

Third Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – 1 Kings 19:9b-21

The LORD Speaks to Elijah

9 There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” **10** He said, “I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.” **11** And he said, “Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. **12** And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. **13** And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” **14** He said, “I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.” **15** And the LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. **16** And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. **17** And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. **18** Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

19:9-14 The question on vv. 9 and 13 evokes the confession in vv. 10 and 14, illustrating the persistence of both the Lord and Elijah. In verse 18, the Lord provides information that undermines Elijah’s evaluation of his circumstance. (TLSB)

19:9 *What are you doing here, Elijah?* The question implies that Elijah had come to Sinai for his own misguided reasons and not because the Lord had sent him. (CSB)

This may have the implication that Elijah is outside his province and is somewhere he really doesn’t belong. (CSB)

Men are made not merely to be acted upon but to act, and should never voluntarily go where they can do nothing. (CB)

19:10 *very jealous for the Lord* – He was desirous of honoring the Lord by leading the people to obey him. (CB)

Elijah did not give a direct answer to the Lord’s question but implied that the work the Lord had begun centuries earlier with the establishment of the Sinai covenant had now come to nothing. Whereas Moses had interceded for Israel when they sinned with the golden calf (Ex 32:11–13), Elijah condemned the Israelites for breaking the covenant, and bitterly complained over the fruitlessness of his own work.

only one left. Elijah reveals the extent of his loneliness and sense of abandonment. (TLSB)

Men are never more likely to boast of their past labors, than when they are neglecting their present duty; nor ever more likely to complain, find fault with others, and sink into despair. (CB)

19:11 *the Lord passed by* – This language is like that of Exodus 33-34. Just as God passes before Moses, so now God passes by Elijah in an act of revelation. That Elijah approaches Moses' stature is reinforced by their joint appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 3)

wind...earthquake...fire – God had sent one or more of these before in his judgment of people. He had used a mighty wind to separate the waters of the Red Sea and had then drowned the Egyptian soldiers when the water came crashing back together. God had sent fire from heaven to destroy the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. But God was not yet about to deal with his people according to the Law. God was not coming to Elijah with threats and anger but with patience and love, with gentleness and mercy. (PBC)

At times, God had manifested Himself in phenomena of nature, e.g., wind (Ezk 1:4), earthquake (Nu 16:31), fire (Ex 19:18). (TLSB)

19:12 *low whisper*. In the symbolism of these occurrences (vv. 11–12) the Lord appears to be telling Elijah that although his servant's indictment of Israel was a call for God to judge his people with windstorm, earthquake and fire, it was not God's will to do so now. Elijah must return to continue God's mission to his people, and Elisha is to carry it on for another generation (v. 16). (CSB)

The word "whisper" also occurs in Job 4:16 (hushed voice) and in Ps. 107:29 (the Lord stilled the storm "to a whisper"). The adjective "gentle" reinforces what is already present in the noun. This adjective is used elsewhere to describe the "thin" flakes of manna (Ex 16:14), the "thin" hair of a diseased person (Lev 13:30), finely ground altar incense (Lev 16:12, and the malnourished "thing" stalks of the seven lean years (Gen 41:6). It is singularly used in our text to modify a sound. God reveals himself to Elijah in a way that strikes awe in him. Through a quiet voice God gave spiritual strength to Elijah. Through that same quiet word God still today continues to save sinners and to restore the souls of his troubled people. The important question is whether we are willing to see him as he promises in his Word to reveal himself – as opposed to setting up our own expectations. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 3)

We may draw a distinction between a Law revelation with obvious power, versus a Gospel revelation that comes quietly. The "theology of glory" looks for God to appear in dramatic visible forms. In contrast, the "theology of the cross" is an incarnational theology of humiliation. It looks for God hidden in Jesus, the man of sorrows, and today cloaked in Word and Sacrament. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 3)

Elijah found no comfort and no assurance in God's power manifested in nature through the wind. Rather, when God's Word came to instruct him in a quiet voice, then the prophet found truth and strength. What the Lord whispers is a mystery. Luther: "The Law is a hammer that crushes rocks, a fire, a wind, and a great and mighty earthquake that overturns mountains. When Elijah could not bear the terrors of the Law that were signified by these events, he wrapped his head in his mantle; and after the storm he had seen was over, there came a still small voice, in which the Lord was present. But the violence of the fire, the storm, and the earthquake had to come first, before the Lord Himself followed in the still small voice' (AE 26:310-11) (TLSB)

It is not always that which is most visible and tangible, or which makes the most noise, that is most efficacious in doing good. (CB)

19:13 *wrapped his face in his cloak* – Perhaps expressing shame. (TLSB)

stood at the entrance – Perhaps the whisper called him out. (TLSB)

What are you doing here, Elijah? After demonstrating his presence in the gentle whisper rather than in the wind, earthquake or fire, the Lord gave Elijah an opportunity to revise the answer he had previously given to the same question (vv. 9–10). (CSB)

19:14 Elijah’s unrevised answer demonstrated that he did not understand the significance of the divine revelation he had just witnessed. (CSB)

I only am left – As a matter of fact, Elijah had not been a failure. The God who sees into our hearts and who “knows those who are his” (2 Timothy 2:19) still had 7000 faithful followers in Israel (verse 18). (PBC)

19:15-17 Many miles north of Israel. *Hazael ... Jehu ... Elisha*. In a renewed battle against idolatry, Elijah was to anoint these men. Elijah personally recruited Elisha (vv 19–21), who in turn carried out the commands concerning Hazael and Jehu (2Ki 8:7–15; 9:1–10). (TLSB)

19:15 *The LORD said to him*. Giving instructions to Elijah that revealed his sovereign power over people and nations. Even though Israel would experience divine judgment through Hazael, Jehu and Elisha, God would continue to preserve a remnant faithful to himself among the people. In the coming verse God will give a threefold assignment. (CSB)

go, return on your way – God here is correcting Elijah’s earlier conclusion that his prophetic ministry was finished; God still has use and purpose for his prophet. God shows compassion by not scolding Elijah for self-piteous whining. Instead, God upholds the weary prophet, listens to his plight, reveals himself and speaks to him, then return the prophet to his holy tasks. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 3)

wilderness of Damascus. Apparently Elijah is to go back by way of the road east of the Dead Sea and the Jordan. As it turns out, all three anointings take place east of the Jordan, though it is Elisha who effects the anointing of the two kings. (CSB)

anoint. Appears to mean here no more than “designate as divinely appointed.” This anointing was actually done by Elijah’s successor Elisha (see 2Ki 8:7–15). (CSB)

Hazael. Subsequently became a serious threat to Israel during the reigns of Joram, Jehu and Jehoahaz (see 2Ki 8:28–29; 10:32–33; 12:17–18; 13:3, 22). (CSB)

God can work inside and outside of the earthly realms of his kingdom. Here and outsider is used to help bring God’s punishment upon Israel. (PBC)

If the people of God, when fearful, discouraged, and desponding, would get out of trouble, they must go to work; what their hands find to do, they must do for the purpose of honoring God and doing good, committing themselves and their interests to His guidance and disposal. (CB)

19:16 *anoint Jehu*. Jehu was a military commander under Ahab and Joram, Ahab’s son (2Ki 9:5–6). He was anointed king over Israel by a “man from the company of the prophets” at the instruction of Elisha (2Ki 9:1–16), with the mandate to destroy the house of Ahab. (CSB)

Called the “son of Omri” on an Assyrian black obelisk that lists his tribute paid to Assyria, because Israel was known as the land of Omri. The low-relief carving shows Jehu bowed on his knees before Shalmaneser III. (TLSB)

Elisha. As with Elijah (see note on 17:1), Elisha’s name (meaning “God is salvation” or “God saves”) was the essence of his ministry. His name evokes memory of Joshua (“The LORD saves”). Elijah is given someone to finish his work just as Moses was, and Elisha channels the covenant blessings to the faithful in Israel just as Joshua brought Israel into the promised land (see the account of Elisha’s ministry in 2Ki 2:19–8:15; 9:1–3; 13:14–20). In the NT John the Baptist (“Elijah,” Mt 11:14; 17:12) was followed by Jesus to complete God’s saving work. (CSB)

son of Shaphat. Shaphat means “He judges,” which is also in accordance with Elisha’s ministry. (CSB)

from Abel Meholah. Like Elijah, Elisha was from beyond the Jordan. (CSB)

Elisha’s home was c 2 mi E of the Jordan and c 25 mi S of the Sea of Chinnereth. (TLSB)

anoint to be prophet in your place – The Lord acknowledges Elijah’s exhaustion and plans for his relief, while ensuring the continuation of the ministry. (TLSB)

