prior preaching as a Jew to his current preaching (thus the “still”) as a Christian apostle. Dunn was of the opinion that “preach” (κηρύσσω) would only be appropriate as a description of *Christian* evangelizing. So Dunn concluded that Paul must be comparing his current evangelizing or preaching activity with his earlier Christian evangelism. To respond to Dunn’s objection, Paul’s language about “preaching circumcision” may merely be intended to parallel the language he uses for “preaching Christ” (1 Cor 1:23; 15:12; 2 Cor 4:5; Phil 1:15). Paul wants to pose circumcision and Christ as mutually exclusive alternatives, and so he should not be taken as implying that he was preaching circumcision *in the same way* as he now preaches Christ. Dunn also questioned whether Jews engaged in evangelistic preaching as did the Christians, including the Christian Paul. The apostle’s language, however, remains ambiguous on the extent to which his advocacy of circumcision expressed itself in proselytizing. He may merely be claiming that he had been an advocate of circumcision in his pre-Christian past and nothing more. (CC)

When Paul responds to the notion of “still” preaching circumcision in 5:11, one need not assume that he is responding to an actual charge that was being leveled. That assumption depends on excessive and unnecessary mirror-reading. The conditional sentence does not require that Paul at some point *actually* preached circumcision. He may be posing the notion rhetorically in order to evoke his former actions as a persecutor of Christians (1:13–14, 23). He had abandoned that path and, naturally, that means that he will now be the persecuted rather than the persecutor. Whether as persecuted or as persecutor, he has been consistent in his teaching, regardless of what the rivals might claim: he has always viewed circumcision and Christ as mutually exclusive approaches to God’s salvation. That Paul is referring to his pre-Christian days is as plausible as the possibility that someone is mistakenly charging him with inconsistency. (CC)

Paul asks, “Why am I *still* being persecuted?” (5:11). Who are the agents of that persecution, and in what does that persecution consist? In 4:29 Paul describes the rivals as persecutors as he draws upon the image of Ishmael verbally harassing Isaac (Gen 21:9–10)—perhaps mocking Isaac’s status as heir. At a minimum, then, Paul envisions Abraham’s beneficiaries in Christ enduring verbal harassment. The apostle’s own persecuting activity (1:13–14, 23) was much more violent. Indeed, he lists the often brutal suffering that he later endured as a Christ-believer at the hands of the synagogue authorities in 2 Cor

11:24–25. Persecution remains a frequent motif in the letter to the Galatians, and in each instance the agents of this persecuting activity are Jewish (e.g., Gal 1:13–14; 4:29 [interpreted “figuratively,” 4:24]). Less clear in 4:29, at least, is whether the agents of persecution are non-Christ-believing or Christ-believing Jews. Gal 5:11, when considered in conjunction with 6:12, may provide some clues. (CC)

Paul continues in 5:11 that if he took the path advocating circumcision, “the scandal of the cross” would thereby be abolished. The word “scandal” or “stumbling block” (σκάνδαλον; see also 1 Cor 1:23–24) was originally used in association with a “trap” or a “snare” (παγίς; see, e.g., Josh 23:13; Pss 69:22 [MT 69:23; LXX 68:23]; 141:9 [LXX 140:9]; 1 Macc 5:4; Rom 11:9, quoting Ps 69:22 [MT 69:23; LXX 68:23]), but the word eventually began to be used on its own for that which gives offense, causes revulsion, or arouses opposition (cf. Sirach 7:6; 27:23; Judith 5:20). Paul says that to preach circumcision is to avoid the scandal of the cross of Christ. In Gal 6:12, within a section that is parallel to 5:2–12, Paul’s Jewish-Christian rivals compel circumcision in order to avoid persecution themselves from fellow Jews for the sake of their adherence to the cross of Christ. These Jewish Christians were doubly suspect figures to their fellow Jews. First, they followed a crucified Messiah figure whom most Jews had rejected. Second, they were also associating with gentiles. Preaching circumcision allowed these Christ-believing Jews to navigate the difficulties in their identity. They could boast to their Jewish peers that they were helping to add to Israel’s numbers. Paul, on the other hand, did not worry about pleasing non-Christ-believing Jews. He did what was right. He remained faithful to the cross of Christ. An uncompromising Christian confession is never the easier path, whether then or today. It may well lead to persecution or troubles. Paul’s bold, unflinching witness remains a model for anyone who would confess Christ. (CC)

still preach circumcision. Opponents may have accused Paul of inconsistency, perhaps because he did circumcise Timothy (Ac 16:3; cf 1Co 9:20). (TLSB)

why ... persecuted? Paul countered that the Jews’ continued harassment proved that he did not require circumcision of converts. (TLSB)

offense of the cross. See Ro 9:32–33; 1Co 1:23. (CSB)

Gk *skandalon*, “what arouses ridicule and opposition” (“stumbling block”). The cross offends human pride, which seeks to be justified by the Law. The cross knocks the props out from under all religious systems advocating salvation by human merit (3:10–13; 6:14). (TLSB)

Paul wants to try everything to call the Galatians back; therefore he now argues on the basis of his own example. He says: “I have brought upon myself the bitterest hatred and the persecution of the high priests, of the elders of the people, and of my entire nation, because I deny that circumcision brings righteousness. If I attributed righteousness to circumcision, the Jews would not only not lie in ambush for me but would even praise and love me extravagantly. But now, because I preach the Gospel of Christ and the righteousness of faith, together with the abrogation of the Law and of circumcision, I suffer persecution. On the other hand, in order not to have to bear the cross and the bitter hatred of the Jewish people, the false apostles preach circumcision; in this way they curry the favor of the Jews and keep them as their friends.” Similarly he says in the sixth chapter (v. 12): “They would compel you to be circumcised, etc.” In addition, they would like to bring it about that there be no dispute at all, but only peace and harmony, between Gentiles and Jews. But it is impossible for this to happen except at the cost of the doctrine of faith, which is the doctrine of the cross and is full of stumbling blocks. (Luther)

5:12 ὄφελον (“would that ...!”)—This particle derives from the first person singular second aorist indicative of the verb ὀφείλω, “to owe; be indebted to.” It became a fixed expression for an unattainable wish when used with an imperfect or aorist indicative verb. The wish is attainable when the word is used

with a future indicative verb, as here (see the next textual note). Paul employs ὄφελον in ironic or sarcastic contexts (1 Cor 4:8; 2 Cor 11:1). Here it is replaced with ἄρα (“so/therefore”) in \mathfrak{P}^{46} , making this the conclusion of the section, but the ἄρα in Gal 5:11 (see the preceding textual note) suffices to signal the close of the paragraph.

ἀποκόψονται—This future indicative middle is well attested. The form is a causative middle, “let themselves be,” rather than passive. ὄφελον (see the preceding textual note) is associated with this indicative verb. The change from the indicative to the aorist subjunctive middle ἀποκόψωνται in \mathfrak{P}^{46} D F G is not well attested and may attest to discomfort with the indicative verb form in this construction. (CC)

Would that those who trouble you also let themselves be mutilated. Paul’s tone in 5:12 is openly sarcastic. If 5:11 reflects actual or perceived charges from the rivals, those charges may well have gotten under the apostle’s skin. On the other hand, the situation in Galatia would be frustrating quite apart from any charges. Literally, he wishes that the rivals would “cut themselves off” or mutilate themselves. The rivals have “cut in on” (ἐγκόπτω) the Galatians (5:7) in advocating circumcision. The verb περιτέμνω, “circumcise” (2:3; 5:2, 3; 6:12, 13), is, literally, “cut around.” Now if only they would “cut themselves off” (the middle voice of ἀποκόπτω)! Paul has been contending up to this point in the letter for the exclusion of these rival missionaries. He pronounces a curse on their other Gospel in 1:8–9. He commands the Galatians to cast them out in 4:30. He warns against a little leaven ruining the whole batch in 5:9. Now he wishes the rivals would exclude *themselves* by a slip of the knife. The language is coarse and shocking, a savagely ironic cut: with one pass of the knife they were brought into the Jewish assembly, but with another slice they would exclude themselves. Deut 23:1 (MT 23:2): “No one whose testicles are crushed or whose penis is cut off shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD” (see also Lev 21:18–20; 22:24; ἀποκόπτω, “cut off,” in LXX Deut 23:2). Eunuchs were among the most despised people in antiquity (Josephus, *Ant.* 4.8.40 §§ 290–91; Lucian, *Eunuch.* 6). The point is *not* that the rivals would be cut off from an Israel according to the flesh. Rather they would be cut off from “the Israel of God” (6:16)! Paul effectively says, “Be my guest! There’s the exit!” Many Greeks and Romans ridiculed Jewish circumcision as a sort of castration.¹³¹ Paul, as a circumcised male, is taking the insult and hurling it against the rival advocates of circumcision at Galatia. The irony is hard to miss. Paul does not tolerate departures from the authoritative, apostolic message. (CC)

As Paul writes to an audience located in Galatia, this course, cruel comment would have been *doubly* ironic. Every year at the spring festival organized by the emperor Claudius, the devotees of Cybele would fast and mourn the infidelity of Attis, Cybele’s consort. Attis demonstrated his desire never to be unfaithful again by castrating himself. After a week of festivities and preparation, on March 24, those men desirous of joining the ranks of Cybele’s most ardent followers, her priests, in a moment of ecstatic frenzy would, like Attis, mutilate themselves for Cybele. The would-be priests would offer their genitals to the goddess (Lucian, *Syr. d.* 50–51). When Paul encourages the rivals to go ahead and mutilate themselves, the Galatians would not have missed the dark cultural allusion. He turns Galatian disgust with the pagan Cybele ritual against his Jewish-Christian rivals.¹³⁴ The Galatians might as well have been returning to their pagan past. (CC)

Paul did not utter these words lightly. The central doctrine of saving faith in Christ was in jeopardy. As Luther commented on 5:12:

Here the question arises whether Christians are permitted to curse. Yes, they are permitted to do so, but not always and not for just any reason. But when things come to the point where the Word is about to be cursed or its teaching—and, as a consequence, God Himself—blasphemed, then you must invert your sentence and say: “Blessed be the Word and God! And cursed be anything apart from the Word and from God, whether it be an apostle or an angel from heaven!” (AE 27:45; cf. Acts 8:20; Gal 1:8–9) (CC)

Those who utter such words are people of conviction, but people who should also recognize that such words are never, ever uttered in any but the most serious of circumstances. Such people should control their tongues very carefully and recognize when the time is appropriate and necessary for such rebuke. Paul's comment is reminiscent of the psalmists who prayed for God to let his wrath fall upon the enemies of his people (e.g., Pss 58:6–9 [MT 58:7–10]; 69:22–28 [MT 69:23–29]; 137:8–9). Righteous fury welled up in Jesus too as he chased the money-changers from the temple (Mt 21:12–13 || Mk 11:15–17 || Lk 19:45–46). The righteous must recognize evil for what it is. Richard Hays remarked: "Indeed, Gal 5:12 may cause us to pause to reflect on whether we have failed to be as angry as we should be toward those who corrupt and disrupt the church's faith in the gospel." (CC)

those. Advocates of circumcision. (TLSB)

emasculate themselves. The Greek word means "to cut off," or castrate." In Phil 3:2 Paul uses a related word to describe the same sort of people as "mutilators of the flesh." His sarcasm is evident. (CSB)

Some see an allusion to the cult of Cybele, which originated in Pessinus in Galatia. Devotees of the goddess practiced sacred castration. Paul's blunt language revealed the emotional intensity of his disgust. (TLSB)

And then perhaps the famous statement -- and this is one that I always tell young preachers. Don't imitate Paul here. Paul -- and it's a wish. He says: I wish that those who are troubling, unsettling you, that they would -- and the translation here is emasculate themselves. It really is castrate themselves. Now, that's pretty strong words. And I think the image here is intended to be graphic obviously. But really the image is an image of paganism. Bear with me. I'm just trying to explain what Paul is saying. Paul is saying that when you have the knife and you're about ready to do circumcision, to cut off that foreskin, he says: I wish that the knife would slip and it would castrate you. Not you, the Galatians. But the opponents would castrate themselves. Now, castration is what pagan priests do. Jews, as you know, castration is a great sign of uncleanness, of unholiness. And Paul is saying if you go the route of circumcision, that is like castration among the pagan priests. If you go that route, you are no different than a pagan. (Just – V-37)

Now, do you see what Paul is saying? This is not only graphic image. Bloody image. Very brutal image. But the point is -- and they would have picked this up -- that if you begin to use the flesh, circumcision, dead foreskins as a means of making yourself right with God, then you are no different than a pagan priest who castrates himself so that he might be able to offer sacrifices to idols in the temple. Paul is equating his opponents with pagan priests in the most graphic of ways. Do you think Paul is upset here? I think he's very upset. And I think he's showing very clearly that he is not going to shrink from any kind of image that indicates that the Gospel, the truth of the Gospel, is at stake. And he wants them to see that ultimately to be a Christian is to be someone who is completely and totally committed to the truth of that Gospel. (Just – V-37)

The Whole Law Fulfilled (5:13–15)

The role of 5:13–6:10 within the letter has been the subject of much scholarly debate. The parallels between 5:1–12 and 6:11–18 (see the introductory comments in the commentary on 5:1–12) raise the question of the role of the intervening material. J. C. O'Neill supposed that 5:13–6:10 is an interpolation or insertion into the letter by a later editor since the sudden warning against antinomianism or lawlessness seems to clash with Paul's opposition to the Law earlier in the letter. Most commentators agree that the hypothesis of an interpolation should be a measure of last resort only in the absence of any viable interpretation that respects the integrity of the text. Martin Dibelius, one of the fathers of Gospel form

criticism, concluded that the generalized exhortation in this section has little to do with the concrete contingencies that prompted the letter.⁷ Dibelius did not account, however, for the connections between 5:13–6:10 and the rest of the letter. For instance, Galatians 5’s Spirit/flesh dichotomy was introduced earlier in 3:3 and 4:29, and Paul’s comments about the Mosaic Law (5:14, 18, 23; 6:2) resolve questions raised by his earlier discussion of that topic. Any discussion of the Law will naturally involve concerns about how God’s people should live: If Moses’ Law is not the primary source of guidance or power for the Christian life, from where does that guidance and power come? Paul will address that matter in this section. (CC)

Wilhelm Lütgert and James H. Ropes seized on 5:13–6:10 as proof that Paul was fighting on two fronts: against “nomists” advocating Moses’ Torah in the first four chapters of the letter and against “spirituals” or “pneumatics” in the last two chapters. The pneumatics were responsible for laxity at Galatia. Unfortunately for Lütgert and Ropes’ proposal, Paul never hints that “those (people)” (4:17; 5:12) in the Galatians’ midst represent two separate parties. Such a view is unnecessarily complicated. When Paul confronts libertinism elsewhere, as in 1 Corinthians, he is more forthright. In this section the apostle is promoting a Spirit-led life in lieu of the unnecessary “yoke” of Moses’ Law (5:1). He is not confronting libertinism but rather confusion with respect to the moral implications of the Gospel message. In a variation of the libertine hypothesis, Walter Schmithals concluded that Paul was combating Jewish-Christian Gnostics. Despite these Gnostics’ advocacy of circumcision, they did not consider a strict Law-observant lifestyle necessary. Gnosticism, however, did not emerge as a movement until at least a generation later.¹² In yet another variation of the libertine hypothesis, Robert Jewett articulated a rather involved proposal that “agitators” had arrived in Galatia seeking to avoid persecution from Jewish Zealots. To obtain quick, demonstrable results for their peers, they promoted circumcision and a Jewish calendar but not the entirety of the Law. Since the agitators did not promote strict observance of the Law, the Galatians lapsed back into their native, Hellenistic libertinism. Paul therefore confronts that moral laxity in 5:13–6:10 even as he confronts nomism in 3:6–4:31; Gal 4:21, however, proves troublesome for Schmithals’ and Jewett’s hypotheses since Paul addresses the Galatians as a people *desirous* now to be under the Law, and, again, 5:13–6:10 never actually identifies libertinism as a specific problem at Galatia. (CC)

John M. G. Barclay has offered the most sensible approach to 5:13–6:10. He noted that Paul’s comments on life in the Spirit often do not appear aimed at any sort of opponent but are simply an extension of his own teachings earlier in the letter. Barclay cautioned against the excessive mirror-reading of those scholars who ignore Paul’s positive description of the Spirit-led Christian in order to claim that he is responding to opponents. Paul does not single out any particular problem with the “flesh” as requiring response.¹⁶ He writes of living by faith in 2:19–20 and urges the Galatians to continue living by the Spirit (3:1–5), but he provides scant detail. Although Paul mentions faith working through love in 5:1–6, the letter, up to this point, has not offered specific direction on how Christians are supposed to live: “*The main body of the letter both points towards and renders necessary the ethical instruction at the end.*” Paul is careful in how he frames his discussion in 5:13–6:10 in order to avoid any appearance of advocating a turn to the Law. Christians “fulfill” but do not “do” the Law in 5:13–14. He avoids admonishing against “sin,” as the rivals likely were doing (2:17), and speaks instead of the “flesh.” The vices which Paul highlights point to a certain degree of community strife at Galatia, although the general nature of the admonitions does not permit much more to be said. Paul admonishes restoring a sinning brother (6:1), warns of the dangers of boasting (6:3–5), and reminds of the need to support teachers (6:6). Whereas the “works of the Law” (e.g., 2:16) *divide* the community into Jew and gentile, the Spirit binds the community *together*. The main point, however, is that the Spirit provides what the Law lacks: sufficient *power* to generate genuine God-pleasing behavior against the desire of the flesh. (CC)

At the same time, Paul is careful not to offer a comprehensive code of behavior. The Galatians will not find in his letter a substitute or complement to Moses’ Law. Paul does address a few practical issues that

revolve around community behavior and conflict, “but even these community rules are incapable of casuistic application for there is still a considerable latitude of interpretation in such phrases as ‘a spirit of gentleness’ [6:1] or ‘with all good things’ [6:6].” Those who enjoy Christ’s Spirit will have all that they need to live a God-pleasing life. (CC)

5:13 μόνον μή (“only ... not”)—The verb of a sentence is frequently omitted after μόνον, “only” (see also 2:10; cf. 1:23; 3:2; 4:18; Phil 1:27). An imperative must be supplied after the negative μή, whether ἔχετε (“do not regard”), ποιεῖτε (“do not make”), or τρέπετε (“do not turn”), with τὴν ἐλευθερίαν (“freedom”) as its object. The imperative “use,” supplied in the translation above, is ambiguous enough to suggest all three of these options.

