

## CHAPTER V

### GALATIANS 5:1-6:10 PAUL'S VINDICATION OF LIBERTY LIVING

#### A. INTRODUCTION.

Western society distinguishes itself, above all other national entities, as the bastion of freedom in the realms of religion, civil relationships, law, and commerce. This being true, then where did this freedom come from? America, Canada, and Australia would trace their roots back to England; England, along with the rest of Europe, would in turn trace its roots of freedom back to the Reformation; the Reformation would trace its roots back to Martin Luther; and Martin Luther would trace his spiritual emancipation back to Galatians; and in Galatians Martin Luther would turn to 2:16; 3:11 as the source of the freedom that came to his soul, while 5:1 describes the practical outworking of this gospel freedom, even as a gospel mandate. In other words, it is when a man or woman finds the liberation of peace with God in their soul that there results a whole gamut of liberties that flows forth into history.

What then is it for a man or woman to be free in his or her soul? *First* we are free because we have unobstructed access to the Word of God. The Book of God is not kept from us as in former days of religious tyranny. *Second*, we are free from the fear of God due to sin, wrath and judgment; rather we have peace with God through faith in the gospel message of the sovereign grace of Jesus Christ found in Scripture. *Third*, we are free because this gospel message has come through faith alone in Christ alone, and not the authoritarian dispensing of any religious organization. No earthly church or agency of man has dominion over my soul. I approach God directly through Christ, not an earthly priest or sacrament. *Fourth*, we are free because others have found this same soul freedom, and as a result together we comprise a society of the free, in no way tolerating former religious tyranny, that is designated as the local Christian church. My soul freedom before God causes me to respect that identical freedom which my Christian brother has, and even the freedom of my unbelieving brother who I desire that he enter into the same soul liberty.

Hence Galatians 5:1, by way of a grand exhortation, deals with the whole root of this matter of human liberty, and it really starts with emancipation from personal sin. When a man is set free in his soul, when free grace overwhelms him, then he will live accordingly; having been set free, he will promote freedom in the spiritual realm and society in general. Presently America is regressing into that captivity which increasing sinfulness inevitably brings. And only the gospel of the grace of God delivers from that bondage. So Luther comments: "Let us learn therefore, to magnify this our liberty, which no emperor, no prophet or patriarch, no nor any angel from heaven hath obtained for us, but Jesus Christ the Son of God."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, p. 443.

## B. LIBERTY LIVING MANIFESTS STABILITY, 5:1-12

Galatians 1-4 has been an extended consideration of the sanctifying effects of the gospel upon Christians. The emphasis has been especially doctrinal, but now we turn to the more practical outworking of this teaching. If anyone is saved by the gospel, then a resultant change of lifestyle is inevitable, and from now on we will designate it as “liberty living.”

In summary, what is “liberty living”? It is a slave who, having been purchased from the slave market, is adopted as a son by his new master and thus lives as a son rather than a slave, 4:4-5. It is the life the Roman young man lives after his father has granted him the rights and privileges of full sonship, 3:23-4:6. It is the life of the Christian lived in exclusive subjection to Christ as a free man quite apart from subjection to an entangling Law code. It is the life that Isaac lived as a secure child of promise, free from the assaults of outcast Ishmael as a child of the flesh and human striving, 4:21-31. It is the life of the Christian who, while confessing belief in the doctrines of sovereign grace, actually lives in the light of them, for his walk reflects the grace of the doctrines.

## 1. Stand firm on your liberty in Christ, v. 1.

“For [the] freedom [ἐλευθερία, *eleutheria n dsf*], Christ set us free [ἀλευθερώω, *eleutheroō v aais*]. Therefore keep standing firm [στήκω, *stēkō v paimp*] and do not be entangled/ensnared [ἐνέχω, *enechō v ppimp*] with a yoke [ζυγός, *zugos n dsm*] of slavery.” By way of military parlance, Paul, having inspected his platoon at Galatia, having assessed its need to smarten up, then exhorts it to march according to its original commission and its present status. This is a declaration that naturally flows from 4:31.

## a. Recall Christ’s original commission.

Hence, “For [the] freedom, Christ set us free.” This was our Commander’s original earthly calling, according to his received commission (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18). The Lord Jesus came to mankind “in the fullness of time” (4:4) and found him bound up by every conceivable form of servitude that sin could impose; captivity to man, self-interest, religious performance, inescapable guilt, insatiable carnal lusting, or as Paul describes it here, “a yoke of slavery.” However the purpose of His ministry was to emancipate, to set the captive free (I Tim. 1:15).

## b. Repudiate former captivity.

Consequently, “Do not be entangled/ensnared with a yoke of slavery.” The yoke was used in Roman times not only to harness animals but also slaves of stubborn will, who would not bend under the load. However a slave could be set free by the payment of money and so the yoke would be lifted. As a result the slave would suddenly stand upright. But imagine a redeemed slave continuing to walk bowed down, as it were under the weight of the Law; he insults his redeemer and all that he has accomplished. Rather the Christian is to stand up straight with the new posture that Christ alone grants.

- c. Respond according to your present status.

“Therefore keep standing firm,” but upon what? Surely the concern here is that, for the Christian in his ongoing life, he fulfill 2:20 by relentlessly “living by faith in the Son of God who loved him and gave Himself up for him.” In other words, he is to maintain his “introduction by faith into this grace in which he stands” (Rom. 5:2).

Put this matter to the test. What do you do when your back is against the wall and the world would have you bow down to its agenda? Panic? Capitulate? Retreat? When sects and novel doctrines challenge, how do you respond? Is being a Christian for you a matter of endurance or enjoyment? Are you inwardly guilt ridden all the time? Does the world dominate your life much more than Christian fellowship?

On the other hand, are the roots of your soul drawing deeply from living water (Ps. 1:3; Jer. 17:7-8)? Are you well armored for the fight, especially with the shield of faith and sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:16-17)? How do you respond to: “Be not carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established [strengthened] with grace” (Heb. 13:9; cf. Acts 20:32)?

Liberty living results from stability in the soul under Christ, the great emancipator (John 8:31-32), the great mediator of the grace of God. Man captive to man is tyranny; man captive to Christ is true emancipation. As George Matheson has written:

Make me a captive, Lord,  
And then I shall be free;  
Force me to render up my sword,  
And I shall conqueror be.  
I sink in life's alarms  
When by myself I stand;  
Imprison me within Thine arms,  
And strong shall be my hand.

2. Stand firm against circumcision and uncircumcision, vs. 2-6.

In a fierce storm, a ship is blown off course hard onto a hidden reef, 1000 miles from land. Later a small rescue vessel approaches the stricken ship to save the lost but discovers that the passengers have formed themselves into four distinct groups. *First*, there are those who believe the situation is not critical; the ship can be repaired so that they can soon proceed as before; they tell the rescue ship it is not needed. *Second*, there are those who claim they will swim the 1000 miles and make it by their own. *Third*, there are those who are unsure of the offer of rescue and stand with one leg on the stricken ship and the other on the rescue vessel. When the rescue vessel pulls away they do the splits and fall into the water. *Fourth*, there are those who jump with hope and confidence into the rescue vessel.

Immediately those who come on board the rescue vessel are given food and clothing for their journey to a safe harbor, yet they are mocked by those who remain behind. So the rescue vessel sets out from the wreck toward a safe harbor. However some consider it necessary to assist the captain since they fear that otherwise they will not safely arrive

at the promised haven. They offer to start rowing, plot the course, steer the ship, maintain the engines, etc. However the captain firmly replies: “How do you think I came to your rescue without your help? So these “would be” helpers, who are more likely to impede the voyage, are told instead to rest, feast, gain strength, listen to the captain’s commands, and trust him to bring them safely to the harbor.

However many who have been rescued take the captain’s advice, though not all; they rest, feast, and convince one another that the captain is indeed able to bring them safely home. They conclude that the captain can handle their rescue from beginning to end. They have no desire to run the ship; rather their faith in the captain and renewed strength lead them to heed his commands, which are not about attempting to steer the ship, but with regard to trusting his leadership and serving one another on board ship. Thus their faith in the captain and admiration of him result in loving service for the captain by means of assisting the passengers. The conclusion is that salvation is all of the captain or not at all; it is faith in him totally, continually, to the exclusion of any other aid or help that will result in reaching the safe harbor. However en route there is much work to be done. Salvation from the wreck on Satan’s reef, resulting in guilt and condemnation, is by faith alone in Jesus Christ, and no other aids or helps. Yet the route to heaven’s harbor calls for much work to be done.

a. It is all of Christ or none of Christ, v. 2.

“Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision [περιτέμνω, peritemnō v pps], Christ profits/benefits [ὠφελέω, ōpheleō v fais] you nothing.” This is not the opinion merely of one man, but a statement full of apostolic authority received by direct revelation from Jesus Christ, 1:11-2:21. If you pursue circumcision, water baptism, or any other religious rite or form or experience, as a means of obtaining righteousness and acceptance before God, of “helping the Captain” so to speak, then you deny that Christ had sufficient righteousness and saving ability; as a consequence His saving work is nullified!

It is insulting to bring forth your works when Christ came by way of the cross without your help. This “captain of their [your] salvation” KJV, or “author/leader” NASB (Heb. 2:10), is able to save from start to finish (Phil. 1:9). Romans 4:9-11 teaches that Abraham was saved by grace alone before he was ever circumcised. Christ supplemented is Christ supplanted! Christ sufficient is Christ as Savior!

b. It is all of Law keeping or none of Law keeping, v. 3.

“And I testify again to every man receiving circumcision that he is a debtor/obligated [ὀφειλετης, ophiletēs n nsm] to keep/obey [ποιέω, poieō inf aa] the whole Law.” The man who chooses to swim to shore is still lost even if he can go as far as 500 miles; he must complete 1000 miles, not even 999! The man who chooses to gain righteousness by Law keeping, supplementary morality, the moral Law, the Sabbath, has to keep all of the moral Law, all of the Sabbaths; this also includes death penalty sanctions for moral Law transgressors and Sabbath breakers (Ex. 31:14; Ezek. 18:4, 20). Further, not only must *all* of the Law be kept, but it must be kept *perfectly, eternally*. The Law knows of no allowance for

keeping a reasonable proportion of its demands, notwithstanding man's common plea that he is quite good even if not perfect.

- c. It is all of grace or none of grace, v. 4.

“You have been invalidated/separated/estranged [καταργέω, katargeō v apip] from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified [δικαιόω, dikaiōō v ppip] by Law; you have fallen [ἐκπίπτω, ekriptō v aaip] from grace.” For Law loyalists Paul declares: “you have been estranged from Christ,” or “severed from Christ,” which is perhaps a play on words for those trusting in the severance that circumcision involves. In other words, “cut your flesh as a supplement to the gospel and you cut yourself off from Christ!” There can be no mingling, no merging here. According to Romans 11:6, grace and works are mutually exclusive. Works, even one work, are like one faulty wire that can short-circuit a whole system. Just one supposed necessary, saving and sanctifying human work declares that Christ was deficient in that area. The man who has one foot on the wreck and the other on the rescue ship will eventually fall into the water; he falls from grace that he never fully grasped. The man on the rescue vessel who attempts to help the captain reach the shore also falls from grace – temporarily, but still remains safe. His perception of grace is dim, and doubtless the captain will apply necessary correction to such a passenger. When the safety of the shore is reached, none will then doubt that this deliverance was all of grace, all of the captain.

- d. It is all of faith through the Spirit or none of faith through the Spirit, v. 5.

“For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting expectantly/eagerly [ἀποδέχομαι, apodechomai v pmip] for the hope of righteousness [δικαιοσύνη, dikaiosunē n gsf].” The captain provides strength immediately we come on board the ship, which pictures the down payment of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:12-14), received through faith alone, 3:2-3. Yet again the aspects of regeneration through the Spirit and justification by faith have distinctive association. To attempt self-rejuvenation through keeping the Law will only result in weakening, frustration, incompetence, while *en route* to the harbor. However the captain also provides hope and rest while in transit (Rom. 8:21-24a; I Pet. 1:13); rest from our human efforts and hope in a consummated salvation at the return of Jesus Christ, all through faith alone. Then will perfect righteousness *de jure* culminate in perfect righteousness *de facto*. Those on board the rescue ship will often be peering from the rail at the horizon, longing for the harbor side welcome.

- e. It is all of faith through love or none of faith through love, v. 6.

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any effective power [ἰσχύω, ischuō v pais], but faith working [ἐνεργέω, energeō par pmnsf] through love.” The passengers respond with love for the captain and as a consequence with love for one another; however this love is grounded in faith alone in the captain. Our shipboard demeanor (local church behavior) does not earn the captain's favor or get us to shore (I Cor. 8:8); we respond by means of “working [ἐνεργέω, energeō] love,” which extols his person. By means of active, fruitful faith (Jas. 2:22) we demonstrably love the captain because he first loved

us (I John 4:19) and sought to rescue us, v. 6, even as he steers the ship safely to the harbor. For this reason, a local church is a community of rescued saints, formerly derelicts, that is interactively manifesting “faith working through love.”

- f. By way of application, why is it important for a man or woman to realize the exclusive nature of this gospel of grace (the fact that it wholly excludes the saving and sanctifying work of man)? Because an understanding of the grace of God in this way brings them to stability. They travel to the harbor with more composure, confidence, calm, and accomplishment.

The person swimming on his own is not resting but rather frantically attempting the impossible. The person with a foot on the wreck and the other on the rescue vessel is torn in two and ends up in the water (Jas. 1:8), hardly at rest. The person who embarks on the rescue vessel, but then attempts to assist the captain’s plotting of the course, is unsure of the captain’s capacity to bring the passengers to shore; he is anxious, uncertain! Only the person who appreciates the proven ability of the captain rests in his total capacity to save and take us safely to shore.