19:17 *Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael.* See 2Ki 9:24. (CSB)

Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. How this may have been fulfilled we are not told, but see 2Ki 2:24; 8:1 (see also Hos 6:5). (CSB)

They would all be instrumental in the punishment of idolatrous Israel. (CB)

19:18 *seven thousand.* A round number, no doubt symbolic of the fullness or completeness of the divinely preserved godly remnant (Ro 11:2–4). In any case Elijah had been mistaken in his conclusion that he alone had remained faithful (see vv. 10, 14; 18:22). (CSB)

Although many were to die by the sword of Hazael and Jehu, for whose rise to power Elisha was responsible (v. 17), a large number would be found in Israel who did not succumb to the seduction of Baal worship. “The godless priests in Judah held a false belief about such sacrifices; Baal worship continued in Israel. Nevertheless, a Church of God was there that objected to these godless services” (Ap XXIV 98). Luther: “This adequate evidence that size does not make the church. Nor dare one consider how holy its origin is, who its ancestors are, and what they have in their possession and have received from God” (AE 2:101). Mel: “In the time of Elijah the church consisted of Elijah, Elisha, and their hearers, and the church was not without ministry. For the prophets themselves were the ministers of the Gospel and there were some godly priests with them” (Chem, LTh 2:685). (TLSB)

not kissed him. It was customary to kiss the statues of the idols. So Elijah was by no means the only true believer left, as the Lord, who knows those who are His, assured him. In the midst of a godless world He has His small crew, a small flock, indeed, but nevertheless loyal to Him. (Kretzmann)

Some good men are at times tempted to think that there are none who labor in the right way to sustain the cause of God but themselves and that when they are gone it must sink. But he will show that it is not as dependent on them as they thought it was. (CB)

19:9–18 When Elijah is discouraged, the Lord comes to him in a “low whisper,” encouraging him that he is not alone and commissioning him to return to his God-given ministry. God’s voice speaks to us in the quietness of the inspired pages of Scripture, by which He encourages us with the forgiveness, life, and salvation in Jesus, the Word made flesh. • I thank You, dear God, that in the pages of the Bible, You have come with the assuring whisper of Your presence and protection. In the gentle Savior’s name. Amen. (TLSB)

The Call of Elisha

19 So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him. **20** And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, “Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.” And he said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?” **21** And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him.

19:19 *son of Shaphat* – Elisha’s family lived east of the Jordan, perhaps in the territory of Gad. (TLSB)

twelve yoke of oxen – Remarkable coordination of effort, guiding a team of 24 animals. (TLSB)

threw his cloak around him. Thus designating Elisha as his successor (see note on v. 16). (CSB)

Not all of us get the mantle of doing full-time church work. But have all been clothed with the robe of righteousness of Christ in our baptism. We don’t have to turn our backs to our current ways of making a living but in fact use our positions in life to witness to God’s love and mercy. (PBC)

Designating Elisha as his successor. Ephraim Syrus: “Elijah also was persecuted as Jesus was persecuted. Jezebel the murderess persecuted Elijah; and the persecuting and murderous congregation persecuted Jesus. Elijah restrained the heavens from rain because of the sins of Israel; and Jesus by His coming restrained the Spirit from the prophets, because of the sins of the people. Elijah destroyed the servants of Baal; and Jesus trampled upon Satan and his hosts. Elijah raised to life the son of widow; and Jesus raised to life the son of widow, as well as Lazarus and the daughter of the ruler of the Synagogue. Elijah sustained the widow with a little bread; and Jesus satisfied thousands with a little bread. Elijah was taken up in a chariot to heaven; and our Redeemer ascended and took His seat on the right hand of His Father. Elisha received the spirit of Elijah; and Jesus breathed upon the faces of His Apostles” (NPNF2 13:398) (TLSB)

19:20 *go back* – This was probably said to try the firmness of his purpose. (CB)

wave I done to you – Idiomatic question, explaining that the call to discipleship was not intended to conflict with respect for parents. (TLSB)

God can at any time so touch the hearts of men that they will voluntarily and cheerfully leave all for him and his cause. But in doing this, he will not lessen their natural affection, or lead them to neglect any of the proper kindnesses and courtesies of life. 1 Peter 3:8 (CB)

19:21 *sacrificed.* Elisha’s break with his past vocation was complete, though he obviously came from a wealthy family. (CSB)

By killing his oxen he was saying with his actions that he was done with farming and was going to be Elijah's successor even though it must have been overwhelming. This is reminiscent of when Jesus called some of his disciples. (PBC)

Elisha turned the situation into a sacred feast, perhaps a fellowship meal. (TLSB)

assisted. In Hebrew the same designation as used for Joshua's relationship to Moses ("aide," Ex 24:13; 33:11). (CSB)

19:19–21 Elijah casts his cloak on Elisha, who will succeed him in God's work. Let us, in the time we have on earth, lay the calling of God's Word on the shoulders of the next generation. As God raises up Elisha to follow in Elijah's footsteps, so He is now raising up faithful servants of the Gospel to minister to this generation and the next. • God of the prophets, bless the prophets' sons—all who proclaim the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. Bless them with courage as they proclaim Your Word to the ends of the earth. Amen. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Galatians 5:1, 13-25

Christ Has Set Us Free

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. 13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

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

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

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

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

For you, brothers (and sisters), were called to freedom! Only do not [use] your freedom as a pretext for the flesh, but through love serve one another. Gal 5:13–15 sets the stage for the larger section (5:13–6:10) by explaining why Paul has been so adamant against the Mosaic Law and circumcision. The "for" (γάρ) in 5:13 likely has a continuative sense as 5:13–15 develops 5:1–12 as a whole (note the parallel in "freedom" language linking 5:1 and 5:13). After the dark, repulsive prospect of mutilation (5:12), Paul reminds the Galatians in 5:13 that they were called to be free, and in freedom the Galatians will fulfill

what the Law had been getting at all along: they will love their neighbors as themselves. With the emphatic pronoun “you” (ὤμεῖς) at the beginning of the verse, the apostle contrasts the Galatians (5:13) with those who were disturbing them (5:12). God had been the agent of the call to freedom (cf. 1:6; 5:8). The preposition ἐπί with the dative case (ἐπ’ ἐλευθερίᾳ) may indicate purpose or goal (Eph 2:10; Phil 4:10; 1 Thess 4:7; BDF § 235 [4]): the Galatians were called “for freedom.” The indicative of God’s call in 5:13a *precedes* the admonition to mutual service in 5:13b. Paul always grounds his imperative for Christian behavior in the prior action of God, and, conversely, God’s action always entails the corresponding imperative of a changed life. (CC)

Paul worries in 5:13 that freedom could easily be misconstrued as a “pretext” or “opportunity” for the flesh. Why does Paul favor the word “flesh” over “sin” at this point? “Sin” or “sinner” could also be used in a divisive, ethnic sense as is the case in 2:15–16: “gentile sinners.” “Sin” in 2:15–16 entails disobedience of Moses’ Law. Were Paul to admonish against “sin” in 5:13, he could easily be misunderstood as encouraging observance of the Law. He opts, instead, to warn against the “flesh.” Paul uses the term “flesh” with flexibility for libertine behavior, envy, or rivalries (as in 5:15, 19–21, 26), or for a powerful force that actively resists God’s Spirit (5:17). When Paul employs the language of “flesh” in Galatians 5, he is not endorsing an anthropological dualism in which human flesh is devalued as matter and human spirit upheld as immaterial. Paul esteems the *entirety* of creation (Rom 8:19–21). In this context “flesh” certainly does not refer more neutrally to the physical body or to the individual or to earthly existence (as in 1:16; 2:16, 20). With its evil desire (5:17), the “flesh” is a dark, morally negative entity inclined toward sin; it is a quasi-personified power that sets itself against God. Gal 3:3 presaged this morally negative context with its deprecating remark about completing in the “flesh” what was begun in the “Spirit,” and in 4:21–31 Paul has just contrasted those born of the flesh and those born of the Spirit. The self-seeking “flesh” with its desire stands opposed to the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit (5:13, 16, 17, 19, 24; 6:8). The flesh is *defined* by its opposition to the Spirit. It is a generative source of evil. The Galatians must not let themselves become a “headquarters” for the flesh’s counterattack! (CC)