τὴν ἐλευθερίαν (“freedom”)—The article is of previous reference and refers back to “freedom” in the first part of 5:13 (ἐλευθερία) as well as in 5:1 (τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ): “freedom” in Christ.

εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῇ σαρκί (“as a pretext for the flesh”)—The noun ἀφορμή was originally a military term for a base of operation, but in Koine Greek it refers to an “occasion,” or to a “pretext” or “opportunity” (see Rom 7:8, 11; 2 Cor 5:12; 11:12; 1 Tim 5:14). At the same time, the notion of warfare is not absent in this context as the “flesh” (5:13, 16–17) and “Spirit” (5:16–18) engage each other. “Flesh” is morally negative and personified with its “desire” in 5:16–17. In this context, the translation of ἀφορμή as “pretext” is preferable, with τῇ σαρκί as a dative of advantage, “for the flesh.” “Occasion” and “opportunity,” as alternative translations, are potentially too neutral.

διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης (“through love”)—This reading is well attested externally. The variant τῇ ἀγάπῃ τοῦ πνεύματος (“by/with the love of the Spirit”; D F G it vg^{cl} cop^{sa} goth Ambrosiaster) may be an assimilation to 5:22: “the fruit of the Spirit is love ...” (cf. Rom 5:5; 15:30). (CC)

For you, brothers (and sisters), were called to freedom! Only do not [use] your freedom as a pretext for the flesh, but through love serve one another. Gal 5:13–15 sets the stage for the larger section (5:13–6:10) by explaining why Paul has been so adamant against the Mosaic Law and circumcision. The “for” (γάρ) in 5:13 likely has a continuative sense as 5:13–15 develops 5:1–12 as a whole (note the parallel in “freedom” language linking 5:1 and 5:13). After the dark, repulsive prospect of mutilation (5:12), Paul reminds the Galatians in 5:13 that they were called to be free, and in freedom the Galatians will fulfill what the Law had been getting at all along: they will love their neighbors as themselves. With the emphatic pronoun “you” (ὁμεῖς) at the beginning of the verse, the apostle contrasts the Galatians (5:13) with those who were disturbing them (5:12). God had been the agent of the call to freedom (cf. 1:6; 5:8). The preposition ἐπί with the dative case (ἐπ’ ἐλευθερίᾳ) may indicate purpose or goal (Eph 2:10; Phil 4:10; 1 Thess 4:7; BDF § 235 [4]): the Galatians were called “for freedom.” The indicative of God’s call in 5:13a precedes the admonition to mutual service in 5:13b. Paul always grounds his imperative for Christian behavior in the prior action of God, and, conversely, God’s action always entails the corresponding imperative of a changed life. (CC)

Paul worries in 5:13 that freedom could easily be misconstrued as a “pretext” or “opportunity” for the flesh. Why does Paul favor the word “flesh” over “sin” at this point? “Sin” or “sinner” could also be used in a divisive, ethnic sense as is the case in 2:15–16: “gentile sinners.” “Sin” in 2:15–16 entails disobedience of Moses’ Law. Were Paul to admonish against “sin” in 5:13, he could easily be misunderstood as encouraging observance of the Law. He opts, instead, to warn against the “flesh.” Paul uses the term “flesh” with flexibility for libertine behavior, envy, or rivalries (as in 5:15, 19–21, 26), or for a powerful force that actively resists God’s Spirit (5:17). When Paul employs the language of “flesh” in Galatians 5, he is not endorsing an anthropological dualism in which human flesh is devalued as matter and human spirit upheld as immaterial. Paul esteems the entirety of creation (Rom 8:19–21). In this context “flesh” certainly does not refer more neutrally to the physical body or to the individual or to earthly existence (as in 1:16; 2:16, 20). With its evil desire (5:17), the “flesh” is a dark, morally negative entity inclined toward sin; it is a quasi-personified power that sets itself against God. Gal 3:3 presaged

this morally negative context with its deprecating remark about completing in the “flesh” what was begun in the “Spirit,” and in 4:21–31 Paul has just contrasted those born of the flesh and those born of the Spirit. The self-seeking “flesh” with its desire stands opposed to the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit (5:13, 16, 17, 19, 24; 6:8). The flesh is *defined* by its opposition to the Spirit. It is a generative source of evil. The Galatians must not let themselves become a “headquarters” for the flesh’s counterattack! (CC)

Crucial to understanding Paul’s opposition between flesh and Spirit in 5:13–6:10 is the recognition that he is describing two *communities*. In 4:21–31 children were born to two different mothers, the slave woman and the free woman. As children of God’s promise (4:28), the Galatians were miraculously born and possess the Spirit (4:29). Christ is being formed in them (4:19). Paul warns against the children of the slave woman since they were born “according to the flesh” (κατὰ σάρκα, 4:23, 29) and are disinherited from God’s Spirit (3:14, 18, 29; 4:7) and from the kingdom of God (5:21; cf. 6:7–9). They operate in a purely fleshly manner, which manifests itself in their communal behavior (5:15). Their end is to be driven out (4:30). In effect, Paul is describing for the Galatians two separate family trees. The Galatians’ genealogy differs from the rivals’ and of those “under the Law” (4:21). Just as in 4:28, 31, where Paul directly addresses his “brothers (and sisters)” as the children of the free woman, he is likewise making clear in 5:13 that the Galatian “brothers (and sisters)” have a choice before them. They must not abandon their family, among whom they enjoy freedom and the power of the Spirit, in order to join a different family, a family of slaves with no future. This alternative community is dominated by the “works of the flesh,” or better, by the *rule* of the flesh (5:19–21). The rivals’ teaching is rendering the Galatians vulnerable to the passions and desires of the flesh (5:24). They must not reap corruption from the flesh (6:8), as the Spirit brings forth from them a *different* fruit (5:22–23)! So Paul admonishes the Galatians in 5:13 to use their freedom responsibly and not as a pretext for the flesh. (CC)

Whereas in 5:1 freedom requires resisting the “yoke of slavery” (ζυγῶ δουλείας), in 5:13 the Galatians must employ their freedom, paradoxically, to *serve* each other as slaves in love (διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις). “If the way to keep Flesh from gaining a base of operations is through loving, mutual service, this suggests that the power of Flesh will try to manifest itself through pride, rivalry, and autonomy.”²⁸ The mutuality of otherworldly servitude is at odds with the often oppressive status orientation of this world’s slavery. Servitude for the sake of others forms a striking contrast (ἀλλά, “but,” 5:13) to the self-seeking flesh. The willing sacrifice of one’s own ego and honor, of one’s status and resources marks the Christian—and the Christian leader! Honor for the Christian will be for the Lord to recognize his or her humble, hidden service at the Last Day. Christian leaders, in their very public service, must especially cultivate the humble self-regard that Paul is admonishing. This is the task of *every* Christian. (CC)

“Love” in 5:13 builds on 5:6: serving one another as slaves (5:13) is the result and manifestation of faith working through love (5:6). Paul is probably also hearkening back to 2:20 as Christ expresses his self-sacrificial love through the believer. This loving enslavement in the service of others mirrors what Paul says of Christ in Phil 2:7. The loving believer is drawn from isolation into genuine other-centered service within a Christian community. The love of Christ draws believers *together*! (CC)

do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. See Ro 6:1; 1Pe 2:16. Liberty is not license but freedom to serve God and each other in love. (CSB)

Lit, a base of operations, as in military contexts. Freedom in Christ ought not become a basis for pandering to the desires of the fallen human nature. (TLSB)

Now, if you look with me at the text, you will see that in Verse 13 there is an implied imperative: Do not allow, you know, the flesh to become a military base of operations. There's in a sense an imperative there. It's implied. But we have to add it in the English. And then you can see: But become slaves. See

that? Become servants to one another through love. And then love one another in Verse 14. And that's in the future. But you know that the future is the most intensive sort of imperative command. Then Verse 15: Look. You know, look -- or do not look out. And in Verse 16: Walk around in the Spirit. And then you can see following that in Verses 17 and following the imperatives end. But we begin to see this section of exhortation. In which Paul is commanding them to live like Christ. (Just – V-38)

Because he is introducing a new concept here. And that's a very important thing to see at the end of a letter when a new concept comes in. Because it obviously is something we should be alerted to. And the concept now is flesh. Now he's used the word flesh before. But it's always been kind of a synonym for circumcision. But now he's talking about flesh as a power. He's going to talk about being under the power of the flesh. And here he's talking about it as a super human power in which sin is at work in us. And this is in a sense when he's using the word flesh now, he's talking about the former life in paganism. (Just – V-38)

And that expression that you have there, a military base of operations, is a brilliant one. Because that's exactly what that word means. And remember, we said the recipients of this letter are soldiers. So they are going to be in a context now where they understand this. And just think of that metaphor here. You know, don't create a camp now in your congregation where the flesh is going to run wild. Don't return now to what you were before. Now, it's interesting because he's going to explain this as this text unfolds. And again, it's one of those Pauline arguments that to a certain extent is somewhat subtle. But once you get underneath it, you can see how devastating it is going to be to his opponents. Because what Paul is going to be doing here is he's going to be equating the life of the flesh, namely, in sin with all its vices, to a life living under the law with all its righteousness as being equivalent. And I think when we get to the point where we see the catalog of virtues and vices, we'll be able to see how clearly Paul is contrasting the Christian way of life, the life in which the great fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, et cetera, in a congregation where you can see Christ is formed in them. And they are at peace with one another. And in a sense at peace with God, even though they may be at odds with the world. That's going to be contrasted to a congregation that is marked by this flesh where they have actually allowed their congregation to be a place where the flesh runs wild. (Just – V-38)

Now, look at how he starts. And you can see that this is so real. This is something that we can -- we can identify with. And remember, as we read these words now, that this is pastoral guidance. And what Paul is talking about is what is daily life like now in a world in which God in Christ is making right what has gone wrong. And he's also talking about it as daily life in wartime where there are these battles between flesh and Spirit. Between faith and the law. (Just – V-38)

And this is -- what he's doing, let's put it this way -- and this is why it's pastoral. This is how I would define pastoral at least in this context. Paul is providing them a map of the world in which they really live. The real world. The real world where the real presence of Jesus Christ is there by the Spirit. A real world that God has made by sending Christ and his Spirit into the world. Remember, God sent his Son into the world. God send the Spirit of his Son. That's the real world Paul is talking about. And he's going to describe this real world as saw in the opening comments in 5 and 6 as the new creation from 6:15. That's what the real world it. It's the new creation. (Just – V-38)

And so he begins. And this is a -- like I said, this is a turning point here. Although you can hear the echo back to Verse 1 of this chapter. He begins by saying. For you were called to freedom brethren. And that's that realm of freedom. Remember freedom, freedom in the Gospel. Freedom in Christ. Freedom from the law. But then he says and you can see when people are freed from the law, they can become, you know, kind of libertized I think is the word that's oftentimes used. But they can resort to sin in the flesh because they feel they have this freedom. So he says: For you were called to freedom, brethren. But do not allow this freedom to become a military base of operations for the flesh. Don't let the flesh now run

wild just because you're free in the Gospel. And you can hear this echo in Romans. You know, Romans 6. Where you know shall we sin so that grace may abound. You can see the same sort of thing is going on there. (Just – V-38)

And now he then gives I think the essence of what the life of Christ is like. But serve one another. And here is the word for servant. ***Duleo. Serve one another through love as Christ served us through the cross. Now, this is the language the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. This is the language of atonement. And we serve one another. And we're going to see how he's going to describe how that is. Love your neighbor as yourself. Bear each other's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ. This is how we serve one another. Now, this is the antidote for the flesh. Serving one another in love. Love is the antidote for the flesh. And you can see now that love is going to be the answer throughout. (Just – V-38)

5:14 ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ (“in one word”)—This reading has strong attestation, but Marcion has ἐν ὑμῖν (“among you),” presumably meaning among Christians and not the Jews. D* G it Ambrosiaster (Western witnesses) have the longer, possibly conflated ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ (“among you in one word”). A few witnesses (1611 syr^h Ephraem) have ἐν ὀλίγῳ (“in short”). “One word” refers to one command or, better, to one *statement*.

πεπλήρωται (“is fulfilled”)—Most witnesses have this perfect indicative passive, but D G 0122 Byzantine have πληροῦται, the present indicative passive. The change to the present tense may render explicit a gnomic use of the perfect tense. Possibly the change places a stronger emphasis on what the Christian does rather than what Christ has done (2:20). Surprisingly, several modern versions mistakenly translate the verb as something like “is summarized” (see, e.g., NRSV, NEB, and NJB). Paul employs a different Greek verb in the similar context of Rom 13:8–10 that may indeed be translated as “summarize” (ἀνακεφαλαιῶ), but “summarize” is not one of the meanings of πληρόω.

ἐν τῷ· ἀγαπήσεις ...—Quotations functioning as nouns are introduced by the article (here τῷ): “in the maxim (or, namely) ‘You will love ...’ ” Note that Paul employs a future indicative and *not* an imperative (corresponding to the Hebrew of Lev 19:18 to express what *will* happen). See the commentary on this verse.

ὡς σεαυτόν (“as yourself”)—ⳑ F G L Ψ have the less-attested ὡς ἑαυτόν (“as oneself”). (CC)

For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, namely: “You will love your neighbor as yourself.” Gal 5:14 provides the basis “for” (γάρ) the loving behavior Paul admonishes in 5:13; Gal 5:13’s mention of “love” prompts Paul to a rather surprising connection: love is the fulfilling *of the Law*. Lest one draw the conclusion that the Law is obsolete in every sense, Paul places the Law back at the center of his discussion. Freedom *from* remains also a freedom *for*. At first glance, the apostle appears to be reducing the Law to the single command of Lev 19:18: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Later Jewish literature typically viewed this Leviticus verse as a summary of all the commands of the Law. Hillel, the great Jewish teacher of the Law in Jesus’ day, reportedly told an aspiring convert: “What is hateful to you, do not [do] to your neighbour: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof; go and learn it” (*b. Šabb.* 31a [Soncino ed.]). Likewise for Paul in Rom 13:8–10, the entire Law remains in view when he references Lev 19:18 in admonishing: “Love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the Law.” After listing several of the Ten Commandments in Rom 13:9, Paul adds that these “and any other commandment are summed up in this word: ‘You will love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does not do harm to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the Law” (Rom 13:9–10). Paul’s reference to the Ten Commandments (Rom 13:9) demonstrates that he is not eliminating all the other commands of the Mosaic Law in his focus on the single command to love one’s neighbor. (CC)

Second Temple Jewish texts do not devote much space to Lev 19:18 with the exception of the Dead Sea Scrolls (CD IX.2, 7–8). Early Christian texts, on the other hand, refer to Lev 19:18 quite frequently (e.g., Rom 13:9; James 2:8; *Did.* 1.2). This early Christian emphasis may stem from the teaching of Jesus when he summarized the Law in the words of Lev 19:18 (Mt 5:43; 19:19; Mk 12:31). The later rabbis, unlike their Second Temple counterparts, had more to say on Lev 19:18 (*b. Šabb.* 31a; cf. Tobit 4:15). Rabbi Akiba (AD 50–135) took “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” as “the encompassing principle of the Torah” (*Sipra* on Lev 19:18 [Parashat Qedoshim Pereq 4]). The rabbis may have been responding to the way Lev 19:18 was being used in early Christianity. The rabbis employed Lev 19:18 as a means of summarizing the main point of obeying the Law in its entirety; the various laws of Moses show how love expresses itself in concrete action. Paul, for his part, takes matters in the opposite direction as he pointedly refuses to place the command to love in a context of taking on the yoke of the Torah. (CC)