Whether you profess to be a Christian right now or not and you were to die this day, why should God let you into His heaven? If you are a Christian today and you died in twenty years time, what then would be the ground of your entry into heaven? And if it were not for the pure mercy of God, what would be your just destiny? Do you have a Scriptural basis for your answers here?

### 3. Stand firm against circumcisers, vs. 7-12.

If John Bunyan portrays the Christian life as a pilgrimage, the Apostle Paul often represents it as a long distance athletic race, for himself (2:2), as well as others. So here the Galatian Christians are likened to being in the midst of a running event. They have left the starting blocks well, as contestants often do, and then initially took the lead (3:3). However Paul warns in I Corinthians 9:24 that “only one receives the prize. Run in such a way that you may win.” It is important to start well, but it is far better to win! Why then is there this contrast between winners and losers? Even in this earthly life we generally tend to admire winners and shun losers. Nevertheless Paul raises the matter of some having started well who presently appear to be prospective losers. They have slowed down or are distracted or are hindered. Hence if they do eventually lose, then from the start they have been “running in vain” (4:11; cf. Phil. 2:16), and this is what concerns Paul about the Galatians. After all, a good trainer has in mind the development of a winner, and so it is the case here with the Apostle (I Thess. 2:19).

In an athletic event, especially long distance running, there can be many obstacles. Here the concern is not with regard to impersonal external circumstances such as weather or the state of the track, but with regard to personal fitness and opposition encountered that detracts from a winning outlook. Sadly, in a competitive track race there are the trials of others cutting in, crowding, jostling, tripping, and spiking, all being designed to disqualify a contestant from winning. In Greek mythology there is the case of the beautiful Atalanta, a huntress who was also a renowned swift runner. She was against marriage, except to the man who could outrun her. A Hippomenes fell in love with her and sought the advice of Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty. She provided three golden apples and advised Hippomenes to roll them successively in front of Atalanta

and so distract her as she ran. This strategy enabled him to run ahead and so win the race; thus Hippomenes and Atalanta were married.

So Paul warns us against the interference of religious contestants, seemingly on the same track so to speak, who declare they go to church, hope to be received into heaven, and yet are counterfeits and spoilers. In John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* there was Mr. Worldly-Wiseman who waylaid Christian and proposed, for the easier relief of his burden, a much shorter route leading to the "comfortable" village named Morality. Except for the help of Evangelist, tragedy would certainly have resulted. Then for Faithful there was Old Adam the First's attempted seduction by means of his three daughters, the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes and the Pride of Life. Only the Word of God delivered him. Then Demas solicited Christian and Hopeful with the dangerous allurements of a silver mine at the Hill Lucre. Only the advice of Christian dissuaded Hopeful from yielding.

- a. They interfere and distract us, v. 7.

"You were running [τρέχω, trechō v iaip] well. Who cut in/hindered [ἐγκόπτω, enkoptō v aais] you from obeying [πείθω, peithō inf pp] the truth?" This good beginning was described in 3:3, 26-27; 4:15, and coach Paul was encouraged; these saints were "running/walking in the Spirit," 5:16; their eyes were on the prize rather than competitors; they were advancing

"Who cut you off [aorist], so as to persuade you to disobey the truth?" In other words, who seduced you with a proposal to consider a wayside distraction, another race, another, prize? Who caused you to slow down, to veer from your course? Actually Paul well knows the answers to these questions, but he wants the Galatians to acknowledge the problem, to agree to the obvious, namely that plainly they are not presently traveling as at the beginning. Hence, they are to confess the cause of their backsliding, which is a competitive false gospel messenger, as with Mr. Worldly-Wiseman.

- b. They infiltrate and mingle with us, vs. 8-9.

Sometimes believers are very naïve when it comes to recognizing the subtlety of encroaching doctrinal error. Often it comes with a smiling face, a seeming slight variation, a persuasive mood, the promise of attractive benefits, the supposed support of some authority figure. But once the ignition of error has taken place, the spreading blaze is so very hard to extinguish.

- (1) Their persuasion is not of God, v. 8.

"This [distracting] persuasion [πεισμονή, peismonē n nsf] is not of He who calls [καλέω, kaleō par pagsm] you." How do we know this? Because from personal experience Paul declares that he was winningly called "through [His] grace," 1:15; the Judaizers' gospel did not succeed in waylaying him. Here is the hallmark of divine calling that results in perseverance. Further, and with an optimistic spirit, Paul knows that according to 1:6, notwithstanding temporary backsliding, the troubled Galatians were genuinely called by "the grace of Christ." Again, in 5:13 you were called by

Christ “to freedom.” However the indications are that you are not presently walking in or glorying in this grace and freedom. So the conclusion is that you are heeding the call of another; your walk or halting style of running tells me that you are following another trainer who is far less qualified. There is less of the aroma of Christ and grace and mercy in your whole lifestyle; there is more of works and Moses and carnal boasting and religious performance in your demeanor.

- (2) Their perversion is subtle and gradual, v. 9.

“A micron of/little [μικρός, micros adj nsf] leaven leavens [ζυμώω, zumoō v pais] the whole lump of dough [φύραμα, phurama n asn].” Here is the proof of v. 4, and especially Romans 11:6, namely that one blown fuse can render a vast circuit as unworkable. Infections usually start with a seeming insignificant microbe, even as is the case amongst the people of God. Jude 4a tells us that the likes of these Judaizers “slip in by a side door,” or “creep in unawares.”

Numbers 16:1-50 tells how just one man, jealous Korah the Levite, opposed Moses and Aaron, but first influenced 3 Reubenites, Dathan, Abiram, and On, who influenced 250 Hebrew leaders, who influenced 2 million Hebrews causing them to rebel, with the result that 19,700 died in a plague of judgment.

What then is the remedy? At this point we turn to I Corinthians 5:1-6 where a similar problem of “a little leaven,” v. 6, not unlike that of the Galatian “leaven” is described. There it is the leaven of “boasting,” along with carnality and arrogance, vs. 1-2, being akin to Galatianism. So here in Galatia the problem is producing the same results, namely “boasting,” 6:12-13, and carnality, 5:16-21. However back in I Corinthians 5:7-8 we have the remedy for leaven infection prescribed.

- (a) “Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened,” v. 7a.

In terms of the Galatian problem, negatively it means to be rid of ministers and ministry that promote a false gospel, that mingle grace and works, that supplement Christ. It involves instruction that pinpoints the problem from Scripture and history with the result that the fellowship returns to its former status in grace.

- (b) Recollect that, “Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed,” v. 7b.

When Israel celebrated the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Matsos), their houses were to be purged of any trace of leaven (Ex. 12:15). So Charles Hodge comments, “The death of Christ obliges a similar obligation on us to purge out the leaven of sin.”<sup>2</sup> But further, the Christian celebrates what is in reality the New Passover, the Lord’s

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 87.

Table or Communion. Here is regular reminder of that pure grace in which I everlastingly stand and exalt (Rom. 5:1-2).

- (c) “Celebrate the feast . . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,” v. 8.

For the Galatians this involves a revolution in their present attitude, that is repentance and renewed faith. Formal compliance at the Lord’s Table is discarded. Regard for Christ as a contributor of salvation, as a co-worker with Moses, is renounced. Rather there is a revival in the heart to sing as the Cambridge Baptist pastor, Robert Robinson, directs us. He himself was a man of volatile temperament who also experienced times of doubt and depression, and at one such time he was directed back to his very own words!

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,  
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
Call for songs of loudest praise.  
Teach me some melodious measure,  
Sung by flaming tongues above;  
O the vast, the boundless treasure  
Of my Lord’s unchanging love!  
  
O to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I’m constrained to be!  
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love;  
Here’s my heart, O take and seal it,  
Seal it for Thy courts above.

- c. They trouble and disturb us, v. 10.

“I have confidence/have been persuaded [πειθῶ, peithō v pfais] in/toward you in the Lord that you will think/hold [φρονέω, phroneō v faip] no other opinion; but the one who is troubling/disturbing [ταράσσω, tarassō par pansm] you will bear [βαστάζω, bastazō v fais] [his] the judgment [κρίμα, krima n asn].” Coach Paul is a spiritual optimist, and for good reason since he knows personally of the grace of God triumphing in his own life, of “grace greater than all our sin” (Rom. 5:20b). So he asserts, “I have had confidence in you in the past and do so in the present, [that is] in the Lord,” hence not in innate personal ability (Phil. 1:6). Paul believes the Galatians really were converted and remain so, in which case he is convinced “you will adopt no other view [not change your opinion about the true gospel].” In other words, this has been a flirtation with legalism, a flash of foolishness, like a child’s temporary infatuation with a distracting, carnal fad. Paul believes it will pass when we are awakened to the glory of free grace.

As for the fad promoters, the interlopers, the meddlers with our running, the augmenters, their judgment is assured by the Lord of the race; they are “marked

out for . . . condemnation [disqualification]” (Jude 4), irregardless of their earthly prominence in man-centered religion and local church life!

d. They criticize and oppose us, v. 11.

“But I [Paul], brethren [ἀδελφός, adelphos n vpm], if I am still proclaiming [κηρύσσω, kērussō v pais] circumcision, yet why am I being persecuted [διώκω, diōkō v ppis]? Then has been abolished/removed [καταργέω, katargeō v ppis] the stumbling block/offence [σκάνδαλον, skandalon n nsn] of the cross [σταυρός, stauros n gsm].” “But, coach Paul,” enquire some of the contestants, “we have been told that you yourself have ‘cut in’ with regard to some Christian contestants by encouraging them to be circumcised?” The Apostle replies: “Yes, that was certainly the case with young Timothy (Acts 16:1-3), though the purpose was more pragmatic than salvific, for the cause of effective witness amongst the Jews, rather than the demand of the Law. In fact I could remind you of other instances.” Never does Paul encourage a Gentile to become a Jewish proselyte through circumcision. In Timothy’s case, being born of a Jewish woman, he was able to claim full Jewishness through circumcision, and that for pastoral advantage amongst the Jews.

But Paul further responds: “Even so, if I now proclaim both faith in Jesus as the Messiah *and* circumcision, as you are suggesting because of the Judaisers’ influence, then surely the prior stumbling block of ‘faith alone in Jesus as Messiah’ has been eliminated. However if this be true, then why do I continue to be persecuted by the Jews? The answer is plain, because I consistently preach ‘faith alone in Christ,’ and the Jews know it, and they persecute me for it. Being present at the stoning of Stephen, I know that he also was vehemently opposed because he taught that the Mosaic Law is changed through Christ (Acts 6:9-15). Don’t confuse my liberty to use circumcision when it suits, with the truth taught by Christ himself that neither boasting in circumcision or uncircumcision is of any value in a saving and sanctifying relationship with God.”

e. They distress and assail us, v. 12.

“Would that/I wish that [ὄφελον, ophelon ptc] also those troubling/ disturbing [ἀναστατόω, anastatoō par panpm] you would cut/mutilate/castrate [ἀποκόπτω, apokoptō v fmip] [themselves].” So coach Paul seems to have reached a point of exasperation concerning the strife brought about by those who focus on the mere cutting of the flesh. Consequently he retorts, very bluntly: “Oh that those troubling you would [not merely cut themselves like circumcision, but] go and castrate/emasculate themselves!” It is as if some legalistic Baptists approached you to teach baptismal regeneration, and out of distress I responded by crying out: “Oh let them go and immerse themselves and stay under if it is so crucial to them. It would certainly help both them and us!” This conflict between an external rite and the loftier matters of the condition of the soul before God is similarly expressed in Romans 14:17: “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

How often in the Bible God has to reprimand those who major on the minors, who focus on non-essentials rather than essentials, shadows rather than

substance, peripherals rather than centralities, the material rather than the spiritual, trivia rather than vital issues, circumcision of the flesh rather than circumcision of the heart.

(1) In the Old Testament.

- (a) Consider Cain's offering of the *earth* rather than that of a *faith sacrifice* (Gen. 4:1-8; Heb. 11:4).
- (b) Consider Esau's preference for *soup* rather than his *birthright* (Gen. 25:27-34).
- (c) Consider Saul who was rebuked by Samuel, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams" (I Sam. 15:22).
- (d) Consider God's condemnation through Isaiah of Israel's vain religion, specifically "multiplied sacrifices, . . . worthless offerings, . . . solemn assemblies, . . . spread out hands, . . . multiplied prayers." Rather God exhorted, "make yourselves clean, . . . cease to do evil, . . . learn to do good; seek justice" (Isa. 1:10-17). Similarly Joel exhorted the vain religionists of his day: "Rend your heart and not your garments" (Joel 2:13).

(2) In the New Testament.

- (a) Consider bodily needs in contrast with righteousness (Matt. 6:25, 33).
- (b) Consider tithing in contrast with justice, mercy, faithfulness (Matt. 23:23).
- (c) Consider water baptism in contrast with the gospel (I Cor. 1:14, 17).
- (d) Consider circumcision in contrast with loving faith as a new creation (Gal, 5:6; 6:15).

C. LIBERTY LIVING MANIFESTS THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, 5:13-6:10

Following v. 12, we might envisage Paul taking a deep breath so as to reorientate his thinking in a more positive direction. There is a place for rebuke, but what matters most is that the Galatian believers should be coached in running more fruitfully and hopefully concerning the goal and prize set before them (Phil. 3:14), which is Christ and heaven.

1. The fruit of the Spirit versus the works of the flesh, 5:13-26.

When we compare the initial running of the Galatians with their present condition, we conclude with Paul that two styles of pilgrim progress have developed, namely fruitful/spiritual and carnal/material. Both groups claim to have been enrolled in this race for the cause of Jesus Christ, like Christian and Ignorance in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, but only one manifests characteristics that reflect His good pleasure or

likeness; only one is received by this Christ into heaven, while the other perishes outside the closed gates of the Celestial City. More specifically, the carnal alternative manifests itself in two directions, namely legalism and licentiousness.