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

Whereas in 5:1 freedom requires resisting the “yoke of slavery” (ζυγῶ δουλείας), in 5:13 the Galatians must employ their freedom, paradoxically, to *serve* each other as slaves in love (διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλους). “If the way to keep Flesh from gaining a base of operations is through loving, mutual service, this suggests that the power of Flesh will try to manifest itself through pride, rivalry, and autonomy.”²⁸ The mutuality of otherworldly servitude is at odds with the often oppressive status orientation of this world’s slavery. Servitude for the sake of others forms a striking contrast (ἀλλά, “but,” 5:13) to the self-

seeking flesh. The willing sacrifice of one's own ego and honor, of one's status and resources marks the Christian—and the Christian leader! Honor for the Christian will be for the Lord to recognize his or her humble, hidden service at the Last Day. Christian leaders, in their very public service, must especially cultivate the humble self-regard that Paul is admonishing. This is the task of every Christian. (CC)

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

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

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

Now, if you look with me at the text, you will see that in Verse 13 there is an implied imperative: Do not allow, you know, the flesh to become a military base of operations. There's in a sense an imperative there. It's implied. But we have to add it in the English. And then you can see: But become slaves. See that? Become servants to one another through love. And then love one another in Verse 14. And that's in the future. But you know that the future is the most intensive sort of imperative command. Then Verse 15: Look. You know, look -- or do not look out. And in Verse 16: Walk around in the Spirit. And then you can see following that in Verses 17 and following the imperatives end. But we begin to see this section of exhortation. In which Paul is commanding them to live like Christ. (Just – V-38)

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

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

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

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

And so he begins. And this is a -- like I said, this is a turning point here. Although you can hear the echo back to Verse 1 of this chapter. He begins by saying. For you were called to freedom brethren. And that's that realm of freedom. Remember freedom, freedom in the Gospel. Freedom in Christ. Freedom from the law. But then he says and you can see when people are freed from the law, they can become, you know, kind of libertized I think is the word that's oftentimes used. But they can resort to sin in the flesh because they feel they have this freedom. So he says: For you were called to freedom, brethren. But do not allow this freedom to become a military base of operations for the flesh. Don't let the flesh now run wild just because you're free in the Gospel. And you can hear this echo in Romans. You know, Romans 6. Where you know shall we sin so that grace may abound. You can see the same sort of thing is going on there. (Just – V-38)

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

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

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

ἐν τῷ· ἀγαπήσεις ...—Quotations functioning as nouns are introduced by the article (here τῷ): “in the maxim (or, namely) ‘You will love ...’ ” Note that Paul employs a future indicative and *not* an imperative

(corresponding to the Hebrew of Lev 19:18 to express what *will* happen). See the commentary on this verse.

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

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

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

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

Most interpreters take the verb πεπλήρωται as a gnomic use of the perfect tense to express not a past situation with ongoing results, but rather a maxim. J. Louis Martyn highlighted the passive form of the verb as support for his novel approach that Paul is writing about what *Christ* did rather than what the Christian does. Martyn conceded that Christ is not directly mentioned in the verse and that his proposal “may seem rather wild.”⁴³ He ruled out the translation “is fulfilled” since he thought that would imply autonomous human possibility. Nevertheless, the epitome of the Law is the love of one’s neighbor as the

very *outworking* of faith (5:6). The Galatians are to enslave themselves to each other in love (5:13). This focus on the Galatians' behavior continues in 5:15. (CC)

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

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

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

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

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

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

me. The law shows me how I can love my neighbor as Christ loved my neighbor. How I can serve my neighbor in love. (Just - V-38)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Walk by the Spirit

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do[e] such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

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

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

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

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

When Paul writes of the “flesh” and the “spirit” in 5:16–26, he is not referring to the different parts of a human being. For Paul, the “flesh” does not refer to a sinful human nature as such but rather to an existence apart from Christ and his Spirit within “the present evil age” (1:4). Thus the flesh is a sphere of

influence, an active quasi-personified force that challenges God and his people. Likewise, Paul cannot be referring to an individual's own spirit. The human spirit does not have the power to overcome the flesh. In 5:16 Paul refers in the second person plural ("you") to the Galatians as a *community* walking by the single Spirit. The "Spirit" is a powerful otherworldly Agent who counteracts the flesh with its evil thoughts and actions. Thanks to the Spirit, the Christian battles the flesh from the point of view of the decisive victory that took place in Christ (see esp. 5:24!). The Christian is an eschatological (end-times) person! As Paul will write in 2 Cor 10:2–3: we may yet be "in the flesh," but we do not wage our battle "according to the flesh." The Christian battles with the power of the Spirit!

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

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

- 5:16–18 The Opposition of the Spirit and the Flesh
- 5:19–21 The Works of the Flesh
- 5:22–23 The Fruit of the Spirit
- 5:24–26 Conclusion and Admonitions (Indicative and Imperatives)
 - Those in Christ "crucified" the flesh (indicative, 5:24)
 - Let us follow the Spirit (hortatory subjunctive functioning as an imperative, 5:25)
 - Let us avoid provoking one another (hortatory subjunctive functioning as an imperative, 5:26)

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Desire” (ἐπιθυμία), a word that is neutral in itself (Phil 1:23; 1 Thess 2:17), is often employed in fairly negative contexts (e.g., Rom 1:24; 7:7–8; 13:14). The “desire” that Paul writes of in 5:16 is that “of the flesh,” and it is “the flesh” that colors every aspect of how that desire should be understood. Paul’s use of the singular “*desire* of the flesh” is striking, as if desire is the central characteristic of an almost personified flesh: “the *desiring* flesh” (cf. the plural “desires” in 5:24)—a single, active, powerful force. The “desiring flesh” will not be allowed to take control! Those who walk by the Spirit will “certainly not” satisfy the desire of the flesh. Paul’s double negative construction (οὐ μὴ with an aorist subjunctive) is emphatic, “the most definite form of negation regarding the future.” The result is assured, as assured as

the very Spirit at work in the lives of those in Christ. Since this verse points to an assured result in the future, the verb “satisfy” (τελέσητε, subjunctive) is probably an “indicative,” that is, a state of affairs that already exists, and not an “imperative” or command. In the three other instances (apart from Scriptural quotations) where Paul uses “certainly not” (οὐ μή) followed by the aorist subjunctive verb (1 Cor 8:13; 1 Thess 4:15; 5:3), he is making a negative assertion and not a command. The believer therefore has a power available in the Spirit to combat fleshly desire and to prevent that desire from coming to fruition. The Galatians had begun in the Spirit but are now in danger of “ending” or “completing” in the flesh (ἐπιτελεῖσθε, 3:3). A return to the Spirit’s guidance, with which they began, will foil the flesh from “completing” (ἐπιτελεῖσθε, 3:3) or “satisfying” (τελέσητε, 5:16) what it desires. (Note the verbal connection between τελέω, *teleō*, “satisfy,” in 5:16 and ἐπιτελέω, *epiteleō*, “end, complete,” in 3:3.) (CC)

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

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

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

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

5:17 ταῦτα γάρ (“for these”)— \mathfrak{B}^{46} \aleph^* B D* F G 33. The alternative reading, ταῦτα δέ (“but these” or “and these”), is in $^2\aleph$ A C D² Ψ 0122 Byzantine syr^h. The original text describes a battle between God’s Spirit and the flesh. The scribal change was probably a result of a misunderstanding of the text as describing an internal struggle between the individual’s own “flesh” and “spirit. (CC)

For the flesh desires [what is] contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit [desires what is] contrary to the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another in order that you do not do the things you want. Gal 5:17 explains why (“for,” γάρ) walking by the Spirit excludes the desire of the flesh (5:16): the two forces are fundamentally opposed to each other. Paul does not envision a matter of sheer willpower. Two opposing

powers are active and doing battle (“for these are in opposition to one another,” ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται), and the Christian is caught up in that struggle. The syntactical relationship between 5:16 and 5:17 (γάρ) requires that the positive emphasis on the Spirit in 5:16 be *maintained* in 5:17, or else 5:17 would no longer serve as support for 5:16. Paul does not envision the flesh frustrating the Spirit or some sort of stalemate between the Spirit and the flesh. Paul does not envision helplessness or frustration on the part of the Christian. The opposition of the Spirit and the flesh means that the desire of the flesh is *foiled*. (CC)

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

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

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

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

J. Louis Martyn proposed a fourth interpretation by seizing on the corporate elements in Galatians 5: the “you” (Greek plural) in “what you want” refers to the Galatians not primarily as individuals but as a divided *community*. Some are following the rival teachers and others are following the Spirit. This