Paul is very careful in his wording of Gal 5:14. The wording of this verse differs markedly from 5:3’s “to do the entire Law” (ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι). Despite the various modern translations of 5:14, Paul does not say that Christians fulfill a *command* (ἐντολή) of the Law. He refers, instead, to a “word” (λόγος), and Christians do not “do” (ποιέω) this “word” but rather “fulfill” (πληρώω) it. Paul therefore contrasts “doing” and “fulfilling.”³⁸ Those *under* the Law “do” “the Law” (3:10, 12; 5:3); those in Christ, on the other hand, “do” “the good” (6:9–10) but not “the Law.” The yoke of servitude to the Law has come to a decisive end. Christians “fulfill” the Law (5:14; 6:2). Paul is careful to employ an indicative verb (πεπλήρωται, “is fulfilled”), and not an imperative, for the Christian’s fulfilling of the Law. The whole Law is fulfilled by the Christian without ever being circumcised or trying to take on the burden of the Law. In Christ and in the Spirit’s power, the Christian’s deeds of love are the “fulfilling” (not the “doing”) of Moses’ Law. (CC)

Most interpreters take the verb πεπλήρωται as a gnomic use of the perfect tense to express not a past situation with ongoing results, but rather a maxim. J. Louis Martyn highlighted the passive form of the verb as support for his novel approach that Paul is writing about what *Christ* did rather than what the Christian does. Martyn conceded that Christ is not directly mentioned in the verse and that his proposal “may seem rather wild.”⁴³ He ruled out the translation “is fulfilled” since he thought that would imply autonomous human possibility. Nevertheless, the epitome of the Law is the love of one’s neighbor as the very *outworking* of faith (5:6). The Galatians are to enslave themselves to each other in love (5:13). This focus on the Galatians’ behavior continues in 5:15. (CC)

Christian behavior cannot be separated from its motivating and empowering source! Paul is not affirming the possibility of autonomous results. The Galatians are led *by the Spirit* (5:18) and produce the *Spirit’s* fruit (5:22–23). The ambiguity of the passive form of the verb “is fulfilled” expresses both God’s new creation and the believer’s involvement (thus 6:2, 15). Paul is describing a *reality* for those in Christ. Lev 19:18 functions here not as a command but as a promise. The love brought about by the Spirit is none other than the love of Christ expressing itself in the lives of believers (2:20). As Paul writes in Rom 8:3–4: “For what is impossible for the Law, in that it was weakened by the flesh, God [has done] by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh . . . so that the just requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, those who walk not according to the flesh but *according to the Spirit.*” The Spirit makes Christ’s decisive, completed work a present reality for and in the believer. Such behavior is only possible with the powerful dawning of a new era (4:4). Christians embody the love of their Savior in action, and in that embodiment they will fulfill what God commanded in the Law of Moses. After all, Christ regularly summarized the Law with these very words (cf. Lev 19:18 in Mt 22:34–40; Mk 12:28–34; cf. Mt 19:19; Lk 10:25–28). What Christ did in his ministry and in his death on the cross expresses itself in the lives of believers: this Scriptural word “is fulfilled” (Gal 5:14). By following the lead of Christ and his Spirit, the Galatians paradoxically fulfill what they had sought by circumcision and the Mosaic Law. Those who “do” the Law apart from the Spirit’s power find themselves ironically in transgression.⁴⁹ Paul is presenting to the Galatians really the *only* way to realize what the Law was ultimately about. (CC)

Although Lev 19:34 and Deut 10:19 clarify that love of “neighbor” includes the alien sojourner, some sectors of Second Temple Judaism restricted the term “neighbor” to fellow (or true) Israelites (e.g., CD IX.2–8). Jesus’ Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25–37) shows how misguided such a restriction is. When Paul’s rivals restrict salvation to those within the circumcised community, they overlook the consistent inclusion of foreigners in God’s people from the very beginning! That oversight is, for Paul, a failure to express love. (CC)

the whole law is fulfilled in one word. Doing to others what you would have them do to you expresses the spirit and intention of “the Law and the Prophets” (Mt 7:12; cf. Mk 12:31). (CSB)

Translated as in v 3, but the Gk terms have slightly different focuses. In v 3, “whole” defines Law as a total of individual precepts. Here in v 14, “whole” describes Law as a unit, with emphasis on its spirit or intention. Love for the neighbor encapsulates its very essence. (TLSB)

For the whole law, ***nomas -- okay. This is the law that Paul has been talking about -- is brought to its perfect completion or fulfillment. Is brought to its end. To what it was intended to be in one word. And in one word. It's not one word. It's a saying. one saying from Scripture. And this is Leviticus 19:18: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Now this future indicative is the strongest kind of imperative. This is not an option. If you are in Christ, if you are baptized, you love your neighbor as yourself. Because Christ loved us, his neighbors, to the point of death, even death on the cross. (Just – V-38)

Now, here you can see that the law is good. The law as it is fulfilled in Christ in love is what the law was intended to be from the beginning. It's only as we -- remember back when Paul said why then the law? It was only on account of transgression transgression that the law becomes bad, shows us our sin, keeps us from sinning. But the law itself is a good thing. In Christ. In the cross. In love. In its fulfillment on the cross. Those of us who have been as Paul says co-crucified with Christ. Christ living in us. I'm just echoing Paul in Chapter 2. Christ living in us, we living in him. The life I now live in the flesh. It's Christ's life. And that's a life of love. So the law is not a burden now. It's not something that condemns me. The law shows me how I can love my neighbor as Christ loved my neighbor. How I can serve my neighbor in love. (Just - V-38)

5:15 *But if you are biting and devouring one another, watch out lest you be consumed by one another.* Gal 5:15 offers a contrast (“but,” δέ) to the positive behavior Paul admonishes in 5:13–14. The love of the Savior is exactly what is *not* being manifested when the Galatians, like animals, bite and devour each other. Such vicious behavior does not fulfill the Law but is a manifestation of the gruesome, cannibalizing desire of the flesh. Although the protasis of a first class conditional (“if you are biting ...”) may or may not describe an actual situation at Galatia, the fruit of the Spirit and the admonitions that follow require a network of relationships within a community of believers. The preoccupation with social concerns in 5:13–6:10 suggests a level of dissension within the Galatian congregations. Paul would certainly fault the rival troublers for some of that; the Galatians were running well *before* the rivals cut in (5:7). Little more can be said about the level of social harmony at Galatia, and Paul’s language in 5:15 may also function as a warning. Greek literature often compared the bad behavior of human beings to wild animals.⁵⁴ “The imagery would have been inviting enough for anyone who was familiar with the way political groups, united in their struggle for freedom under some tyrant, can turn on each other once the tyrant is overthrown and lose the advantages gained, in bitter factional infighting.” If for the Greek author Plutarch (*Frat. amor.* 486B) brothers in a royal family should avoid behavior like that of wild beasts, how much more should the family of God avoid such behavior! Some modern congregations need to be reminded of this. (CC)

Although 5:1 and 5:13 firmly assert the believer's freedom from the Law, Paul is beginning in 5:14–15 to correct misimpressions about that freedom. Freedom does not mean that one may act in whatever way one pleases. Freedom from the Law does not lead to a “lawless” life. As the Gospel message inevitably draws people together, the freedom of Christ expresses itself in a community characterized by the utter self-sacrifice of Christ's love in mutual service. Crass Western individualism is not an option for the believer. (CC)

bite and devour one another. Opposite of vv13-14. Seeking to attain status with God and man by mere observance of law breeds a self-righteous, critical spirit. (CSB)

A vicious dogfight to the death, animals snapping at one another with bared fangs, portrays the ugliness of bitter partisan strife in the congregation. (TLSB)

And then Paul can't help himself. Because he knows that there are other things going on. And here in Verse 15 right after this really kind of sublime theology in which you can see how justification and sanctification are together in Christ. Not separated. But joined together in Christ. Paul speaks in Verse 15 of what Pharisaical behavior, of what life under the law is like. And he says -- and this is very sharp. But if you bite and devour one another -- look at the language there. You can also -- it's very, very graphic. If you bite and devour one another, watch out. Look out lest you are not consumed by one another. And that's what happens in Pharisaical behavior when you're living according to the law. People are measuring themselves according to the law. And that causes this kind of disruption. And I think this idea of being consumed by one another, you can see in any kind of a culture where the law is the way of life that it creates this kind of enmity between people. (Just – V-38)

I think we can all identify with this. Think of a classroom where people are extremely competitive. How that can create a tremendous amount of anxiety of people biting and consuming one another over the competition over standards like that. There's only one standard we're going to see. And that is the standard of love. This is perhaps the most important section for the last two chapters that really sets the tone for what's going to happen. We've anticipated it in the first 12 verses. But as Paul is want to do, he eases us into the argument. And then he gives us the punch. And here is the punch. (Just – V-38)

So just to very briefly summarize here, we are freed from the cursing law. We are freed from sin. We are freed from the elements of the cosmos. And now Paul says we are free from the flesh. But in that freedom, don't let the flesh take over. Because the flesh destroys community life. Instead, serve one another in love as Christ served us by giving up his life for his neighbors on the cross. (Just – V-38)

5:1–15. Paul specifically argues that the acceptance of circumcision in principle violates Christian freedom and endangers a person's relationship to Christ. Congregational strife often arises when issues in the area of Christian freedom are elevated to the level of biblical doctrine. Christ Jesus loved us to the end so that He might lift the burden of guilt that troubles our consciences. • Lord, as we eagerly await Your coming, free us from pettiness and self-indulgence so that we may love one another. Amen. (TLSB)

Walk by the Spirit

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do[e] such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of

the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. **26** Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

5:16-24 And I think you're going to see here in the way in which Paul is presenting the argument that if we just twist his words a little bit and actually look at these as the ancient world perhaps would have as catalog of vices and virtues, then I think we're going to miss the point. This isn't about moral behavior. That is not what Paul is talking about. Even though it might give birth to behavior that is moral. But he is talking about what is it that constitutes a community in Christ. And he's talking about really in many ways how a community is formed in Christ. This is the language that Paul has been using throughout this epistle. And here he is now giving concrete expressions of it. (Just – V-39)

But real life, real life is found when Christians gather together around the real presence of Jesus Christ. Where his love is being giving as a gift in Word and sacrament to the people of God. That's why this is to be understood at a sermon in a liturgical context. In which Christ is being given as gift. And his love is being spread among the members as they commune with him and his body, his bodily presence. In the hearing of the word and the receiving of the Holy Supper. (Just – V-39)

Now, for Paul, that's real life. And that creates community. And that community has certain characteristics. And what he does here very simply is says that this community is a community in which the Spirit is alive and well. The communities that are not of the Spirit are communities of the flesh. Or as we're going to see, communities of the law. But for Paul a community of the flesh and a community of the law are one and the same thing. Now let's see if we're going to find that in the text. (Just – V-39)

When Paul writes of the “flesh” and the “spirit” in 5:16–26, he is not referring to the different parts of a human being. For Paul, the “flesh” does not refer to a sinful human nature as such but rather to an existence apart from Christ and his Spirit within “the present evil age” (1:4). Thus the flesh is a sphere of influence, an active quasi-personified force that challenges God and his people. Likewise, Paul cannot be referring to an individual’s own spirit. The human spirit does not have the power to overcome the flesh. In 5:16 Paul refers in the second person plural (“you”) to the Galatians as a *community* walking by the single Spirit. The “Spirit” is a powerful otherworldly Agent who counteracts the flesh with its evil thoughts and actions. Thanks to the Spirit, the Christian battles the flesh from the point of view of the decisive victory that took place in Christ (see esp. 5:24!). The Christian is an eschatological (end-times) person! As Paul will write in 2 Cor 10:2–3: we may yet be “in the flesh,” but we do not wage our battle “according to the flesh.” The Christian battles with the power of the Spirit!

Fleshly existence and “spiritual” existence therefore manifest themselves not only on an individual basis but also within the larger society. The flesh promotes strife and division between human beings even as the Spirit binds people together in unity and concord. The fruit of the Spirit strengthens the Christian community even as the works of the flesh undermine it. Paul’s vice list, “the works of the flesh” (5:19–21), includes drunkenness, disputing, and quarreling like one would find in the pagan symposia gatherings. Idolatry and sexual sin would take place in the context of the pagan temple and public cultic activities. The Spirit’s peace, on the other hand, like the other virtues in “the fruit of the Spirit” (5:22–23), expresses itself in the communal gatherings of *believers*.

Gal 5:16–26 may be outlined as follows:

- 5:16–18 The Opposition of the Spirit and the Flesh
- 5:19–21 The Works of the Flesh
- 5:22–23 The Fruit of the Spirit

- 5:24–26 Conclusion and Admonitions (Indicative and Imperatives)
 Those in Christ “crucified” the flesh (indicative, 5:24)
 Let us follow the Spirit (hortatory subjunctive functioning as an imperative, 5:25)
 Let us avoid provoking one another (hortatory subjunctive functioning as an imperative, 5:26)

The contrast between “the works of the flesh” listed in 5:19–21 and “the fruit of the Spirit” in 5:22–23 dominates this section of the letter. Lists of vices and virtues would have been very familiar to Paul’s audiences. Plato (427–347 BC) extolled the four virtues of wisdom, bravery, sobriety, and justice (or loftiness of soul) (*Resp.* 4.427E; 7.536A; *Leg.* 12.963C). Aristotle (384–322 BC) developed Plato’s list of virtues even further (*Rhet.* 1.6.6–16 [1362b]; 1.9.4–13 [1366b]), especially in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. The Stoic philosophers adopted and popularized these lists. Even the Jews had their lists of virtues and vices.¹⁸ The Dead Sea Scrolls’ *Community Rule* (1QS) from Qumran refers to two spirits, the spirit of truth and the spirit of perversity, along with their corresponding virtues and vices (1QS III.25–IV.25, esp. 1QS IV.3, 9, 21, 23; see also the vice list in *T. Ash.* 2.5–8). The late first-century Christians maintained the “two ways” teaching (*Did.* 1–5; *Barn.* 19–20; *Herm. Mand.* 6.2).

Scholars have wondered whether Paul is more indebted to the Jewish “two ways” tradition (cf. Ps 1:6) or to the Greek tradition. Paul does not use the term “two ways” or employ the distinctive language that one finds at Qumran (in 1QS IV). On the other hand, six of the nine fruit of the Spirit in Galatians are also in 1QS IV: “gentleness,” “patience,” “goodness,” “kindness,” “faith,” “peace.” The lists of *both* virtues and vices that one finds in Second Temple literature are rare in non-Jewish circles (with the exception of Aristotle). Paul also differs from the Greek Stoics in tracing virtue not to knowledge but rather to the Spirit, and that Spirit must be understood within a peculiarly Jewish eschatological context (5:21). This Jewish apostle is describing the results of a cosmic battle between the present, evil age and the dawning new creation in Christ, and one of these parties is clearly the victor! (CC)

The Opposition of the Spirit and the Flesh (5:16–18) (CC)

5:16 περιπατεῖτε (“walk”)—The present imperative could also be translated as “keep walking”; likewise the present hortatory subjunctive στοιχῶμεν (“let us walk”) in 5:25 could be “let us keep on walking.” (CC)

But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not satisfy the desire of the flesh. Paul signals the beginning of a new paragraph with “but I say” (λέγω δέ) language that draws the audience’s attention to a key affirmation (cf. “I say” in 3:17; 4:1; 5:2; 1 Cor 10:29). Paul is offering an alternative to 5:15’s biting and devouring and consuming. Those who walk by the Spirit will not engage in such behavior. Paul is also proffering the Spirit as the solution to the supposed dangers of a “Law-less” existence (5:13). When Paul writes of walking by or according to the Spirit, he is likely echoing the OT phraseology “walk according to the Law/the LORD’s statutes” (e.g., Ex 16:4; Lev 18:4; Jer 44:23; Ezek 5:6–7). Life in the Spirit remains a “walk,” but that walk is decidedly not a life lived under the Mosaic Law. The Spirit empowers a genuine love in believers that fulfills the Law (Gal 5:14; cf. Rom 13:10). Indeed, this walk by the Spirit is the only means by which the Law’s admonition to love can ever be fulfilled. The Spirit counters the desire of the flesh in a way that the Law never could. The supremacy of the Spirit dominates the section that follows (including 5:17, which grounds this verse). The Galatians had begun their Christian existence with the Spirit (3:3, 14); they had become God’s sons by virtue of the Spirit (4:6). Now they must *live* by the Spirit! (CC)

Lenski chided the majority of commentators and translators of his day for not recognizing that the anarthrous “spirit” (πνεῦμα) in 5:16 is qualitative (in his opinion) and does not refer to God’s Spirit. Lenski explained that when Paul is writing of God’s Spirit, the apostle clearly indicates it by a genitival construction in the context: “God’s Spirit,” “Christ’s Spirit.” Such markers are absent in 5:16. The

subsequent articular instances of “the spirit” (τὸ πνεῦμα, Gal 5:17 [twice], 22) should be classified as articles of “previous reference”: so if the initial “spirit” (5:16) refers to the human spirit, then the articular instances of “the spirit” that follow must likewise be referring to the human spirit. Lenski understood Paul to be contrasting the old nature versus the new nature/spirit. Lenski’s thesis remains problematic since Paul’s attention throughout the letter has been riveted on God’s own Spirit. In 4:6 God sends “the Spirit of his Son” by which the Galatians can now address God as Father. The Spirit’s coming fulfills the “promise” of 3:14, a verse which itself grounds the Galatians’ experience of the Spirit in 3:2; Gal 4:6 also explains how gentile believers, as adopted children, have received the inheritance of Abraham in 3:29. When Paul writes of being born “according to/as a result of the Spirit” as opposed to being born “according to/as a result of the flesh” in 4:21–31 (see esp. 4:29), he has not suddenly changed the referent for the “Spirit” (πνεῦμα). Lenski’s discussion, while interesting, does not overturn the consensus of Galatians commentators through the years. What ultimately concerned Lenski about the consensus reading of 5:16 (“Spirit”) was that Christians seem to be *using* God’s Spirit (“by the Spirit,” πνεύματι, a dative of means). Lenski’s formulation of the problem is overly crass. Paul admonishes believers in Christ to *apply themselves* in drawing on the Spirit’s power. The Spirit takes the lead in the Christian walk and provides the empowerment, but the Christian must determine to follow the Spirit’s leading (so also 5:25). Paul’s concerns for the sanctified Christian life must be reflected in the church’s preaching and teaching. The indicative of Christ’s completed work along with the Spirit’s adoption always ground the subsequent imperative, but the exhortation to act *must* follow. Such action is ultimately an expression of Christian identity! (CC)