- a. Liberty living manifests love, not legalism or licentiousness, vs. 13-16.

What then is it that distinguishes the “flesh cutters,” those who major on minors, those who demand ritualistic conformity, from heart renewal and loving constraint? It is the vital element of affections, the nature and direction of our yearning. And while the legalist may have it all wrong in this area, in trusting in the reward of performance rather than the response to grace because of a tender heart, yet those like Paul who are adamant about *sola gratia* face another perversion of gospel truth in the opposite direction. Instead of adding to grace with religious performance, resulting in bondage, they presume upon it with resulting defilement. Instead of the constraint of grace unto righteousness, they trust in the reign of grace while maintaining indifference to personal sinning, carnality, and “liberty” in worldly living. Consequently they simply focus on greater grace and ignore personal holiness and virtue! Paul deals with this licentiousness, this practical antinomianism in Romans 6:1, 15, and so here. It is freedom that runs off the rails of righteousness! The avoidance of both extremes is now dealt with.

- (1) Our liberty in Christ should manifest selfless love, not selfish licentiousness, v. 13.

“For you were called [καλέω, kaleō v apip] for the purpose of freedom [ἐλευθερία, eleutheria n asf], brethren. Only do not [turn] the freedom into an opportunity [ἄφορμή, aphormē n asf] for [serving] the flesh; but through the [constraining] love [of Christ] serve [δουλεύω, douleuō v paimp] one another.” Here is a declaration similar to that of v. 1, which emancipation the preceding context indicates to be from “Mount Sinai,” 4:24-25, 31, that is the Mosaic covenant. As we have seen, for Paul “calling” is everything (Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:6, 15; 5:8). So again the Christian’s “calling” is qualified, as in v. 8 where it originates with “Him who calls you.” Here the focus is upon the direction of this calling, that is unto love among the brethren.

Notice how Peter gives a similar admonition: “Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God” (I Pet. 2:16). Jude warns us concerning those who have “crept in unnoticed, . . . ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 4). In other words, let love for Christ rather than self direct your lifestyle (I Cor. 13:5). In licentiousness, sensual indulgence and self-gratification are dominating concerns of the flesh and self; grace is a secondary necessity. In love for God, His unqualified mercy and holy will are the governing affections, the overwhelming constraint (II Cor. 5:14); self is a secondary consideration.

How then do we turn or slide from liberty living to licentiousness? When we lose sight of our liberty *under* Christ, His reign, and distance ourselves *from* Christ, when we lose sight of the grandeur and glory of the grace of God toward big sinners, when we descend into man-centeredness and use liberty

to justify our carnality. *Example one:* We can worship God at home just as well as at church meetings; but at home we give priority to television and recreational activity. *Example two:* We say we watch or read certain media to be informed, when in fact we use this liberty to lust and wallow in human corruption. *Example three:* We accommodate the standards of the world to avoid offense with the supposed claim that effective witnessing needs to be at that level. *Example four:* We so trust in the sovereignty of God that our secure salvation leads us to minimize concern for godliness and readily excuse ungodliness.

Rather, “through the [constraining] love [of Christ] serve one another.” The consumer orientation of local church growth today concerns “utilitarian benefits” dispensed by a “full service church,” that in reality is so short in vision of the glory of God. Whereas Paul here exhorts the true child of God to be a consecrated benefactor rather than a beneficiary. The nature of grace is to give liberally without charge; that is the character of the gospel and the resultant character of those saved by the gospel! As the Lord Jesus declared to Simon the Pharisee concerning the sinful woman: “[H]er sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little” (Luke 7:36-50). Her love was lavish, constrained by the mercy of Christ! So the lavish love of Christ constrains His true disciples.

- (2) Our liberty in Christ should manifest selfless love, not selfish legalism, vs. 14-15.

In view of the warning about licentiousness in v. 13, Paul could easily anticipate the suggestion that what is needed, in a remedial sense, is a good dose of the Law! But he would most likely reply, “Thank you for the thought, but you must not place Law and liberty in opposition because they are related even if not identical in operation. There is no such thing as absolute freedom since it always requires bounds or limits. As Katherine L. Bates has well written:

America! America! God mend thine every flaw,  
Confirm thy soul in self-control, thy liberty in law!

God Himself is constrained by the boundaries of his holy nature (Num. 23:19; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18). However the perverse understanding of freedom does result in licentiousness when the boundaries are changed or regarded as flexible, especially by means of carnal reasoning. In a similar manner, biblical love has boundaries which are the holiness and righteousness of God, whether according to the Old Testament or New Testament administrations. Indeed it is the priority of holiness which establishes the operation of love and grace (Isa. 6:1-7), and not the reverse. But licentiousness replaces these boundaries with man-centered reasoning. Thus biblical love is in harmony with the confines of the holiness and righteousness of God, even as these moral standards are revealed and inscribed in the Law of God, again, whether Old Testament or New Testament law.

## (a) Love is the fulfillment of the Law, v. 14.

“For the whole Law, in one word, has been fulfilled [πληρώω, plēroō v pfpis], in which [it is written by the holy God of Abraham] ‘You shall love [ἀγαπάω, agapaō v fais] your neighbor [πλησίον, plēsion adv] as yourself’” (Lev. 19:18; cf. Matt. 7:12; 19:16-19; 22:35-40; Rom. 13:8-10; I Cor. 13:1-13). This quotation of Leviticus 19:18 is not regarded as some worldly maxim or proverb, but the commandment or Law of the only true and living God. It presupposes His self-revelation of love, even toward His enemies (Matt. 5:43-48; Rom. 5:10).

To begin with, let us do away with the false, egocentric notion that this verse encourages self-love because of man’s common problem of low self-esteem. To the contrary, Paul assumes that man devotedly loves himself; he dotes upon himself and is concerned about his every blemish, ache, and wrinkle. The whole advertising industry is based upon this premise. So the Apostle writes that, “no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it” (Eph. 5:29).

So even the Law, the Law of Moses, in contradistinction to selfish licentiousness that indulges the flesh, v. 13, directs us to love God and others with the same intensity with which we assuredly love ourselves. Nowhere does the Law command us to love ourselves; it comes naturally; such self-preoccupation comes with the Adamic sin nature and is cultivated by our materialist society. So if a man can, with a renewed heart, rise above self-interest for the love of God and love of others, he can likewise rise to fulfill whatever else the Law demands, even in the first table of the Ten Commandments!

For instance: “You shall have no other God’s before me” means “you shall love God exclusively.” Again: “You shall not make for yourself an idol [or earthly representation of God]” means, “you shall love God authentically.” Again: “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain” means, “you shall love God respectfully/reverently.” Again: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy” means “you shall love God corporately, worshipfully, appreciatively.” In other words, love is God’s desired attitude response to the demands of His righteousness, even as revealed in His Law. But licentiousness is selfish lawlessness! From another perspective, only when the principles of the law of Christ are approached, with a right loving attitude for His Father, are they then truly obeyed with regard to love for man. And such God-constrained love for others will be as intense as acknowledged self-love.

However it is impossible for such an acceptable, right loving attitude toward God and man to be self-generated. Since man is an enemy of God (Eph. 2:3; Col. 1:21), he is incapable of loving God and making himself a friend of God. He simply does not want to (John 3:19)! Further, love from God is initially *given* by God at conversion (Rom. 5:1, 5), and there subsequently follows love for God as “the fruit of the Spirit,” (3:2-3, 5, 14; 4:6; 5:5; I John 4:11, 19) as a spontaneous

response (John 13:34; II Cor. 5:14). However, once endowed with love from God that results in love for God and man, this love in the believer can then be cultivated (5:16, 22-26; 6:8; Eph. 5:8-10), especially by means of the disciplined mind (Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:2)! Hence, “against such things [Spiritual fruit] there is no law,” v. 23. Indeed the Law of Moses, even in mandating love for ones neighbor (Lev. 19:18), does not rise to such a level of command as Christ reveals (John 13:34; I John 2:7-8). Nor can this Law produce such a virtuous harvest! Yet it does have a produce and it is not what is commonly expected, nor is it attractive.

(b) Law is the stimulus to strife, v. 15.

“But if you are biting [δάκνω, daknō v paip] and devouring/savaging [κατεσθίω, katesthiō v paip] one another, see that you are not consumed/destroyed [ἀναλίσκω, analiskō v apsp] by one another.” Here is what Galatianism produces. Of course it is possible to “obey” the Law with self-interest in mind, that is to be seen of men, to obtain benefits such as approbation. As a result we compete and self-righteously criticize. Hence legalism, as well as licentiousness, are inevitably productive of strife. As A. T. Robertson explains, they are like “two snakes that grabbed each other by the tail and each swallowed the other.”<sup>3</sup>

Here, like wild animals, self-righteousness, self-interest and indulgence come to a logical conclusion, even as was the result at Corinth (I Cor. 1:10-17; 3:1-4; 5:1-6:11; 11:17-22; 15:12).

Again, is the answer then, to licentiousness in particular, a big dose of the Law? In no way! That is like attempting to douse a fire with gasoline! Rather Paul prescribes gospel balm, gospel parameters, gospel constraint, as in Ephesians 4:25-5:5, so here in vs. 16-26, 6:14-16. As Paul explains in Romans 8:2: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the Law of sin and death.” As a result, “the righteousness of the Law . . . [is] fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” For Peter the same principle applies, namely that we should “follow in His [Christ’s] steps,” His selfless concern for others, the example of “He [who] Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you are healed” (I Pet. 2:21-24). So in Galatians Paul is about to press home the same point that he often repeats, namely that Christian sanctification results from obedient, loving union with Christ, not self-congratulatory conformity to the Law of Moses, or self-indulgent avoidance of the law of Christ.

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<sup>3</sup> A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, IV, p. 311.

b. Liberty living and the contrary nature of the flesh and Spirit, vs. 16-18.

We follow on from the stark contrast in behavior of professing believers that vs. 14-15 have portrayed. The ethic, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” is one thing; the dynamic or inclination is quite another; the neglect of this dynamic results in a self-dominant, self-propogating religious witness. Paul clearly assumes that the Galatian Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who is “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9; cf. I John 3:23-24). This has been an ongoing emphasis, 3:2-3, 5, 14; 4:6; 5:5; 6:8. So he exhorts believers to conduct their lives, not according to external law, but internal constraint. However this brings with it the danger that we merely trust inner feelings, mysticism, intuition, rather than the concrete Word of God. Cannot “walking in the Spirit” in fact turn out to be walking according to a sanctified hunch?

(1) The call to walk by the Holy Spirit to the exclusion of carnal desire, v. 16.

“But I [Paul] say, you are to be walking [περιπατέω, peripeteō v paimp] in/by [the Holy] Spirit and you will not fulfill/carry out [τελέω, teleō v aasp] [the] desire of [the] flesh” (cf. Rom. 8:4; 13:14). This verse is not saying, “you are not to walk by the flesh, you are to walk according to the Spirit.” Rather it is saying that, “Walk by the rule of the Spirit. If you do so, you will not, you cannot gratify the lusts of the flesh.”<sup>4</sup> A double negative here makes an emphatic point. These opposite forms of “walking” are mutually exclusive!

That the flesh is a constant irritant to the soul is a given here about to be elaborated upon in v. 17. So let us suppose that it proposes some lustful, self-gratifying indulgence; we know it is wrong, yet there is a carnal craving about it that clings like a leech. What then of two proposed remedies will be the most successful, not merely in terms of noncompliance but rather in terms of pleasing God?

Plan A. We expose ourselves to the Law; its stern prohibitions warn us, yet we seem all the more stimulated to sin, as if the flesh is increasingly aroused (Rom. 7:9). Perhaps we yield, and then are overcome with guilt, having “grieved” (Eph. 4:30) and “quenched” (I Thess. 5:19) the Spirit. However, perhaps with great exertion and grit we do not actually carry out the deed; hence our noncompliance took effort, with some degree of self-resultant congratulation; nevertheless the motive was fear of transgression, perhaps even painful consequences.

Plan B. As the flesh presses with its beguiling, blinding proposal, we read some good Christian literature; then the Spirit in our soul is aroused to awaken our preference for righteousness, godly virtue; perhaps we reflect on a passage of Scripture that brings arousal concerning God’s great mercy: “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God” (I John 3:1, KJV); the soul is further stimulated to turn from a lifestyle of indulgent ingratitude; perhaps we struggle, even cry out in prayer, “O Lord, rescue my soul” (Ps. 6:4), and as a

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<sup>4</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians*, p. 209.

result find the relief of heaven-sent calm; perhaps we listen to some hymns that stir up the power of grace, and then the response of loving conformity, such as:

My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine;  
For Thee all the pleasures of sin I resign;  
My gracious Redeemer, My Savior art Thou,  
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

Then we further recall the opening we gave for the flesh to assert itself and turn from such defiling influences. This whole act of repentance is so much more than noncompliance; it is a response to the tender urging of the Spirit so that we prefer to “walk in the Spirit;” and as a result the love of God is awakened and fruit is the product. The same principle is described in Ephesians 5:18-20; being filled with the Spirit is not passive expectation, but rather active involvement with appointed means of grace; so also with Romans 8:9-17.

Is then this whole matter of a spiritual walk in fact an intuitive, subjective, mystical experience of the heart that supercedes and transcends Scripture? As Charles Wesley describes it:

A heart in every thought renewed  
And full of love divine,  
Perfect and right and pure and good:  
A copy, Lord, of Thine.

No, quite emphatically so, for the Spirit works indivisibly with the Word of God, even as v. 14 explicitly teaches. So in 6:6-8, the ministry of Scripture is vital to the encouragement of “sowing to the Spirit.” However, this whole Bible needs careful exposition concerning the Old Covenant on tables of stone mediated through Moses that has been transcended by the New Covenant through the blood of Jesus Christ and its distinctive, sanctifying blessings.