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And so this -- I think this sense of Apocalyptic war are is very much here. And these soldiers, these Galatian soldiers would get it. They know what war is like. But this is a war unlike any war they've fought. This is a cosmic war. This is a war that Christ fought on the cross against Satan. Killed him. But he triumphed. He triumphed in his weakness just as Paul preached the Gospel in his weakness. It's one of my favorite images from the fathers. You probably know that Christ was crucified naked on the cross. And the fathers say that they are in his nakedness, in his weakness, in his shame and humiliation, he despoiled the principalities and powers of this world. He conquered them in his nakedness. Now, that's the images Paul wants us to have in our minds as he goes forward here. (Just – V-39)

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

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

5:18 *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.* The connective (δέ) that begins 5:18 may be a simple connective (“and,” or left untranslated). If a contrast is intended (“but,” as translated), the contrast need only be in relation to the flesh’s attempted opposition to the Spirit in 5:17. In a first class conditional, Paul explains that “if” the Galatians are indeed led by the Spirit, then they are simply not

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Paul just explained in 5:13–18 that with the Spirit’s guidance and power, the Galatians will not engage in “biting and devouring” (5:15). Their behavior will express itself in a loving, willing enslavement to each other. The flesh, on the other hand (δέ, 5:19), works something grossly different. The phrase “the works of the flesh” is reminiscent of “the works of the Law” in 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10. Indeed, this discussion of “the works of the flesh” must be understood in view of the admonitions against circumcision and the Law

throughout the letter. The ultimate test whether the Galatians are “in Christ” (e.g., 3:26) or are “under the Law” (e.g., 3:23–25; 4:21) will be whether they receive circumcision. If they receive circumcision *in their flesh*, then they will have placed themselves “under the Law.” The rivals probably advocated circumcision and the Law as the beginning of a new existence that would counteract “the works of the flesh.” “Paul’s linkage of law with flesh, as outrageous as it must have seemed to his enemies, was intended to jolt the readers into a recognition of the direction in which their thinking was moving,” the wrong way!⁴⁸ “The works of the Law” prove to be ineffectual against “the works of the flesh.” Such “works” belong to the past! (CC)

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

Figure 1

The Works of the Flesh (Galatians 5:19–21)						
Greek	Transliteration	KJV	NRSV	HCSB	ESV	
[μοιχεία	<i>moicheia</i>	adultery]*				
Sexual Sins	1. πορνεία	sexual immorality	fornication	fornication	sexual immorality	sexual immorality
	2. ἀκαθαρσία	impurity	uncleanness	impurity	moral impurity	Impurity
	3. ἀσελγεία	indecency	lasciviousness	licentiousness	promiscuity	Sensuality
Sins against God	4. εἰδωλολατρία	idolatry	idolatry	idolatry	idolatry	Idolatry
	5. φαρμακεία	sorcery	witchcraft	sorcery	sorcery	Sorcery
Social Relational Sins	6. ἔχθραι	enmities	hatred	enmities	hatreds	Enmity
	7. ἔρις	strife	variance	strife	strife	Strife
	8. ζῆλος	jealousy	emulations	jealousy	jealousy	Jealousy

	9.	θυμοί	<i>thumoi</i>	rage	wrath	anger	outbursts	offits of anger
							anger	
	10.	ἐριθειᾶι	<i>eritheiai</i>	selfishness	strife	quarrels	selfish	Rivalries
							ambitions	
	11.		<i>dichostasiai</i>	dissensions	seditions	dissensions	dissensions	dissensions
		διχοστα						
		σίαι						
	12.		<i>haireseis</i>	factions	heresies	factions	factions	Divisions
		αἱρέσει						
		ς						
	13.	φθόνοι	<i>phthonoi</i>	envy	envyings	envy	envy	Envy
		[φόνουι	<i>phonoι</i>		murders]*			
Sins	of 14.	μέθαι	<i>methai</i>	drunkennes	drunkennes	drunkennes	drunkennes	drunkennes
Excess				s	s	s	s	s
	15.	κῶμοι	<i>kōmoi</i>	carousing	revellings	carousing	carousing	orgies

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

Since the bulk of the list—eight of the vices—refers to social or relational sins, it is difficult to escape the impression that discord characterized the Galatian churches (cf. 5:15). The sins that would express themselves in the Christian community are sandwiched between the first five and last two sins that are endemic in the wider, pagan society (temple practices and festivities).⁵⁶ Dangers lurk from both within and outside the Christian community. B. S. Easton called attention to the eight social sins in the middle of the list: enmities, strife, jealousy, rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy. Were one to remove those eight vices in the middle, the seven Greek words that remain would be characterized by euphony: πορνεία (*porneia*, “sexual immorality”), ἀκαθαρσία (*akatharsia*, “impurity”), ἀσέλγεια (*aselgeia*, “indecency”), εἰδωλολατρία (*eidōlolatria*, “idolatry”), φαρμακεία (*pharmakeia*, “sorcery”), ... μέθαι (*methai*, “drunkenness”), and κῶμοι (*kōmoi*, “carousing”). These seven remaining sins would be of action

rather than of disposition; cf. Rom 1:29–31. The eight vices in the middle of the list (“enmities, strife, jealousy, rage, selfishness, dissensions, factions, envy”) are not present in the popular philosophers’ vice lists. Paul may have personally added these eight “works” to a more typical list in order to address a specific situation at Galatia. Perhaps these eight were “works” which characterized Paul’s rivals. As a means of drawing further attention to the center of his list, Paul opens and closes the list with sins that the formerly pagan Galatians could easily condemn: sexual sins, impurity, indecency, drunkenness, and carousing. Thievery, sexual immorality, anger, hatred, violence, and witchcraft were sins that the local Anatolian cults also condemned.⁶⁰ The heart of the list—the eight social sins—would probably hit home at Galatia. (CC)

1. *Porneia* (πορνεία)—sexual immorality: Throughout his letters, Paul consistently employs the noun πορνεία (*porneia*) for “sexual immorality,” whether for a man sleeping with his father’s wife (1 Cor 5:1), or in the context of lustful, gentile passion (1 Thess 4:3–5), or for sexual relations apart from a marital relationship (1 Cor 7:2: marriage is a *solution* to sexual sin). Paul uses the word in 2 Cor 12:21, as here in Gal 5:19, with impurity (ἀκαθαρσία [*akatharsia*]) and licentiousness (ἀσέλγεια [*aselgeia*]); see also Eph 4:19; 5:3; Col 3:5. Sexual sin is closely associated with idolatry in the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon (14:12–27), as is the case in sexual relations with a temple prostitute (1 Cor 6:13, 18). The prominence of “sexual immorality” (πορνεία) at the head of the works of the flesh may reflect the social acceptability and popularity of temple prostitution within the local Cybele cult of Asia Minor. On the other hand, Paul does not render a reference to cultic prostitution explicit here, and “sexual immorality” in his letters usually has little or nothing to do with temple prostitution. The sexual mores in pagan Anatolia were simply nowhere near as rigorous as in Judaism or in early Christianity; sexual sin was rampant in the Galatians’ world, even as it is today.⁶⁴ For Paul, such “works of the flesh” characterized the Galatians’ former lives. (CC)

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

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

4. *Eidōlōlatrīa* (εἰδωλολατρία)—idolatry: This “work” is related to the following work, φαρμακεία (*pharmakeia*), “sorcery.” Paul provides the earliest attestation of the word “idolatry” (εἰδωλολατρία), which apparently originated in Christian circles (see 1 Cor 5:10–11; 6:9; 10:7; Col 3:5). Idolatry may follow naturally on the heels of the various sexual immoralities listed just before since idolatry was closely associated in the ancient mind with temple prostitution. Earlier Paul was quite clear that God is *one*; there is no other (Gal 3:20). Both 1 Cor 10:14–21 and 1 Pet 4:3 identify idolatry as typically *gentile* (i.e., *non-Christian*) behavior. Those Israelites guilty of idolatry “fell” to God’s judgment (1 Cor 10:7–8).

