

## The Works of the Flesh and the Fruit of the Spirit

### Galatians 5:13-26

#### Introduction

A couple of generations has grown up with the song, "I've Gotta Be Me," a song that was sung by Sammy Davis Jr., Barbara Streisand, Cher and any other number of pop singers. In many ways, the song's title becomes the theme song of our times, a drive for individual self-expression, personal freedom and fulfillment. This mood and sentiment of our times becomes a barrier that hinders people from fully commitment of their lives to Jesus Christ. Often people raise the issue of whether personal commitment to Jesus Christ will mean a negation of personal freedom and fulfillment.

Freedom is not something that belongs to our natural state as human beings. As Paul states his case for genuine freedom in the book of Galatians, he is very aware of the various bondages that grip the human person. There are three major bondages in Galatians that stand in the way of genuine freedom.

- 1) Paul speaks about the bondage of his readers to *superstitions, fears of superhuman powers* (Gal. 4:3, 9). Paul cites a horrible slavery to the "elemental spirits of the universe," a bondage that had been part of their past. People look to magical spells, secret ceremonies to drive away hostile demons and to please the good spirits of the universe. People think that they can govern their lives by personal rituals, good luck coins, ouija boards, horoscopes or particular religious "signs" of good will or good fortune.
- 2) Paul also deals with the bondage of *religious requirements (law)*, whether the laws are pagan or Jewish. He is very clear that bondage to the Law enslaves people with a deathlike grip. Legalism is a stern, harsh and heavy yoke to bear, and thus, Paul says, "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1). Paul uses the OT Law, so precious to the Jewish teachers and argues that those who put their trust in the Law, thinking that they can thereby please God may be Jewish, but their mother is Hagar, the slave—not Sarah the free woman with a child of promise. The Galatian hope is not in God's saving promise, which enables Sarah to bear a child when she had passed through menopause. Their hope in human effort is similar to Abraham's attempt to "help God," by taking a slave-girl as a substitute wife. And thus, Paul argues that slavery to the Law leads to a disinheritance by God (5:2-4). The troublemakers teach that Christ plus the Law is the formula for salvation; Paul cancels this religious equation. God's arithmetic is all-or-nothing, a choice of either-or, but not both; no combination will suffice. His language is strong, "Now I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you" (5:1). The divine Law, when used in the wrong manner, will either lead to human pride or despair. People, who assume that they please God through the Law, may reveal a smug complacency and be unable to see the real needs of their neighbor. Others, who fail to please God, may feel the incredible weight of their sin and personal problems, that they are unable to see God or see their

neighbor, since they are so consumed with their own problems and failures. The Law simply intensifies the sense of alienation they already experience.

- 3) In ch. 5, Paul speaks about the bondage of *license* that stands in the way of genuine freedom: "For you were called to freedom, brothers; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, be servants of one another." License is expressed in the song, "I'll do it my way." Selfish expression of personal freedom leads to a biting and devouring of another and a mutual-destruction of the community; in Galatia, the license may well have been expressed as loveless dissension. The "flesh" is another bondage that leads to lawless behavior; it operates without limits or restraint; it shuns convention and walks on the wild side, looking attractive at first, but becomes a tyrannical master to the human spirit. However, the wounds that come from license and supposed "freedom" are deadly and may well lead to as much pain as the hurt and fear that is inflicted by superstition or by the Law.

These three areas of bondage stand squarely in the face of the wonderful position of sonship or daughtership, for which Paul has argued. Slaves can become sons and daughters, enjoying a future, an inheritance, a relationship, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the Abba-prayer. From slaves to sons; from slaves to daughters; this is the real and personal biography of those who trust in Jesus Christ. At the right time, God made it possible for such a transformation to occur; this new possibility occurs through the gift of His Son; He allows the world to grow up, to come of age, to enter into full freedom and to enjoy the full privilege of what it means to be a daughter or a son of God: "So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir."

Within the context of the son-father, son-daughter relationship, Paul also looks to the position of the believer within the family of God; the people of God are a family of adopted sons and daughters who need to be properly related in the context of freedom. The "works of the flesh" destroy the family as a community; through the growth of fruit, the Spirit seeks the well being and life of the family community. Paul's primary emphasis here is the community's inner life and health; his focus is not primarily the growth of Christian character. Genuine freedom is not a blissful "high" of emotion with a sense of triumph and giddy state of immunity from life's challenges and risks. Freedom is lived out in the context of community life and conflict and the nurture of love, patience, self-control, etc. His chief concern is the development of the fruit of the Spirit that will build up and serve for good of the community; the fruit of the Spirit comes from within the context of Christian liberty and obedience to Christ. The fruit of the Spirit is communal in nature.

### **The Larger and Immediate Context.**

The section on the "works of the flesh" and the "fruit of the Spirit" belongs to the larger section of 5:1-6:10, a block of material that is largely hortatory in nature and is concerned with community attitudes, responses and behavior. Frequently, the "works of the flesh" and "fruit of the Spirit" are understood only in terms of personal attitudes and behavior; Paul's concern here is the community. Following the previous exposé of the Galatian misunderstanding of grace and his own apostleship, he now turns to the practical exhortations, which are squarely founded upon his previous doctrine of genuine freedom.

Evidently there is some sort of community bickering and viciousness concerning the issue of freedom and license to "do your own thing"; thus, Paul responds to a community in which some members are "at each other's throats." The community at Galatian began with an exuberance of charismatic experience (3:1-5); however, some of the members did not understand the responsibilities associated with their newfound freedom (5:15, 26). Paul begins this section with the clear affirmation that Christ has set his readers free for authentic freedom; there must be no reversion to a previous condition of bondage to the Law and yoke of slavery (4:5, 31). Strange as it may seem, however, his readers have reverted to such bondage and slavery, supposedly in their attempt to wed grace and requirements. Not only is their behavior illogical, but they are denying their very existence as sons and daughters by this behavior. Paul challenges them with a radical either-or choice: Christ, sonship/daughtership [adoption], inclusion, freedom, inheritance, gift of the Spirit, Abba-father relationship and genuine success **or** the Law, slavery, exclusion, no inheritance, no gift of the Spirit, no Abba-father relationship and failure. Paul allows for no middle ground or compromise between these two radical opposites. If his readers, incited by a "ringleader" (5:10) or troublemakers (5:12) adopt certain Jewish regulations (circumcision, observance of feasts and days, angels, etc.), then the readers are obliged to keep the entire law (5:3). The vital requirement of the new life and sonship/daughtership is that of "faith working through love," i.e., "a genuine faith that expresses itself in love" (5:6). This affirmation prepares for the section on the fruit of the Spirit in that Neighbor-Love is singled out as the primary fruit, the radical fulfillment of the Law *in toto*. The clear responsibility for moral conduct is not regulated by an external dictate of the Law but by the empowerment and sufficiency of the Spirit for the dynamic growth of the fruit of the Spirit.