“Desire” (ἐπιθυμία), a word that is neutral in itself (Phil 1:23; 1 Thess 2:17), is often employed in fairly negative contexts (e.g., Rom 1:24; 7:7–8; 13:14). The “desire” that Paul writes of in 5:16 is that “of the flesh,” and it is “the flesh” that colors every aspect of how that desire should be understood. Paul’s use of the singular “*desire* of the flesh” is striking, as if desire is the central characteristic of an almost personified flesh: “the *desiring* flesh” (cf. the plural “desires” in 5:24)—a single, active, powerful force. The “*desiring* flesh” will not be allowed to take control! Those who walk by the Spirit will “certainly not” satisfy the desire of the flesh. Paul’s double negative construction (οὐ μὴ with an aorist subjunctive) is emphatic, “the most definite form of negation regarding the future.” The result is assured, as assured as the very Spirit at work in the lives of those in Christ. Since this verse points to an assured result in the future, the verb “satisfy” (τελέσητε, subjunctive) is probably an “indicative,” that is, a state of affairs that already exists, and not an “imperative” or command. In the three other instances (apart from Scriptural quotations) where Paul uses “certainly not” (οὐ μὴ) followed by the aorist subjunctive verb (1 Cor 8:13; 1 Thess 4:15; 5:3), he is making a negative assertion and not a command. The believer therefore has a power available in the Spirit to combat fleshly desire and to prevent that desire from coming to fruition. The Galatians had begun in the Spirit but are now in danger of “ending” or “completing” in the flesh (ἐπιτελειῖσθε, 3:3). A return to the Spirit’s guidance, with which they began, will foil the flesh from “completing” (ἐπιτελειῖσθε, 3:3) or “satisfying” (τελέσητε, 5:16) what it desires. (Note the verbal connection between τελέω, *teleō*, “satisfy,” in 5:16 and ἐπιτελέω, *epiteleō*, “end, complete,” in 3:3.) (CC)

Christians will still sin (thus 6:1), but they will not live their lives from the vantage point of an age that is passing away. The Christian walk is always directed *forward*, that is, toward the full dawning of the “new creation” (6:15; cf. “running” in 5:7). That age is already exerting itself in the present. “Spirit people” simply march to a different drummer, and their behavior represents a decided break from their non-Christian, flesh-driven pasts. Paul expresses walking by the Spirit in 5:16 as being led by the Spirit in 5:18. In 5:25a Paul speaks of living by the Spirit and in 5:25b of keeping in step with the Spirit. The Spirit impels action, motion forward! (CC)

live by.† Present tense of the imperative mood—“go on living” (used of habitual conduct). Living by the promptings and power of the Spirit is the key to conquering sinful desires (see v. 25; Ro 8:2–4). (CSB)

Look at how Paul begins in Verse 16 of this second section of this pastoral, very pastoral part of Chapter 5. He says in Verse 16: But I say -- and I'm going to translate this literally because I love the word -- walk around in the Spirit. And so do not bring to completion the impulsive desires of the flesh. Now, I've taken a little liberty there with that word. We would have simply translated that as desires. But it's impulsive desires. It's a desire that we cannot help. And what he's saying is daily conduct in the Galatian congregation, in a Christian congregation, that is formed in Christ by his Spirit is a community in which the Spirit reigns. Because of the divine invasion, this Apocalyptic invasion of the son into the cosmos in the incarnation and his Spirit that comes along with him and now reigns in the church by which he is present in the church. (Just – V-39)

That is what constitutes the Christian community. And so if you are -- if you are walking in the Spirit and you are -- this is -- you know this is how you have to translate this -- walk around in the Spirit. And you are. Then you will not -- you will not bring to completion the impulsive desire of the flesh. Now, that's hard for us. Because we do. We do sin. The impulsive desire of the flesh sometimes gets a hold of us. And when that happens to a Christian, it's always a great tragedy. Paul is going to actually refer to this in the next chapter. So we'll wait for him to talk about what happens when the impulsive desire of the flesh breaks out in a Christian community. But here he's talking in general terms. Walk around in the Spirit and so do not bring to completion the impulsive desire of the flesh. (Just – V-39)

5:17 ταῦτα γάρ (“for these”)— $\text{B}^46 \text{K}^* \text{B D}^* \text{F G 33}$. The alternative reading, ταῦτα δέ (“but these” or “and these”), is in $^2\text{X A C D}^2 \Psi 0122$ Byzantine syr^b. The original text describes a battle between God’s Spirit and the flesh. The scribal change was probably a result of a misunderstanding of the text as describing an internal struggle between the individual’s own “flesh” and “spirit. (CC)

For the flesh desires [what is] contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit [desires what is] contrary to the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another in order that you do not do the things you want. Gal 5:17 explains why (“for,” γάρ) walking by the Spirit excludes the desire of the flesh (5:16): the two forces are fundamentally opposed to each other. Paul does not envision a matter of sheer willpower. Two opposing powers are active and doing battle (“for these are in opposition to one another,” ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται), and the Christian is caught up in that struggle. The syntactical relationship between 5:16 and 5:17 (γάρ) requires that the positive emphasis on the Spirit in 5:16 be *maintained* in 5:17, or else 5:17 would no longer serve as support for 5:16. Paul does not envision the flesh frustrating the Spirit or some sort of stalemate between the Spirit and the flesh. Paul does not envision helplessness or frustration on the part of the Christian. The opposition of the Spirit and the flesh means that the desire of the flesh is *foiled*. (CC)

Does “what you want” at the end of 5:17 express positive intentions, negative intentions, or indeterminate intentions? As a related issue, does the final clause express purpose or result—“*in order that* you do not do the things you want” or “*with the result that* you do not do the things you want”? Six interpretive options have been proposed. (CC)

One possibility is that “what you want” refers to *both* what the flesh desires *and* what the Spirit desires, even as both the Spirit and the flesh serve as the subjects of the preceding, parallel clauses. In this case, the flesh desires contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit desires contrary to the flesh, with the result that (or in order that) you do not do the things you want—whether according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. This approach suggests a parity or stalemate in the battle between the flesh and the Spirit. This interpretation should be rejected, since 5:17 so understood would hardly provide a supporting reason for 5:16’s affirmation that walking by the Spirit will defeat the desire of the flesh. Why bother to walk by the Spirit if the flesh will nevertheless defeat the Spirit? The Spirit would not be an effective counter to the flesh. The Spirit would be no more effective than Moses’ Law.³⁶ Paul never entertains a stalemate in the battle against the flesh. The Spirit will bear his fruit; those in Christ “*crucified*” the flesh (5:22–24). (CC)

A second possibility is that “what you want” does not refer to both Spirit- and flesh-prompted desires but only to Spirit-prompted desires. Such praiseworthy willing (“what you want”) would parallel the positive desires (“what I want,” ὃ θέλω) in Rom 7:15, desires which are hindered by the flesh. So the flesh hinders what “you” (by the Spirit) want. Again, the Galatian context simply does not support an approach in which the flesh successfully hinders the Spirit. If that were the case, the Galatians would do just as well under the Law. Paul would be undermining his own case for a Spirit-empowered existence.³⁸ The apostle never hints that he is speaking of an “immature” or inadequately empowered Christian. *All* who believe in Christ enjoy the Spirit of the Son (4:6)! (CC)

A third possibility would take “what you want” as referring to the flesh’s nefarious desires: the Spirit prevents the Christian from following through on “what you want” according to the flesh. This approach may be commended for its recognition of the Spirit’s fruitful empowerment in this context. J. Louis Martyn, however, has questioned this approach since 5:18 expresses the Spirit’s positive activity *in contrast to* (“but,” δέ, 5:18) the opposition of flesh and Spirit in 5:17. Paul appears, for Martyn, to be counteracting some sort of failure at the end of 5:17. Martyn’s objection is not decisive since Paul may be positing the Spirit’s leading in 5:18 in contrast only to the flesh’s *foiled* opposition in 5:17. A more fundamental weakness of this third possibility (“what you want” = fleshly desires) is that it ignores the parallelism in the first part of 5:17: Paul says that the Spirit opposes the flesh, *and* the flesh opposes the Spirit. They oppose *each other*. Why should “what you want” be limited only to fleshly desires? This parallelism is precisely why so many interpreters gravitate toward the first position in which “what you want” may be the desires of both the flesh and the Spirit—a position that has already proved problematic. Is there a solution to this apparent impasse? Two of three remaining interpretations may resolve the challenges posed by this verse. (CC)

J. Louis Martyn proposed a fourth interpretation by seizing on the corporate elements in Galatians 5: the “you” (Greek plural) in “what you want” refers to the Galatians not primarily as individuals but as a divided *community*. Some are following the rival teachers and others are following the Spirit. This conflict has, for Martyn, resulted in their biting and devouring each other (5:15). The failure to do “what you want” refers to the dissension within their gatherings. Martyn concluded that this failure must be on the part of those entertaining the false teaching in the Galatians’ midst. Paul’s positive description of Spirit-inspired behavior in 5:16 applies to the *faithful* in the Galatian assemblies. While Martyn’s approach is commendable for recognizing the communal dimension of the passage, he posited a “you” that is not really “(all) you Galatians” but rather *the specific Galatians* who are yielding to the rival teachers’ influence. These are the ones who are guilty of not doing what “you” as a community want. Paul’s language (with the unqualified plural “you”) gives no hint that he is primarily addressing only a subgroup of the Galatians. (CC)

In a promising fifth approach, Ronald Lutzjens has proposed that 5:17 includes a parenthetical remark: “For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit (and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other) to prevent you from doing what you want.” This approach neatly resolves the exegetical problems posed by 5:17. Paul’s basic sentence is this: what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit to prevent you from doing what you want, that is, what you want to do in accordance with the Spirit. Paul can barely countenance the flesh’s opposition of Spirit-prompted desires without immediately qualifying in a parenthesis that the flesh’s actions are countered by the overwhelming power of the Spirit to which the Christian has immediate access. Christians have a power available to them in their ongoing personal struggle that is not accessible through the Mosaic Law. The Spirit neutralizes the flesh’s attack. Paul’s exhortations therefore assume what is genuinely possible for the Spirit-empowered Christian. (CC)

John M. G. Barclay has championed yet another viable option: Paul's opposition of Spirit and flesh does not entail equal antagonists. The Spirit simply interrupts the flesh's self-expression. The Christian will no longer do *whatever* he or she wants (cf., e.g., 1 Cor 7:24; Phil 4:11). Christian freedom will not express itself in just *any* way. The Spirit provides direction and power to live differently. One is either in the domain of the flesh or in the domain of the Spirit. The individual is caught up in an uneven apocalyptic struggle and will be on either one side or the other. Warfare inevitably excludes some options and necessitates others. Paul's comments need not imply some sort of warning against libertinism; the apostle most likely is just stating what life is like with the Spirit.⁴⁴ The believer will adopt a lifestyle that reflects the Spirit's priorities. (CC)

The promising approaches—Barclay's and Lutjens' (even Martyn's for that matter)—all recognize the decisive victory wrought by the Spirit. Paul never dreams of the flesh's stymieing the Spirit. A new age has dawned with Christ's Spirit that brings with it a decisive victory in which the Christian individual and the Christian community share. Individuals stand either on the side of the Spirit or on the side of the flesh. The two sides are utterly incompatible. (CC)

Paul reminds his hearers of the Spirit's decisive power even as he recognizes, to be sure, that the flesh determinedly persists in its failed, losing struggle against God's Spirit. The complete cessation of hostilities will only come with the full manifestation of the new creation (6:14–15). In the meanwhile, believers must continue to wage war against sin and the flesh in their personal lives as well as in their corporate communities. Paul is assuring the believer here not of an automatic triumph but of the access and availability of decisive power in the struggle. That power comes through faith's reliance upon the Spirit and a steadfast focus on Christ's victory on the cross. Paul would heartily agree with his fellow apostle: "Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 Jn 4:4). Paul considers it crucial to keep reminding his hearers of that decisive, cosmic victory wrought at Calvary (cf. Gal 3:3). That must be the constant focus. (CC)

walk by the Spirit...desires of the flesh.. See Ro 7:15–23; 1Pe 2:11. (CSB)

From the moment believers receive the Holy Spirit at Baptism, a lifelong struggle with the old Adam begins (see FC SD VI 7). (TLSB)

And here is why. Verse 17 states is very, very clearly. And I want you to see now that we have two orbs of power: Flesh and Spirit. They are at war with one another. They are fighting one another. These are two supra human Apocalyptic powers that are in this war of liberation. And I haven't used this language yet but I'm going to now. I think one of the ways Paul is portraying this war is in this way: When you're baptized, you become a foot soldier on the front line of this Apocalyptic battle. Now, oftentimes we think it's the flesh that's desiring war on the Spirit. But it's just the other way around. (Just – V-39)

It's the Spirit that's declaring war on the flesh. The flesh has it all. The flesh is in control of the world. It's having a grand time. But it's the invasion of the Son to come in and take on the flesh. It's the invasion of the Spirit into us that changes us. And we are now by the Spirit there on the front lines of the Apocalyptic war fighting that war by the Spirit in Christ, clothed in Christ, with his Apocalyptic armor on us. It's not our armor. Remember what Paul says later on: we have the breast plate of righteousness, et cetera, et cetera. You know the helmet of salvation. We're out there fighting the battle in Christ. And we're doing it because that's who we are. That's who we have become in baptism. (Just – V-39)

And so this -- I think this sense of Apocalyptic war are is very much here. And these soldiers, these Galatian soldiers would get it. They know what war is like. But this is a war unlike any war they've fought. This is a cosmic war. This is a war that Christ fought on the cross against Satan. Killed him. But he triumphed. He triumphed in his weakness just as Paul preached the Gospel in his weakness. It's

one of my favorite images from the fathers. You probably know that Christ was crucified naked on the cross. And the fathers say that they are in his nakedness, in his weakness, in his shame and humiliation, he despoiled the principalities and powers of this world. He conquered them in his nakedness. Now, that's the images Paul wants us to have in our minds as he goes forward here. (Just – V-39)

Now, look at what he says in Verse 17. He says very clearly here: For the desires of the flesh, the impulsive desires of the flesh, are against the Spirit and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. Now, see, they are at war with one another. These evil desires and the Spirit. And then he goes on: For these are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things you want to do. Now, does that sound like Romans 7? The things I don't want to do, I do and -- you know, this is Romans 7. Here Romans 7 is a sense of kind of expanding this. (Just – V-39)

Here you can see that the war between the evil desires in the flesh and the Spirit begin with the Galatian's baptism. And as I said, the Spirit is declaring war. And we are from the moment we are baptized engaged in a war that is -- that is painful. This is something that I think a lot of people don't recognize when people are newly baptized. They think that their life is going to be better. That things -- now that they are in Christ, everything is going to be good. And oftentimes and pastors I think can testify to this. When a person is baptized, all of a sudden things seem to go back for them. That Satan is out after them. And pastors and congregations need to support them fully. I mean, it is an extraordinary thing. Because once these people have been snatched out of the kingdom of Satan. He's angry. And he's going after them. And as I said, they are soldiers on the front line of the Apocalyptic war now. And Satan is there trying to win them back. So the imagery here is very, very powerful. And I think you can see that it's not -- it's not easy. We need Christ. We cannot do it on our own. And we certainly can't do it by means of our works. (Just – V-39)

5:18 *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.* The connective (δέ) that begins 5:18 may be a simple connective (“and,” or left untranslated). If a contrast is intended (“but,” as translated), the contrast need only be in relation to the flesh's attempted opposition to the Spirit in 5:17. In a first class conditional, Paul explains that “if” the Galatians are indeed led by the Spirit, then they are simply not under the Law. They have escaped bondage “under” (ὑπό) the enslaving forces of “the present evil age” (1:4; see the various ὑπό phrases in 3:23–4:10). The return in 5:18 to the Law is somewhat surprising after the previous verses' preoccupation with the flesh. Gal 5:18 is a reminder, then, that Paul's ultimate concern is with the Galatians' consideration of a Law-observant lifestyle. He is reminding the congregations that to adopt the observance of the Law is to fall back “under” a slavery to its commands. The Spirit will suffice for guidance. Note the dative of means in 5:18 (and also in 5:25): “by the Spirit.” The Spirit's leading (5:18) will *enable* the walking (5:16). In the Galatians' “Law-less” existence they will not do just *whatever* they want (5:17). At the same time, affirmations of a Spirit-led existence do not deny the validity of the Law as a norm! The issue in this section of the letter has to do with the ineffectiveness of the Law in combating the flesh. The Law simply proves to be an ally of the flesh in the present evil age because people are unable to live according to its demands. Only the Spirit can break the unholy alliance between the Law and the flesh. (CC)

walk by the Spirit. See Ro 8:14. (CSB)