- (2) The conflict between the flesh and the Holy Spirit, v. 17.

“For the flesh desires against/to oppose [κατά, kata pre] the Spirit [and] the Spirit desires against/to oppose [κατά, kata pre] the flesh, for these things/entities/forces oppose [ἀντίκειμαι, antikeimai v pmi] each other, so that you are unable to do the things you wish/desire.” Ask someone what are the greatest battles that man has ever faced and he might commence with the Peloponnesian wars of ancient Greece, involving the conflict between Sparta and Athens; the Battle of Issus, 333 B.C. whereby Alexander the Great conquered the Persians under Xerxes, and the door to Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Babylon, and India opened before him; the Battle of Tours, 732 A.D. whereby Charles Martel defeated the Muslim hordes from Spain in southern France, so preserving western Europe from Islamization; the Battle of Waterloo, 1815 whereby the Duke of Wellington led the final defeat of Napoleon and exile to St. Helena. What more shall we say of World War II, and the 6 Day War of Israel in 1967? Yet none of these compare with the fundamental conflict between the redeemed soul of a man or woman and the

vehicle of their individual body of flesh. During the Reformation a cartoonist pictured Martin Luther receiving from the Devil a written proclamation that read: “This is a formal declaration of war.”<sup>5</sup>

So Paul, having in v. 16 described the Christian’s “walk by the Spirit” that excludes the “desire of the flesh,” he now expounds upon this fundamental Christian problem and conflict, with regard to which John Wesley recommended: “Know your disease; know your remedy.” “For the flesh is lusting [desiring/soliciting] against the Spirit, and the Spirit is lusting [desiring/soliciting] against the flesh; for these things [conflicting entities] are in opposition, so that you may not desire and do whatever these things propose.” John Owen comments concerning this verse:

An acquaintance with these several principles and their actings is the principal part of our wisdom. They are upon the matter, next to the free grace of God in our justification by the blood of Christ, the only things wherein the glory of God and our own souls are concerned. These are the springs of our holiness and our sins, of our joys and troubles, of our refreshments and sorrows. It is, then, all our concernments to be thoroughly acquainted with these things, who intend to walk with God and to glorify him in this world.<sup>6</sup>

(a) The assertiveness of the flesh.

Paul describes the “flesh,” that is our carnal legacy inherited from Adam, our spiritually polluted material body subject to relentless degeneration, as having a congenital spiritual disease, so that it is our “body of sin” (Rom. 6:6), being comprised of “members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness” (Rom. 6:19). So the body has an unholy contagion, an inclination against anything that is holy; it is continually (present tense), militantly in opposition to righteousness, especially that godly virtue which the indwelling Holy Spirit promotes (4:29).<sup>7</sup> For the Christian, knowing the enemy, is vitally important. So in I Corinthians 9:26-7 Paul writes: “I box in such a way, as not beating the air.” He makes every punch count, in not missing the mark, so that he may hit and bloody Satan on the nose every time! So he continues: “I discipline my body and make it my slave,” rather than vice versa.

(b) The assertiveness of the Spirit.

However the Holy Spirit promotes an opposite inclination against everything that is unholy, even as evident in the deeds of the flesh, vs. 19-21; it is continually (present tense implied), militantly opposed to unrighteousness, especially that which the Holy Spirit discovers (John 16:8).

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<sup>5</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand*, pp. 239-41.

<sup>6</sup> John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, VI, pp. 161-2.

<sup>7</sup> While Lenski, following Luther, proposes “spirit” here, Paul’s predominant use of “Spirit” in Galatians as indwelling the believer through faith is preferable; so also Brown, Burton, Hendriksen, Lightfoot.

Prior to the Holy Spirit's indwelling in a redeemed soul, what was the state of affairs then? Well the body said "jump," and we "jumped into the mire;" the body said "eat," and we became "gluttons" for carnal food; the body said "drink," and we became "intoxicated" with the wine of this world. The body directed and we blindly followed! But now that the body is "a temple of the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. 6:19), He has sovereign sway even though this carnal vehicle is like a rebellious mule, so that in yielding to its strong solicitations, it is possible for us to "grieve the Spirit" (Eph. 4:30) or "quench the Spirit" (I Thess. 5:19). For this reason Paul "disciplines his body" (I Cor. 9:27; cf. Rom. 6:12; 12:21), keeps it in check. However it is the Holy Spirit who "leads," v. 18, the authentic child of God with the confidence that "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (I John 4:4).

(c) The assurance of the conflict.

So Luther comments:

Let no man marvel therefore or be dismayed, when he feeleth in his body this battle of the flesh against the spirit: but let him pluck up his heart and comfort himself with these words of Paul. . . . [L]et him not be discouraged therewith, but let him resist in the Spirit, and say: I am a sinner, and I feel sin in me, for I have not yet put off the flesh, in which sin dwelleth so long as it liveth; but I will obey the spirit and not the flesh: that is, I will by faith and hope lay hold upon Christ, and by his word I will raise up myself, and being so raised up, I will not fulfil the lust of the flesh.<sup>8</sup>

Do you know this contrariness between the flesh and the Spirit, this conflict? Take heart! Do you know this campaign of the flesh? Take heart! Do you know about the conflict between the body and the righteous influences of the Spirit of God? Take greater heart! Do you know of gospel encouragement in the Word of God? Take still greater heart! Do you know of the holy proposals and comforts of the Spirit of God, especially as they cause you to draw closer to the hope of the gospel? Supremely take heart! (Ps. 51:1-4, 10-11; Acts 5:32; Rom. 5:5; 8:16; II Pet. 1:2-4).

A victorious Christian life assumes battles; it does not mean that they pass away before we die; rather we are to be well prepared with "the full armor of God" (Eph. 6:11), and thus be vigilant, never underestimating the enemy and his strategy, especially in his use of the flesh. For we are to be doughty fighters, valiant in battle, "walking circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" KJV (Eph. 5:15-16).

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<sup>8</sup> Luther, *Galatians*, pp. 503-4.

- (3) The constraint of the Holy Spirit excludes the tyranny of the Law, v. 18.

“But if you are being led [ἄγω, agō v ppi] in/by [the] Spirit, you are not under [ὑπό hupo] [the Mosaic] Law.” In this verse we continue to study Paul’s unveiling of the tension that persists, according to v. 17, between “the flesh” and “the Spirit,” in every soul of a regenerate child of God. Again Owen illustrates and counsels:

Where the subjects of a ruler are in feuds and oppositions one against another, unless great wisdom be used in the government of the whole, all things will quickly be ruinous in that state. There are these contrary principles in the hearts of believers. And if they labor not to be spiritually wise, how shall they be able to steer their course aright? Many men live in the dark to themselves all their days; whatever else they know, they know not themselves. They know their outward estates, how rich they are, and the condition of their bodies as to health and sickness they are careful to examine; but as to their inward man, and their principles as to God and eternity, they know little or nothing of themselves. . . . Awake, therefore, all of you in whose hearts is any thing of the ways of God! Your enemy is not only *upon* you, as on Samson of old, but is *in* you also. He is at work, by all ways of force and craft, as we shall see. Would you not dishonor God and his gospel; would you not scandalize the saints and ways of God; would you not wound your consciences and endanger your souls; would you not grieve the good and holy Spirit of God, the author of all your comforts; would you keep your garments undefiled, and escape the woeful temptations and pollutions of the days wherein we live; would you be preserved from the number of the apostates in these latter days;—awake to the consideration of this cursed enemy, which is the spring of all these innumerable other evils, as also of the ruin of all the souls that perish in this world.<sup>9</sup>

Notice that whereas in v. 16, the Christian “walks by the Spirit,” and in v. 17 “the [indwelling] Spirit opposes the flesh,” here in v. 18 the Christian is “being led [constrained] by the Spirit.” Hence: “But if you are being led by [the] Spirit [and this is assumed to be the case], you are not under [the dominion of the] Law.” We might expect here, “But if you are being led by the Spirit, you are not under the dominion of the flesh.” According to v. 16, this is true, but Paul wants to make a further point since the Law and the flesh often work in harmony, though primarily in the unbeliever (cf. Rom. 7:5, 8-11, 13, 23 re the believer), and also here in the Galatian backslider. Thus assuming genuine regeneration, the Holy Spirit provides a radically different, internal *modus operandi* in the life of the Christian in contrast with the external *modus operandi* of the Law as a stimulus to righteousness. The *internal impetus* of the Holy Spirit of a Holy God, the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9, 14), produces spontaneous, intuitive obedience that God desires (cf. v. 14; Rom. 13:8-10), in conjunction with the Word of God (6:6-8); the *external impetus*, exemplified by the Mosaic code, using a cloak of religiosity, produces congratulatory works of obligation, fulfilled duty, even according to the Word of God, as with the Pharisee of Luke 18:11-12. So John Brown writes:

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<sup>9</sup> Owen, *Works*, VI, pp. 162-3.

“To be led by the Spirit” is another figurative expression, signifying to be influenced by the new mode of thinking and feeling to which the Spirit by the faith of the gospel forms men. To “walk in the Spirit” and to be “led by the Spirit,” are nearly synonymous. The active influential nature of the Spirit is perhaps somewhat more clearly brought out in the last of these modes of expression. They who are thus influenced are not under the Law.

“The law” is here, as generally throughout the epistle, the Mosaic Law, to which the Judaizing teachers were endeavoring to subject the Galatians. And what the Apostle says is this, ‘If you are influenced as you ought to be by these views and affections which grow out of the faith of the gospel, you will not be among those who seek to subject themselves to the Mosaic Law, you will distinctly see that you stand in no need of it, that its genius does not correspond to the character of the new and better order of things which the Messiah has introduced, and refusing to submit to what are now nothing better than “commandments of men”, you will “walk at liberty, keeping God’s commandments.” They who are led by the Spirit spontaneously by “a law written on their hearts” [Rom. 2:15], follow that course which God approves, and have no need of the paedagogy of the Law from which the church has been delivered.<sup>10</sup>

c. Liberty living and the works of the flesh, vs. 19-21.

Here we are returned to the threatenings of the flesh, and its produce when active, vs. 16-17. Recall its incompatibility with the Spirit, v. 16, and its assertiveness against the Spirit, v. 17. However, while we may “grieve the Spirit” (Eph. 4:30) or “quench the Spirit” (I Thess. 5:19), yet the context of v. 21 soberly reminds us that the following ugly catalog of those “practicing [present tense]” the “deeds of the flesh,” describes not mere backsliders, but apostates, those excluded from the kingdom of God!

Yet these same “deeds of the flesh” confront every child of God, as v. 17 makes plain. But like Christian and Faithful in Vanity Fair, he prayerfully cries out: “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity” (Ps. 119:37, KJV). The Lord Jesus Christ, obviously hungry in the wilderness, was similarly but not identically assaulted in the flesh when Satan proposed: “[C]ommand that these stones become bread [the very best and tastiest, cf. John 2:9-10]” (Matt. 4:3). However He rebuked Satan (not having sinful, lusting flesh): “Man shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Why did he do this? Because his appetite, generated by the baptism by Holy Spirit freshly received, was wholly governed by the love of righteousness, a hunger for the bread of the holy will of his Father (John 4:34). So it is impossible for the true child of God, indwelt by the same Holy Spirit, to make the following works his regular lifestyle. Yet at the same time Paul repeatedly warns us of these disqualifying characteristics (I Cor. 5:9-13; 6:8-11; II Cor. 12:20-21; Eph. 5:3-12; I Thess. 4:3-7); he is all too aware that if one in twelve of the disciples was an apostate, then all local churches are similarly comprised of wheat and tares (Matt. 13:24-30).

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<sup>10</sup> John Brown, *An Exposition of Galatians*, p. 131-132.

- (1) The works of *sexual immorality*, v. 19.

“Now the works [ἔργον, ergon n npn] of the flesh are evident/clear/obvious [φανερός, phaneros adj npn], which are sexual immorality [πορνεία, porneia n nsf], uncleanness/ impurity [ἀκαθαρσία, akatharsia n nsf], unrestrained sensuality/depravity [ἀσέλγεια, aselgeia n nsf].” In other words: “Manifest [evident] are the works of the flesh.” That is, being inherent to the body, they are more easily identified and include, “illicit sexual relations within and without marriage, moral uncleanness and perversion, unrestrained lasciviousness.” Without a principle of control and discriminating cultivation, they easily grow like weeds. No nurture is required, as is the case with fruit. Just let the plot of the flesh to itself and all sorts of ugly and objectionable thorns, thistles, and stink weed will spring forth. Only “those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires,” v. 24. How is that possible? Through authentic faith alone in this Christ there has come a new life and nature. Hence: “If we live by the Spirit [and this is assumed to be true], let us also walk by the Spirit,” v. 25. And the inevitable result will be the sweet and nourishing spiritual fruit of vs. 22-23.

- (2) The works of *religious idolatry*, v. 20a.

“Idolatry [εἰδωλολάτρης, eidōlolatrēs n nsf], sorcery [φαρμακεία pharmakeia n nsf].” Here two categories of materialism and outward form are wedded to religion; “idolatry” is the offering of service to a material representation of deity; “sorcery,” from, φαρμακεία pharmakeia, involves a material formulation, a potion as used in witchcraft, in conjunction with occult powers, that is also associated with the carnality and immorality of v. 19.

- (3) The works of *social rivalry*, vs. 20b-21a.

“Enmities/hostilities [ἔχθρα, echthra n npf], strife/contention [ἔρις, eris n nsf], jealousy [ζήλος, zēlos n nsm], anger/rage [θυμός, thumos n npm], selfish pursuits [ἐριθεία, eritheia n npf], dissensions [διχοστασία, dichostasia n npf], factions/heretical schisms [ἄρεσις, hairesis n npf], envying [φθόνος, phthonos n npm].” Here eight categories are listed that focus on selfish assertiveness and competitiveness, no doubt having special reference to vs. 15, 26. They are “hateful attitudes, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of anger, divisive disputes, resultant divisions, wranglings, and envyings.” Diotrophes was such a person who, while loving prominence, “has not seen God” (III John 9-11), and thus “will not inherit the kingdom of God,” v. 21b.

