

## AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF GALATIANS 5 WITH PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

As we begin our survey of this powerful chapter in the great Apostle's powerful letter, we naturally inquire as to the time and the place of the writing of this great epistle, one which was thought of so highly by Doctor Martin Luther that he expounded it in some of his most voluminous exegetical treatises, since its theme is that central doctrine of the Christian, religion, the justification of a poor sinner by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith. And in this connection it is significant that the Apostle does not present this fundamental doctrine in the form of a cold, abstract definition, like a pikestaff without a banner, but invests it with flesh and blood, as it were, discussing it in connection with the events of his day, especially with regard to the false teachers who were making every attempt to make the glorious Gospel of Christian liberty a new kind of law or trying to bring the Galatian Christians back into the bondage of ordinances and precepts, or as the Apostle calls them, weak and beggarly elements. The Apostle does not hesitate, therefore, to describe the difficulties which threatened his converts, just as he definitely associates his teaching with his own person and work.

Where can we best place this great epistle? It is a well known fact that this question has caused a great deal of discussion in theological circles, which has frequently led to sharp polemics. However, we have a number of facts which enable us to fix the time and the place of this letter with reasonable certainty. And not the least of these considerations is the similarity between this epistle, and the letter to the Romans. The latter, chiefly on account of certain historical references (e. g., Rom. 16:1-2) has been associated with the city of Corinth. According to Acts 20:1-3, Paul had left Ephesus, evidently in the late summer or fall of the year 57, and had journeyed to Macedonia and Greece, a trip which may have taken the better part of five months. Luke distinctly states that Paul abode in Greece for three months. And since the text states, in verse 6, that Paul, on his return trip, sailed from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, that is, about in April, we may rightly assume that he had spent the first three months of the year 58, according to our way of reckoning, in Corinth. It was here that he wrote his majestic letter to the Romans. But now this letter has more than a score of similarities with the letter to the Galatians, which is written in a far more turbulent style. We are therefore justified in assuming that the Apostle, having received news of the trouble that was brewing in the congregations of Galatia, was constrained to write to these Christians in such an emphatic manner, so that his language at times is like a turbulent mountain stream tumbling over immense boulders. And this fact, at the same time, points to a phenomenon in literature, namely that a letter, written under the stress of some great excitement, may be followed by one on the same general topic, but composed with a much greater measure of quietness and logical precision. Thus these two great letters having the same general topic came into being. Paul writes with great vehemence, but at the same time with an overwhelming tranquillity, with an overpowering force. And not the least of its powerful chapters is that which is the subject of our discussion, Chapter 5.

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## Chapter 5:1–6. True Christian Liberty as Opposed to Legalism

For freedom Christ has liberated us. Keep on standing firm therefore, and stop being entangled again by a yoke of slavery. Be hold, I, Paul, am telling you, If you go on being circumcised, Christ will be of benefit to you in not one thing. Once again I solemnly affirm to every man who receives circumcision that he is a debtor to do the entire Law. You have lost your efficacy away from Christ, such of you who are seeking righteousness in the Law, you have, lost your hold on the grace. For, as for us, through the agency of the Spirit, on the basis of faith, we are eagerly awaiting the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision has any validity nor uncircumcision, but faith which becomes effective through unselfish love.

We first offer a paraphrase, with a running commentary. The Apostle opens this section of his letter with the statement that for the freedom, that is, the aforementioned freedom, Christ has liberated us, has set us free. By His death on the cross Christ has procured for us the freedom from the Law. Since they, the Galatian Christians, had therefore left behind them the status of children and of slaves, they were now to stand up with great firmness, for the situation required just such unwavering certainty. What Christ had obtained by the shedding of His blood on Calvary they were not to throw away lightly, and above all not to be ensnared again in any kind of legalistic system, in the meshes of a Judaistic slavery.

V.2. By introducing his second statement with Behold! the Apostle calls attention to the importance of his announcement, for it is a divine reality in which all Christians should take their stand. If therefore, in this particular case, the Galatian Christians should yield to the demand that they be circumcised and should actually carry out this intention under pressure of the false teachers, then Christ would no longer be of benefit to them in so much as a single thing. They were placed before a decision, a divine either-or. Either they would go the way of the Law and thereby be under compulsion to keep all its ordinances and precepts; or they would follow the teaching of the Lord Jesus and gain the marvelous benefits and advantages connected with this relationship. The one course excludes the other.