Led not by coercion but by a gentle and loving grasp, as when a child puts her hand into the hand of a beloved and trusted father. (TLSB)

If you are led by the Holy Spirit, you are not under the law but rather in sync with it. Paul explains that the Christian's life will always be a pitched battle. There is an ongoing conflict between what the rebellious old Adam wants to do contrary to God's will and what the new man, guided by the Spirit, wants to do in accordance with God's will. (PBC)

the works of the flesh. Not under the bondage of trying to please God by minute observance of the law for salvation or sanctification (see note on Ro 6:14). (CSB)

Instead of controlling the flesh, the Law increases sin (Rm 5; 8). (TLSB)

Now, look at what he says in Verse 18. And here he's now -- he's now going to move forward towards the catalog of vices. If you are led by the Spirit, and you are -- you always have to add that. And you are. Then you are not under the power of the law. Now, this may not surprise you. But it does me now. Because he hasn't mentioned law up until this point. Now it's under the power of the law. Before it was flesh. But now it's law. And look at what he does then in 19: For the works of the flesh are evident. Now, these works of the flesh I'm going to get to in a minute. But before we go there, I want to make a comment about what Paul is doing. (Just – V-39)

5:19–21 For other lists of vices see 1Co 6:9–10; Eph 5:5; Rev 22:15. (CSB)

In this list of fifteen vices seven are Greek singulars: ¹⁹πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἀσέλγεια, ²⁰εἰδωλολατρία, φαρμακεία, ... ἔρις, ζῆλος, ¹⁹sexual immorality, impurity, indecency, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, ... strife, jealousy.” The eight plurals are ²⁰ἔχθραι, ... θυμοί, ἐριθείαι, διχοστασίαι, αἰρέσεις, ²¹φθόνοι, μέθαι, κῶμοι, ²⁰enmities, ... rage, selfishness, dissensions, factions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, carousing.” Scribes would often make a list uniformly singular or plural. Therefore the most difficult reading would be that which includes both singular and plural forms. Greek abstract nouns are frequently used in the plural to signify manifestations (“actions expressing”) or demonstrations of (“displays of”) the quality denoted by the singular. (CC)

Paul just explained in 5:13–18 that with the Spirit’s guidance and power, the Galatians will not engage in “biting and devouring” (5:15). Their behavior will express itself in a loving, willing enslavement to each other. The flesh, on the other hand (δέ, 5:19), works something grossly different. The phrase “the works of the flesh” is reminiscent of “the works of the Law” in 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10. Indeed, this discussion of “the works of the flesh” must be understood in view of the admonitions against circumcision and the Law throughout the letter. The ultimate test whether the Galatians are “in Christ” (e.g., 3:26) or are “under the Law” (e.g., 3:23–25; 4:21) will be whether they receive circumcision. If they receive circumcision *in their flesh*, then they will have placed themselves “under the Law.” The rivals probably advocated circumcision and the Law as the beginning of a new existence that would counteract “the works of the flesh.” “Paul’s linkage of law with flesh, as outrageous as it must have seemed to his enemies, was intended to jolt the readers into a recognition of the direction in which their thinking was moving,” the wrong way!⁴⁸ “The works of the Law” prove to be ineffectual against “the works of the flesh.” Such “works” belong to the past! (CC)

5:19–21a *Now the works of the flesh are obvious, which are sexual immorality, impurity, indecency, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, rage, selfishness, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and such things as these ...* Since English translations of the works of the flesh tend to differ, a chart may be helpful for comparison. See figure 1.

Figure 1

The Works of the Flesh (Galatians 5:19–21)						
Greek	Transliteration	Das	KJV	NRSV	HCSB	ESV
[μοιχεία	moicheia		adultery]*			
Sexual Sins	1. πορνεία	porneia	sexual	fornication	fornication	sexual

			immorality		immorality	immorality		
	2.	<i>akatharsia</i>	impurity	uncleanness	impurity	moral impurity	Impurity	
		ἀκαθαρ σία						
	3.	<i>aselgeia</i>	indecency	lasciviousness	licentiousness	promiscuity	Sensuality	
		ἀσέλγεια						
Sins against God	4.	<i>eidōlolatRIA</i>	idolatry	idolatry	idolatry	idolatry	Idolatry	
		εἰδῶλο λατρία						
	5.	<i>pharmakeia</i>	sorcery	witchcraft	sorcery	sorcery	Sorcery	
		φαρμακ εία						
Social Relational Sins	or 6.	ἔχθραι	<i>echthrai</i>	enmities	hatred	enmities	hatreds	Enmity
	7.	ἔρις	<i>eris</i>	strife	variance	strife	strife	Strife
	8.	ζῆλος	<i>zēlos</i>	jealousy	emulations	jealousy	jealousy	Jealousy
	9.	θυμοί	<i>thumoi</i>	rage	wrath	anger	outbursts	offits of anger
	10.	ἐριθειᾶι	<i>eritheiai</i>	selfishness	strife	quarrels	selfish ambitions	Rivalries
	11.		<i>dichostasiai</i>	dissensions	seditions	dissensions	dissensions	dissensions
		διχοστα σίαι						
	12.		<i>haireseis</i>	factions	heresies	factions	factions	Divisions
		αἰρέσεις						
	13.	φθόνοι	<i>phthonoi</i>	envy	envyings	envy	envy	Envy
		[φόννοι	<i>phonoι</i>		murders]*			
Sins Excess	of 14.	μέθαι	<i>methai</i>	drunkennes	drunkennes	drunkennes	drunkennes	drunkennes
				s	s	s	s	s

15. κῶμοι *kōmoi* carousing revellings carousing carousing orgies

Although “the works of the flesh” should be obvious to Paul’s audience, he nevertheless lists them. The list bears a rough shape. The first three works may, initially, seem apt for “flesh”—sexual immorality, impurity, indecency—but Paul does not list any other sins of bodily appetites or of the body itself. The majority of the “works” have nothing to do with “satisfying one’s physical desire” (cf. 5:16–17). Paul is not speaking of human flesh but rather of flesh as a power that is asserting itself over and through humanity. Sexual sins hardly exhaust the darkness in that realm. The next two—idolatry and sorcery—are primarily sins against God. The eight sins that follow manifest themselves within community relationships: enmities, strife, jealousy, rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy.⁵² The final two—drunkenness and carousing—are sins of excess. The asymmetrical, chaotic structure of the works of the flesh (3-2-8-2) contrasts with the tidier arrangement of the fruit of the Spirit (3-3-3).⁵⁴ The evil works Paul lists exemplify the chaotic and destructive self-centeredness that accompanies rebellion against God. (CC)

Since the bulk of the list—eight of the vices—refers to social or relational sins, it is difficult to escape the impression that discord characterized the Galatian churches (cf. 5:15). The sins that would express themselves in the Christian community are sandwiched between the first five and last two sins that are endemic in the wider, pagan society (temple practices and festivities).⁵⁶ Dangers lurk from both within and outside the Christian community. B. S. Easton called attention to the eight social sins in the middle of the list: enmities, strife, jealousy, rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy. Were one to remove those eight vices in the middle, the seven Greek words that remain would be characterized by euphony: πορνεία (*porneia*, “sexual immorality”), ἀκαθαρσία (*akatharsia*, “impurity”), ἀσέλγεια (*aselgeia*, “indecency”), εἰδωλολατρία (*eidōlolatria*, “idolatry”), φαρμακεία (*pharmakeia*, “sorcery”), ... μέθαι (*methai*, “drunkenness”), and κῶμοι (*kōmoi*, “carousing”). These seven remaining sins would be of action rather than of disposition; cf. Rom 1:29–31. The eight vices in the middle of the list (“enmities, strife, jealousy, rage, selfishness, dissensions, factions, envy”) are not present in the popular philosophers’ vice lists. Paul may have personally added these eight “works” to a more typical list in order to address a specific situation at Galatia. Perhaps these eight were “works” which characterized Paul’s rivals. As a means of drawing further attention to the center of his list, Paul opens and closes the list with sins that the formerly pagan Galatians could easily condemn: sexual sins, impurity, indecency, drunkenness, and carousing. Thievery, sexual immorality, anger, hatred, violence, and witchcraft were sins that the local Anatolian cults also condemned.⁶⁰ The heart of the list—the eight social sins—would probably hit home at Galatia. (CC)

1. *Porneia* (πορνεία)—sexual immorality: Throughout his letters, Paul consistently employs the noun πορνεία (*porneia*) for “sexual immorality,” whether for a man sleeping with his father’s wife (1 Cor 5:1), or in the context of lustful, gentile passion (1 Thess 4:3–5), or for sexual relations apart from a marital relationship (1 Cor 7:2: marriage is a *solution* to sexual sin). Paul uses the word in 2 Cor 12:21, as here in Gal 5:19, with impurity (ἀκαθαρσία [*akatharsia*]) and licentiousness (ἀσέλγεια [*aselgeia*]); see also Eph 4:19; 5:3; Col 3:5. Sexual sin is closely associated with idolatry in the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon (14:12–27), as is the case in sexual relations with a temple prostitute (1 Cor 6:13, 18). The prominence of “sexual immorality” (πορνεία) at the head of the works of the flesh may reflect the social acceptability and popularity of temple prostitution within the local Cybele cult of Asia Minor. On the other hand, Paul does not render a reference to cultic prostitution explicit here, and “sexual immorality” in his letters usually has little or nothing to do with temple prostitution. The sexual mores in pagan Anatolia were simply nowhere near as rigorous as in Judaism or in early Christianity; sexual sin was rampant in the

Galatians' world, even as it is today.⁶⁴ For Paul, such “works of the flesh” characterized the Galatians' former lives. (CC)

2. *Akatharsia* (ἀκαθαρσία)—impurity: In the immediate context of “sexual immorality” (πορνεία), this word refers not to ritual uncleanness (as it could in other contexts) but rather to moral laxity or “impurity.” Paul uses this word as the opposite of the “holiness” to which God has called believers (1 Thess 4:7). The word functions as a near synonym of “sexual immorality” (πορνεία) in Rom 1:24 and 2 Cor 12:21. Sexual sin is therefore a particularly egregious work of the flesh. (CC)

3. *Aselgeia* (ἀσέλγεια)—indecenty: The third “work,” although notoriously difficult to define, must be understood in connection with the first two sexual sins as nearly synonymous (thus 2 Cor 12:21). The word appears to indicate some sort of sexual misconduct and so is translated here as “indecenty.” Some translate the word as “licentiousness” or “debauchery” or “sensuality.” Josephus uses this Greek word for a woman exhibiting herself before a man (*J.W.* 1.22.3 § 439), for “women’s wantonness” (γυναικῶν ἀσελγείας, *J.W.* 2.8.2 § 121 [Thackeray, LCL]), for drunk men imitating women’s dress and engaged in passions, and for pollution with foul deeds (*J.W.* 4.9.10 § 562). In Rom 13:13 Paul uses “indecenty” in connection with “carousing and drunkenness” (κῶμοις καὶ μέθαις), and Paul will close the list of the works of the flesh with those same two vices (in reverse order: μέθαι, κῶμοι, Gal 5:21). As many younger adults can attest, alcoholic parties regularly lead to indecenty and sin. Believers in Christ as children of the light (the language of 1 Thess 5:5) will avoid dangerous social events where drunkenness leads to sexual indecenty. (CC)

4. *Eidōlōlatría* (εἰδωλολατρία)—idolatry: This “work” is related to the following work, *pharmakeia* (φαρμακεία), “sorcery.” Paul provides the earliest attestation of the word “idolatry” (εἰδωλολατρία), which apparently originated in Christian circles (see 1 Cor 5:10–11; 6:9; 10:7; Col 3:5). Idolatry may follow naturally on the heels of the various sexual immoralities listed just before since idolatry was closely associated in the ancient mind with temple prostitution. Earlier Paul was quite clear that God is *one*; there is no other (Gal 3:20). Both 1 Cor 10:14–21 and 1 Pet 4:3 identify idolatry as typically *gentile* (i.e., *non-Christian*) behavior. Those Israelites guilty of idolatry “fell” to God’s judgment (1 Cor 10:7–8). Believers should not even eat or associate with the idolater (1 Cor 5:10–11). The idolaters and the sexually immoral need to be driven out of the church for the sake of the salvation of their souls (1 Cor 5:5, 13). The church as a gathering of the holy may not tolerate such sin in its midst. Paul warns in very serious terms against the works of the flesh (see Gal 5:21). (CC)

5. *Pharmakeia* (φαρμακεία)—sorcery: When employed with “idolatry,” *pharmakeia* refers to aberrant religion, sorcery, or witchcraft. “Paul does not deny that witchcraft exists and is possible” (Luther, AE 26:190). Elsewhere in the NT this word is used only in Rev 18:23, which refers to “Babylon” (Rev 18:21) deceiving all the nations through her “sorcery.” *pharmakeia* (φαρμακεία) can also refer to the ingesting of drugs in order to induce an altered state of consciousness. Drug usage was common in witchcraft and in the administration of poison.⁷⁰ In the OT magic (occult arts including sorcery, divination, and contacting spirits) was strictly forbidden, although it was common in non-Israelite societies (Ex 22:18 [MT 22:17]; Lev 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27; Deut 18:9–14; so also Rev 9:21; 18:23). Pharaoh’s magicians and the Babylonian magicians both practiced sorcery (φαρμακεία, LXX Ex 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18; Is 47:9, 12; cf. Wis Sol 18:13), as did many Canaanites (Wis Sol 12:4). In the Jewish *Testament of Judah* 23.1–5, sexual sin, witchcraft, and idolatry prompted God to curse Israel with exile. In censuring witchcraft or “sorcery,” Anatolian inscriptions from Paul’s day give witness to the popularity of such practices. Paul therefore warns of those who cast the demonic evil eye in Gal 3:1. For the Galatians to come “under the Law” (e.g., 4:21; 5:18) would be to enter a state very much like that of their pagan, idolatrous past (“under the elements of the world,” 4:3, 9). How could Paul make what would be perceived as such an extreme equation as Law = idolatry? The Law is simply not up to the task of opposing the flesh, and so the flesh will reassert its hold

on the Galatians. Paul's warning remains relevant for any who would place their hope in Moses' Law. (CC)

6. *Echthrai* (ἔχθραι)—enmities: “Enmities” is the first of eight “works of the flesh” that express what is likely, sadly, taking place in the Galatian communities. This word (ἔχθραι) is commonly used in Classical Greek literature for enmity or hatred. The plural form (thus “enmities”) renders abstract nouns concrete by referring to repeated manifestations or demonstrations of a quality.⁷⁴ Herod and Pilate are “at enmity” with each other (Lk 23:12: ἐν ἔχθρᾳ), even as those in Herod's court experience serious enmities in their relations (Josephus, *Ant.* 16.8.2 § 239). In Eph 2:14, 16 “enmity” (ἔχθρα) stands between Jew and gentile. A substantival form of the cognate adjective (ἐχθροί, “enemies”) describes the relationship between lost humanity and God (Rom 5:10). James 4:4 describes that same hostility or enmity toward God with the noun. The ancients considered “enmity” (ἔχθρα) the opposite of “friendship” (φιλία). The rivals wish for Paul to be deemed an “enemy” (ἐχθρός, 4:16). For Paul, such “enmities” characterize those given to “the works of the flesh.” Those given to “enmities” are at odds not only with other people but also with God. Perhaps that would explain why “enmities” follows immediately after “sorcery.” Magical spells frequently cursed people with “enmity” (ἔχθρα). (CC)

7. *Eris* (ἔρις)—strife: The Greek word refers to strife, discord, or contentious quarreling and is limited in the NT to Pauline literature (e.g., 2 Cor 12:20 [with ζῆλος, “jealousy,” as in Gal 5:20]; Phil 1:15; 1 Tim 6:4; Titus 3:9). Paul refers to strife in Rom 1:29 in a context in which idolatrous people hate God and applaud evil. He adds in the context of Rom 13:13 that such behavior characterizes “the works of darkness,” whereas Christ's own put on “the armor of light” (Rom 13:12). Such strife, in the context of a Christian community behaving in a fleshly manner (1 Cor 1:11; 3:3), motivated the entire letter of 1 Corinthians in response. (CC)

8. *Zēlos* (ζῆλος)—jealousy: Paul uses this word for either a positive “zeal” or a negative “jealousy” (for jealousy, see Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 3:3). “Jealousy” and “strife” are related vices according to 2 Cor 12:20, as the one likely leads to the other. Paul's being “zealous” for the Law (ζηλωτής, Gal 1:14) led him to the violent persecution of Christians, a testimony to the destructive power of a misguided ζῆλος. Outside of Paul's writings, the word may refer in a negative sense to “envy” (e.g., LXX Eccl 4:4; 9:6; James 3:14, 16) or to a quick temper or rage (e.g., Acts 5:17; 13:45; Heb 10:27; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.3.9 § 82). Paul would not deny a relationship between envy and rage, as is clear from the next work of the flesh. (CC)