- (4) The works of *drunken revelry*, v. 21b.

“Drunkenness [μέθη, methē n npf], carousings [κῶμος, kōmos n npm] and related/similar matters/revelings, [about] which I forewarn [προλέγω, prolegō v pais] you, just as I forewarned you that those practicing [πράσσω, prassō par panpm] such things will not inherit [κληρονομέω, klēronomeō v faip] the kingdom of God.” There is particular emphasis here upon intemperateness

with regard to drink and to a lesser extent food. Alcoholism is not seen to be merely a disease, but rather a sin before God. Thus it is foolish for a man to claim that God dominates his life when it is obvious that drink has a far greater hold. Hence Paul reiterates a familiar principle, namely that “those who are practicing [πράσσω, prassō, present participle] such things [as a customary lifestyle] will not inherit the kingdom of God.” At that day, the Lord Jesus will say: “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who are working/practicing [ἐργάζομαι, ergazomai v par pmvpm] lawlessness” (Matt. 7:23).

Here then is the character of the natural man, religious though he be, who “does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised” (I Cor. 2:14). This man of the flesh has “borne the image of the earthy” (I Cor. 15:49); he is the “carnival man,” the enthusiast for Vanity Fair! The essential characteristic of this person, man or woman, is “flesh”!

d. Liberty living and the fruit of the Spirit, vs. 22-23.

“<sup>22</sup>But the fruit [καρπός, karpos n nsm] of the Spirit [τοῦ πνεύματός, tou pneumatos, n gsn] is love [ἀγάπη, agapē n nsf], joy [χαρά, chara n nsf], peace [εἰρήνη, eirēnē n nsf], patience [μακροθυμία, makrothumia n nsf], kindness [χρηστότης, chrēstotēs n nsf], goodness [ἀγαθωσύνη, agathōsunē n nsf], faithfulness [πίστις, pistis n nsf], <sup>23</sup>gentleness [πραῦτης, prautēs n nsf], self-control [ἐγκράτεια, enkrateia n nsf]; against such things there is no law.” There is an essential, distinguishing characteristic here that is lacking in vs. 19-21. It is not “love,” but rather the beneficent Holy Spirit. The man of the flesh is wholly of himself (Eph. 2:3); his carnality is what he is in Adam. But the Christian here is radically different since an external agent of God has come to indwell him, the Holy Spirit. Thus, “we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God” (I Cor. 2:12). Leave man to himself, and the result is festering and metastasizing decadence. Only when God saves the soul through the surgery of the Lord Jesus Christ is this corruption arrested.

It is also important to distinguish here between the graces or fruit of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of that same Spirit. Jonathan Edwards writes:

A man may have those extraordinary gifts, and yet be abominable to God, and go to hell. The Spiritual and eternal life of the soul consists in the grace of the Spirit, which God bestows only on his favorites and dear children. He has sometimes thrown out the other as it were to dogs and swine, as he did to Balaam, Saul, and Judas; and some who in the primitive times of the Christian church committed the unpardonable sin. . . . The greatest privilege of the prophets and apostles was not their being inspired and working miracles, but their eminent holiness. The grace that was in their hearts was a thousand times more their dignity and honor than their miraculous gifts. The things in which we find David comforting himself are not his being a king, or a prophet, but the holy influences of the Spirit of God in his heart, communicating to him divine light, love, and joy. The apostle Paul abounded in

visions, revelations, and miraculous gifts, above all the apostles; but yet he esteems all things but loss for the excellency of the spiritual knowledge of Christ.”<sup>11</sup>

John Owen writes:

They [the gifts of the Spirit] are indeed *works* and *effects*, but not properly *fruits* of the Spirit, nor are anywhere so called. They are *effects* of his operation *upon* men, not *fruits* of his working *in* them; and, therefore, many receive these gifts who never receive the Spirit as to the principal end for which he is promised. They receive him not to sanctify and make them *temples* unto God.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, the fruit of the Spirit, as distinct from abstract morality, is that indispensable evidence, that certain, authentic, incontrovertible, indisputable proof of a true professor of saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

(1) The fruit of *internal* Spiritual character, v. 22a.

“But the fruit [καρπός, karpos n nsm] of the Spirit [τοῦ πνεύματος, tou pneumatos, n gsn] is love [ἀγάπη, agapē n nsf], joy [χαρά, chara n nsf], peace [εἰρήνη, eirēnē n nsf].” Notice the priority of *internal* character with the first three fruit which are productive of *external* characteristics, that is the resultant six fruit.

(a) Love, as reflection of the love of God.

Since God is “good,” having attractive, admirable moral excellency, the active expression of His goodness is love. On its own, love or ἀγάπη, agapē, has no fixed moral value since even in John 3:19 “men loved [ἀγαπάω, agapaō v aaip] the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil.” Rather it refers not so much to the senses, emotions, or sentiment, as to the will, purposeful intent, committed affections whether good or bad. In the character of God, it is His righteousness which regulates His love, and so with a child of God.

Note that “fruit” of the Spirit is singular in contrast with “works” of the flesh being plural. This probably indicates that “love” as the first mentioned is “the fruit” from which the following “fruits” result (Rom. 13:8-10). So Jonathan Edwards entitles one of his works, in this regard, “Charity and its Fruits.”

- 1) First, love is the love of God *for* us (Rom. 5:8; I John 4:10). Such love, His holy kindness to sinners, is inherent in the heart of God, His own merciful will, without consideration of not even a smidgen of worthiness or value in the sinner. His gracious good pleasure, His compassionate nature is the root of His love.
- 2) Second, love is the love of God *in* us (Rom. 5:5). Here is the root planted through justification and regeneration, since we have

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, I, p. 138.

<sup>12</sup> Owen, *Works*, IV, p. 429.

“become partakers of the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4). Here is the implanted seed (I John 3:9), or divine life that is the indwelling Holy Spirit (I John 3:24). Such life must manifest the divine nature.

- 3) Third, love is the love of God *refunded* to Himself (I John 4:19-20). Here is the joyous acknowledgment of God's love for us in that we respond with heartfelt love toward Him. The primary response that God requires of man is love of Himself (Matt. 22:35-37; cf. Deut. 6:5), that is one holy passion, or “panting” after God (Ps. 42:1-2).
- 4) Fourth, love is the love of God *from* us to others (I Cor. 13:4-7). Here is the fruit manifest, evident, that matures to nourishing, attractive usefulness. It commences with love for the brethren” (I John 5:1) that is selfless love, vs. 13-14, but supremely is constrained by the Lord Jesus (II Cor. 5:14), and thus is modeled after the Lord Jesus (John 13:34). Here is the produce, the familial hallmark.

But most importantly, while love is *the* “fruit” of the Spirit, divinely bestowed, yet nurture and cultivation are personal responsibilities that result in greater sweetness and abundance! By various means fruit develops and matures; by growth in grace, pilgrimage experiences, especially within local church life, this same fruit sweetens, ripens, and proves nourishing to others.

- (b) Joy, in God that is reflected.

In and of itself, “joy” *χαρά*, chara, meaning gladness, happiness, has no moral value since the Bible also refers to evil rejoicing (John 16:20; Rev. 11:10). Even this world manifests a form of joy and gladness.

- (1) First, it is *soul joy* in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, such as with Paul declaring, “rejoice in the Lord” (Phil. 3:1; 4:4; cf. Acts 16:25), while in prison. It is Holy Spirit generated (I Thess. 1:6) and far transcends mere vocal expression (I Pet. 1:8).
- (2) Second, it is *manifest joy* in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is not simply a face splitting smile or a rollicking, jovial manner. Rather, “the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). J. C. Ryle comments: “True religion was never meant to make men melancholy. On the contrary, it was intended to increase real joy and happiness among men.”<sup>13</sup> While one can sound joyful in a manufactured sense in conversation and the singing of hymns, it is the soul that swells through the Spirit's illumination of the truth that results in true joyful singing. We do not need to be told to look joyful lest it produce artificiality.

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<sup>13</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on John*, I, p. 91.

- (c) Peace, with God that is reflected.

In and of itself, “peace,” εἰρήνη, eirēnē, meaning rest in the soul, contentment, the absence of restiveness, has no moral value since the Bible also refers to a deceitful peace (I Thess. 5:2-3).

- 1) First, it is peace *with/from* God (Rom. 5:1) since He has made peace with believing, previously alienated, sinners. But note that it is peace which is mediated “through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 2:14; Col. 1:20).
  - 2) Second, it is the peace *of* God manifest in the believer (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; II Cor, 13:11), but note that it comes “in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).
  - 3) Third, it is not only the absence of strife and factions in local church life but “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).
- (d) By way of application, it is one thing to describe the fruit of “love, joy, peace,” but quite another to consider how they are generated. What has been the key that is common to all three graces? It is union with Christ.

- 1) “The *love of Christ* controls [constraineth us, KJV]” (II Cor. 5:14).
- 2) We are to “*rejoice in the Lord* always” (Phil 4:4).
- 3) We are to have “*peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Rom. 5:1).
- 4) We are to be “filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through *Jesus Christ*, to the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:11).

Imagine that you have a fresh branch torn from a tree, and you want it to produce fruit. How would you go about it? You could buy some fruit, either real or plastic, and attach it to the branch. It might deceive some for a time, but not for long. Some people are like that. Their fruit is at best counterfeit, artificial, rather than natural, and it does not increase or nourish, but withers as does the branch. An alternative would be to graft the branch into a fruit tree so that the fruit producing life continually flows into the once severed limb. This is the only way the Bible teaches that genuine fruit results and increases. So in John 15:4-5, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.” Paul’s exhortation to “love, joy, peace” is not concerning abstract morality, but the inevitable result of genuine union with the Lord Jesus Christ who himself, and no other, imparts “love, joy, peace” (John

14:27; II Cor. 5:14; Heb. 12:2). Such fruit always has the savor of his person and work!

(2) The fruit of *external* Spiritual characteristics, vs. 22b-23.

“Patience [μακροθυμία, makrothumia n nsf], kindness [χρηστότης, chrēstotēs n nsf], goodness [ἀγοθωσύνη, agothōsunē n nsf], faithfulness [πίστις, pistis n nsf], gentleness [πραΰτης, prautēs n nsf], self-control [ἐγκράτεια, enkrateia n nsf]; against such things there is no law.” Whereas “love, joy, peace” spoke of an internal attitude concerning one’s state of being, the remaining six, even seven virtues, are an external expression of this state of being towards others.

(a) Patience.

“Patience,” literally being “long tempered,” speaks of longsuffering, forbearance, not a knee-jerk, intolerant attitude. It is endurance in the face of provocation, annoyance, persistent irritation, *after the divine model* (Acts 17:30; Rom. 2:4; 3:25; I Cor. 13:7; Col. 3:12-13; I Pet. 2:23). It shows itself in relation to immature fellow believers, and a desire for progress in the work of God. Eighteenth century London pastor, George Burder, wrote:

Behold His patience bearing long  
With those who from Him rove,  
Till mighty grace their hearts subdue,  
To teach them God is love.

(b) Kindness.

“Kindness” speaks of merciful sensitivity, a readiness to forgive, considerateness without a harsh manner or discrimination or distinction. It evidences a tender regard born of empathy that produces a thoughtful attitude, *after the divine model* (Matt. 5:43-45; II Cor. 6:1-6; Col. 3:12-13; Tit. 3:4). So Isaac Watts writes:

How kind are Thy compassions, Lord,  
How slow Thine anger moves;  
But soon He sends His pardoning word,  
To cheer the souls He loves

(c) Goodness.

“Goodness” is akin to gentleness and kindness, but it originates from holiness and truth, and thus has a distinct noble, honorable attractiveness about it, *after the divine model* (Eph. 5:8-9; II Thess. 1:11). John Gurney, nineteenth century Anglican, wrote of the goodness of God that constrains the believer to respond in song of this appealing characteristic.

Yes, God is good—in earth and sky,  
 From ocean depths and spreading wood,  
 Ten thousand voices seem to cry:  
 God made us all, and God is good.

For all Thy gifts we thank Thee, Lord,  
 But chiefly for our heavenly food;  
 Thy pardoning grace, Thy quickening word,  
 These prompt our song, that God is good.

(d) Faithfulness.

“Faithfulness” means loyalty, reliability, integrity, fidelity, in the company of believer and unbeliever. This person can be trusted with private matters; his word is his bond, *after the divine model* (I Cor. 10:13; I Thess. 5:23-24; II Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 2:13; I John 1:9). Thomas Chisholm wrote:

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,  
 There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
 Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not;  
 As Thou has been Thou for ever will be.

So children of God reflect their heavenly Father’s nature; they inherit His faithful character.

(e) Gentleness.

“Gentleness” means meekness, humility with a soft quality, a willing submission with modesty, although strong resources are at hand, *after the divine model*. Consequently Paul, in dealing with carnality amongst Christians at Corinth, made entreaty “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you” (II Cor. 10:1). This gentleness is embodied in Christ who, as a glorious sovereign, willingly submitted to servitude (Phil. 2:6-8). Charles Wesley wrote:

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,  
 Look upon a little child,  
 Pity my simplicity,  
 Suffer me to come to Thee.

Fain [willing] I would be as Thou art;  
 Give me Thy obedient heart:  
 Thou art pitiful and kind;  
 Let me have Thy loving mind.

(f) Self-control.