Following the section on the contrasting "works of the flesh" and the "fruit of the Spirit," Paul hearkens back to the prioritization of Neighbor-Love, expressed through the injunction of restoring those who have succumbed (6:1) to one of the "works of the flesh." Such restoration is to be accomplished through "gentleness," which is one of the fruits of the Spirit (5:23). The Christian, freed from the Mosaic Law is under a higher law—the "higher road," "the Law of Christ" (6:2), "under the Law of Christ" (ἔννομος Χριστοῦ I Cor. 9:21), "a slave of Christ" (δοῦλος ἐστὶν Χριστοῦ I Cor. 7:22). This new law is really "the law of the Spirit of life" (Rom. 8:2), and is specified here as the Law of Neighbor-Love. The entire section is oriented to community relationships. Even the restorative action of the community (6:1) is interpreted as the Law of Neighbor-Love, "Bear one another's burdens and thus, you will fulfill the Law of Christ" (6:2). A further expression of Neighbor-Love is the practical manifestation of love, expressed in the support for the "instructors" of the community (6:6) and the doing of good to all—especially to those of the household of faith (6:10).

### Structural Analysis

*Practical implications of freedom in Christ expressed in 5:1-12 (5:13)*

13 ὑμεῖς γὰρ ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ ἐκλήθητε, ἀδελφοί·

*What freedom does not mean (negative)--license*

μόνον μὴ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῆ σαρκί,  
ἀλλὰ

*What freedom means (positive)--love*

διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις.

*Substantiation for the positive freedom for love*

14 ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται,  
ἐν τῷ· ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου  
ὡς  
σεαυτόν.

*Contrasting behavior and result--mutual destruction*

15 εἰ δὲ ἀλλήλους δάκνετε  
καὶ  
κατεσθίετε,  
βλέπετε μὴ ὑπ' ἀλλήλων ἀναλωθῆτε.

*Exhortation to contrasting behavior—walk in the Spirit*

16 Λέγω δέ, πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε  
καὶ

*Result of walking in the Spirit*

ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελέσητε.

*Explanation for why there is a conflict between flesh and spirit—divided self*

17 ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος,  
τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα [ἐπιθυμεῖ] κατὰ τῆς σαρκός,  
ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται,  
ἵνα μὴ ἂν ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε.

*Freeing power of being led by the Spirit*

18 εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε,  
οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον.

*Contrasting works of the flesh*

19 φανερὰ δέ ἐστιν τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός,  
ἅτινα ἐστιν

πορνεία,  
ἀκαθαρσία,  
ἀσέλγεια,  
20 εἰδωλολατρία,  
φαρμακεία,  
ἔχθραι,  
ἔρις,  
ζῆλος,  
θυμοί,  
ἐριθείαι,  
διχοστασίαι,  
αἰρέσεις,  
21 φθόνοι,  
μέθαι,  
κῶμοι

καὶ

τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις,

*Emphatic introduction to warning*

ἃ προλέγω ὑμῖν,

καθὼς

προεῖπον ὅτι

*Warning against practicing the works of the flesh*  
 οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες  
 βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν.

*Contrasting fruit of the Spirit*

22 ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος ἐστὶν ἀγάπη  
 χαρὰ  
 εἰρήνη,  
 μακροθυμία  
 χρηστότης  
 ἀγαθωσύνη,  
 πίστις  
 23 πραΰτης  
 ἐγκράτεια·

*Corresponding freedom of the fruit of the Spirit*  
 κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος.

*Explanation for the freedom of the Spirit—victory  
 over the flesh*

24 οἱ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ] τὴν σάρκα  
 ἐσταύρωσαν σὺν τοῖς παθήμασιν  
 καὶ  
 ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις.

*Concluding exhortation to walk by the Spirit*

25 Εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι,  
 πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν.

*Contrasting attitudes and behavior*

26 μὴ γινώμεθα κενόδοξοι,  
 ἀλλήλους προκαλούμενοι,  
 ἀλλήλοις φθονοῦντες.

*Practical implications of freedom in Christ expressed in 5:1-12 (5:13)*

13 For you were called to freedom, brethren;

*What freedom does not mean (negative)--license*

only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh,

but

*What freedom means (positive)--love*

through love serve one another.

*Substantiation for the positive freedom for love*

14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word,

“You shall love your neighbor  
as  
yourself.”

*Contrasting behavior and result--mutual destruction of community life*

15 But if you bite

and

devour one another

take heed that you are not consumed by one another.

*Exhortation to contrasting behavior—walk in the Spirit*

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit,

and

*Result of walking in the Spirit*

you will certainly not gratify the desires of the flesh.

*Explanation for why there is a conflict between flesh and spirit—divided self*

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 prevent you from doing what you would.

*Freeing power of being led by the Spirit*

18 But if you are led by the Spirit

you are not under the law.

*Contrasting works of the flesh*

19 Now the works of the flesh are plain:

immorality  
uncleanness  
debauchery  
idolatry  
witchcraft  
hatred  
discord  
jealousy  
fits of rage

selfish ambitions  
 dissensions  
 factions  
 envy  
 drunkenness  
 carousing  
 and  
 the like.

*Emphatic introduction to warning*  
 I warn you,  
 as I warned you before, that

*Warning against practicing the works of the flesh*  
 those who do such things  
 shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

*Contrasting fruit of the Spirit*  
 But the fruit of the Spirit is:

love  
 joy  
 peace  
 patience  
 kindness  
 goodness  
 faithfulness  
 gentleness  
 self-control

*Corresponding freedom of the fruit of the Spirit*  
 against such there is no law.

*Explanation for the freedom of the Spirit—victory  
 over the flesh*

24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus  
 have crucified the flesh with its passions  
 and  
 desires.

*Concluding exhortation to walk by the Spirit*  
 25 If we live by the Spirit,

let us also walk by the Spirit.

*Contrasting attitudes and behavior*

26 Let us have no self-conceit,  
 no provoking of one another,  
 not envying one another.

## Interpretation

*Practical implications of freedom in Christ noted in 5:1-12 (5:13).* This verse is a logical conclusion of the argument of 5:1-12 and serves as the thesis statement for the paragraph that follows. The allegory of Hagar and Sarah (4:21-5:1) highlights Sarah's

position of freedom—not the bondage represented by Hagar with her son Ishmael, "the son of slavery" (4:24). The metaphor builds towards its concluding exhortation, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm,<sup>1</sup> then and do not be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (5:1). The particular form of slavery/bondage (δουλεία) in the previous discussion concerns the "yoke of the Law."<sup>2</sup> Here, the word family-δουλ-, "perform the duties of the slave" (δουλεύω) appears in the injunction, "through love, perform the duties of a slave to one another." As Cole notes, "If we seek an Old Testament analogy, it is to be found in the 'freed' slave who refuses to leave the household of the master whom he loves, but chooses deliberately to remain a 'slave' forever (Ex. 21:1-6). Gal. 6:17 may possibly refer to the 'ear-marking' which was the practice on such occasions."<sup>3</sup> The word family refers to the negative bondage (what one is free from) and the positive thrust of the new service (what one is free for). The idea of Neighbor-Love will be the means by which the Torah is fulfilled and is predicated upon the role of the Spirit in the life of the believer.