9. *Thumoi* (θυμοί)—rage: This word (θυμός) refers to fits of rage or outbursts of anger in negative contexts (cf. Eph 4:31; Col 3:8). Paul refers to “rage” with “jealousy” and “strife” in 2 Cor 12:20. Such groupings offer a clue to the sins the apostle considers particularly egregious. Christian behavior expresses itself in a different demeanor than is common in the world. “Rage” is nearly synonymous with “wrath” (Rom 2:8): God expresses wrath and fury against evil. “Works of the flesh” therefore evoke an unimaginably negative response on the part of God. How such works of the flesh should be avoided! (CC)

10. *Eritheiai* (ἐριθειαι)—selfishness: Paul is the only NT author to use this word (ἐριθειά) in the plural, and he uses it to refer to repeated acts of “selfishness” or “selfish ambition.” The point is that selfishness naturally leads to dissension and factions. The term might also be translated as “self-centeredness” (2 Cor 12:20; contrast other-centered ἀγαθωσύνη, “goodness,” in 2 Thess 1:11). In Rom 2:8 such self-centeredness evokes God's wrath and fury. Those in Christ cultivate the *other-centeredness* of Christ (Phil 2:3). Paul's own ministry for the Lord, in avoiding “self-ambition,” stems from a genuine desire to place his congregations first (thus Phil 1:17). Paul goes on in Phil 2:5–11 to describe the ultimate act of selflessness in Christ's saving work on the cross. (CC)

11. *Dichostasiai* (διχοστασία)—dissensions: This word, in the plural, can be a political term that refers to dissensions or seditions (cf. the singular usage of this word in 1 Macc 3:29). In Rom 16:17 Paul warns against those causing divisions or dissension (διχοστασία, singular) contrary to “the doctrine.” Doctrinal departures inevitably lead to dissensions within the Christian community. Paul is dealing with that very sort of problem at Galatia as the rivals have offered a fraudulent alternative “Gospel” (1:6–9). Thus all of the central eight terms in this list appear pointed toward the situation at Galatia. (CC)

12. *Haireseis* (αἱρέσεις)—factions: This word refers to the “factions” that divide people into competing parties (see the singular in Acts 5:17; 15:5; 24:5, 14; 26:5, and the plural in 1 Cor 11:19; 2 Pet 2:1). Paul wrote an entire letter to combat the factions (αἱρέσεις) at Corinth (1 Cor 11:19; cf. 1 Cor 1:10). Were not Paul’s rivals at Galatia, in effect, creating a Law-oriented faction at Galatia?⁸⁰ The placement of “factions” immediately after “dissensions” suggests some overlap or synonymy in meaning. (CC)

13. *Phthonoi* (φθόνοι)—envy: This word refers, in the plural, as here, to acts of ill will, malice, or envy (cf. the singular in Mt 27:18; Mk 15:10; Rom 1:29; Phil 1:15; 1 Tim 6:4). “Envy” is the predominant NT usage. This term may be reserved for last in the eight social sins as a means of emphasizing the root cause of the Galatians’ divisions and factions.⁸¹ Paul signals the pivotal importance of this particular work of the flesh by using the cognate verb in 5:26 at the conclusion of the section (5:16–26). The eight divisive works in the middle of the list (nos. 6–13) all stem from a sinful preoccupation with the self. (CC)

14. *Methai* (μέθαι)—drunkenness: The last two sins in the list (nos. 14–15) form their own subset as they manifest themselves primarily in the Galatians’ interactions with the pagan world. The word μέθαι (the plural of μέθη) refers to “drunkenness” or regular bouts of excessive drinking (the plural is also used in Rom 13:13 [with κῶμος, *kōmos*, as here]); cf. Lk 21:34; 1 Cor 5:11; 6:10; 1 Thess 5:7). The symposia that took place in homes and at pagan temple feasts provided regular opportunities for drunkenness. Paul found himself frustrated with the way the Corinthians had turned their communal meals and celebrations of the Lord’s Supper into occasions for the supposedly “spiritual” to get drunk (1 Cor 11:21)! That Paul has in mind such social occasions for drunkenness is clear from the immediately following Greek word κῶμοι (*kōmoi*). (CC)

15. *Kōmoi* (κῶμοι)—carousing: Examples of “carousing” in antiquity would include the excessive feasts and orgies that took place in the context of the festivals to pagan gods such as Dionysus or Bacchus (Wis Sol 14:23; 2 Macc 6:4; 1 Pet 4:3). Such carousing is a work of the flesh, but also of the darkness in Rom 13:13, whereas believers live honorably in “the day” wearing “the armor of light” (Rom 13:12). Drunkenness and the Spirit’s filling are mutually exclusive (Eph 5:18). The Galatians are in danger of creating a social setting much like the one they left behind. They must leave such sins in their past! (CC)

Paul’s list of “the works of the flesh” (Gal 5:19–21) is by no means exhaustive, as is clear from his closing with “and such things as these” (καὶ τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις). The multiple “works” (τὰ ἔργα, 5:19) form a fitting contrast to the single “fruit” (καρπός, 5:22) of the Spirit. Even as the plural “works” divide the community, the single “fruit” of the Spirit serves to unite the community. One cannot make too much of this contrast, however, since “fruit” (καρπός) can function in Greek, as in English, as a collective singular noun (e.g., “apples are the fruit in the basket”). Nevertheless, the distinction between unity and division is quite clear from the context. Oneness has also been a major motif in Galatians (3:16, 28). The Spirit brings the baptized community into a oneness in Christ that transcends ethnic, gender, or social differences (3:27–29). (CC)

Paul names 15 crass sins and ends the series by adding “and the like.” He could no doubt have named more. And for that matter, a shorter list would have been just as incriminating. The point is that nothing good comes from our old, sinful nature. (PBC)

A careful look at the placement of semicolons in the NIV translation indicates that the translators have attempted to group the vices. Sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery” are sins against the Sixth Commandment. “Idolatry and witchcraft” are infractions of the First and Second Commandments. “Hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy” are sins against the neighbor, essentially breaking the Fifth Commandment. “Drunkenness” and “orgies” lump together all manner of intemperance. (PBC)

It is important to keep in mind that Christ died also for sins like those on Paul’s list. The apostle is not saying they are unforgivable. After all, in their pagan past the Galatians had done all of them. Paul previously had to preach against such wickedness in their lives. Forgiven of their past, the Galatians, however, dare not blithely return to their pet sins. They know from Paul’s gospel that God’s Son came down from heaven to give his life as a ransom for sin. If God is that serious about sin, how can the Galatians, or we, carelessly continue in a sinful lifestyle? That would be a contradiction in terms. (PBC)

Paul is not speaking of individual lapses into sin that the Christian repents of and receives forgiveness for. Paul is speaking of a pattern, a consistent and persistent lifestyle. The original Greek makes that plain. Literally Paul says, “Those continuing to do things of that sort will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (PBC)

Germany and Ascension Day and men’s drunkenness – NO Mardi Gras

5:19 ἅτινα (“which [things]”)—In Koine Greek the plural ἅτινα (a compound neuter plural relative pronoun from ὅστις) had come to take the place of the simple neuter plural relative pronoun ἃ (“which [things]”), used in 5:17, 21.

[μοιχεία,] πορνεία (“[adultery,] sexual immorality”)—Several ancient sources (²κ D Byzantine it syr^h Irenaeus^{lat} Ambrosiaster) begin the vice list by adding μοιχεία (“adultery”) before πορνεία (“sexual immorality”). F and G add the plural μοιχεῖαι (“adulteries”). These additions may be an attempt to harmonize the list with the corresponding vice lists in Mt 15:19 || Mk 7:21–22, which have *both* μοιχεῖαι (“adulteries”) *and* πορνεῖαι (“sexual immoralities”); cf. the vice list without either in Rom 1:29–31. (CC)

works of the flesh are evident – This passage is rather similar to the statement of Christ (Matt. 7:16–17): “You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit.” (Luther)

Paul’s list of the flesh’s deeds begins with three descriptions of sexual sin, signaling their prominence in society. *works*. The same term as in “works of the Law” (2:16; 3:2, 5, 10). (TLSB)

5:20 ἔρις (“strife”)—Several sources have the plural ἔρεις (C D¹ F G Ψ Byzantine it vg syr^h cop Marcion Clement Epiphanius Irenaeus^{lat}).

ζῆλος (“jealousy”)—This is the reading of B D* P 33 sy^p. The alternative reading, ζηλοῖ (“jealousies”), is in κ C D¹ (F G) Ψ Byzantine syr^h cop. The variant helps harmonize the second half of the list into uniformly plural nouns. (CC)

sorcery – Among the works of the flesh Paul numbers sorcery, which, as everyone knows, is not a work caused by the desires of the flesh but is an abuse or imitation of idolatry. Witchcraft makes a pact with demons, while superstition or idolatry makes a pact with God, though with a false god rather than the true God. Thus idolatry is really spiritual sorcery. For just as witches cast spells upon cattle and people, so idolaters, that is, all self-righteous men, would like to cast a spell upon God, to make Him the way they imagine Him in their ideas; that is, they do not want Him to justify us by mere grace and faith in Christ but to regard their acts of worship and self-chosen works and to grant them righteousness and

eternal life on account of these. But they are actually casting a spell upon themselves rather than upon God; for if they persist in this wicked notion of theirs about God, they will die in their idolatry and will be damned. Most of the works of the flesh are sufficiently well known not to require any explanation. (Luther)

divisions... envy. Of the 15 sins listed in vv 19–21, eight share a common feature: they are behaviors that disrupt Christian fellowship. (TLSB)

5:21 φθόνοι (a plural noun; “envy”)—This word alone (without φόνοι) is the reading of Ɔ46 Ɔ B 33 cop^{sa} Marcion^E Clement Origen Irenaeus^{lat} Augustine. A C D F G Byzantine it vg cop^{bo} support the assonant phrase φθόνοι φόνοι, *phthonoi phonoi* (“envies [and] murders”). The addition of φόνοι may be an attempt to harmonize the list with φθόνου φόνου (“envy, murder”) in Rom 1:29. Jerome has only fifteen items in Paul’s list of “the works of the flesh,” and not the sixteen as required by the addition of “murders” in the variant. *Phthnoi phonoi* was a common wordplay in antiquity and could easily have crept into the text.

καθώς (“just as”)—This adverb alone (without καί following) is the reading of Ɔ46 Ɔ* B F G cop^{sa}. Several sources (2Ɔ A C D Byzantine Marcion^E Irenaeus^{lat} Clement Ambrosiaster) add καί (“even”), which, if original, would result in the more forceful translation “I am warning you, *just as I also* said before.”

ἃ (“concerning which [things]”)—The neuter plural relative pronoun is likely accusative and anticipates the clause introduced by ὅτι, namely, ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν (“that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God”).

οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν (“will not inherit”)—Porter has highlighted the lack of any firm contextual indication of temporal implicature in translating this negated future tense verb as “cannot expect to inherit” instead of “will not inherit.” Paul in his writings speaks of the kingdom of God as manifesting itself both now (with the present tense) and with an aspect that is “not yet” (with the future tense).¹⁰ This future tense verb is translated with temporal implicature (“will not ...”) in view of Paul’s perspective on the kingdom of God. (CC)

Paul concludes the vice list by saying “*concerning which [works of the flesh] I am warning you, just as I said before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*” Most commentators opt to translate the initial verb (προλέγω) “tell in advance,” but the context of this passage is a warning that those characterized by such evil works will certainly not inherit the kingdom of God—thus “*I am warning you.*” Both possible meanings of the verb are attested elsewhere in Paul, “tell in advance” in Rom 9:29 and 1 Thess 3:4, and “warn” in 2 Cor 13:2. The words “just as I said before” indicate that when Paul had been among the Galatians he left them with at least *some* practical ethical instruction even if he refused to offer the sort of concrete code that the rival teachers were promoting in Moses’ Law. (CC)

Paul warns in 5:21 against “doing” such things (present participle). Paul is not talking about, for instance, a single outburst of anger but rather an ongoing, characteristic pattern of behavior. Those who refuse to live as Christians will not inherit the kingdom of God. For Paul, the kingdom of God is a present reality (Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20; Col 1:13; 4:11; 1 Thess 2:11–12; 2 Thess 1:5) as well as a future reality (1 Cor 6:9–10; 15:24, 50; 2 Tim 4:1, 18). The kingdom is both now and not yet. When Paul employs the future tense as in Gal 5:21 (“will ...”), he is explaining that when the kingdom of God manifests itself fully on earth—when Christ returns—those who do such “works” (5:19) will be left out. They have cut themselves off from Christ (5:4) and “will not inherit the kingdom of God” (5:21). This warning is particularly serious after Paul has just detailed at length how the Galatians came to share in that promised inheritance (3:8, 16–18; 4:1–7, 22–31). The rivals had emphasized, as Jewish teachers would, that one must become an heir of Abraham through circumcision. Paul counters that faith in Christ, apart from the rite of circumcision, is sufficient to enjoy those promises. An inheritance is a gift!⁸⁶ Thanks to the Spirit of the Son (4:6), the Galatians have been made coheirs of what God promised through Abraham. “God’s

kingdom” (βασιλείαν θεοῦ, 5:21; note the possessive genitive) is a kingdom in which those in Christ share. That wonderful new reality stands in jeopardy if the Galatians hand themselves over to the flesh and its works. (CC)

Some people in Lutheran circles like to bandy about the popular slogan “sin boldly.” One may certainly “sin boldly,” but let such a one be properly forewarned that those who enjoy the life of sin will by no means inherit the kingdom of God. Those who are one with their Lord and Savior live like their Lord and Savior (2:19–20)! Those who revel in behaving otherwise betray their destiny. (CC)

things like these. Not an exhaustive list. (TLSB)

warned you before. Paul repeats this teaching from catechesis or an earlier Letter. (TLSB)

will not inherit the kingdom of God – Paul says in Verse 21 -- and this is how he summarizes it -- I warn you as I warned you before that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Those who engage in this regular practice of these outbursts of sin will not inherit the kingdom of God. Now, that's very, very unusual language for Paul. First time he's used kingdom of God. It's not a popular expression in Paul's writings. It's not a common one I should say. That's the language of Jesus. And that somewhat surprises us here because we don't expect it. It comes unexpectedly. And it shows us that what Paul is doing here is he's talking about a reference here to the teaching of Jesus. And all the parables about the kingdom, all of the things about the kingdom are being expressed here by this reference. (Just – V-39)

Cf 1Co 6:9–10; Eph 5:5. Reveals the purpose of the list in vv 19–21. Persons engaged in such a pattern of behavior reap eternal consequences (exclusion from God's heavenly kingdom). “Those who walk according to the flesh [Galatians 5:19–21] retain neither faith nor righteousness” (Ap V 227). (TLSB)

5:22–23† For other lists of virtues see 2Co 6:6; Eph 4:2; 5:9; Col 3:12–15. Christian character is produced by the Holy Spirit, not by the mere moral discipline of trying to live by law. Paul makes it clear that justification through faith does not result in libertinism. The indwelling Holy Spirit produces faith and Christian virtues in the believer's life. (CSB)

The Fruit of the Spirit (5:22–23)

5:22–23a *The fruit of the Spirit, however, is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.* The prophets of old had lamented the failure of Israel to bear fruit (see especially Isaiah's “song of the vineyard” in Is 5:1–7). The prophets looked forward to the day when that would change.^a In an end-time transformation, God's Spirit would be poured out into the hearts and lives of his people, and they would finally be fruitful (Is 32:15–16; Joel 2:18–32 [MT 2:18–3:5]; cf. 1QS IV.3–11). One of these prophetic texts bears some verbal similarities to Gal 5:22–23 with its list of the fruit of the Spirit. Is 57:15–19 (cf. Is 32:16–18) combines the notions of “spirit” and “fruit” along with “joy,” “peace,” “patience,” and the Spirit's resurrection life. If Paul is alluding to Isaiah 57, then the promise of a renewed land of Israel with its fruitful people is now being realized rather unexpectedly in the *gentile* Galatian Christians! (CC)

The long-awaited age has finally dawned with the gift of God's Spirit. The apostle may have drawn on such OT passages when he coined the phrase “the fruit of the Spirit.”⁹² In this new age Christians have, like Christ, experienced a crucifixion. They crucified the flesh with its evil desires (5:24). Now they love their neighbors (5:14) even as Christ loved them (2:20). They manifest the fruit of Christ's Spirit (4:6; 5:22–23), a fruit that leads to self-sacrifice rather than the selfish, divisive “works of the flesh” (5:19–21). This is a *single* fruit that does not come piecemeal. Whereas “the works of the flesh” form rather chaotic

subdivisions (3-2-8-2 or 3-2-4-4-2), the fruit of the Spirit may be subdivided into three groups of three (3-3-3). Order replaces chaos. Furthermore, “fruit,” unlike “works,” places the stress on God’s activity and empowerment. The noun “Spirit” in “the fruit of the Spirit” is a genitive of *source*! Paul is not referring to a list of mere behavioral qualities. The Spirit creates a genuinely different person on the model of Christ himself! See figure 2. (CC)