“Self-control” means temperance, self-discipline as an athlete (I Cor. 9:24-27), especially concerning sensual desire with regard to sex, food and drink, entertainment (II Cor. 10:5), *after the divine model* (John 4:7-8, 31-34). Whereas the flesh tends to arouse indulgence, the Holy

Spirit enables the believer to reign in such lusting (Eph. 5:18-19; I Pet. 3:18; Jude 19).

(g) Generosity.

“Against such things [the forgoing spiritual fruit] there is no law,” of limitation. Such fruit is not to have restricted production. There is to be no moderation, no restraint here, *after the divine model* (John 1:16; Rom. 5:17, 20); the branches are to be full with the overflowing abundance of a sweet crop. In fact love and all of its produce are the “filling to the full of the Law,” v. 14, (Rom. 13:10). God desires an overflowing crop of virtue through the Spirit.

(3) By way of application, what in essence then is the difference between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit?

(a) The works of the flesh are naturally produced, the fruit of the Spirit are supernaturally produced.

(b) The works of the flesh are the works of man, the fruit of the Spirit is the work of God.

(c) The works of the flesh are concerned with selfish ambition, that is self satisfaction through sensuality, lusting, ego gratification, approbation from man and the world. The fruit of the Spirit are selfless ambitions that concern others, that delight in the vine and its supporting life, that desire Christ-likeness and fruitfulness, that nourish and help others, that delight in the grace of Christ and approbation of the Father, that are for the purpose of glorifying the Father.

(d) Paul was a spiritual horticulturist (I Cor. 3:6-7). He longed for fruit that is so extravagant and profuse that it bends the branches, to the end that others might be nurtured, encouraged, fed.

(e) The vital question then is really what tree or vine we are grafted into. Jesus tells us that our conduct or fruitage indicates our character, since good fruit issues forth only from a good tree (Matt. 12:33-37). A bad vine brings forth sour grapes (Deut. 32:32-33). One day our words, our fruit will judge us and certainly reveal the type of vine into which we were united (Matt. 12:37).

e. Liberty living and the fruitful use of the believer's resources, vs. 24-26.

Suppose you buy a fruit tree that is labeled “Cherry tree – fruit especially suitable for eating,” yet when planted produces cherries that are most bitter and tart. How would you deal with the problem? Knock down all the cherries, give it a prune, and wait for the next crop? But they will still come forth as sour. Attach a larger more prominent label with clearer lettering? But they will still come forth as sour. Realise that the inner life of the tree was producing the sour cherries, hence the

label was false. Conclude that only a change in the tree's inner life could produce sweet cherries.

Paul has likewise taught us that the works or produce of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit have divergent internal origins. The question is what inner dynamic dominates and drives us? It is either a self-oriented human spirit that is productive of hideous, hellish natural works or a Christ-oriented Holy Spirit that is productive of attractive, holy, supernatural fruit.

Now Paul calls upon the believer to reckon on, and act upon the resources that are implied in the name "Christian," which means "Adherent of Christ," or "One belonging to Christ" (Acts 11:26). Only the right inner resources ensure sweet fruit. Further, allowing for necessary cultivation, the right inner resources guarantee sweet fruit. Hence as professing Christians we are first to identify our inner resources and then act upon them. No evidence of resources negates the possibility of true fruit. Evidence of resources makes true fruit inevitable and incumbent. No evidence of true fruit negates the possibility of resources, except in the case of John 15:2 where a true branch "in Me that does not bear fruit" is "lifted up" toward the nourishment and stimulation of the light. Evidence of true fruit makes resources certain.

In Christian conventions there has often been repeated an emphasis on "living the victorious life," or "the Keswick message," or "the Christian's spiritual walk," and usually a particular stress or key or secret concerning success in this area involves whatever vs. 24-26 are believed to declare. First there is the "*second blessing*" *solution* that does not simply involve a subsequent "baptism in the Spirit," but also post-conversion "full surrender," or "total consecration," or "total yieldedness," or "accepting Christ as Lord," etc. Christian living is portrayed at one of two levels. Second there is the "*total passivity*" *solution* that is summed up by the cliché, "let go and let God." It presents the Christian at his best as an empty, trusting, waiting vessel, since God does it all; we wait on Him to fill us, to live His life through us. Third there is the "*crucified life*" *solution* that involves a moment by moment putting to death, a crucifixion of this body of flesh that we might become more dead to sin. We gradually mortify the flesh, our sinful desires, and become saintly. What is the matter then with these "solutions" as described? Much, though not in the same degree concerning the third possibility. Rather let us consider the biblical answer here and note the emerging contrast.

- (1) Realize or reckon on your resources and position as a believer, vs. 24-25a.

As previously seen, it is fundamental for the Christian to realize that all of his resources are grounded upon Christ's atoning death. Romans 5:1-5 teaches that spiritual fruitfulness is grounded on justification by faith. Romans 6:10-12 teaches that present victory over the dominion of sin is grounded on Christ's atoning sacrifice. Galatians 2:20 teaches that the life which we now live is grounded on Christ's substitutionary death. In other words, the believer is first to consider what has been done and consequently provided for him through Christ's death, and only then live accordingly. We are to *realize* concerning our redemption, and then *react*. We are to *reckon* concerning our redemption, and then *respond* (Romans 6:11-12).

It follows then that our realization or reckoning of what Christ has provided for us necessitates a comprehensive knowledge of these resources. Hence our reckoning is not a mere consideration or supposition whereby we convince ourselves “as if” it were true. Rather it is a reckoning of that which in reality is true and factual. By way of summary then, consider the believer’s resources as recorded in Galatians.

- Grace and peace from the Father and Son, 1:3.
- Assurance and deliverance from this present evil age, 1:4.
- Right standing, justification before God, 2:16.
- The Holy Spirit of God, 3:2-3; 4:6.
- Heirship of the blessing promised to Abraham, 3:7-9.
- Redemption from the curse and bondage of the Law, 3:13, 24-25.
- Full sonship in God’s family, 3:26.
- The garment of Christ’s righteousness, 3:27.
- Equal standing and unity with the brethren through Christ, 3:28.
- Being a possession of Christ, 3:28-29.
- Access to God, 4:6.
- Christ indwelling, 4:19.
- Liberty in Christ from legalism, 5:1.
- The hope of glorification, 5:5.
- Christian fellowship, 6:1-2.
- Ministry of the Word of God, 6:6.
- Everlasting life, 6:8.
- Separation from the world, 6:14.
- The new birth, 6:15.

(a) You belong to Christ, v. 24a.

“Now those of [belonging to] Christ Jesus” have crucified the flesh together with its passions and desires. Christ is the active possessor here, and we the passive captives (cf. 3:29; John 10:27-28). Does not reckoning on this reality that He owns us provide us with the desire to walk in the Spirit, to walk in His steps (I Pet. 2:21)? Are not His sheep emboldened when He calls them “by name and leads them out” (John 10:3)? The same is so with the confidence of an earthly child who is sure of belonging to its parents, in contrast with the doubts and fears of an orphan.

(b) Your body of flesh has lost its dominion, v. 24b.

“[They have] crucified [σταυρώω, *stauroō* v *aaip*] the flesh with its passions [πάθημα, *pathēma* n *dpn*] and desires [ἐπιθυμία, *epithumia* n *dpn*].” “Crucified” is in the aorist tense and refers to a decisive, initial

act of faith at conversion, and therefore is related to 2:20 where that same one crucifixion of the flesh through faith is similarly represented. However, the perfect tense of 2:20, and 6:14 re the world, also stresses the *present realization* of that past accomplishment. Hence Paul is not teaching that we daily crucify the flesh and become more saintly. The flesh *has been* crucified at the believers initial, definitive sanctification and we are to reckon on the reality of this radical separation (Rom. 6:11-12). Such a reckoning with the finality here does lead us to maintain Christian discipline (I Cor. 9:26-27). However does not such reckoning on this reality provide us with the freedom to walk in the Spirit?

(c) You have received the Holy Spirit, v. 25a.

“If we live [ζῶω, zaō v paip] by the Spirit,” assumes this to be true. Again, the context demands that this reception was at the believer’s point of regeneration and saving faith, otherwise Paul would have to distinguish between two classes of Christians. The “we” here must refer to “those who belong to Christ Jesus,” v. 24, hence all true believers. He is the Spirit whose presence Christ obtained for us, and whose indwelling preeminently focuses upon Christ (Rom. 8:9-10; I John 3:23-24). Ought not experiential reckoning with this reality provide us with the dynamic to walk victoriously as indeed “belonging to Christ”?

(2) Respond and reproduce on the ground of your resources as a believer, vs. 25b-26.

“Let us also walk [στοιχέω, stoicheō v pasp] in the Spirit. Let us not become vainly glorying/conceited/boastful [κενόδοξος, kenodoxos adj npm], challenging/provoking [προκαλέω, prokaleō par pm npm] one another, envying [φθονέω, phthoneō par panpm] one another.” Those who are truly regenerate, and at the same time believe in the sovereignty of God, are not to neglect personal responsibility here (Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 5:19) as if expecting that the exhortation to “walk by the Spirit” is inevitable, *ex opere operato*, in a mechanistic sense. It must be understood that the regenerate are yet responsible for the use of means of grace, such as prayer, exposure to Bible truth, spiritually healthy fellowship, in the conduct of their walk.

(a) Positively, walk by the Spirit, v. 25b.

You have the status of being Christ’s, the resources of the Spirit, the indwelling of the Spirit, the life of God; hence exercise your responsibility and act according to the Spirit’s inclination. Paul has told us we are wealthy and ought to realize this truth and now use our wealth responsibly. Paul has told us we are in God’s army, that we are mightily equipped and consequently we are to use the weapons of our warfare (Eph. 6:13-17).

- (b) Negatively, do not walk by the flesh, v. 26.

We are to spurn “vainglory” or conceited self-concern, “provocation” that encourages strife for the sake of self preservation, “envy” as mental attitude larceny for the sake of self satisfaction. By way of caution, Scriptural reckoning assumes authentic rather than imaginary resources. If the right resources do not exist, no amount of reckoning will result in Scriptural responses. Instead self deception and frustration will arise.

2. The fruit of the Spirit evident in the local church, 6:1-10.

As much as we might consider the virtues of a fruit tree, yet there remains one vital quality which is the crucial matter. The appearance of the fruit is important though it can be very deceptive. The root resources of the fruit tree are essential, though at times they may be difficult to discern. However from a pragmatic perspective, the taste of the fruit is the moment of truth, that is the degree of sweetness and nourishment giving properties. Galatians 6:1-10 now deals with this practical proof. The real judging arena concerning Spiritual fruit is within the local church, vs. 1, 10. We are not to ignore our testimony in the world, but the point is that if we cannot love God's people first, how can we possibly love indifferent unbelievers?

- a. Brotherly burden-bearing, vs. 1-5.

Luther comments:

This commandment then of bearing one another's burdens belongeth not to them which deny Christ, and not only do not acknowledge their sin, but also defend it; neither doth it belong unto those which continue still in their sins (which also do partly deny Christ), but such must be forsaken, lest we become partakers of their evil works. On the contrary, they which willingly hear the Word of God and believe, and yet notwithstanding against their will do fall into sin, and after they be admonished, do not only receive such admonition gladly, but also detest their sin and endeavor to amend; these, I say, are they which be overtaken with sin, and have the burdens that Paul commandeth us to bear.<sup>14</sup>

- (1) A word of exhortation, vs. 1-2.

Suppose a believer slips or lapses into sin, not with initial premeditation yet with agreement to what is suggested that leads to ensnarement, involvement and guilty complicity, as well as a bad testimony before an assembly of God's people, such as with David (II Sam. 11:1-12:15). How should another believer handle such a situation? The example of Nathan the prophet is illustrative for us.

- (a) Our proxy burden bearing is to be with gentleness, v. 1.

“Brethren, if a man [among you] is overtaken/overpowered [προλαμβάνω, prolambanō v apss] in any trespass/transgression/

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<sup>14</sup> Luther, *Galatians*, p. 540.

infraction [παράπτωμα, paraptōma n dsn], you [who are] the spiritual ones, restore [καταρτίζω, katartizō v paimp] [to spiritual health] such a person in a spirit of meekness/gentleness [πραΰτης, prautēs n gsf], [each one] examining [σκοπέω, skopeō par pansm] yourself, lest you also should be tempted [πειράζω, peirazō v apss].” The fall here concerns a lapse from walking by the Spirit and thus yielding to the impulse of the flesh, even as 5:25-26 portrays. Here perfectionism is denied (I John 1:8). Are we first to reflect on our better standing and judge accordingly? Are we to jump on the fallen brother with a heavy hand and stern denunciation? Are we to reject him as being beyond the grace of God and a reprobate? Paul gives four required components that are necessary to face this problem:

1) Spirituality, 5:16, 18, 25.

Paul does not intend that any member of a church qualifies here (I Cor. 3:1). Rather qualified people have appetites that are consistently and manifestly spiritual, vs. 22-24. If in a local church there is such a problem as here, then only seek out a spiritual person for consultation and none other. If you see a person with a problem, be careful to consider your own spiritual state before you step in to give advice and help. If you are not qualified, first take steps to remedy your own problem.

2) Restoration, 4:10-12.

Have the attitude of the angels in heaven (Luke 15:7). “Restore,” καταρτίζω, katartizō, means to repair, mend, even as the disciples mended their broken nets (Matt. 4:21). The desire is to gently lift up, not sit upon; it is to seek healing and wholeness, not with ostracism and self-glorifying censoriousness; it is to desire restoration to a former state of “blessedness” (4:14) and “running well” (5:7) and “spiritual fruitfulness” (5:22-23), even as modeled by Paul.

3) Gentleness, 5:23.