Believers should not even eat or associate with the idolater (1 Cor 5:10–11). The idolaters and the sexually immoral need to be driven out of the church for the sake of the salvation of their souls (1 Cor 5:5, 13). The church as a gathering of the holy may not tolerate such sin in its midst. Paul warns in very serious terms against the works of the flesh (see Gal 5:21). (CC)

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

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

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

8. *Zēlos* (ζῆλος)—jealousy: Paul uses this word for either a positive “zeal” or a negative “jealousy” (for jealousy, see Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 3:3). “Jealousy” and “strife” are related vices according to 2 Cor 12:20, as the one likely leads to the other. Paul’s being “zealous” for the Law (ζηλωτής, Gal 1:14) led him to the violent persecution of Christians, a testimony to the destructive power of a misguided ζῆλος. Outside of Paul’s writings, the word may refer in a negative sense to “envy” (e.g., LXX Eccl 4:4; 9:6;

James 3:14, 16) or to a quick temper or rage (e.g., Acts 5:17; 13:45; Heb 10:27; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.3.9 § 82). Paul would not deny a relationship between envy and rage, as is clear from the next work of the flesh. (CC)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is important to keep in mind that Christ died also for sins like those on Paul’s list. The apostle is not saying they are unforgivable. After all, in their pagan past the Galatians had done all of them. Paul previously had to preach against such wickedness in their lives. Forgiven of their past, the Galatians, however, dare not blithely return to their pet sins. They know from Paul’s gospel that God’s Son came down from heaven to give his life as a ransom for sin. If God is that serious about sin, how can the Galatians, or we, carelessly continue in a sinful lifestyle? That would be a contradiction in terms. (PBC) Paul is not speaking of individual lapses into sin that the Christian repents of and receives forgiveness for. Paul is speaking of a pattern, a consistent and persistent lifestyle. The original Greek makes that plain. Literally Paul says, “Those continuing to do things of that sort will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (PBC)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

sorcery – Among the works of the flesh Paul numbers sorcery, which, as everyone knows, is not a work caused by the desires of the flesh but is an abuse or imitation of idolatry. Witchcraft makes a pact with demons, while superstition or idolatry makes a pact with God, though with a false god rather than the true God. Thus idolatry is really spiritual sorcery. For just as witches cast spells upon cattle and people, so idolaters, that is, all self-righteous men, would like to cast a spell upon God, to make Him the way they imagine Him in their ideas; that is, they do not want Him to justify us by mere grace and faith in Christ but to regard their acts of worship and self-chosen works and to grant them righteousness and eternal life on account of these. But they are actually casting a spell upon themselves rather than upon God; for if they persist in this wicked notion of theirs about God, they will die in their idolatry and will be damned. Most of the works of the flesh are sufficiently well known not to require any explanation. (Luther)

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

5:21 φθόνοι (a plural noun; “envy”)—This word alone (without φόνου) is the reading of ℣46 κ B 33 cop^{sa} Marcion^E Clement Origen Irenaeus^{lat} Augustine. A C D F G Byzantine it vg cop^{bo} support the assonant phrase φθόνοι φόνου, *phthonoi phonoi* (“envies [and] murders”). The addition of φόνου may be an attempt to harmonize the list with φθόνου φόνου (“envy, murder”) in Rom 1:29. Jerome has only fifteen items in Paul’s list of “the works of the flesh,” and not the sixteen as required by the addition of “murders” in the variant. *Phthnoi phonoi* was a common wordplay in antiquity and could easily have crept into the text.

καθώς (“just as”)—This adverb alone (without καί following) is the reading of ℣46 κ* B F G cop^{sa}. Several sources (2^x A C D Byzantine Marcion^E Irenaeus^{lat} Clement Ambrosiaster) add καί (“even”), which, if original, would result in the more forceful translation “I am warning you, *just as* I also said before.”

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

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

Paul concludes the vice list by saying “concerning which [works of the flesh] I am warning you, just as I said before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Most commentators opt to translate the initial verb (προλέγω) “tell in advance,” but the context of this passage is a warning that

those characterized by such evil works will certainly not inherit the kingdom of God—thus “*I am warning you.*” Both possible meanings of the verb are attested elsewhere in Paul, “tell in advance” in Rom 9:29 and 1 Thess 3:4, and “warn” in 2 Cor 13:2. The words “just as I said before” indicate that when Paul had been among the Galatians he left them with at least *some* practical ethical instruction even if he refused to offer the sort of concrete code that the rival teachers were promoting in Moses’ Law. (CC)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Fruit of the Spirit (5:22–23)

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

The long-awaited age has finally dawned with the gift of God’s Spirit. The apostle may have drawn on such OT passages when he coined the phrase “the fruit of the Spirit.”⁹² In this new age Christians have, like Christ, experienced a crucifixion. They crucified the flesh with its evil desires (5:24). Now they love their neighbors (5:14) even as Christ loved them (2:20). They manifest the fruit of Christ’s Spirit (4:6; 5:22–23), a fruit that leads to self-sacrifice rather than the selfish, divisive “works of the flesh” (5:19–21). This is a *single* fruit that does not come piecemeal. Whereas “the works of the flesh” form rather chaotic subdivisions (3-2-8-2 or 3-2-4-4-2), the fruit of the Spirit may be subdivided into three groups of three (3–3–3). Order replaces chaos. Furthermore, “fruit,” unlike “works,” places the stress on God’s activity and empowerment. The noun “Spirit” in “the fruit of the Spirit” is a genitive of *source*! Paul is not referring to a list of mere behavioral qualities. The Spirit creates a genuinely different person on the model of Christ himself! See figure 2. (CC)

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

Figure 2

The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23)						
Greek	Transliteration	Das	KJV	NRSV	HCSB	ESV
1. ἀγάπη	<i>agape</i>	love	love	love	love	love
2. χαρά	<i>chara</i>	joy	joy	joy	joy	joy
3. ειρήνη	<i>eirēnē</i>	peace	peace	peace	peace	peace
4. μακροθυμία	<i>makrothumia</i>	forbearance	longsuffering	patience	patience	patience

5.	<i>chrēstotēs</i>	kindness	gentleness	kindness	kindness	kindness
	χρηστότη ς					
6.	<i>agathōsunē</i>	goodness	goodness	generosity	goodness	goodness
	ἀγαθωσύ νη					
7.	πίστις <i>pistis</i>	faithfulness	faith	faithfulness	faith	faithfulness
8.	πραΰτης <i>prautēs</i>	gentleness	meekness	gentleness	gentleness	gentleness
9.	<i>enkrateia</i>	self-control	temperance	self-control	self-control	self-control
	ἐγκράτει α					

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

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

The Septuagint’s translators, in using ἀγαπάω (*agapaō*) for “to love,” were merely reflecting the common usage of their day rather than some “noble truth” about *agapē* love. (CC)

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

3. *Eirēnē* (εἰρήνη)—peace: Throughout the Hebrew Bible, God promises his people “peace,” *shalom* (Num 6:22–27; 25:12–13; Is 32:17; see also 2 Macc 1:2–4). “Peace” always refers to a relationship between parties, and so those in Christ enjoy a relationship with “the God of peace” (Rom 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23; see also Rom 5:1), and that peace transcends understanding (Phil 4:7). Christians mirror the otherworldly peace of God in their relationships with each other and with outsiders (Rom 14:19). Paul therefore opens many of his letters by invoking God’s peace. At the same time, such peace must not be sought at any cost. “The God of peace” assists believers in combating those who cause divisions and offenses that are contrary to the teaching of Scripture (Rom 16:17–20). Peace also entails good order (1 Cor 14:33). “Joy” and “peace” stand together elsewhere within passages offering concrete instruction on how believers may overcome their differences to live in harmony (Rom 14:17; 15:13). The antonyms “dissensions” (διχοστασία), “factions” (αἰρέσεις), and “strife” (ἔρις, Gal 5:20) are the works of the flesh! (CC)

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

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

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

7. *Pistis* (πίστις)—faithfulness: This is the same word Paul uses for “faith.” As a *fruit* of the Spirit, Paul no doubt has in mind an active “faithfulness.” “Faithfulness,” like the other manifestations of the

fruit, is an attribute of the God who remains faithful to his promises even when human beings prove to be unfaithful (Rom 3:3; 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 1:18–20; 1 Thess 5:23–24). God is faithful to his people in keeping them from tests that are beyond their strength (1 Cor 10:13). The ultimate demonstration of God’s faithfulness is his sacrifice of Christ. Paul may by this fruit have in mind the believer’s “faithful” behavior toward *others* (as in 1 Cor 4:2, 17), but the apostle does not express that notion elsewhere in the letter to the Galatians. More likely, Paul has in mind in this letter a faithful devotion to God that, in turn, leads to more of the Spirit’s fruit: faith expresses itself in (faithful) love (Gal 5:6)! (CC)