1. *Agapē* (ἀγάπη)—love: Throughout his letters Paul uses the noun “love” (ἀγάπη) seventy-five times and the corresponding verb “to love” (ἀγαπάω) thirty-four times. He mentions love more than any other NT author apart from the Johannine writings. How fitting, then, that he should begin the list of the Spirit’s fruit with “love.” Perhaps the varied aspects of the Spirit’s single fruit are all ultimately manifestations of love.⁹⁴ The apostle is drawing on a rich, Scriptural tradition. Love is the very word that characterizes God’s relationship to his chosen people Israel, a relationship now enjoyed by the Galatians. In 2 Cor 13:13 (ET 13:14) Paul closes the letter with a Trinitarian benediction praising “the love of God.” Nothing will be able to separate the believer from that love (Rom 8:35, 38–39). God expressed that love in sending his own Son to the cross (Rom 5:6–8), and Paul reminds the Galatian congregations of the self-sacrificial love of Christ (ἀγαπάω, Gal 2:20). The Spirit takes God’s love and pours it into the believer’s heart (Rom 5:5). (CC)

Figure 2

The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23)						
Greek	Transliteration	Das	KJV	NRSV	HCSB	ESV
1. ἀγάπη	<i>agape</i>	love	love	love	love	love
2. χαρά	<i>chara</i>	joy	joy	joy	joy	joy
3. εἰρήνη	<i>eirēnē</i>	peace	peace	peace	peace	peace
4. μακροθυμία	<i>makrothumia</i>	forbearance	longsuffering	patience	patience	patience
5. χρηστότης	<i>chrēstotēs</i>	kindness	gentleness	kindness	kindness	kindness
6. ἀγαθωσύνη	<i>agathōsunē</i>	goodness	goodness	generosity	goodness	goodness
7. πίστις	<i>pistis</i>	faithfulness	faith	faithfulness	faith	faithfulness
8. πραΰτης	<i>prautēs</i>	gentleness	meekness	gentleness	gentleness	gentleness
9. ἐγκράτεια	<i>enkrateia</i>	self-control	temperance	self-control	self-control	self-control

ἐγκράτει
α

As Luther observed, the Spirit's fruit does not consist of mere internal dispositions or warm, good feelings (AE 27:93). Even as God's love expressed itself in the selfless sacrifice of his own Son on the cross, so also genuine, sacrificial love is always other-centered. Love is the opposite of the self-gratifying sexual sin that heads Paul's works of the flesh (5:19). Lustful desires, sometimes confused with love, remain focused on self. Love counters the "enmities" (ἔχθραι, 5:20) produced by the flesh. Faith therefore works through love, and that concrete loving service toward others fulfills God's Law (Gal 5:6, 13–14). Spiritual gifts, indeed anything, would be worthless without love (1 Cor 13:1–3). "Is love something the Galatians must decide to do, or is it the natural outcome of the Spirit's presence?... The Spirit creates the condition (freedom from the law, from Sin, from the elements of the world) in which truly responsible loving action can in fact take place." Paul therefore exhorts the Spirit-filled Galatians to be loving. (CC)

In popular Christian thought, *agapē* love is of a nobler, godlier character than the other types of love expressed in the Greek language by words such as *philos* or *eros*. Unfortunately, such distinctions, despite their popularity, are on the whole artificial and misleading. The various Greek words for "love" must be considered within their own individual contexts and apart from some artificial, imposed notion about what different sorts of love "must be." The translators of the Hebrew Bible into the Greek Septuagint (LXX) certainly preferred ἀγαπάω (*agapaō*) over φιλέω (*phileō*), which was the word for love in vogue among Classical Greek authors. Does that prove that the Septuagint's translators were trying to infuse the Greek word ἀγάπη (*agapē*) with a nobler sense that would eventually lead to the NT's concept of "divine love"? No. In LXX 2 Sam 13:15, ἀγαπάω (*agapaō*) is used for *incestuous lust* in the raping of Tamar by her half-brother Amnon! In Jn 3:19 people "loved" (ἠγάπησαν [from *agapaō*]) *darkness* instead of the light. They "loved" (ἠγάπησαν [from *agapaō*]) praise from men (Jn 12:43). In 1 Jn 2:15: "Do not love [ἀγαπᾶτε (*agapaō*)] the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves [ἀγαπᾷ (*agapaō*)] the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Context must always remain the ultimate arbiter of meaning. So why did the Septuagint's translators prefer *agapaō*? Word usage changes over time. In the classical period the Greek verb κυνέω (*kuneō*) was often used for "to kiss," the verb φιλέω (*phileō*) was used for "to love," and the verb ἀγαπάω (*agapaō*) ordinarily meant something altogether different: "to be content with." Over time an evolution took place. Apparently since κυνέω (*kuneō*, "to kiss") clashed homonymically with κύω (*kuō*, "to impregnate"), κυνέω (*kuneō*) as "to kiss" fell out of usage. By the Hellenistic period, "to kiss" would be expressed instead by φιλέω (*phileō*), and ἀγαπάω (*agapaō*) came to mean "to love." The Septuagint's translators, in using ἀγαπάω (*agapaō*) for "to love," were merely reflecting the common usage of their day rather than some "noble truth" about *agapē* love. (CC)

2. *Chara* (χαρά)—joy: In the Hellenistic world "joy" was a common name for children, even as it is today. The joy the Spirit produces as fruit must be understood, as with love, in terms of God's action in Christ. Believers rejoice *in the Lord* (Rom 5:11; Phil 3:1; 4:4) since the Lord's saving work provides sure confidence about the future (Rom 5:2, 11; 12:12; Gal 5:5). Christians live and work together in joy (Rom 14:17). Paul embodied this joy as he proclaimed it to the Philippians from the darkness of prison and chains (Phil 1:15–20). Indeed, the apostle was *always* rejoicing. Whatever the circumstances, Christ's own rejoice. Joy accompanies the peace that comes in Christ (Rom 14:17; 15:13). (CC)

3. *Eirēnē* (εἰρήνη)—peace: Throughout the Hebrew Bible, God promises his people "peace," *shalom* (Num 6:22–27; 25:12–13; Is 32:17; see also 2 Macc 1:2–4). "Peace" always refers to a relationship between parties, and so those in Christ enjoy a relationship with "the God of peace" (Rom 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23; see also Rom 5:1), and that peace transcends understanding (Phil 4:7). Christians mirror the otherworldly peace of God in their relationships with each other and with outsiders (Rom 14:19). Paul therefore opens many of his letters by invoking God's peace. At the same time, such

peace must not be sought at any cost. “The God of peace” assists believers in combating those who cause divisions and offenses that are contrary to the teaching of Scripture (Rom 16:17–20). Peace also entails good order (1 Cor 14:33). “Joy” and “peace” stand together elsewhere within passages offering concrete instruction on how believers may overcome their differences to live in harmony (Rom 14:17; 15:13). The antonyms “dissensions” (διχοστασία), “factions” (αἰρέσεις), and “strife” (ἔρις, Gal 5:20) are the works of the flesh! (CC)

4. *Makrothumia* (μακροθυμία)—forbearance or patience: This word in ancient Greek literature indicated a slow fuse (e.g., Plutarch, *Luc.* 32.3; 33.1). The Jews used the word for steadfastness or longsuffering (Prov 25:15; Sirach 5:11; 1 Macc 8:4 [the Romans would remain patient or steadfast until victory]; *T. Jos.* 2.7; 17.2; 18.3; Josephus, *J.W.* 6.1.5 § 37). God patiently bears with humanity’s sins in order to allow time for repentance (Rom 2:4; 9:22). God’s forbearance—thanks to the Spirit’s influence—is then mirrored by the believer both within and beyond the community of faith (Col 3:12–13; 2 Tim 4:2). No longer will outbursts of temper or “rage” (Gal 5:20) characterize the believer. God grants the believer forbearance to endure everything (Col 1:11; 2 Tim 3:10). (CC)

5. *Chrēstotēs* (χρηστότης)—kindness: God expresses both forbearance and kindness in delaying his wrath against sin (Rom 2:4). God’s saving grace is an expression of his kindness (Eph 2:7) and the opposite of his severity (Rom 11:22). Whereas “forbearance” (μακροθυμία) is passive, “kindness” (χρηστότης) is an *active*, merciful goodness (thus Titus 3:4). The merciful kindness of believers is a mirror of God’s own kindness (Col 3:12; also Eph 4:32 [χρηστός]) as they forgive one another. Paul embodied kindness in his sufferings as a servant of God (2 Cor 6:6). The Spirit’s fruit of “kindness” (χρηστότης) counters the flesh’s “rage” (θυμοί, Gal 5:20). (CC)

6. *Agathōsunē* (ἀγαθωσύνη)—goodness or generosity: This Greek word is absent in Classical Greek literature and Josephus. Paul uses the word as nearly synonymous with “kindness,” the immediately preceding fruit of the Spirit. The word refers to a positive moral quality exhibited by believers in Rom 15:14. “Goodness” is the product of God’s light (Eph 5:9) and of faith (2 Thess 1:11). Paul uses the cognate term “good” (τὸ ἀγαθόν) in Gal 6:9–10 to expand on how goodness expresses itself in generous action toward others. That generosity contrasts with the “selfishness” (ἐριθειά, 5:20) that is the work of the flesh. (CC)

7. *Pistis* (πίστις)—faithfulness: This is the same word Paul uses for “faith.” As a *fruit* of the Spirit, Paul no doubt has in mind an active “faithfulness.” “Faithfulness,” like the other manifestations of the fruit, is an attribute of the God who remains faithful to his promises even when human beings prove to be unfaithful (Rom 3:3; 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 1:18–20; 1 Thess 5:23–24). God is faithful to his people in keeping them from tests that are beyond their strength (1 Cor 10:13). The ultimate demonstration of God’s faithfulness is his sacrifice of Christ. Paul may by this fruit have in mind the believer’s “faithful” behavior toward *others* (as in 1 Cor 4:2, 17), but the apostle does not express that notion elsewhere in the letter to the Galatians. More likely, Paul has in mind in this letter a faithful devotion to God that, in turn, leads to more of the Spirit’s fruit: faith expresses itself in (faithful) love (Gal 5:6)! (CC)

8. *Prautēs* (πραΰτης)—gentleness: The Greek philosopher Aristotle referred to “gentleness” (πραΰτης) frequently in his discussion of ethics (e.g., *Eth. nic.* 2.7.10). From an ancient perspective, “gentleness” was the proper balance between the extremes of excessive anger and the inability to be angry when it was required. Paul does not envision gentleness as a mere internal disposition or some quiet, introspective “navel-gazing” since the fruit of the Spirit is always other-centered. Christians therefore restore each other from transgression with the Spirit’s own gentleness (Gal 6:1; see the correction with “gentleness” in 1 Cor 4:21 and 2 Tim 2:25). As Paul models Christ’s own meekness and gentleness in 2 Cor 10:1, gentleness clearly includes an element of humility (see the close association of humility and gentleness in Eph 4:2). “Gentleness” is not arrogant, self-assertive, or “overly impressed by

a sense of one's self-importance" (BDAG). "Gentleness" toward others counteracts envy (φθόνοι, 5:21) or quarreling (Titus 3:2). "Gentleness" also implies self-control, the last of the Spirit's fruit. (CC)

9. *Enkrateia* (ἐγκράτεια)—self-control: The Greeks were obsessed with self-control. The classical author Xenophon traced the interest in self-control to Socrates, who introduced the concept into ethics (*Mem.* 1.5.4). Aristotle's discussions also proved influential for later authors as they stressed the need to control the passions and to resist temptation. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* includes an entire section devoted to this virtue. The search for self-control was popular among Second Temple Jews as well (e.g., 4 Macc 5:34; *Let. Aris.* 278; Josephus, *J.W.* 2.8.2 § 120). What the Greeks and Jews so earnestly sought is, ironically, the miraculous fruit of Christ's Spirit. "Self-control" will therefore remain a losing struggle for the non-Christ-believing Greeks and Jews (cf. life under the Law in Rom 7:14–25). The believer's "self-control" expresses itself in the avoidance of sexual sin either through a healthy marital relationship or through restraint in the state of singleness (1 Cor 6:12; 7:5, 9). The believer is characterized by the self-discipline of a "spiritual athlete" competing mightily in the service of the Lord (1 Cor 9:25). Even as the last two works of the flesh—"drunkenness" and "carousing" (Gal 5:21)—involve uncontrolled excess, the last two fruit of the Spirit entail the exact opposite. "Gentleness" and "self-control" curb the excesses of drunkenness and carousing that belong to the Christian's *past*. (CC)

If one wants to see a pattern, it would seem that three groups of three virtues yield a workable scheme. The first three, "love, joy, peace," are inner qualities that reflect our Christian relationship to God. The next three, "patience, kindness, goodness," show themselves in the Christian's attitude and actions toward his neighbor. The last three, "faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" reflect how the new man conduct himself in view of the duties, opportunities, and obligations that come to him in his Christian living. (PBC)

The death of Christ makes it already possible now for us to live this way in the Spirit. Now, here baptism comes right back to us. When were we co-crucified with Christ? In baptism. When did the fruits of the Spirit become ours? When we were joined with Christ in baptism. Where we suffered -- and here Romans 6 is coming in. Where we suffered with Christ, we died with him, we were buried and rose again. We rose now to a life that never ends. A life that is constituted by Christ himself. I think you can see here that love is the dominant theme of life in Christ. And as I said at the very beginning, these fruits of the Spirit are not moral imperatives. You know, kind of laws by which we live. He says very clearly: Of such things there is no law. This is being. This is identity. This is who we are in Christ. This is our character. And we bear it joyfully because Christ is in us and Christ lives through us. This is one of the great gifts that God gives us in Christ. (Just – V-39)

5:22 *fruit of the Spirit*. Compare the singular "fruit" with the plural "acts" (v. 19). (CSB)

Gk *karpos*. The harvest of a life produced and guided by the one Holy Spirit is like a cluster (singular) of grapes—in contrast to dissentious deeds (plural) of the self-indulgent life. (TLSB)

Not the difference in how Paul describes the two sets of activities. The acts of the sinful nature are things that sinful people can do by themselves. They need no help. The good things, on the other hand, are not things that come naturally. They are the fruit of the Spirit. God the Holy Spirit produces them in and through us. (PBC)

love – It would have sufficed to list only love, for this expands into all the fruit of the Spirit. Hence Paul attributes to it all the fruit that comes from the Spirit, when he says (1 Cor. 13:4): "Love is patient and kind, etc." Nevertheless, here he wanted to list it among the fruit of the Spirit and to put it in first place. Thus he wanted to exhort Christians that above all they should love one another, through love outdo one another in showing honor (Rom. 12:10), and each regard the other as more excellent than

himself—all this on account of the indwelling of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and on account of the Word, Baptism, and the other divine gifts which Christians have. (Luther)

joy – This is the voice of the Bridegroom and the bride; it means joyful thoughts about Christ, wholesome exhortations, happy songs, praise, and thanksgiving, with which godly people exhort, arouse, and refresh one another. Therefore God is repelled by sorrow of spirit; He hates sorrowful teaching and sorrowful thoughts and words, and He takes pleasure in happiness. For He came to refresh us, not to sadden us. Hence the prophets, apostles, and Christ Himself always urge, indeed command, that we rejoice and exult. Zech. 9:9: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your King comes to you.” And often in the Psalms (32:11): “Be glad in the Lord.” Paul says (Phil. 4:4): “Rejoice in the Lord always.” And Christ says (Luke 10:20): “Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” When this is a joy of the Spirit, not of the flesh, the heart rejoices inwardly through faith in Christ, because it knows for a certainty that He is our Savior and High Priest; and outwardly it demonstrates this joy in its words and actions. The faithful rejoice also when the Gospel is disseminated, and when many come to faith and thus the kingdom of Christ is increased. (Luther)

peace – Peace with both God and man, so that Christians are peaceful and quiet. They are not quarrelsome and do not hate one another but bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2) with patience; for without patience peace cannot continue, and therefore Paul places it right after peace: (Luther)

patience – Μακροθυμία. I think this means a persistent patience, by which someone not only bears adversity, insults, injury, etc., but even waits patiently for some improvement in those who have harmed him. When the devil cannot conquer the victims of his temptation by force, he conquers them by persistence. He knows that we are earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7), which cannot stand frequent and continuous blows or shocks. Thus he conquers many by his persistence. To conquer this persistence of his, in turn, there is need of endurance, which waits patiently both for the improvement of those who use force against us and for the end of the trials caused by the devil. (Lu)

kindness – Χρηστοτης. This means a gentleness and sweetness in manner and in one’s entire life. For Christians should not be harsh and morose; they should be gentle, humane, affable, courteous, people with whom others enjoy associating, people who overlook the mistakes of others or put the best construction on them, people who willingly yield to others, who bear with the recalcitrant, etc. Thus even the heathen have said: “You should know the manners of your friend, not hate them.” That is how Christ was, as can be seen throughout the Gospels. We read of St. Peter that a very great virtue, and one that is necessary in every area of life. (Luther)

goodness – This means willingly helping others in their need, being generous, and lending to them. (Luther)

faithfulness – When Paul lists “faith” here among the fruit of the Spirit, it is obvious that he means faithfulness or honesty, not faith in Christ. Hence he says in 1 Cor. 13:7 that “love believes all things.” Anyone equipped with this faith is not a suspicious person; he is a sincere one, with a simple and honest heart. Even if he is taken in and experiences something different from what he believes, he is so mild that he gladly overlooks this. Faithfulness means, then, that one man keeps faith with another in the matters that pertain to this present life. For what would this present life of ours be if one person did not believe the other person? (Luther)