Earlier, 5:23, we saw that gentleness was meekness, a humble, modest attitude that is restrained in spite of having access to strong resources, as pictured in the life of Christ (John 8:10-11), as well as Paul (I Cor. 4:21; 15:9-10). There is no subtle boasting of superior spirituality because of sensitivity to falling (I Cor. 10:12), but a sympathetic identification with the believer. Advice will be given along with the possible suggestion of discipline, even the withdrawal of responsibilities, but the whole occasion will admonish ourselves as well as the fallen brother.

## 4) Self-examination, I Cor. 10:12; II Cor. 13:5.

We, who would even consider bearing another's burden, are reminded in this situation that it is only the grace of God that has delivered us. Looking deep within, we admit to the darkness there and lurking sin and our great frailty. We know of the iniquity of our thought processes even though we have not sinned overtly. So we desire that our brother be restored that he might help us with out own trials and burdens, 6:2. As Charles Wesley has written:

All praise to our redeeming Lord,  
 Who joins us by His grace,  
 And bids us, each to each restored,  
 Together seek His face.  
 He bids us build each other up;  
 And, gathered into one,  
 To our high calling's glorious hope  
 We hand in hand go on.

Paul's Epistle to Philemon illustrates this attitude of gentle, uplifting counsel, vs. 10-17. Likewise in Galatians, Paul's attitude is firm on doctrine, yet gentle, loving, spiritual, modest, restorative. In *The Pilgrim's Progress* we see Christian stumbling through pride, but Faithful comes along and gently, without harsh condemnation, lifts his brother to his feet, with the result that, "they went very lovingly on together."<sup>15</sup> And consider even Nathan the prophet who surgically exposed the cancer of King David's soul. Upon learning of heartfelt repentance, "I have sinned against the LORD," David is then told, "The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die" (II Sam. 12:13).

## (b) Our proxy burden bearing is to be Christ motivated, v. 2.

"Bear/support/endure [βαστάζω, bastazō v paimp] one another's [pressing, heavy] burdens [βάρος, baros n apn], and so fulfill/fully discharge the true purpose of [ἀναπληρώω, anaplēroō v faip] the law of Christ." At a church this writer pastored many years ago, there were those who believed that we should have congregational sharing meetings at which we would ventilate our problems before all. This verse was used as justification for such a practice, though the writer vigorously opposed it on the grounds that first, v. 1 qualifies that the sharing is only to be with a "spiritual person," and surely in private, and second, indiscriminate public sharing would only stimulate carnality rather than blessing.

What then is meant by "the law of Christ" that is to regulate our "burden bearing" for others? The word "bear," βαστάζω, bastazō, is identical to that used in John 19:17: "They took Jesus, therefore, and

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<sup>15</sup> John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan*, OIII, p. 117.

He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull.” Thus “the law of Christ” means that as Christ has born *our* burdens, so also ought we to bear those of *others*, especially *fellow believers*. Matthew 11:28-30 tells of Christ giving rest to those who are “weary and heavy-laden.” Those then who receive rest are to give rest wherever possible. I Peter 2:23-24 tells how Christ “bore our sins in His body on the cross.” Hence while we do not condone sin, and warn our Christian brother of it, yet should he become burdened we deal with him tenderly, desiring restoration. Philippians 2:5-8, 22 tells of Christ willingly humbling himself so that he might bear our burdens (cf. John 3:17). Hence v. 5 exhorts us to, “have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,” by means of bearing the burdens of our brethren. So John 13:34 gives a precise definition of “the law of Christ,” “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you” (cf. John 15:12). In other words, those who are loved much by Christ will love much according to the constraint of Christ (Luke 7:47; II Cor. 5:14-15).

(2) A word of caution, vs. 3-5.

When we bear another’s burden, are we not at the same time tempted to be patronizing, condescending in our attitude? We look at the sin of our brother and wonder how he could fall since we did not. We deign to lift him back to our impeccable level. We applaud ourselves, believing we have come much further in the Christian life than our brother. We are like Hopeful in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* who considered that he would have put up a better fight against assailed Little-faith’s three muggers, Faint-heart, Mistrust, and Guilt.<sup>16</sup> Whereas here Paul declares that with this attitude we “deceive ourselves,” we are deluded in terms of our real “spirituality” that does not accord with the definition of v. 1.

In Christian work, one of the most common pitfalls is that of pride in relation to other believers’ activities. Consider the case of III John 9: “I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say.” For this reason a deacon is not to be “a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil” (I Tim. 3:6). Sometimes, because our appointed roles in a church differ, there is a tendency to regard one another differently, though Paul warns against this (I Cor. 12:21-25). Hence a sobering method of self-examination is about to be revealed.

(a) Don’t judge yourself by the standards of others, v. 3.

“For if anyone thinks [δοκέω, dokeō v pais] he is something when he is nothing, he deceives/mentally leads astray [φρεναπατάω, phrenapataō v pais] himself.” The man of the world commonly makes the claim that he is at least as good as the rest of mankind. However the believer should see things differently. He has a realistic view of human nature:

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 149-50.

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall” (I Cor. 10:12; cf. 6:1b). He knows the depth of sin in the human heart and especially pride within the thought processes (Rom. 7:18-20). He is sensitive to his accountability before a holy and a righteous God.

Hence don't be foolish enough to think you are somebody when compared with another sinner, says Paul. You are attempting to boast in your ranking as a fair sow in a pig farm! “For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding. . . . For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends” (II Cor. 10:12, 18).

(b) Judge yourself by God's absolute standards, v. 4.

“Let each one examine [δοκιμάζω, dokimazō v paims] his own work, and then he will have [cause/reason] to boast [καύχημα, kauchēma n asn] only according to himself, and not according to another.” While the believer is to “examine” himself, as if assaying metals or validating money, no objective standard of judgment is directly stated. However, in addressing Christians, surely “the law of Christ,” v. 2, is assumed (John 13:34; I Cor. 9:21; I John 2:3-6; 3:23-24). Hence, measure yourself against the standard of Jesus Christ's matchless character, especially as demonstrated in His earthly ministry. If you claim to be a better tennis player than this writer, you do not prove very much; but suppose you compare yourself with the number one ranking tennis professional, then you may or may not have much to boast about. Likewise if I compare myself with God's standards, only then will I have anything to boast in, or, more likely, be overcome with shame. In the light of v. 14, comparison with Christ will shut our mouths, except to boast in grace alone.

(c) Remember, there is a reckoning day of judgment, v. 5.

“For each one shall bear/support/endure [βαστάζω, bastazō v fais] his own load/weight to be carried [φορτίον, phortion n asn].” The seeming parallel with v. 2 is not altogether real since “burden” there is not the same Greek word as “burden” is here translated in the KJV. There “burden” refers more to an unnatural, grievous millstone of guilt and trouble; here “load” refers to a natural back-pack of responsibility. Thus in helping distressed fellow pilgrims, we are first to have a realistic, objective assessment of our selves in the light of our standing before Christ (Ps. 143:2). So in Romans 14:12, “each one of us will give an account of himself to God.” The problem with Job's comforters was their lack of judgment concerning themselves before they judged Job. For this reason they were unqualified and ineffectual as “burden bearer's.” They felt they could clearly see Job's problem while being oblivious to their own self-righteous hearts! Their relative health, according to their own implied self-assessment, was suggestive of right

standing with God. However, it was in fact a sanctimonious, judgmental spirit that indicated their wrong standing with God. They needed to appreciate, as did some of the Galatians, that, “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (II Cor. 5:10). When a Christian has this perspective in mind, he qualifies as a good “burden bearer,” and is much better able to help the likes of Job. He is continuously humbled by a dominant vision of the righteousness of God, his own accountability proving him to be unworthy, and consequently the only ultimate hope of grace and mercy!

b. Brotherly substance sharing, vs. 6-10.

The issue here is not that of a Christian brother being “overtaken with a fault,” v. 1. Rather it is a new question of practical material need amongst the teaching brethren so that they might be set free to do the full work of the ministry (Acts 6:1-6). James 2:15-16 similarly addresses the matter of “a brother or sister who is without clothing and in need of daily food.” Of course “the law of Christ” is equally applicable here, v. 2, even as is the vital role of spiritual fruit, 5:22-23.

(1) Our responsibility is to invest in biblical ministry, v. 6.

“Let he who is being catechized/instructed [κατηχέω, katēcheō par ppsm] in the Word share [κοινωνέω, koinōneō v paims] all good things with his catechizer/instructor.” Here katēcheō, means “to orally instruct.” While we may think of children being catechized, in the early church those taught prior to baptism were called “Catechumens,” which practice may be derived from Judaism that stressed thorough instruction of its proselytes. Hence here we have a glimpse of life in an early local church that included solid, regular instruction or doctrine, not candy-cane teaching and abstract relational sentiment.

But why does Paul desire that the student of the Word care for his teacher in a practical way? So that the student might freely manifest Spiritual fruit according to present material necessity. Romans 15:26-28 speaks of the physical needs of the Jerusalem church being met by Gentiles who had received the gospel, which charity is also declared to be a fruit. Philippians 4:15-17 speaks of “giving and receiving,” of Paul’s physical needs being met and declared by him to be a fruit. Those given the high responsibility of teaching God’s Word (I Tim. 5:17) should not be encumbered with mundane affairs, concern for bodily needs, duties of lesser importance (Acts 6:1-6). Rather the spiritual fruit of the saints should materially support them.

Consider the high responsibility of teaching the Word of God (Jas. 3:1), hence permit your teacher to fulfill his high calling of “accurately handling the word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15). Consider the source of your spiritual food provided by those “worthy of double honor,” so that “you shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing [the grain], . . . the laborer is worthy of his wages” (I Tim. 5:17-18). Consider the prime need of the church for the

Word. Hence give your preacher time and do not shackle him with mundane responsibilities (Acts 6:1-4, 7). However remember that your concern in this area will be in direct proportion to the real desire you have for doctrine, the Word, since we only invest where our heart is. We often wonder where to wisely give our money for the Lord's work. Make it a basic rule, as implied here, that we give where the Word of God is faithfully taught and published and broadcast.

- (2) Our responsibility is to invest in eternity, vs. 7-9.

The connection here with v. 6 is that to the degree we invest in the Word for ourselves and others, we likewise invest in eternity and Spiritual priorities. As a consequence, we receive commensurate spiritual dividends. This is a fixed immutable law.

- (a) The law of sowing and reaping, v. 7.

“Do not be deceived/lead astray [πλανάομαι, planaomai v ppimp], God is not being [successfully] deceived/mockled/ridiculed [μυκτηρίζω, muktērīzō v ppis]. For whatever a man sows [σπείρω, speirō v pass], this he will also reap [θερίζω, therizō v fais].” Here is indicated the inviolate nature of the law of sowing and reaping (II Cor. 9:6); there will not be any exception just because a particular Christian believes himself to be worthy of exemption. A clear, categorical warning is being given. It is a matter of cause and effect. A man who does not invest in heaven with its currency is not going to heaven to partake of its desirable dividends!

The kind of sowing (investing) we are involved in determines the kind of reaping (return) that will result. “Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles” (Matt. 7:16). Hence our investing indicates the type of harvest we are really to expect. If our heart is where our pocket is, then where is our pocket? – invested in the Word and God's business or in the business of this world? If our hip pocket nerve, so close to our wallet, is the most sensitive of all, does it hurt most when we are called upon to invest in this world or the next? So, “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:19-21).

Hence Paul longs for us to make the right sort of investment, to sow the good seed, to make a down-payment on a heavenly venture. In Luke 16:9 our Savior encourages this same sort of investment, even using money as a means toward accomplishing a heavenly end, for self and others. That is, if we have money or material means, not simply if we have lots of it, let us invest it with a spiritual goal in mind. Let us use our material substance for our own edification in the Word as well as others. Hence, where we invest in this world indicates not only where our heart is, but also the commensurate type of harvest we can expect.

Do you claim to be a Christian? If so, where are you investing? Where are you sowing? Is it in the Word of God? If so, then you will reap a dividend from the Word. If it is not in the Word of God, then why do

you call yourself a Christian? Paul here says, “Do not be deceived!” You can only reap from where you invest. Perhaps you don’t claim to be a Christian. Even so this law still applies without exception. If you sow to the world and the flesh, you will reap corruption, death, judgment, God’s wrath. If you sow to the rejection or neglect of the Word and God’s beloved Son, you reap condemnation (Rom. 5:16, 18). What exactly is your investment portfolio comprised of, earthly of heavenly stocks and bonds?

(b) The direction in which we sow, v. 8.

“Because the one sowing to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption/rottenness [φθόρα, phthora n asf], but the one sowing to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” There are basically only two fields in which we can sow, those of the “flesh” and the “Spirit.” So in Matthew 7:13-14 there are only two gates, two paths, two types of pilgrims, two destinations.

1) The field of the flesh reaps a fleshy harvest.

What is meant by “sowing to his own the flesh”? Notice how Paul distinguishes between “the one” as the essential professing Christian, and “his own flesh” which is the vehicle of the essential professing Christian (Rom. 6:6, 12-13, 19; 7:18, 22-23). Two aspects are suggested here.

a) The subjective (internal) field of our own flesh.

We invest in cultivation of that relationship between the human spirit, the soul, and our *own* polluted body of flesh. In this case the human spirit yields to the overtures of the flesh. Calvin comments that it is, “to be so entirely devoted to the flesh as to direct all our thoughts to its interests and convenience.”<sup>17</sup> Thus the human spirit panders to the lusting of the body of flesh.” As a result the battle of the inner man establishes the direction of external confrontations according to carnal proposals from the world.

b) The objective (external) field of fleshy activity.