*What freedom does not mean (negative)—license.* The noun, "freedom" (ἐλευθερία) is used twice in v. 12, to refer to the positive goal to which the Galatians were called and what their freedom does not mean,<sup>4</sup> "an opportunity" or "occasion" for the flesh. Freedom does not mean license, i.e., an occasion for sin to take its opportunity and wreak havoc on the individual and community.<sup>5</sup> The noun ἄφορμή means, "the starting point or base of operations for an expedition, then generally the resources needed to carry through an undertaking." In Rom. 7:8, 11, the term signifies the "grasp of an opportunity with gen. of the one who gives opportunity." This is similar to modern military terminology, FOL=Forward Operating Location, i.e., the home base.<sup>6</sup> In the divine commandment (here "covetousness"), sin finds its chance, its foothold, a bridgehead, in order to produce all sorts of desires. On the surface, the law appears to limit human freedom. However, people react against this negative limitation, and seek independence from the law, only to find another sort of bondage, far more devastating, far-reaching and fatal. In Rom. 7, sin takes the occasion for bringing about destruction, while Gal. 5:12 isolates "flesh" as the entity that brings destruction and death. In the passage, "flesh" is a power sphere that is personified:

5:13 freedom itself can be the opportunity for the flesh to work

5:16 the flesh has a certain desire

5:17 the flesh desires the things against the Spirit and the Spirit desires the things against the flesh; the flesh and the Spirit are opposed to each other; the warfare of the flesh makes Christians unable to do the things they really want to do

5:19 the flesh makes certain works to be visible

There are 18 references to "flesh" (σάρξ) in the book of Galatians, 6 of which are found in this paragraph. In Galatians, the term "flesh" is used "to refer to:

1) earthly descent ("born after the flesh" Ishmael Gal. 4:23, 29)

<sup>1</sup> BAGD, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> In 3:19, the Law was added because of transgressions.

<sup>3</sup> Alan Cole, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), p. 155.

<sup>4</sup> The adverb μόνον "only" indicates a limitation to the action/position of freedom.

<sup>5</sup> The preposition εἰς with the noun "occasion/pretext" signifies "actualization." Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1990), p. 239.

<sup>6</sup> BAGD, p. 127.

- 2) corporeality, being a human body ("the life I now live, I live in the flesh . . ." Gal. 2:20)
- 3) the body itself ("weakness of the flesh"—bodily illness Gal. 4:13)
- 4) outward appearance and object of human trust ("a good showing in the flesh" Gal. 6:12-14),
- 5) humanity in its weakness and limitation—a human being—in contrast with God ("conferred not with flesh and blood" Gal. 1:16)
- 6) the willing instrument of sin (Gal. 5:13-26)

How is the term "flesh" to be translated in ch. 5 in a way that does not foster the anthropological dualism, wherein "flesh" is linked with the human body and thus, is evil? Various translations have been offered: "human nature/natural desires/physical desires" (GNB),<sup>7</sup> "lower nature" (NEB)<sup>8</sup>, "corrupt nature" (Knox), "sinful nature" (NIV), "self-indulgence" (JB).<sup>9</sup> The clearest is that suggested by Barclay and Longenecker, "add the adjective "corrupt" or "sinful" to the noun "nature" (i.e., Knox, NIV)."<sup>10</sup> This rendering avoids the idea that the body is essentially evil. Barclay notes:

The flesh is what man has made himself in contrast with man as God made him. The flesh is man as he has allowed himself to become in contrast with man as God meant him to be. The flesh stands for the total effect upon man of his own sin and the sin of his fathers and of the sin of all men who have gone before him. The flesh is human nature as it has become through sin . . . "<sup>11</sup>

In 5:13-26, the "flesh" is a power sphere, which works dynamically with "sin"; wherever the flesh is, there is sin. In this paragraph, "flesh" is an independent force that wages war against the human person and God's Spirit. The point of opposition here is between one aspect of the human existence and the Spirit of God who dwells within the Christian. Schweitzer notes that "flesh" is an "independent force superior to man."<sup>12</sup> Paul is aware that the human person becomes subject to sinister powers and forces, which entice one away from God. However, the "flesh" is not simply a tragic fact but it also renders people accountable and guilty for the orientation of life that moves away from God. The libertine, in all areas of life, chooses to live for self only for the present and is mindless of the future implications of present conduct. The "flesh" and the "Spirit" are not simply two forces within the human person, which allow for a free choice by people. The "flesh" is an active force that stands all too ready to seize an opportunity, if it is presented to a person. The "flesh" looks to see what a person will do with one's freedom; the flesh is essentially opportunistic. This means that even as believers, people stands both under the promise of grace and also under the threat of apostasy. It does not mean that both are at work in him at the same time, and that he is delivered up to both with no will or choice of his own.<sup>13</sup> The "flesh" is a power that grips the human person deep within and issues in a moral and mortal conflict. In Titus 3:5, Paul says that the people were "deceived and

<sup>7</sup> Reflects the unPauline condemnation of sex.

<sup>8</sup> This may assume that the human person has a "higher nature," which is beyond the reach of the "lower nature."

<sup>9</sup> This translation hardly captures the thought since it suggests a certain indulgence in material pleasures and excess.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Longenecker, p. 240.

<sup>11</sup> Longenecker, p. 240.

<sup>12</sup> A Schweitzer, "σάρξ," *TDNT*, vol. II, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1971), p. 133.

<sup>13</sup> A. Schweizer, "πνεῦμα," *TDNT*, vol. VI, p. 429.

enslaved by all kinds of passions and desires," (prior condition). The norm of the flesh becomes the power, which shapes the human person. Thus, the new "freedom" can itself become the occasion for a new bondage. "Paul's obvious concern here is to show the bondage of man to the σάρξ, from which, only the power of God's Spirit can free him."<sup>14</sup> In 5:24, the "flesh" is "the vanquished flesh,"<sup>15</sup> "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." Paul is aware of the faith-community's need to put away the kinds of attitudes and behavior that are not only illogical but destructive for community (5:15). Schweitzer says,

Paul calls for fresh faith . . . it is apparent that for Paul orientation to the σάρξ or the πνεῦμα, is a total attitude which determines everything. The man ruled by the Spirit must no longer secure his life by the σάρξ, whether by wealth or by good works. But this means that the splitting of life into thousands of individual acts, which is typical of legalists and scrupulous penitents, is quite impossible. Life is determined as a totality by σάρξ or πνεῦμα.<sup>16</sup>

*What freedom means (positive)—love.* Positively, freedom is then to be expressed through a paradox; freedom means a continual and new "slavery/service," (δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις "continue to perform the duties of a slave to one another")<sup>17</sup> at work in the community of faith.

Characteristic of Pauline ethics, the pattern of the indicative-imperative holds true. Paul declares the freedom (indicative) and follows with the ethical obligation (imperative). For the Judaizers, the ethical obligation implies a subjection to the Mosaic Law; for Paul, subjection is understood as the obligation of love to the new community of faith. Betz notes, "Christian ethics can be defined as the exercise of freedom, or as the preservation of freedom; the corruption and loss of that freedom is then identical with the return under the slavery of the 'elements of the world.'"<sup>18</sup> In the light of Paul's call to emancipation, the temptation to libertinism was real (3:26-28). Since the Law was dismissed as a means of being justified by God, the result is that there is no external code that dictates what is right and what is wrong. The flesh does not look beyond one's own ego and its satisfaction; love directs a person away from egotism to the neighbor and will spend its resources on the needs of the neighbor. Love is the means (διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης "through love) by which service is to be rendered to the community. The imperative "through love, perform the duties of a slave" (διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε v. 12) parallels the imperatival future of v. 14, "you shall love" (ἀγαπήσεις), and the later imperative, "walk in the Spirit" (πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε) of v. 16 and the statement in v. 18, "if you are being led by the Spirit" (εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε). These are coordinate expressions, which are later made more specific as the "fruit of the Spirit" (vss. 22-23). These clauses are contrasted with the egotism of the flesh. Genuine faith

<sup>14</sup> Schweitzer, p. 132.