8. *Prautēs* (πραΰτης)—gentleness: The Greek philosopher Aristotle referred to “gentleness” (πραΰτης) frequently in his discussion of ethics (e.g., *Eth. nic.* 2.7.10). From an ancient perspective, “gentleness” was the proper balance between the extremes of excessive anger and the inability to be angry when it was required. Paul does not envision gentleness as a mere internal disposition or some quiet, introspective “navel-gazing” since the fruit of the Spirit is always other-centered. Christians therefore restore each other from transgression with the Spirit’s own gentleness (Gal 6:1; see the correction with “gentleness” in 1 Cor 4:21 and 2 Tim 2:25). As Paul models Christ’s own meekness and gentleness in 2 Cor 10:1, gentleness clearly includes an element of humility (see the close association of humility and gentleness in Eph 4:2). “Gentleness” is not arrogant, self-assertive, or “overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance” (BDAG). “Gentleness” toward others counteracts envy (φθόνοι, 5:21) or quarreling (Titus 3:2). “Gentleness” also implies self-control, the last of the Spirit’s fruit. (CC)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

faithfulness – When Paul lists “faith” here among the fruit of the Spirit, it is obvious that he means faithfulness or honesty, not faith in Christ. Hence he says in 1 Cor. 13:7 that “love believes all things.” Anyone equipped with this faith is not a suspicious person; he is a sincere one, with a simple and honest

heart. Even if he is taken in and experiences something different from what he believes, he is so mild that he gladly overlooks this. . Faithfulness means, then, that one man keeps faith with another in the matters that pertain to this present life. For what would this present life of ours be if one person did not believe the other person? (Luther)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The context of Paul’s discussion helps resolve whether or not he is referring to the Mosaic Law in 5:23. He juxtaposes the Spirit and the Mosaic Law in 5:18 (“under the Law”) just before launching into “the works of the flesh” and “the fruit of the Spirit” (5:19–23; cf. “under the Law” in reference to the Mosaic Law in 3:23–25; 4:21). Now he closes his listing of the fruit of the Spirit with a comment about the Law. The Law and the Spirit once again stand juxtaposed in 5:22–23. In effect, 5:23 corrects a possible misinterpretation of 5:18 in which the Law and the Spirit are somehow opposed to each other since one is led by the Spirit and is not under the Law. Freedom from the Law’s bondage does not mean that the Law no longer functions as a norm or standard; the path of the Spirit is by no means contrary to what the Law enjoins. The fruit of the Spirit will, in fact, satisfy the true intention of the Law. (CC)

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

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

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

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

Now those of Christ [Jesus] crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Gal 5:24 begins with a continuative use of δέ (“now”). If any contrast is intended, the contrast would be mild and only in relation to the Law’s potential opposition in 5:23. “Those of Christ” refers to those incorporated by faith and Baptism into Christ (3:27–29). They are now one person in Christ and belong to him. The crucified Christ lives in and through those who have “put on Christ” and have been granted his Spirit (2:19–20; 3:27; 4:6). According to 5:24, “those of Christ” *crucified* the flesh (note the aorist tense of ἐσταύρωσαν). Several commentators have argued that “crucified” is an inceptive aorist with the action continuing into the present, as is usually the case with the perfect tense. According to this understanding, Christians must

continually crucify the flesh with its passions (cf. Rom 7:5). An ongoing action is not a typical use of the aorist tense, and a more likely option is available. Paul considers the believer the active agent in 5:24's crucifying event, whereas Christians have been passively crucified with Christ in 2:19–20 and 6:14. Nevertheless, 2:19–20 provides the foundation for 5:24 by explaining that the crucified Christ now lives in the believer. The believer lives as the crucified Christ. Gal 5:24 is best understood as expressing the indicative of what the believer decisively *did* in Christ. The believer, who *crucified* the flesh, is holy. The death of the flesh is a past event. The flesh belongs to the old order that is passing away. The Christian is no longer a slave of sin (2:17) since the decisive victory that took place at Christ's cross is also a decisive victory that took place in the life of the believer (cf. also Baptism in 3:27–28). (CC)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The verse has a chiasmic structure that emphasizes the crucial role of the Spirit. The flesh's decisive death in Christ's crucifixion (5:24) gives way to the life of the Spirit (5:25a; cf. 2:19; 6:14–15). The Spirit makes alive (4:29) and is the believer's power source! To "walk" (5:25a: στοιχέω, not περιπατέω) derives

from military language. The term originally referred to a line of soldiers standing in a row or marching in a row following the lead; hence such meanings as “be in line with,” “conform,” or “follow.” If the Galatians are looking for the rule of law, they will find all the guidance and discipline they need in the Spirit.¹²⁷ The marching orders are clear (5:25b): they will be led by the Spirit (5:18) and will walk by the Spirit (5:16). (CC)

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

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

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

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

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

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

στοιχεῖα/*stoicheia*, 4:3). The flesh was “crucified” (5:24) once and for all! The Spirit makes that victory a present reality for the believer. (CC)

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

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

provoking one another envying one another – Here Paul describes the effect of vainglory. A teacher of error or an originator of a new doctrine cannot help provoking others; and if they do not approve and accept his doctrine, he immediately begins to hate them bitterly. (Luther)
5:16–26 Christian freedom means walking, conducting oneself, by the Holy Spirit’s power and leading. Our sinful flesh, consumed by self-importance, instinctively looks down on others and inevitably causes interpersonal tensions. At Baptism, we were united with Christ, who died to set us free from sin and the way of the Law. • O Holy Spirit, give us daily victories over sin in our personal life and, above all, the power to love one another. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Luke 9:51-62

Samaritan Village Rejects Jesus

51 When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. 53 But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. 54 And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” 55 But he turned and rebuked them. 56 And they went on to another village.

There are good reasons to consider 9:51 *the* turning point of Luke’s gospel. Jesus’ death has become an explicit part of his messianic mission (9:22, 31), and now Jesus begins the journey toward his death in Jerusalem, “the place of the full manifestation of Jesus as the Christ.” The long journey to Jerusalem fulfills what Moses and Elijah discussed at the transfiguration (9:31): this *is* Jesus’ “*exodus*,” which he is about to fulfill in Jerusalem. Jesus is reenacting Israel’s exodus from Egypt and journey of going up to the

Promised Land, but Jesus is doing so in perfect obedience. Even though Christ accompanied Israel on that first exodus journey (1 Cor 10:1–13), the people repeatedly fell into idolatry, grumbling, and rebellion. But now, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice for the sin of Israel—and the sin of the whole world. (CC pp. 426-427)

9:51 *when the days drew near* – ἐγένετο δέ—This phrase helps mark 9:51 as the turning point in the gospel. The focus shifts from Galilee to Jerusalem. Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem extends through 19:28. (CC p. 426)

The phrase ἐγένετο δέ, “and it came to pass,” alerts the reader to something especially significant, and the combination of critical phrases in the opening articular infinitive (dependent clause) reinforces the verse’s importance. The “*days* of his being taken up” refer to that time period leading up to the *day* of his departure/ascension. “Were being fulfilled” conveys the passing of time, as if the narrator were watching the clock or marking off days on a calendar. Jesus adheres to a timetable for the climactic event. The clock is running. Jesus fulfills prophecy as he follows the Father’s schedule (cf. Acts 1:7; Gal 4:4). (CC p. 427)

FOR HIM TO BE TAKEN – ἐν τῷ συμπληροῦσθαι τὰς ἡμέρας—This typical Lukan expression (ἐν τῷ plus the infinitive with the accusative subject) describes the inexorable destiny of Jesus in Jerusalem as the *fulfillment* of the divine plan and of prophecy. The present infinitive suggests the process of the passing of days until the arrival of *the day*. Jesus’ destiny is marked by journey notices again in 13:22 and 17:11. (CC p. 426)

Refers to Jesus’ death, resurrection, and esp ascension into heaven (24:50–51; Ac 1:2, 9–11). (TLSB)

taken up – τῆς ἀναλήψεως αὐτοῦ—In 9:31, Luke referred to the passion, resurrection, and ascension events in Jerusalem as τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ, “his exodus.” Now the events are represented by a similar image, “his being taken up,” a reference to his exaltation at the ascension, but also including his death and resurrection. Cf. ἀναλαμβάνω in Acts 1:2, 11, 22; also LXX 2 Ki 2:11. (CC p. 426)

set his face to go to Jerusalem. Lit. “set his face to go to Jerusalem” (cf. Isa 50:7). Luke emphasizes Jesus’ determination to complete his mission. This journey to Jerusalem, however, is not the one that led to his crucifixion but marks the beginning of a period of ministry in Judea, of which Jerusalem was the central city. Mk 10:1 notes this departure for Judea, which John more specifically describes as a journey to Jerusalem during the time of the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn 7:1–10). (CSB)