We invest in cultivation of that relationship between the whole person and external carnal proposals. Here is Paul’s main thrust in this instance. It is self-investment that welcomes every encouragement of the world in this direction. It is preference for investing in the state lottery or casino with all of its remote uncertainty rather than the mining and propagation of God’s Truth with its assured eternal

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<sup>17</sup> John Calvin, *Galatians*, [http://www.ccel.org/c/calvin/comment3/comm\\_index.htm](http://www.ccel.org/c/calvin/comment3/comm_index.htm).

dividends. It is to spend with relish more time before the television and media of this world, audio, visual, and print, than you do with the Bible and good Christian books. It is having little interest in learning from the preaching and exposition of God's Word, drinking it in and thus desiring to support such ministry, as the context here describes. Rather it is to spend more time in recreational fellowship with the world than you do with God's people.

But what is the harvest that results from such sowing? "They sow the wind and they reap the whirlwind" (Hos. 8:7). They are "those who sow trouble [and] harvest it. By the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of His anger they come to an end" (Job 4:8-9). If we sow in the world, not biblical ministry, we can only expect to reap what the world has to offer, which is passing, fleeting pleasure that snaps back with bitter results, like the bite of an adder. Consider a professing Christian who, in neglecting biblical ministry, sows to the flesh; he is miserable and yet wonders why his life is so lifeless, so arid and parched; he reaps what he has sown. So Paul here uses the term "corruption," φθόρα, phthora, to describe "rottenness, decadence," that which we reap from carnality. It does not mean annihilation, cessation of existence, but rather increasing moral dissolution and putrefaction in a man's soul that ends in death and consignment to hell!

In the physical realm, if a man eats poor food, he reaps poor health. If a man eats poor soul food he reaps poor health in his soul, that is the cancer of various forms of immorality in the mind that metastasize throughout his whole being. As a result, such a person who will not invest in biblical ministry, for the sake of himself, his teachers and others, will inevitably shrivel up in his soul and wither and die. Because of the cultivation of his spiritually unhealthy appetite, this is to be his bitter harvest!

## 2) The field of the Spirit reaps a Spiritual harvest.

What does "sowing to the Spirit," mean? It means that we invest in the Spirit of God's agenda. "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5). Above all else, what is it that the Spirit of God does to a Christian man? He imparts life, divine life (Rom. 8:6, 10) so that the Christian becomes a "partaker of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). But here the Spirit indwelt child of God is described as investing "into the Spirit." More specifically, what is this "spiritual field"? Again two aspects are suggested here.

- a) The subjective (internal) field of our own soul.

We invest in cultivation of that relationship between the human spirit and the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16, 26), with the result that we do not “grieve” or “quench” his urgings (Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 5:19), but “worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3).

- b) The objective (external) field of means of grace.

We invest in cultivation of that relationship between the human spirit that is dominated by the Holy Spirit and external, God ordained agencies that enable us to “walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16, 25). This is the main emphasis here, and the most obvious, specific instance is that of v. 6; (cf. II Corinthians 9:5-6, 10). In other words, when we sow or plant a field of good biblical ministry, then we reap good biblical ministry that in turn reaps a harvest of “eternal life,” for ourselves and others. Why do wealthy men often pour great amounts of money into political causes? Because they hope to reap earthly dividends from the politicians! So the Spiritual Christian invests materially and personally in the cause of the kingdom of Jesus Christ with the intent that many, including himself, will reap eternal, heavenly dividends.

Suppose that you invest in this world in the realm of ambition, acquisition, law, medicine, politics, sport, entertainment, as did Dr. Faustus by means of bargaining with the Devil, in Goethe’s tragedy, *Faust*, and reap the highest level this world affords. But then comes the time when death draws near and Mephistopheles comes to collect his part of the bargain, consignment to hell! Then what shall it profit a man or woman, “to gain [to invest in] the whole world, and forfeit his soul [reap its damnation]?” (Mark 8:36). That is God’s inviolate rule of investment! But to those who invest in the kingdom of God there comes the Savior at death who declares: “Well done, good and faithful slave/servant; . . . enter into the joy of your master [receive your heavenly dividend according to your investment]” (Matt. 25:21).

- (c) The determination with which we sow, v. 9.

“Let us not become weary/losing heart/yielding to evil [ἐγκακέω, enkakeō v pasp] in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not yield to weariness/fainting/throwing in the towel [ἐκλύω, ekluō par pnpn].” The fact of sowing is one thing; the necessity is indisputable as Paul has described it; but the manner in which we sow is quite another matter. What we are involved with in sowing, the Word of

God, is indisputable; but the ongoing spiritual health of the sower, his co-workers, and the church environment, is another matter.

1) Sowing with exhaustion.

Now the analogy of “sowing and reaping” is still with us, and it is helpful to consider this process at an earthly level. In other words, after a farmer has wearily sown his seed, then, while watering and weeding is ongoing, yet patience is required until harvest time (Jas. 1:12; 5:7-8). Thus the end purpose of sowing is not realized for a considerable period of time. Hence applying this to the spiritual sowing of vs. 6, 8, we translate here: “Let us not be growing weary [present tense] in doing [present tense] that which is good; for in due time we will reap if we are not fainting [present tense].” There are two negative attitudes described here. First, not “growing weary,” ἐγκοκέω *enkakeō*, means not to be discouraged, to lose heart, to slacken off, but rather confidently endure, hopefully persevere. Second, not “fainting,” ἐκλύω, *ekluō*, means not to unloose our spiritual taughtness and go limp and collapse, to relax in serious employment, and thus yield to the flesh, v. 8, but rather maintain disciplined, controlled effort.

Now the assumption is that we are involved in bona fide Christian ministry, whether *directly* in the proclamation of the Word, in various ways, or *indirectly*, in receiving the proclamation of the Word, or *supportively* in the proclamation of the Word. Further, this is a prolonged process probably encompassing years. So it is suggested that initial enthusiasm has tended to give way to a sense of a daily grind. This means that that *directly*, the proclamation of the Word has become more of a professional duty, *indirectly*, the reception of the Word with a glow of enthusiasm has become more of a flicker, and *supportively*, material investment has become comparatively meager when compared with our worldly portfolio of stocks and bonds. In modern terms, our spiritual life is suffering a mid-life crisis; it is satisfied with spiritual moribundity! We have declined into lukewarmness, mediocrity! Our ministry is biblical, but we are lackluster laborers!

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has a significant sermon on this text in which he describes the problem as follows:

This is the stage which follows the initial experience . . . in which everything was new and surprising and wonderful and clear, the stage in which we were constantly making new discoveries [about the Christian life] which never seemed to come to an end. But suddenly we are conscious of the fact that they do seem to have come to an end, and now we have become accustomed to the Christian life. . . . Perhaps, to make it all worse, there may be troubles and difficulties, caused by other people. They may do

things they should not do and offend in various ways. [As a result we] are not so much tired of the work as tired in it.<sup>18</sup>

2) Sowing with expectation.

Thus Dr. Paul, in having learned of certain symptoms of spiritual ill-health, calls on us to apply self-diagnosis and prescriptive treatment.

- a) What then is the remedy, diagnostically speaking?:
- i) *First* we acknowledge the problem and therefore reject resignation, indifference.
  - ii) *Second* we reject artificial stimulants, such as a physical remedy when a spiritual solution is needed, or vice versa.
  - iii) *Third* we employ self-examination, physical and then spiritual.
  - iv) *Fourth* we investigate why we are engaged in this Christian work, and consider the legitimacy of our part in it. Are we now more concerned about security? To again quote Lloyd-Jones: “Instead of being God’s work, has it been a sort of mainspring of my life?”<sup>19</sup>
  - v) *Fifth* we examine our personal, devotional and family life; routine may have dulled our spiritual exercising.
- b) What then is the remedy, prescriptively speaking?
- i) *First* let us review the importance of what we are doing, our original motivation. Is it still the same?
  - ii) *Second* let us look at the lives of other sowers and allied workers, both good and bad, especially in the context of local church life.
  - iii) *Third* let us appreciate our status in terms of spiritual maturity; is our problem impatience, like a child?
  - iv) *Fourth* let us be reminded of harvesting already accomplished, some fruit or evidence of God’s blessing.

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<sup>18</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression, its Cause and Cure*, pp. 192-4. Some of the following remedial suggestions are also derived from this work.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

- v) *Fifth* let us anticipate future harvesting in this life and the life to come, by means of a heavenly rather than an earthly perspective. Paul describes his own hope in this regard: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing” (II Tim. 4:7-8). For Paul, it is heavenly acclamation, not earthly praise, that he is seeking!

(3) Our responsibility to invest in goodness, v. 10.

“So then, as we have time, let us do/work [ἐργάζομαι, *ergazomai*] good to all [people], and especially to those who are of the householders [οἰκεῖος, *oikeios* adj apm] of the faith.” Paul now concludes the main practical segment of his epistle with a final exhortation. Clarification of the doctrine of justification by faith alone has led us on to the believer’s duty of liberty living in Christ, 5:1, and resultant fruit bearing in particular, 5:22-23. Elsewhere Paul has repeatedly stressed that salvation by grace alone through faith results in an inevitable call and response to duty (Eph. 2:8-10; Tit. 3:7-8). Now in one verse Paul sums up the responsibility of the believer who has been saved by grace alone through faith. In spite of present faithful perseverance “in doing good,” v. 9, don’t allow weariness to overcome you. Consequently, be sensitive to opportunities for good concerning all men in general, but believers in particular. In other words, while we are to be considerate of all men and women, yet, as the saying goes, “charity begins at home,” and in this case we mean the local church community of believers.

(a) Be sensitive to opportunities for good.

Literally, “As we have time/opportunity, let us be working the good.” In other words, desirous of doing good, we are to be sensitive to openings, looking for every available occasion; life is for doing good, not self-indulgence. John Bunyan spent 12 years in Bedford jail, yet during that time he preached to inmates, made shoelaces, wrote 9 books including *The Pilgrim’s Progress* and *Grace Abounding*. John Wesley regularly rose at 4:00 a.m. to pray for two hours. He mastered six languages, preached 40,000 sermons, rode 250,000 miles on horseback, wrote 440 books and pamphlets, and died at 87 having led England through revival. William Carey was the pastor of a poor Baptist church at 26, also a cobbler during the week and thus by this means supported a wife and two children. While at his work bench he also studied and learned five languages in seven years.

But what is “the good” here? Of course such “goodness” is rooted in being united to God who is essentially good, that is *admirable* in his moral glory, and especially so in redemption through His beloved Son. So Joseph Hart, pastor of the Independent Chapel in London during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, has written in this vein as follows:

How good is the God we adore,  
 Our faithful unchangeable Friend!  
 His love is as great as His power,  
 And knows neither measure nor end!  
 'Tis Jesus the First and the Last,  
 Whose Spirit shall Guide us safe home,  
 We'll praise Him for all that is past,  
 And trust Him for all that's to come.

But surely the context here describes this goodness as the teaching of 5:22-26; 6:2, 6, 8-9. This includes, “patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control,” burden bearing, spiritually motivated material investment, etc. But further Ephesians 4:28-29 declares it to be both good deeds and the gracious speaking of good doctrine that will result in edification. Further the context suggests that both believers and unbelievers are to be the focus of this goodness.

- (b) Be sensitive to the need of goodness in all men in general.

“As we have time/opportunity, let us be working the good *to all people*.” But who are these “all people”? Often the Bible describes the Christian’s duty toward “all men/ people.” Thus, we are to be “gentle, kind, peaceable, considerate” toward all people (Phil. 4:5; II Tim. 2:24; Tit. 3:2). But further, we are to “abound in love [ἀγάπη agapē] for one another, and for all people” (I Thess. 3:12). In other words, “all people” means all of mankind wherever we encounter them, yet with a particular order in mind.

But why are we to act this way? Why are we to “do good to *all people*,” to be gentle, kind, peaceable, considerate, loving? Are we asked to do anything that God does not do Himself? If we are to “love all people,” is this contrary to what God does? Listen to the Son of God: “I say to you, love [ἀγαπάω, agapaō] your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt. 5:44-45). If the Lord Jesus here commands indiscriminate love for our enemies, and undoubtedly “all men,” can he at the same time have particular love for the elect? Surely the answer is “yes”! However hyper-Calvinists tilt in the direction of suggesting that God only loves the elect. Yes, there is a distinction between God’s particular love for the elect and his universal love for the non-elect. Nevertheless the Lord Jesus makes it plain that His Father does love the world in general, that is the non-elect, in a universal sense. Here is a paradox when we also contemplate His wrath. However, as with the Father, the next qualifying statement also establishes a distinction in the Christian’s love for “all men.”

- (c) Be sensitive to the needs of believers in particular.

“As we have time/opportunity, let us be working the good to all people, *but especially/above all/chiefly* [μάλιστα, malista ] *to the householders of the faith.*” Thus there is a distinction here concerning the priority of our goodness. So in I Timothy 4:10, God is “the Savior of all men, especially [μάλιστα, malista] of believers.” Here are two distinct aspects of God being a Savior. On the one hand He is a Savior of the non-elect concerning temporal earthly preservation and blessing (Acts 14:16-17; 17:25-26). On the other hand He is “especially” the Savior of the elect concerning their eternal salvation (John 10:3; Eph. 2:3-6).

If we are married, our first responsibility is to our family, those in our immediate charge. Hence we do not neglect those closest to us so that we might enter into missionary service. Such a person is “worse than an unbeliever” (I Tim. 5:8). This would be a reversal of the order here. Rather we ought to instinctively do good to those with whom we have the closest relationship. But then there follow those who are our neighbors, employment associates, and simply those we pass in the street. So: “See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people” (I Thess. 5:15). Again: “Honor all people, love the brotherhood, honor the king” (I Pet. 2:17).

Thus because the Christian has the most intimate relationship of all with Jesus Christ, then he or she will give loving priority to those who have the same sacred relationship, that is His disciples. “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him” (I John 5:1). Therefore, perhaps our participation or lack of it in the affairs of a local church does indicate the degree of our love of Christ. If we love Him, we will have special love for His sheep (John 13:34-35). That love will be evident in practical concern for their good, both material and spiritual. “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren” (I John 3:14).