<sup>15</sup> Schweitzer, p. 132.

<sup>16</sup> Schweitzer, p. 135.

<sup>17</sup> The present imperative refers to ongoing activity, "the long obedience in the same direction," Eugene Peterson, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980). The present tense does not refer to what is done "from time to time." Cf. Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, (Peabody Press: Hendricksen Publishers, 1994), p. 430.

<sup>18</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 273.

expresses itself in love. "Anything that does not work itself out in love, though it may conceivably be verbal orthodoxy, is not faith in Paul's sense of the term."<sup>19</sup>

*Substantiation for the positive freedom of loving service (v. 14).* The conjunction "for" (γάρ) substantiates the previous injunction "in love, serve one another." The imperative is grounded in the witness of the Old Testament, by way of general summary ("the entire Law is fulfilled in one word") and the specific command, "love your neighbor":

Lev. 19:18 You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but *you shall love your neighbor as yourself*. I am the LORD.

19:18 καὶ οὐκ ἐκδικᾶται σου ἡ χεὶρ, καὶ οὐ μνηεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς τοῦ λαοῦ σου καὶ ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν, ἐγὼ εἰμι κύριος.

Even though Paul has dismissed the Law and the threat of legalism, nonetheless he now "unobtrusively readmits it through the back door."<sup>20</sup> Love for the neighbor is compared with "self-love," i.e., the careful attention that one gives to one's own self is to characterize the care that one gives to another in the community. The responsibility of Neighbor-Love is not one specific law but is essentially a total approach to life and others in a non-restrictive manner. While the "neighbor" was understood as a fellow-Jew in the OT law, Paul's perspective may well be broader and inclusive. The neighbor<sup>21</sup> is anyone:

"Let us do good to all men, but especially to those who belong to the household of faith." (6:10).

Grace, the power of love, the new life in the Spirit become the norm of the new life, which are all expressed in the actual performance of the duties of a slave. This service is not paternalism, wherein Christians are constantly the more controlling, more powerful, wiser and richer person who knows what is best for the needy person, who is somehow "beneath: them. The performance of the duties of a slave expresses their relative position; it is lower than the needy person. It is also important that in Paul's enumeration of the "fruit of the Spirit," that "love" is the first fruit that is mentioned (v. 22).<sup>22</sup> Barrett notes,

Circumcision is the sort of thing which, if abstracted from the rest of the law, can be performed as an end in itself; indeed it can hardly be performed in any other way. Love, on the other hand, if it is rightly understood, cannot be performed as an end in itself; the moment it becomes such an end it ceases to be disinterested love—that is, it ceases to be love. This means that the law of circumcision, if it is taken on its own, inevitably becomes not law but legalism; the law of love cannot become legalism but rather acts as a safeguard against legalism.<sup>23</sup>

*Contrasting behavior and result—mutual destruction (v. 15).* The verbs of v. 15 express the contrast between the attitude and behavior of love in the community setting and that which is destructive of community life:

<sup>19</sup> C.K. Barrett, *Freedom and Obligation*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), p. 71.

<sup>20</sup> Longenecker, p. 241.

<sup>21</sup> The question, "Who is my neighbor?" expresses the implicit difference of treatment between those who are "inside" and those who are "outside." In parable form, Jesus says that the real issue is that of "becoming the neighbor" to the one in need (Lk. 10:36; cf. also Matt. 5:43f.; also Matt. 22:40).

<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere in Paul, the Love-Commandment is central I Thess. 4:9; I Cor. 13:1-7, 13; 16:14; Rom. 13:8-10; Col. 3:14; Eph. 5:2.

<sup>23</sup> Barrett, p. 74.

"if you bite" (εἰ δὲ ἀλλήλους δάκνετε)<sup>24</sup>  
 "and devour" (καὶ κατεσθίετε).

The sarcasm is clear and forceful. These verbs reflect a type of party strife, noted in BAGD as "something like 'tear to pieces,'" behavior that clearly destroys the sense of community; this behavior reflects the "law of the jungle" or the "cat fight,"—behavior of wild animals. The OT frequently uses the imagery of wild beasts—wild scavenger dogs to refer to the attitude of enemies to the people of God (Psa. 35:25). The result of such behavior will be a "consuming by one other" (βλέπετε μὴ ὑπ' ἀλλήλων ἀναλωθῆτε)<sup>26</sup> There is a clearly negative progression between the verbs "bite," "devour" and "consume."

*Exhortation to contrasting behavior—walk by the Spirit (v. 16).* Paul summons an active and continued walk<sup>27</sup> "by the Spirit." The walk by the Spirit is expressed in the previous clauses as loving service of others in the community.<sup>28</sup> Paul does not argue here for some type of privatized religious experience, but the fulfillment of the OT, the prioritized commitment to loving others in the community of faith. Its antithesis is the community strife ("biting and devouring") the several "works of the flesh" that are noted in v. 19ff., which are clearly anti-social attitudes and behaviors. Walking by the Spirit means a loving social concern for the other members of the Church. Under the influence of the Spirit ("by"), the Christian possesses an inner principle, which will help overpower the "flesh" and is no longer merely confronted with an external claim of the Law. Through a walk "by the Spirit," the believer is able to fulfill the Law of Neighbor-Love, which in turn fulfills Torah.

*Result of walking by the Spirit.* The result of walking by the Spirit is expressed in the promise, "you will not carry out what the flesh desires,"<sup>29</sup> The aorist "carry out/satisfy" is constative and "treats the act as a single whole entirely irrespective of the parts or time involved."<sup>30</sup> There is a chiasm in vss. 16-17:

- A Walk by the *Spirit*
- B You will not carry out the desire of the *flesh*
- B The *flesh* rises in protest against the Spirit
- A The *Spirit* rises in protest against the flesh

*Explanation for why there is a conflict between flesh and spirit—divided self (v. 16b).* The conjunction "for" (γάρ) introduces the explanation for why it is necessary to walk by the Spirit and not carry out the desires of the flesh. The Christian walk is not uncontested but it is a constant struggle and battle. Conflict is a real and necessary part

<sup>24</sup> The verb δάκνω is obviously used figuratively here.

<sup>25</sup> BAGD, p. 423. The verb κατεσθίω means "to eat up, "consume" our "devour." In Lk. 20:47; Mk. 12:40; Matt. 23:13 it refers to "eating up widows' houses," i.e., appropriate them illegally, BAGD, p. 423. In MM, there are some references to "swallow up."

<sup>26</sup> The verb ἀναλίσκω is used figuratively of "annihilation," (BAGD, p. 56) and is used in II Thess. 2:8 for the annihilation of the lawless one and in James and John's request that fire come down and consume the unreceptive Samaritans (Lk. 9:54).

<sup>27</sup> The verb is used in the OT sense of "live" or "conduct oneself."

<sup>28</sup> Paul refers to the Spirit 7 times in this section (5:16, 17, 18, 22, 23).

<sup>29</sup> A very weakened sense in BAGD, "satisfy one's physical desires (ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελέσητε), p. 818.