Place of Jesus’ death and resurrection, which fulfill God’s plan of salvation. (TLSB)

αὐτὸς τὸ πρόσωπον ἐστῆρσεν—This graphic description depicts Jesus turning to face Jerusalem. (CC p. 126)

“He himself set his face” alludes to Jesus’ prophetic role. For God to “set his face” *against* a person, city, or region (Jer 21:10; Ezek 13:17; 14:8; 15:7; 21:2 Ezekiel as God’s spokesman in Ezek 6:2.) is for God to show his wrath. The opposite is for God to “make his face shine on you and be gracious to you” (Num 6:25). But here Jesus “sets his face” to go to Jerusalem not to show wrath or mercy to Jerusalem, but to face and overcome all temptations and opposition that would turn him aside from traveling to the cross. Lk 9:62 balances 9:51 with a proverbial summation of what it means to “set one’s face.” The words of 9:52–61 illustrate some of the potential distractions. (CC p. 427)

OT precedents offer further illumination on the significance of the fact that Jesus “set his face.” God made Ezekiel’s forehead as hard as flint so that the prophet could endure the hostility of rebellious Israel (Ezek 3:8–9). The Suffering Servant says,

“I have not rebelled; I have not drawn back. I gave my back to the smiters, my cheeks to the pluckers. *I did not hide my face* from mockings and spit. The Lord Yahweh will help me; therefore I will not be ashamed. *Therefore, I have set my face like flint*, and I know that I will not be put to shame” (Is 50:5–7). (CC p. 427)

Jesus, the Servant, is resolutely determined to go to the cross, fully aware of the torture and humiliation involved. He trusts in eventual vindication by the Father (Is 50:8–9), and he knows that the cross is the only way to procure salvation for humanity (compare Is 50:8–9 with Rom 8:31–34). (CC p. 427)

On this journey, Jesus will pass through many towns and villages and encounter many different people. He has much to teach.

Luke is very careful to note Jesus’ audience in every instance. To each group, furthermore, Jesus speaks quite different sorts of words: to the crowd, he issues warnings and calls to conversion. To those who convert and become disciples, he gives positive instructions on discipleship. Finally, to those who resist his prophetic call, he tells parables of rejection.

Luke gives dramatic structure to these sayings by carefully alternating the audiences. Throughout the journey ... Luke has Jesus turn from one group to the other, from crowd to disciples to Pharisees. (CC p. 428)

Ever in motion toward his goal, Jesus gives revelatory instruction for others making pilgrimage from birth to death and from rebirth in Baptism to resurrection and eternal life in the new Jerusalem. (CC p. 428)

In firm resolve. Evokes numerous passages from Ezk (6:2; 13:17; 21:2) and so reinforces Luke’s characterization of Jesus as God’s ultimate prophet. (TLSB)

out for – τοῦ πορεύεσθαι—As part of Luke’s journey vocabulary, this word signals Jesus’ movement toward his goal of death and resurrection. J. Fitzmyer calls this Luke’s “pregnant use of the verb *poreuesthai* ... [where] the context is one of opposition and hostility, and the implication is that his destiny is to be reached despite such opposition. Further noteworthy instances of it are to be found in the travel account in particular (9:51, 52, 53, 56, 57; 10:38; 13:33; 17:11; 19:12) though its use is not confined to this section” (*Luke I–IX*, 168–69; see pp. 164–71 on Luke’s geographical perspective). (CC p. 126)

Jerusalem – εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ—Jerusalem is the goal of the journey and the place of destiny. (CC p. 426)

9:52 *sent messengers* – ἀπέστειλεν ἀγγέλους πρὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ—This is a practical necessity because of the size of the group. But the wording also points to Jesus as the Prophet like Moses (cf. Ex 23:20). Luke 9 ends as it began (9:2), with Jesus sending out the disciples to prepare for his mission. (CC p. 429)

As Jesus begins to journey to Jerusalem, he meets rejection in a village of Samaria. Except for Mt 10:5, only Luke among the synoptic gospels refers to Samaria and the Samaritans (9:52; 10:33; 17:11, 16). This could reflect Luke’s later concern for the Samaritan mission, the second stage of the sequence in Acts. Hostility existed between Jews and Samaritans at the time of Jesus, and although the natural route for pilgrims from Galilee to Jerusalem was through Samaria, many travelers would bypass Samaria by going

south on the eastern side of the Jordan. Jesus deliberately passes through Samaria in his journey to Jerusalem. There must be preparation for the journey so that Jesus might be received hospitably (ὡς ἐτοιμάσαι αὐτῷ, “in order to prepare for him”; 9:52). Although it does not explicitly say that the messengers were sent preaching the kingdom of God (as were the Twelve and the seventy[-two], “the principle of 10:16 would apply to them,” namely, that “the one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me; and the one who rejects me rejects the one who sent me.” The language of commissioning (ἀπέστειλεν, “sent”; 9:52), hospitality or rejection (οὐκ ἐδέξαντο, “they did not receive”; 9:53), and journey (ἐπορεύθησαν, “journeyed”; 9:56) is repeated here. (CC p. 430)

Likely sent to proclaim the kingdom and call for repentance. On that understanding these envoys anticipate the upcoming appointment and sending of the Seventy-two (10:1-16). (TLSB)

who went and entered – πορευθέντες—See comments at 9:51. Immediately following the announcement that Jesus must now journey to Jerusalem, the evangelist shows movement toward that goal. The language of journey (πορεύομαι) is repeated at 9:53, 56, 57. (CC p. 429)

village of the Samaritans. Samaritans were particularly hostile to Jews who were on their way to observe religious festivals in Jerusalem. It was at least a three-day journey from Galilee to Jerusalem through Samaria, and Samaritans refused overnight shelter for the pilgrims. Because of this antipathy, Jews traveling between Galilee and Jerusalem frequently went on the east side of the Jordan River. (CSB)

This is the only place that Luke, who has special concern for Samaritans, records their hostility. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

Unfortunately, those sent by Jesus to the Samaritans had no success. (TLSB)

9:53 *face set toward Jerusalem* – The Samaritans, obviously, would rather see Jesus heading for Mount Gerizim than for Jerusalem. This difference on where to worship comes up in Jesus conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well in John chapter 4. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

ὅτι τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἦν πορευόμενον εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ—Luke uses journey language to reiterate Jesus’ destiny in Jerusalem. Regarding “face,” see the commentary on 9:51. “Face” is used with “journey” (LXX πορεύομαι, reflecting פָּנָה) in 2 Sam 17:11.

9:54 *fire to come down.* As Elijah had (2Ki 1:9–16). James and John were known as “Sons of Thunder” (Mk 3:17) (CSB)

The disciples expected that harsh judgment would come down on the Samaritans. Their request was perhaps inspired from the ministry of the prophet Elijah (2Ki 1:9–12) and also by centuries-old antagonism between Jews and Samaritans. (TLSB)

James and John misunderstand 9:5. Not only do they want to shake off the dust, but they also want to blow them away. They obviously share the ingrown hostility of their people toward Samaritans. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

For a first-century Jew, the natural enmity between the Samaritans and Jews would explain the Samaritans’ failure to receive Jesus. After all, he was journeying toward Jerusalem, which they considered to be a false place of worship. The Samaritan Pentateuch version of Ex 20:17; Deut 5:21; 12:5 specified Mt. Gerizim as the place of worship ordained by God. But the hearer of the gospel knows that Jerusalem is the city of Jesus’ passion; Jesus is rejected also in anticipation of his destiny to be rejected there. The disciples believe that the lack of hospitality showed by the Samaritans to Jesus should be

countered with wrath and vengeance. They have not understood Jesus' mission as the Messiah who is a Suffering Servant. He himself will "be baptized" with the fire of heavenly wrath (12:49–50). His mission as Messiah is one of mercy and compassion, not of condemnation (Jn 3:17). Punishment of those who reject the Gospel will come in the eschaton. Thus "he rebuked" (ἐπετίμησεν) James and John, just as he had rebuked demons (Lk 4:35; 9:42), a fever (4:39), and the disciples' speaking of an incomplete confession (9:21). Each rebuke counters hindrances to his bringing of the kingdom through his death and resurrection in Jerusalem. (CC p. 431)

9:55 rebuked them. Third time Jesus reproved the attitudes of His apostles (cf vv 46–50). The disciples still had much to learn about the Christ-like attitudes necessary for ministry. (TLSB)