5:23 ἐγκράτεια (“self-control”)—After this word D* F G it vg Irenaeus^{lat} Cyprian Ambrosiaster add “purity” (ἀγνεία) to end of the list. This addition to “the fruit of the Spirit” (5:22–23) sharpens the contrast with the sexual sins that begin “the works of the flesh” (5:19–21). The addition also reflects an ascetic emphasis among the second- and third-century Christians against the male sexual impulses. No scribe would have had reason to delete “purity” had it been part of the original list. (CC)

GENTLENESS – This is the virtue by which one is not easily provoked to anger. Innumerable occasions in this life provoke us to anger, but they are conquered by gentleness. (Luther)

SELF-CONTROL – This refers to sobriety, temperance, or moderation in every walk of life. Paul contrasts it with the works of the flesh. Therefore he wants Christians to live a chaste and sober life; not to be adulterers, immoral or lustful persons; to marry if they cannot live chastely; not to be contentious; not to go to court, etc.; not to be drunken, not to be addicted to intoxication; but to abstain from all these things. All this is included in chastity or self-control. Jerome explains it exclusively as virginity, as though married people could not be chaste or as though the apostle had written this only to virgins. In Titus 1:8 and 2:5 Paul definitely admonishes bishops and younger women, both of them married, to be chaste and pure. (Luther)

no law. See 1Ti 1:9. (CSB)

Rhetorical understatement; the fruit of the Spirit goes far beyond the Law’s requirements. “Faith must be the mother and source of works that are truly good and well pleasing to God, which God will reward in this world and in the world to come” (FC SD IV 9). (TLSB)

The Law is not opposed to such things. Paul’s concluding comment (κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος) is not without its share of difficulties. Should the preposition κατὰ be translated as “against/opposed” or “concerning/dealing with”? To what does τοιούτων refer: “such things” or “such people”? Finally, is the apostle referring to any law or to the Mosaic Law in particular? Paul’s language is nearly identical to what Aristotle expressed in his writings: κατὰ δὲ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστι νόμος (*Pol.* 3.8.2 [1284a]). Aristotle was referring to people who, because of their great virtue, live like gods among humans. Such people did not need to have their conduct regulated by the law, since they were themselves the standard by which others might measure themselves. Some have questioned whether Aristotle’s sentence should be determinative for the interpretation of Paul, especially since knowledge of Aristotle remained limited to an elite few in the first-century world. Nevertheless, to interpret Paul’s statement along the lines of Aristotle’s, those serving as the standard of conduct are the ones who possess Christ’s Spirit. As much as Paul would likely agree that the Christ-likeness of Christians should serve as a model of godly behavior, he offers absolutely no evidence that he has read Aristotle. Aristotle is probably not the best source for unraveling Paul’s difficult comment. (CC)

With respect to the preposition κατὰ: one possibility is that Paul is saying that the Mosaic Law does not deal with, concern, or discuss such moral qualities as love, joy, or peace. To say that the Law does not deal with matters such as love, however, flatly contradicts Gal 5:14’s citation of Lev 19:18. The Mosaic Law is legislation that *does* require love. Furthermore, instances in which the preposition κατὰ (*kata*) with the genitive (as here in Gal 5:23) means “concerning” are rare (in the NT only Jn 19:11; Acts 25:3; and 1 Cor 15:15, but see BDAG, A 2 b, which translates even these instances as “against”). The construction here, κατὰ with the genitive, normally means “against” (e.g., Gal 3:21), and nothing in this context would suggest otherwise: the Law is not against or opposed to such persons/things. (CC)

The context of Paul’s discussion helps resolve whether or not he is referring to the Mosaic Law in 5:23. He juxtaposes the Spirit and the Mosaic Law in 5:18 (“under the Law”) just before launching into “the works of the flesh” and “the fruit of the Spirit” (5:19–23; cf. “under the Law” in reference to the Mosaic Law in 3:23–25; 4:21). Now he closes his listing of the fruit of the Spirit with a comment about the Law. The Law and the Spirit once again stand juxtaposed in 5:22–23. In effect, 5:23 corrects a possible misinterpretation of 5:18 in which the Law and the Spirit are somehow opposed to each other since one is led by the Spirit and is not under the Law. Freedom from the Law’s bondage does not mean that the Law

no longer functions as a norm or standard; the path of the Spirit is by no means contrary to what the Law enjoins. The fruit of the Spirit will, in fact, satisfy the true intention of the Law. (CC)

As for the final conundrum in 5:23, either “such things” (neuter) or “such people” (masculine) would make sense conceptually. The Law certainly does not stand against people who express the Spirit’s fruit. Nevertheless, the immediate antecedents of the Greek “such things/people” (τῶν τοιοῦτων) are feminine in Greek (the nine fruit, ἀγάπη ... ἐγκράτεια, “love ... self control”) and do not refer to people. Referred to collectively, the nine fruit of the Spirit, although feminine singular nouns, require a neuter plural demonstrative pronoun. The translation “such things” is therefore more likely in this context. Paul certainly wrote about those people who are led by the Spirit in 5:18, but by 5:21 he is writing about “such things” (τὰ τοιαῦτα, neuter), “the works [τὰ ἔργα, neuter] of the flesh” (5:19). The nearest antecedent of “such (things/people)” (τῶν τοιοῦτων) in 5:23 would be the various “fruit of the Spirit” just listed (5:22–23a). The fact that the Law is not against “such things” implies that the list of the Spirit’s fruit is not exhaustive. Since the Law is not against “such things” of the Spirit, Paul’s otherwise surprising reference to “the Law of Christ” in 6:2 becomes comprehensible. The Law stands against sin, but the Spirit-endowed Christian produces a genuinely praiseworthy fruit. The prophets had looked forward to the day when God would write the Law on his people’s hearts (Jer 31:33) and place his Spirit within them so that they would walk in his statutes (Ezek 36:27), thus enabling a true obedience. In Christ that day has now come. Paul does not have to give the Galatians a detailed instructional manual on the Christian life, as if Moses’ Law must be replaced by another. Despite the desire of many moderns for just such a manual, that would be to repeat the Galatians’ mistake. The Spirit’s fruit will express itself in Christ-like behavior that genuinely satisfies the requirements of the Law. (CC)

Paul concluded the works of the flesh in 5:21 with “those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” He could have closed the fruit of the Spirit in 5:23 in parallel fashion: “those who do such things will inherit the kingdom of God,” but such a conclusion would imply that the kingdom of God depends on the believer’s manifesting the Spirit’s fruit. It does not. Paul traces the inheritance of the kingdom to Christ’s completed work on the cross. The Spirit conveys that inheritance to us by faith. Nevertheless, Paul will be clear very shortly that the believer actively sows to the Spirit and will reap the fruit in eternity (6:7–10). (CC)

Conclusion and Admonitions (Indicative and Imperatives; 5:24–26) (CC)

5:24 τοῦ Χριστοῦ (“of Christ”)— B^46 D F G Byzantine it vg syr all omit “Jesus.” The attestation for this reading is only slightly better than τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (“of Christ Jesus”) in K A B C P co. (CC)

Now those of Christ [Jesus] crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Gal 5:24 begins with a continuative use of δέ (“now”). If any contrast is intended, the contrast would be mild and only in relation to the Law’s potential opposition in 5:23. “Those of Christ” refers to those incorporated by faith and Baptism into Christ (3:27–29). They are now one person in Christ and belong to him. The crucified Christ lives in and through those who have “put on Christ” and have been granted his Spirit (2:19–20; 3:27; 4:6). According to 5:24, “those of Christ” *crucified* the flesh (note the aorist tense of ἐσταύρωσαν). Several commentators have argued that “crucified” is an inceptive aorist with the action continuing into the present, as is usually the case with the perfect tense. According to this understanding, Christians must continually crucify the flesh with its passions (cf. Rom 7:5). An ongoing action is not a typical use of the aorist tense, and a more likely option is available. Paul considers the believer the active agent in 5:24’s crucifying event, whereas Christians have been passively crucified with Christ in 2:19–20 and 6:14. Nevertheless, 2:19–20 provides the foundation for 5:24 by explaining that the crucified Christ now lives in the believer. The believer lives as the crucified Christ. Gal 5:24 is best understood as expressing the indicative of what the believer decisively *did* in Christ. The believer, who *crucified* the flesh, is holy. The death of the flesh is a past event. The flesh belongs to the old order that is passing away. The Christian is

no longer a slave of sin (2:17) since the decisive victory that took place at Christ's cross is also a decisive victory that took place in the life of the believer (cf. also Baptism in 3:27–28). (CC)

The modern person does not always recognize how unusual Paul's language is in 5:24. With the sole exception of the Christians, the ancients never used crucifixion as a metaphor. As Dunn explained: "Crucifixion was such a horrific punishment ... that the use of it in any kind of positive sense would probably have seemed almost obscene, 'gallows humour' of the lowest kind (contrast the negative force in the nearest parallel in Philo, *Som.* ii.213)." The only way to break the power of the flesh is to kill it! That only happens in Christ, the Crucified One. With the death of the flesh (5:24) comes life (5:25)! (CC)

crucified the flesh. See 2:20; 6:14. (CSB)

The Galatians participate in Christ's crucifixion when baptized (note past tense of "crucified"). Cf Rm 6:3–4, 10–11. Baptism entails a daily crucifixion (putting to death; cf Col 3:5) of the flesh. Luther: "The Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires" (SC, Baptism, pp xxxix–xl; see also FC SD IV 19). (TLSB)

Being baptized into Christ, we have received the crucified Christ as our Savior and Lord. Even though the sinful nature still at times leads us into sin, we can calm our troubled hearts by recalling what Jesus did for us on the cross. (LL)

5:25 πνεύματι καί ("by the Spirit ... also")—⚪ F G a b d delete καί ("also"), but the deletion is not strongly attested. Ψ and 1505, on the other hand, place the καί before πνεύματι, which creates a smoother and therefore secondary reading: "*and* let us follow the Spirit."

στοιχῶμεν ("let us walk"; lit. "let us keep in step [with]")—The same verb (στοιχέω) is used in 6:16 but translated there as "follow." (CC)

If we live by the Spirit, then by the Spirit let us also walk. The admonition in the second half of 5:25 with its cohortative subjunctive verb prevents triumphalism. Paul's confident statements in 5:16, 22–23, 24 do not imply that the fullness of the age to come has completely exerted itself. As long as the present evil age remains active and as long as the flesh seeks to regain control, the indicatives must give way to imperatives. A vicious struggle is still going on as every believer can personally attest. Nevertheless, even in 5:26 with its closing imperative (via the hortatory subjunctive), the emphasis remains on the positive, empowering action of the Spirit. Although not every first class conditional protasis expresses real circumstances, the protasis of 5:25 in this context clearly does. Through the conditional form, "*if* we live by the Spirit," Paul invites his hearers to recognize for themselves the new reality in which they share. The imperative in the final part of the sentence is therefore grounded in the indicative, the certainty of life in the Spirit. (CC)

The verse has a chiasmic structure that emphasizes the crucial role of the Spirit. The flesh's decisive death in Christ's crucifixion (5:24) gives way to the life of the Spirit (5:25a; cf. 2:19; 6:14–15). The Spirit makes alive (4:29) and is the believer's power source! To "walk" (5:25a: στοιχέω, not περιπατέω) derives from military language. The term originally referred to a line of soldiers standing in a row or marching in a row following the lead; hence such meanings as "be in line with," "conform," or "follow." If the Galatians are looking for the rule of law, they will find all the guidance and discipline they need in the Spirit.¹²⁷ The marching orders are clear (5:25b): they will be led by the Spirit (5:18) and will walk by the Spirit (5:16). (CC)

Preachers and teachers should never shy away from Paul’s clear emphasis on Christ’s Spirit and the Spirit’s fruit. The Galatians, as with Christians of any age, will never find power in a misguided focus on Moses’ Law. To go “under” the Law (e.g., 5:18) is to abandon Christ and his Spirit and to fall under the Law’s curse (3:10–13). The Law, of course, is only one of many potential misguided focuses in the modern age: social justice, personal development, higher education, self-advancement. For all their positives, these alternatives are poor substitutes for the riches in Christ. Likewise, a proper Christian focus means that the believer does not dwell on the last, losing struggles of the crucified, defeated flesh. To dwell on the flesh is nothing but surrender! Many preachers mistakenly spend far too much time trying to instill a false sense of identity as “sinners.” This emphasis in many cases reflects a misapplication of the popular phrase *simul justus et peccator*, or in modern parlance, “simultaneously both saint and sinner.” Just as the Gospel predominates over the Law, so also justified (*justus*) saint and sinner (*peccator*) are not equal for the Christian. A believer’s *identity* is not that of a “sinner” but of a “saint” whose sins have been forgiven (Gal 1:4) and who is now *one* with Christ (3:28). The believer does not find his or her identity in sin but rather struggles daily and mightily against it. Tragically, efforts to instill a sense of identity among God’s people as “sinners” abandon the decisive victory of Christ’s powerful work that took place not only on the cross but also in the lives of his followers.¹³¹ Dwelling on personal sins becomes its own form of idolatry! The empowering Spirit always directs a believer’s eyes back to the victory in Christ (3:1). With a focus on Christ alone, the fellow crucified experience the tremendous power of Christ and his Spirit in action. What the Spirit began (3:3) now continues. In “walking” by the Spirit (5:16, 25), the believer is moving ever closer with every passing step toward the final end of all things when the resurrection life fully reveals itself at the Last Day. The believer lives *in victory* even as he or she lives in hope! (CC)

live by the Spirit. Or “walk in line with,” a different Greek verb from “live by” (or “walk by”) in v. 16. (CSB)

The Spirit is the source as well as guide of our spiritual life. *walk.* Lit, “be in line with” or “keep in step with” (the leading of the Spirit; cf 3:2; 4:6–7). (TLSB)

It means to march in rank and file with the Spirit as our leader. In doing so, we do what the Spirit does as patterned by Christ Jesus himself. As we keep in step with the Holy Spirit, he Spirit produces the fruit. This fruit brings true pleasure to the individual and unity within congregations. Those who walk with the Spirit look to God for approval and have no need to envy others. (LL)

5:26 μὴ γινώμεθα (“let us not become”)—This is a negated first person hortatory subjunctive. (CC)

Positive instructions for the Christian believer dominate 5:25; what the believer ought *not* do is the topic of 5:26: *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.* The adjective “conceited” (κενόδοξος) is used only here in the NT, but Paul uses the related noun (κενοδοξία) in Phil 2:3 for “empty conceit” (BDAG). Let the rivals be the ones to boast for all the wrong reasons (Gal 6:13)! The Hellenistic philosophers considered “conceit” a sort of intellectual and moral charlatanism. As C. S. Lewis put it: “Pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense.”¹³⁴ According to 5:26, conceit always leads to broken relationships as it expresses itself in provoking and envying others (“envy” is one of the works of the flesh in 5:21; see also in 5:20 “enmities, strife, jealousy, ... dissensions, factions”). Provoking and envying evokes the biting and devouring of 5:15. Nevertheless, Christians battle sin from the decisive vantage point of the victory that took place in the cross! In a play on words in the Greek, Christians can keep in step (στοιχῶμεν/*stoichōmen*, 5:25) precisely because they were delivered from slavery “under the elements of the world” (ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα/*stoicheia*, 4:3). The flesh was “crucified” (5:24) once and for all! The Spirit makes that victory a present reality for the believer. (CC)

At the same time, the individual believer must now take action in accord with the Spirit's leading. Paul's exhortations are genuine even as he is clear on the source of power and motivation. Christian preachers and teachers will recognize that such behavior is not automatic; they will always be encouraging their fellow believers to keep in step with the Spirit. Although the enemy has been decisively defeated, the final battles must still be waged until Christ returns! Paul has been writing more generally in 5:24–25; the specific details are in 6:1–10. The apostle will also turn to the Spirit's guidance in "the Law of Christ" (6:2). (CC)

not become conceited – He says: Let us not become conceited is how most translations do it. But it literally is vain glorious. That's an old-fashioned world. But we glory in our own vanity. We look completely inward at ourselves. And here is what a conceited vain glorious life looks like. Provoking one another. Envyng one another. This is the kind of Pharisaical self righteousness. The kind of, you know, perfectionism, you know, living according to the law. Self righteous behavior in which the law becomes the standard and breaking the law is what causes division in congregations. This is what Paul sees in his opponents as they bring their theology to the Galatians. It's not constituted by Christ. It's not constituted by love. It's where you begin really like life under the flesh, you are turned in on yourself, which is one of our definitions for sin. So here you have life in the Spirit. Let us walk by the Spirit. If we live in the Spirit and we do, then let us walk by the Spirit. And then this vain glorious life, provoking one another, envyng one another. (Just – V-40)

Perhaps the Galatians had been parading their observance of the Law to show their superiority over others (thus also provoking envy). (TLSB)

provoking one another envyng one another – Here Paul describes the effect of vainglory. A teacher of error or an originator of a new doctrine cannot help provoking others; and if they do not approve and accept his doctrine, he immediately begins to hate them bitterly. (Luther)

5:16–26 Christian freedom means walking, conducting oneself, by the Holy Spirit's power and leading. Our sinful flesh, consumed by self-importance, instinctively looks down on others and inevitably causes interpersonal tensions. At Baptism, we were united with Christ, who died to set us free from sin and the way of the Law. • O Holy Spirit, give us daily victories over sin in our personal life and, above all, the power to love one another. Amen. (TLSB)