<sup>30</sup> ATR, p. 832. The double negative with the aorist subjunctive here makes an emphatic statement, "you will certainly not."

of Christian living. Since Christian living is human living, it is subject to human passion and desire. The verb "to desire, long for" (ἐπιθυμέω) is used in the first clause and understood in the second clause. The verb here signifies "desire against" or "rise in protest against something."<sup>31</sup> Each power sphere challenges the other for ascendancy. The old and the new clash; this clash has a way of draining human energy, distracting attention and diverting people away from doing the will of God. The ongoing warfare and struggle is also expressed by the verb "be opposite, form a contrast to" (ἀντίκειμαι) and is to be translated, "these things are in opposition to each other." There is a fierce and unremitting antagonism between these two forces, which are postured in an irreconcilable, bitter and unremitting antagonism and belong to two different worlds and two different spheres. That is to say, the divided self, including flesh and spirit within the human person necessitates activity and moral commitment through the walk by the Spirit.

The result of such internal warfare is that people are unable to practice the things that they desire. There is a clear contrast here between the things that are not practiced and the things that are really desired; the struggle is similar to the language and thought of Romans 7:14-23. Paul provides no simple solution to this conflict; the Spirit of God stands in stark opposition to fleshly desires and a legalistic tendency. Paul argues that neither bondage to the Law nor abandonment to the flesh is a spiritual state: "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law" (5:18). Neither careful regulation nor carefree rebellion—is the work of the Spirit. Believers still possess the flesh and as long as believers are alive in the world, there will be an internal warfare. The Spirit that indwells the believer desires that the believer do the things of the will of God; however, the flesh does not allow the person to do the full will of God. Further, the Christian is never quite as selfish and worldly as the flesh would like the person to be, because the Spirit does its own work of restraint. Burton notes, "Does the man choose evil, the Spirit opposes him; does he choose good, the flesh hinders him."<sup>32</sup> The Spirit makes a crucial difference as the people of God sense how radically their lives need to be changed.

*Freeing power of being led by the Spirit (v. 18).* Paul now affirms the positive and promising condition and state of the believer, who is enlivened by the positive and freeing role of the Spirit; this new position stands in contrast with the experience of the divided self (v. 17c). Although Paul affirms the role of the Christian through an active imperative, "Walk by the Spirit" (v. 16), now he describes the same condition through the passive verb, "being led" (ἄγεσθε) by the Spirit; there is a close correlation between the human activity and the human passivity due to divine leading. To walk by the Spirit means a genuine decision; however, the decision is not primarily a superhuman effort of the human will to overcome obstacles. The decision involves an active entrustment to the Spirit, a willingness to be led, and a willingness for the Spirit to "grow" the fruit of the Spirit in one's life. Life, that is lived in passive submission to the Spirit is also active and requires active and deliberate effort.<sup>33</sup> Walking by the Spirit means an inner responsiveness to God's power to transform, to lead, to grow and to develop.

There is a clear cause-effect relationship between being "led by the Spirit" and the resultant condition, "you are not under law" (οὐκ ἔστέ ὑπὸ νόμον). The preposition

<sup>31</sup> BAGD, p. 293.

<sup>32</sup> Burton, p. 246.

<sup>33</sup> A similar thought is expressed in Phil. 2:12f. "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you . . ."

"under" is noted at several points to describe the plight of people before they came to Christ or the situation of Gentiles who choose circumcision as an "add-on" to their experience of grace:

- 3:23 "under the Law"
- 4:4 "under the Law"
- 4:5 "under the Law"
- 4:21 "under the Law"
- 3:25 "under a strict disciplinarian/governess"
- 4:2 "under guardians, trustees"
- 3:10 "under a curse"
- 5:18 "under Law"

The Spirit liberates the people of God from this legal tyranny of the Law and the desires of the flesh.

Christians have been freed from the negative bondage to the Law and now are under a new type of "service" ("through love, perform the duties of a slave to another"), given in v. 13. Paul has just affirmed that the entire Law (νόμος) is summed up in the Law of Neighbor-Love (v. 14). They are "under this Law" but not the Law, under which the Galatians desire to live:

Gal. 4:21 Tell me, you who desire to be under law (ὕπὸ νόμον), do you not hear the law?

Although the Galatians desire to be "under the Law," they do not fully understand that the Law is fully summed up in the Law of Neighbor-Love. Fee notes, "To be 'Law-less' does not meant to be lawless."<sup>34</sup> They are not under the Law as a means of religious performance and achievement—as an "add-on" to their experience of grace. Later in the text, Paul says that "against such things [fruit of the Spirit] there is no law (οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος) in v. 22. No external law can promote the internal attitudes and external behaviors of love; however, the Spirit produces such qualities in the Christian who "walks," who "loves," and "is led" by the Spirit.

*Contrasting works of the flesh (vss. 19-21).* The "works of the flesh" are plain, i.e., they are evident and observable for all to see. Paul's contrast here between the "works of the flesh" and the "fruit of the Spirit" may well reflect the Jewish doctrine of the Two Ways, found in the OT and Jewish tradition. The "works of the flesh" may be understood primarily as "antisocial behavior" that is then contrasted with the "eschatological fruit" of the Spirit,<sup>35</sup> in that all of these behaviors destroy the sense of community and violate the new life of love. Paul details 15 particular "works of the flesh," followed by the more generalized, "things similar to these" (v. 21). The term "work(s)" (ἔργον) may signify human effort or striving; generally the term is used in the NT in a negative sense. The list is not a complete list of all the vices or particular "works of the flesh." Other similar lists in the Pauline corpus contain other vices not listed here.<sup>36</sup> The list contains four sorts of sins: 1) sexual sins, 2) religious/cultic sins, 3) social sins and 4) drinking sins:

<sup>34</sup> Fee, p. 451

<sup>35</sup> Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), p. 389.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. vice lists in Rom. 1:29-31; 13:13; Col. 3:5; I Cor. 5:11; 6:9-10; II Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:31; 5:3-5; I Tim. 1:9-10; Titus 3:3; II Tim. 3:2-4.

1) *Sexual sins:*

"immorality" (πορνεία), used of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse<sup>37</sup>

"uncleanness" (ἀκαθαρσία) or "immorality" with "viciousness" used in connection with sexual sins<sup>38</sup>

"debauchery" (ἀσελγεία) or "licentiousness" as a shameful lifestyle<sup>39</sup>

These sexual sins are obvious examples of the works of the flesh whatever form they might take. God knows the purpose of human sexuality—human caring, communion, partnership and intimacy as male and female. The Spirit of God wars against conduct that dehumanizes people in their own sexuality; the Spirit knows who people can be and become and how much Christ wants to change and free them in their own sexuality.

2) *Religious/cultic sins:*

"idolatry" (εἰδωλολατρία), often in connection with the unlawful deeds associated with idolatry<sup>40</sup>

"witchcraft" (φαρμακεία) or "sorcery, magic"<sup>41</sup>

Idolatry leads to sorcery; incorrect worship of God leads to the abusive and illicit use of divine power. The communities, then and now, are steeped in both. God is demeaned and people become enslaved by the false systems and the means of controlling their fate through the use of magic and drugs. These elements debase human worship of God and damage personal relationships.