The rebuke added between 9:55 and 9:56 in some manuscripts provides a reason for Jesus' rebuke of James and John (similar to Mt 16:23, where Jesus calls Peter "Satan"): "You do not know of what sort of spirit you are," implying that the judgmental attitude of James and John is inspired by the devil. (CC p. 431)

The promise of Jesus that the Gospel would reach Samaria (Acts 1:8) will soon be realized in Acts 8 through Philip's efforts; God's plan goes forward according to his schedule. Even though the Samaritans reject Jesus here, they are spared fire from heaven so as to be able to hear the Gospel another day. Soon Luke will report: "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee *and Samaria* had peace and was built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied" (Acts 9:31). (CC p. 431)

So long as the world stands, there exists the call and opportunity to preach the Gospel to unbelievers in the hope that they will repent and be saved. Those who fail to preach the Gospel and instead utter imprecations are of a different spirit—not the Spirit who descended on Christ at his baptism (Lk 3:21–22). While there is only weak textual support for including that thought in the addition between 9:55 and 9:56, the theology remains biblical, as John will later realize (1 Jn 3:11–24; 4:7–21; cf. also James 1:19–20; 2:1–9; 4:1–7, though the book of James may have been written by the brother of the Lord, not the apostle). The other logion in the addition, "for the Son of Man did not come to destroy souls of men, but to save," is also weakly attested but is similar to Jn 3:17. (CC p. 431)

9:51–56 When Jesus' overture to the Samaritans is rejected, His apostles imagine that harsh retribution is in order. Such thinking is typical, unfortunately, as age-old conflicts die hard. We may easily resort to similar bad judgment. Yet, Jesus makes peace, not only with God but also between people. In Christ, all who repent are fully reconciled to the Father. • Lord, remove all sinful division and enmity from Your Church, that we love just as You have loved us. Amen. (TLSB)

The Cost of Following Jesus

57 As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." 58 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." 59 To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." 60 And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." 61 Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." 62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

9:57 *As they were going.* Continuing their journey through Samaria to Jerusalem. (CSB)

πορευομένων αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ—The journey motif continues; the added expression ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ describes Jesus' journey as being “along the way.” (CC p. 432)

These sayings of Jesus are spoken *while journeying along the way*. Jesus has begun that pilgrimage that will lead to his departure (cf. ἀπέρχη, “you go” [9:57]; ἔξοδος, “exodus” [9:31]). It makes him “homeless” on earth and distinct from the “dead” who are at home in this world. To journey with him means “departing” from all that belongs to this world (cf. ἀπελθών, “departing” [9:60]). Unlike foxes and birds, the Son of Man has no place to lay his head (see comments on 8:19–21). (CC p. 433)

I will follow you – ἀκολουθήσω—See comments at 5:11 on ἀκολουθέω as a term for discipleship. It is repeated three times in this pericope (9:57, 59, 61). (CC p. 432)

Elsewhere, Jesus always initiated the call to discipleship. (John 15:16) Remarkably, the Gospels never tell us about anyone offering to follow Jesus and then successfully becoming a disciple. In each case, Jesus seems to challenge the self-confidence. (TLSB)

9:58 *no where to lay his head* – During Jesus' ministry, He had no home of His own. He depended on hospitality, just as the apostles did when He sent them out. (TLSB)

9:59 *bury my father*. If his father had already died, the man would have been occupied with the burial then. But evidently he wanted to wait until after his father's death, which might have been years away. Jesus told him that the spiritually dead could bury the physically dead, and that the spiritually alive should be busy proclaiming the kingdom of God. (CSB)

9:60 *leave the dead bury their own dead* – ἀπελθὼν διαγγέλλε—“Departing” shows that one can be in Jesus' band of pilgrims and serve the cause of the kingdom without *literally* following his physical presence (cf. also 8:38–39). Nevertheless, the man is to abandon his old way of life with its natural cares and priorities. “Proclaim far and wide” (BAGD s.v. διαγγέλλω, 1; cf. Rom 9:17) is used only here with “the kingdom.” (CC p. 432)

Jesus is the visitation from above, the Dawn from on high (1:78). The new era of salvation is present in him; he brings the new world of the kingdom of God. Those who enter this kingdom, this new world, are snatched and transferred out of the power of darkness (Col 1:13). To be “fit,” “suitable” for this kingdom and its proclamation entails subordinating all family ties and other worldly cares (“let the dead bury their own dead”; Lk 9:60) and focusing on the task that lies ahead (“no one having puts his hand to the plow and still looking at the things behind is fit for the kingdom of God”; 9:62). This will put Jesus' disciples at odds with the world and will distinguish them from their own earthly families, as in 8:19–21. (CC p. 433)

The kingdom is so important that its proclamation pushed even venerated duties and traditions into the background. (TLSB)

9:61 *say farewell* – ἀποτάξασθαι—Greetings, blessings, and salutations were very important in the ancient world, particularly those spoken on the road, as one first arrives at a house, and as one takes leave of the house. Jesus overturns some of these priorities. Here he discourages a would-be disciple from going back to give his family the customary departing benediction. Examples of such departing blessings in the OT include Gen 31:55; 32:29 (MT 32:1, 30); 2 Sam 19:39 (MT 19:40); 1 Ki 8:66. In sending out the seventy (-two), Jesus will forbid them from greeting others on the road and also will offer a new greeting on arrival at the house: “Greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house’ ” (Lk 10:4–5). (CC p. 432)

Lk 9:57–62, along with 9:23–24 and 14:25–35, gives a rather stark picture of the radical nature of the call to discipleship. To take up the cross daily (9:23–24) is to proclaim *the kingdom of God* (9:60—action/function) and to be fit for *the kingdom of God* (9:62—status/being), both of which will bring rejection for the disciples. But here they follow the pattern of their Lord. Twice at the end of his Galilean ministry, before he set his face to go to Jerusalem, Jesus spoke of his rejection (9:22, 44). His rejection on the cross foreshadows the rejection of Jesus’ disciples, a theme in the journey narrative of Luke and a reality in Acts. The way of new life is not an easy, painless way. It is the way of death for the old man, in daily contrition and repentance. It requires staying on the hard road of pilgrimage that leads to the cross, through death, and finally to resurrection. It calls for an unhesitating departure from ties to the old life, even the ties to family. The family that matters, says Jesus, is the family of God (Lk 8:19–21). We may be born of human mothers into a human family, but the new birth into God’s kingdom is through Baptism, and the true family of God has Christ as its head (Jn 3:3, 5; Col 1:18). Luke does not record the responses of the three would-be disciples in this pericope, suggesting that more important than the question of whether *they* heeded Jesus’ words is the question of whether *you*—the hearer or reader of Luke’s gospel—will respond in faith and persevere on the journey with Jesus. (CC p. 433)

A third candidate for discipleship is shocked by Jesus’ demands. Clearly, following Jesus means a radical reordering of value and priorities. (TLSB)

9:62 *hand to the plow and looks back* – ἐπιβαλὼν τὴν χεῖρα ἐπ’ ἄροτρον καὶ βλέπων εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω—The first participle, ἐπιβαλὼν, is an aorist, showing that the act of setting hand to plow comes first; the second participle, βλέπων, is present, suggesting that the act of looking back is ongoing and connected to the (implied) action of plowing. The image here is vivid. One who turns his head and looks back while he is plowing the field is sure to make a crooked furrow instead of a straight one. It is hard enough to plow a straight furrow when one keeps his eyes forward and concentrates on the task at hand. (CC pp. 432-433)

is fit – εὐθετός ἐστιν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ—One must be made “fit” for the kingdom in order to continue to journey toward the kingdom or to announce the kingdom far and wide. This involves a particular posture of having *set one’s face* (cf. Jesus in 9:51, 53) and of having left this world behind. (CC p. 433)

looks back – He is to focus on the tasks that are to be done now that are right in front of them and not get caught up in habits and rituals of the past.

It took one’s full attention to hold and press down on a plow with one hand as it cut through the earth. The plowman’s other hand held a goad for the animal pulling the plow. (TLSB)

9:57–62 In three brief exchanges with would-be disciples, Jesus shows that the cost of discipleship is high. Obviously, were it up to us to achieve our place in the kingdom of God, we would never make it. Thankfully, then, Jesus invites us and by grace makes it possible for us to become members of His eternal communion. • “O Lord, rescue us from the captivity of the sins which have oppressed us, so that we may attain the dwellings of the heavenly Jerusalem; through Jesus Christ. Amen.” (Sarum Breviary, *TLWA*, p 228). (TLSB)