3) *Social sins:*

"hatred" (ἔχθραι)<sup>42</sup>

"discord" (ἔρις), "contention" or "strife"<sup>43</sup>

"jealousy" (ζήλος) and its various outbreaks or forms that it may assume<sup>44</sup>

"fits of rage" (θύμοι) or "outbursts of anger"<sup>45</sup>

"selfish ambitions" (ἐριθειαι)<sup>46</sup>

<sup>37</sup> BAGD, p. 699.; prostitution, adultery noted as such (Matt. 15:19; Matt. 5:32; 19:9); the plural form "immoralities" in I Cor. 7:2 suggests the various factors that may bring about immorality for the Christian.

<sup>38</sup> The term is used literally to refer to "dirt" or "refuse" and figuratively with reference to "immorality" and "viciousness" of sexual sins (cf. II Cor. 12:21; Col. 3:5; Eph. 5:3) or can refer to the "unnatural" vices, e.g., God gave them over to viciousness" (Rom. 1:24); "to the practice of every kind of immorality" (Eph. 4:19). The opposite of such "uncleanness" and "viciousness" is "holiness" (I Thess. 4:7; Rom. 6:19).

<sup>39</sup> Sensuality in the singular and plural (Eph. 4:19; I Pet. 4:13; II Pet. 2:2; II Cor. 12:21), which is often found in the vice lists (Mk. 7:22; II Peter. 2:7). Often the term is used to express excess, defined by Barclay as, "a love of sin so reckless and so audacious that a man has ceased to care what God or man thinks of his actions." William Barclay, *Flesh and Spirit*, p. 31.

<sup>40</sup> BAGD, p. 220. Can be used of "greed" (Col. 3:5); cf. Eph. 5:5; I Cor. 10:14; I Pet. 4:3.

<sup>41</sup> BAGD, p. 861. Associated with the magic arts (cf. Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:14; Isa. 47:9, 12; Wisd. 12:4; 18:13; Enoch 7:1); Rev. 18:23. The noun φάρμακον means "magic, potion, charm" or "remedy, medicine, drug," often associated with witchcraft.

<sup>42</sup> Enmity, hostility—of hostile feelings and actions (Eph. 2:14, 16; Lk. 23:12), BAGD, p. 331.

<sup>43</sup> Often used in the sense of "quarreling" (I Cor. 1:11; Titus 3:9; Rom. 1:29; 13:13), BAGD, p. 309.

<sup>44</sup> The term can be used in a good sense ("zeal" or "ardor") or the bad sense of "jealousy, envy or strife" (Rom. 13:13; II Cor. 12:20).

<sup>45</sup> Although the term can be used in a good way to refer to God's wrath, it is used in a pejorative sense of people, "filled with anger," "uncontrolled anger" (Col. 3:8; Eph. 4:31; II Cor. 12:20).

"dissensions" (διχοστασίαι)<sup>47</sup>

"factions" (αἱρέσεις) or "dissensions"<sup>48</sup>

"envy" (φθόνοι)<sup>49</sup>

The longest list of sins concerns the social sins, the disturbing tendencies that fracture and split, divide and conquer, and lead to fearful and protective behavior, insecurity and defensive attitudes, bigotry, class-ism, sexism, and leads to the human divisions in the community. This list reiterates the self-destructive behavior of "biting and devouring" one another (v. 15). Paul had affirmed that the Body of Christ is one—no Jew no Gentile, no slave, no free, no male, no female. True, the differences are still there, but they no longer matter. Christ has broken down the barriers; Christ's Spirit breaks down the walls of division—all such walls have been abrogated by the coming of Christ.

#### 4) *Drinking Sins*

"drunkenness" (μέθαι) or "dissipation"<sup>50</sup>

"carousing" (κῶμοι) "or "revelry"<sup>51</sup>

The list of vices, "works of the flesh," is concluded with personal sins of drunkenness, which affect both the person and the community. Life hits bottom when people escape in a drunken stupor, trying to deal with person issues of guilt, fear or meaninglessness through alcohol or the public carousing that often attends alcoholic excess. Paul says the Spirit of God desires God's grace in the place of the fantasies and "inspiration" associated with intoxication: "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).

*Emphatic introduction to warning. (v. 21).* The warning is given in the following section of v. 21; however, the warning is emphatically introduced with two forms of the verb "tell beforehand" (προλέγω):

"I tell beforehand" (προλέγω)

"I told beforehand" (προεἶπον)

The present and aorist forms of the verb highlight the importance of Paul's communication of the following warning; his statement that follows is not a casual or incidental aside but it is a stern warning that must be taken seriously. The statement had been made on several occasions.

*Warning against practicing the works of the flesh (v. 21c).* The specific warning states that those who practice the works of the flesh and their like, noted above, will not inherit the Kingdom of God. There is a clear cause-effect relationship between the present practice of such attitudes and behavior and the future exclusion of people from the Kingdom of God. Paul calls these the works of the "flesh," yet he regards the human person as ultimately responsible and accountable for such behavior. There are dire consequences for their present behavior; if the present warnings are not heeded, the future consequences will be sure—people will be responsible for their own exclusion from the

<sup>46</sup> The term can refer to "strife" or "contentiousness," however, the term probably refers to "selfishness" or "selfish ambition," "disputes or outbreaks of selfishness" (Rom. 2:8; Phi. 2:3; Phil. 1:17; II Cor. 12:20). BAGD, p. 309.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. I Cor. 3:3; Rom. 16:17. BAGD, p. 199.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. I Cor. 11:19. BAGD, p. 23.

<sup>49</sup> Or "jealousy" (Titus 3:3; Rom. 1:29; I Tim. 6:4; I Pet. 2:1; Phil. 1:15), BAGD, p. 865.

<sup>50</sup> BAGD, pp. 500.

<sup>51</sup> Rom. 13:13; I Pet. 4:3—in the bad sense of excessive feasting. BAGD, p. 462.

Kingdom of God, the wonderful inheritance of sons/daughters of God (4:3:6-4:7, 30). The previous injunctions will be the means by which people will give evidence that they will be included in the coming Kingdom; their attitudes and behavior are different ("through love, perform the duties of a slave to one another;" "love your neighbor as yourself," "walk by the Spirit," "those who are led by the Spirit"). Although the term "Kingdom of God" is not the major motif in Paul's theology, nonetheless he uses it in a similar way to Jesus' expression in the Gospels, i.e., "the royal reign or rule of God—as an eschatological idea." In the text here, the Kingdom of God is essentially future (cf. I Cor. 6:9ff.; Eph. 5:5; II Tim. 4:1; I Cor. 15:50). Elsewhere, Paul speaks of the "Kingdom" as an ethical reality of a loving community:

Rom. 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit;

1 Cor. 4:20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.<sup>52</sup>

With the future perspective of the Kingdom in view, Paul states that Christians must avoid these vices if they are to share the blessings of the coming Kingdom of God and enter into the communion with God at the Parousia.

*Contrasting fruit of the Spirit (vss 22-23a).* The general term "fruit" of the Spirit is made particular with nine virtues; the term "fruit" of the Spirit also suggests organic relationship, which may be well contrasted with the term "works" of the flesh. The term derives from the metaphor of botanical growth; fruit follows as a matter of course when there is vital and life giving power in the soil or the tree. Paul does not add the generalization, "those similar to these" to the list of 9 virtues as he expresses a generalization about the "works of the flesh" in v. 21. However, the list is probably not exhaustive and does not represent the totality of Christian character and expectation; the Spirit produces other virtues in addition to these.<sup>53</sup> These virtues do not express the full Christian life and character; however, they express various ways in which the Spirit is expressed in personal and community life. They are examples of the lifestyle of the believer and stand in opposition to the self-centered life. On the first three virtues, love, joy and peace, Betz notes, "People cannot be expected simply to act in an ethically responsible way, but they must first be enabled, empowered and motivated before they can act."<sup>54</sup> Love is mentioned first in the list; many of the virtues that follow are the clear outgrowth of the basic virtue of love.

"love" (ἀγάπη) takes its place here as the first virtue which the Spirit produces<sup>55</sup>

"joy" (χαρά)<sup>56</sup>

"peace" (εἰρήνη)<sup>57</sup>

<sup>52</sup> The contexts of both passages is communal in nature.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. II Cor. 6:6; Col. 3:12-15; Eph. 4:2; 5:9 for other virtue-lists.

<sup>54</sup> D.S. Dockery, "Fruit of the Spirit," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 318.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Rom 15:30 "through the love of the Spirit" (διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ πνεύματος); Col 1:8 "your love in the Spirit" (τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι). People know God's love through the Spirit (Rom. 5:5), noted most powerfully in the death of God's Son on the cross (Rom. 5:6-8). Love stands as

<sup>56</sup> In Phil. 1:25, joy comes from faith and in I Thess. 1:6, joy comes from the Holy Spirit (cf. also Rom. 14:17). The joy here may be specifically related to the joy expressed in the context of the Christian community (cf. Rom. 15:13).

<sup>57</sup> The term here is a community term, "to be at peace with others," "living peaceably" and "harmoniously" (II Tim. 2:22; Heb. 12:14; Rom. 14:19—"strive after peace" in the passage that follows Paul's communal word, "The Kingdom is not food and drink but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"). The term

"patience" (μακροθυμία) with people, "forbearance"<sup>58</sup>  
 "kindness" (χρηστότης) or "goodness," "generosity"<sup>59</sup>  
 "goodness" (ἀγαθωσύνη), "generosity" or "uprightness"<sup>60</sup>  
 "faith[fulness]" (πίστις) or reliability as a Christian virtue<sup>61</sup>  
 "gentleness" (πραΰτης), "humility," "courtesy," "considerateness" or "meekness"<sup>62</sup>  
 "self control" (ἐγκράτεια)<sup>63</sup>

The fruit of the Spirit is clearly contrasted with the works of the flesh:

Acts of hatred versus Love (and joy)  
 Discord versus Peace  
 Anger (quick temper) versus Patience  
 Fits of rage versus Acts of kindness  
 Acts of selfish ambition versus Acts of generosity  
 Dissensions leading to factions versus Faithfulness to others  
 Acts of envy versus Acts of considerateness<sup>64</sup>

The focus of the enjoined fruit of the Spirit is not simply personal behavior but behavior as it impacts the assembled community of faith. The Spirit indwells both the individual and the community and summons forth the response of freedom for the loving service to the community. As Witherington notes, "In other words, a corporate and communal effort is required to win these sorts of battles against the flesh. That is why we have all the discussion here about burden bearing and loving neighbor. These are the bases of forming a resilient and enduring community."<sup>65</sup>

*Corresponding freedom of the fruit of the Spirit (v. 23b).* For all of the virtues that Paul now enumerates, he realizes that these cannot be codified into an external list that people must dutifully follow. There is no Law that can legislate these virtues; the statement parallels v. 18b, "if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law;" instead the people of God are to look to the fulfillment of the Law in the commandment of

refers to the wholeness and well-being that God gives to His people in their life together. Cf. Rom. 16:20; II Thess. 3:16.; I Cor. 14:33. Cf. also Eph. 2:14-17; Rom. 14:1-15:13; Col. 3:12-4:6.

<sup>58</sup> The term is generally used in contexts dealing with forbearance or patience towards others who may oppose or cause distress towards the believer. II Cor. 6:6; Col. 3:12; II Tim. 4:2; Eph. 4:2. BAGD, p. 489.

<sup>59</sup> BAGD, p. 894. Kindness is an active movement towards others; its opposite is self-centered behavior.

<sup>60</sup> BAGD, p. 3. The noun takes the form of the verb, "to do good" and is expressed through action for another.

<sup>61</sup> Often "faith" is linked with other Christian virtues and is perhaps best understood as faithfulness; often linked with "love" (cf. I Thess. 3:6; 5:8; I Tim. 1:14; II Tim. 1:13; Philm 5). Often linked with a triad of "faith," "hope" and "love" (I Cor. 13:13; I Thess. 1:3; 5:8; Col. 1:4ff.). BAGD, p. 669. Authentic faith is faithfulness, expressed towards God, which is also expressed towards others.

<sup>62</sup> BAGD, p. 705. II Cor. 10:1—"meekness and gentleness of Christ"; Titus 3:2; Col. 3:12; Eph. 4:2; Gal. 6:1. The term includes a realistic estimation of oneself in relationship to God (humility) and a considerate treatment of others. As Fee notes, "It is the fruit of the Spirit which is at work in those who do not think too highly of themselves (6:3), but who 'in humility consider others better than themselves' (Phil. 2:3)—in the sense that they look after others' needs and concerns before their own." Fee, p. 452. Perhaps a "strength under control" or a humble disposition to the divine will. Dockery, p. 318.

<sup>63</sup> Especially with matters of sex in I Clement (I Cl. 35:2; 62:2; 64). It is a general posture towards excess of any sort." , p. 452. However, the term does not mean abstinence (I Cor. 10:31-33; Rom. 14:1-23; Col. 2:16-23; I Tim. 4:1-5).

<sup>64</sup> Witherington, p. 402.

<sup>65</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), p. 415.

Neighbor-Love (v. 14). Clearly, there is no law that can be dictated against such virtuous actions. Fee notes, "when these virtues are evident in one's life because of the presence of the Spirit, Torah is an irrelevancy."<sup>66</sup> Barrett captures the sentiment of the text, "You want to observe the law, don't you. You will not find any law that forbids these things."<sup>67</sup>

*Explanation for the freedom of the Spirit—victory over the flesh (v. 24).* Paul explains why such virtues replace the previously mentioned "works of the flesh." Paul says that those of Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. This clause stands in clear contrast with the clause that describes those who practice the works of the flesh (v. 21):

*Warning against practicing the works of the flesh*

ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες

βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν. v. 21

that those who practice such things

shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

*Explanation for the freedom of the Spirit—victory over the flesh*

24 οἱ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ]

τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν σὺν τοῖς παθήμασιν

καὶ

ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις.

24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus<sup>68</sup> m

have crucified the flesh with its passions

and

desires

Paul says that Christians have crucified the flesh; yet Paul is also aware of Christian existence that lives between this age and the age to come. Christians have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires and yet the flesh continues to wage war against the human person and causes fracture in the community setting (v. 15). Christians need to express the determined resolve to keep their "flesh" crucified to the cross. In 6:14, Paul says that he (also Galatian Christians) also died to the world and the world has died to him. Paul has argued that through Christ's death, the believer has died to the Law (2:17; Rom. 7:1-4). Now he similarly says that the believer has died to the flesh through a crucifixion with Christ to the flesh. We find the ongoing tension in the text; Paul makes an absolute statement here of the crucifixion of the flesh and yet, in 5:13, Paul expresses the painful fact that the flesh is still very much alive, alert for opportunities to abuse Christian freedom and destroy the community of faith. The fruit of the Spirit here is largely concerned with community life, concerns and relationships.

*Concluding exhortation to walk by the Spirit (v. 25).* Paul returns to the exhortation of "walking by the Spirit," which is the expected result of "living by the Spirit." Paul takes it as an established fact that Christians "live by the Spirit," based upon their prior crucifixion of the flesh with its passions and desires (Gal. 2:20; 6:14). That death is the very means of present life ("if we live by the Spirit"); what follows is the exhortation, "let us also walk in line with the Spirit." The verb expresses the thought of

<sup>66</sup> Fee, p. 453.

<sup>67</sup> Barrett, p. 77.

<sup>68</sup> Parallel expressions in Galatians: "in Christ" (2:16f.; 3:26-28; 5:6), "put on Christ" (3:27); Christ is their Lord (1:3, 19; 5:10; 6:14, 18); Christ redeemed them (1:4; 2:20; 3:13; 4:4f.; 5:1); they are given the Spirit (4:6).

following a standard, rule, norm or principle, which is to be followed. The hortatory subjunctive, "let us walk in line" (στοιχῶμεν)<sup>69</sup> is aptly translated by the NIV by "let us keep in step with" the Spirit. Keeping in step with the Spirit is expressed through the expressions, "through love, perform the duties of a slave to one another," "neighbor-love," "walking by the Spirit," and "being led by the Spirit," in addition to the specific fruit of the Spirit that is noted in vss. 22-23. There is a close parallel between the passive verb, "you are being led" and the active verb, "let us walk in line," i.e., the close cooperation between the divine and human activity.

*Contrasting attitudes and behavior (v. 26).* Keeping in step with the Spirit is then contrasted by three separate clauses that build on the various "works of the flesh," i.e., attitudes and behavior that contribute to the destruction of the community of faith:

The first clause, "let us not become conceited/boastful" (μὴ γινώμεθα κενόδοξοι) corresponds well with several of the "works of the flesh," which reveal prideful attitudes or behavior ("jealousy," "selfish ambitions," "dissensions" and "factions").

The second clause, "provoking one another" (ἀλλήλους προκαλούμενοι) reflects an aggressive posture in the community, i.e., "challenging one another," an attitude and behavior that is reflected in various works of the flesh that express "discord," "dissensions" and "factions." Aggressive polarization within the community leads to its own self-destruction and self-consumption (v. 15).

The third clause, "envying one another" (ἀλλήλοις φθονοῦντες) clearly corresponds with the "work of the flesh" designated by the noun "envy" (φθόνοι) noted in v. 20. Jealousy over the wealth, position, experiences or gifts of others is the direct opposite of an inclusive concern for others in the community—it leads to community destruction; it is the antithesis of Neighbor-Love.

## Application

Paul does not say that the material world or the human desires are inherently evil. He does not imply that physical desires, human feelings or sexuality are wrong. He does not say that possessions are wrong. However, he is keenly aware of the possible abuses of human persons in their freedom; the flesh is opportunistic and seeks to destroy people at the very point of their freedom. In our culture, personal freedom, individual identity, personal fulfillment and rugged individualism are highly prized. Frequently, these drives are highlighted at the expense of community identity and responsibility. Genuine freedom is to be found in Christ and the presence and dynamic activity of the Holy Spirit in one's life. It is a freedom to perform the duties of a slave to another. It is a freedom to build up the community of faith through love. Witherington says, "Maturity in Paul's view means understanding whose you are, not just who you are; which is to say, understanding that true identity is established in relationship with God, not through radical individualism."<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Originally the verb means "be drawn up in line," "be in line with, stand beside a person or thing." It is used in Gal. 6:16, "Peace and mercy to all who follow/keep in step with this rule." Cf. also Phil. 3:16; Rom. 4:12.

<sup>70</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), p. 386.

It is easier to lose freedom than to keep it. The distinguished Russian novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn narrates the account of the Soviet system of labor camps, subsequent to the Russian Revolution, when the reign of the Czar was ended. He struggled over the freedom that was gained in the Russian Revolution in 1917; however, this freedom was quickly surrendered to the new totalitarian regime. Here is what Solzhenitsyn said, "We lacked enough love of freedom. And even more a consciousness of the real situation. We spent ourselves in one unrestrained outburst in 1917, and then we made haste to be submissive. We submitted with pleasure."<sup>71</sup>

He said, "We lacked enough love of freedom . . . We submitted with pleasure." These sentences not only characterizes the Russian situation, but the Galatian situation and the situation of people in our millennium. Left to ourselves and our own misuse of the gift of God, we give away our genuine freedom as sons and daughters of God. The Spirit of God says, then and now, "Stiffen yourselves to hold on to the wonderful position and freedom that are yours." "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery . . . For you were called to freedom, brothers; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh but through love, be servants of one another" (Gal. 5:1, 13). Our own human drives and desires have a way of binding us, putting us in bondage like prisoners in a prison or labor camp.

The Good News is that the new relationship with God does not stop with a freedom from various things, but it moves on to real sonship and daughtership. Frequently, owners in the Mediterranean world were attracted to certain slaves and were appreciative of their skills and talents and made the movement to adopt them. When this often happened and the owner was childless, the owner could bequeath his property and inheritance. Paul affirms the wonderful news that through God, His people are no longer slaves but sons and daughters and if sons and daughters, then heirs (Gal. 4:7). God took upon Himself that initiative in sending His Son; no one can redeem or adopt himself or herself. And in this wonderful act of adoption, He sends His Holy Spirit into our hearts, enabling us to call God, "Abba-Father." We cannot even make this confession and affirmation were it not for the work of the Holy Spirit who makes this possible. And in calling us to a family relationship, He also provides the wonderful context of freedom: freedom from superstition, freedom from religious legalism and freedom from license. He is aware of the moral and mortal conflict that rages within—as the Spirit rages against the human flesh and the human flesh rages against the Spirit of God within. And within this context, He summons us to Christian virtue, Christian fruit, the primary one, which is love—as the guide and norm for all of our interpersonal relationships in the community of faith. Although the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit is very real, this contest for freedom is no stalemate. The Spirit within has ways of winning and the victories are for our good and the welfare of the Christian community. The Spirit changes our lives from within by enabling us to respond to God's good news with love, joy and peace. The Spirit enables us to affirm our position, dignity and freedom, and, in turn, to affirm the position, dignity and freedom of others within the faith-community. We are loved and accepted and thus, our struggles with each other can be settled. His Holy Spirit enables His people to imitate and be empowered through relationship to imitate the conduct of Jesus in faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Jesus, through the person and work of the Holy Spirit pioneers a whole new way of life—a life that does not need external

---

<sup>71</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, January 8, 1974.

control, since it is governed by God's law of love and the dynamic of the Holy Spirit. While the primary battle has been won, the struggle continues as we seek to appropriate the gift of the Spirit as we continue to crucify the flesh with its desires. As we do so, we will find the ever-increasing wonder of how much Jesus has changed our lives.