V.3.f. For that reason the Apostle solemnly bears witness, he stresses the truth of the fact in a strong asseveration, that any man who received circumcision in the sense of an Old Testament sacrament, with the idea of earning anything in the sight of the Lord, thereby placed himself under the obligation of fulfilling the entire Law. It is almost the same thought as that offered by James, chap. 2:10: "Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Jesus Himself suggests such a course when he tells the lawyer in Luke 10:28: "This do, and thou shalt live." He who would safeguard, his relationship to God by keeping one precept of the Old Testament Law, in this case that pertaining to circumcision, is under obligation to keep all precepts as given to the Jews. The Apostle declares that such a person is a debtor to do the entire Law. And he uses a strange picture to bring home his point. He states that such people have lost their efficacy away from Christ, just as a machine is put out of action if it loses contact with the source of power. They are no longer in effective relation to Christ; they no longer derive spiritual benefits from Him who would enable them to live a life pleasing to Him, namely through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The picture contained in the verb is used also of plants which have been removed from their source of growth, which no longer have their roots in the soil. They are bound to come under the

condemnation of John 15:4-5: “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. . . . He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit for without Me ye can do nothing.” To all those who are seeking their righteousness out of the Law, by keeping the demands of the Law with, the purpose of gaining merits before God, the Apostle’s declaration must come like a bombshell: “You have lost your hold on the grace,” namely the one and only grace that is offered in the Gospel. And the word “grace” here refers not only to the unmerited love and favor of God in Christ, but also to the effect which the possession of this grace has in the daily life of the believer. By grace we are saved: by grace we live as saved ones, as children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Hence every one who depends upon keeping the Law for the purpose of earning something before God has already fallen away from the one and only path of salvation. It is not that God turns man away from the grace of justification, so that such foolish defection would make the promises of God of none effect, for His call, goes out again and again: “Return unto Me, and I will return unto you.” Mal. 3:7. But it is the perversity of man that causes him to lose his hold on the grace of God in Christ, not only His justifying, but also His sanctifying grace.

V.5. The Apostle now makes a bold statement: “For, as for us, through the agency of the Spirit, on the basis of faith, we are eagerly awaiting the hope of righteousness.” We here remember that the righteousness of faith is a present fact, a present possession. As soon as a person says, without the slightest restriction: I, a sinner, saved by grace,—he has this unmerited favor of God as his own. “Ye **are** justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Cor, 6:11. “The Gentiles **have attained** to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.” Rom. 9:30. “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Rom. 3:24. It is not by any kind of self-effort, not by self-righteousness that the hopes of the Christians are realized, but only through the power of the Holy Spirit who is constantly coming to the assistance of our weakness. For while the gift of grace, the imputation of Christ’ righteousness, is a matter of present possession and is always perfect, no matter whether faith is great or small, there is definitely a growth in sanctifying grace possible. The apostle Peter writes: “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” 2 Peter 1:10. And again: “Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Chap, 3:18. And St. Paul gives us a fine summary: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” Phil. 2:12,13. Therefore the reference to the hoped-for righteousness is altogether in order. It is like eternal life: We are in possession of it even now. as Christ says in His highpriestly prayer, John 17:3. But this possession will gradually grow into a more complete and satisfying enjoyment until it is perfect in the heavenly places.

V.6. That we must keep in mind the relationship between the grace of God in obtaining and in retaining faith, and yet observe the distinction between justification and sanctification, so as not to intermingle the two, is evident from the next words of the Apostle, For he writes: “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision has any validity nor uncircumcision, but faith which becomes effective through unselfish love.” The verb in the first part of the sentence is literally. “to be strong, to have strength.” Or we may translate, “has power, it exerts or yields power.” In the Christian life, in the Christian Church the background of a person is not the deciding factor in his relation to the Savior.

It makes no difference whether he is a Jew or a Gentile by birth. As the Apostle writes in chapter 3 of this letter: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” There is only one thing that counts, one avenue of approach to be followed, namely that a person have faith toward the Savior in his heart. “A man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law,” writes the Apostle in Rom. 3:28. Yet this faith is not an abstract idea, but, as Luther writes, it is a living active thing. It is bound to become effective, to assert itself through unselfish devotion, through what is rightly called love. If one understands this verse rightly, the so-called Majoristic Controversy of the 16th century seems truly foolish. Faith justifies as faith, by itself, since it is essentially trust in the grace of God in Christ. Yet this faith is bound to express itself, to give evidence of its existence. A good tree is bound to yield fruit; a lighted lamp is bound to shed brightness. And in that sense, as the apostle James puts it, faith without works is dead. Chap. 2:17. So we do not confound essence and attributes in speaking of faith, but we emphasize the necessity of evidence in order to determine the genuineness of faith. Christians do not become just by doing just things, but being already just, they do just things.

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Let us now make a few practical applications of some of the thoughts presented by the Apostle in this paragraph. The liberty of which our text speaks in verse 1 is primarily that which rejects, for example, the need of circumcision as a condition of true Christianity. St. Paul did not want the Galatian Christians to be bound by this particular Mosaic ordinance. Yet the argument running through the statements of the Apostle establishes a principle which is valid for all times, as Luther shows in his classical exposition of the Letter to the Galatians. For the great Reformer shows, in a few paragraphs of singular power and beauty, that the system of the papal Church is diametrically opposed to true Christian liberty, just as the claims of the fanatics subjected them to a spiritual slavery, since they insisted upon a legalistic observation of certain rules of the Ceremonial Law as well as upon man-made rules and regulations.

We have the same phenomenon before us today. For it is legalism, an entanglement in the yoke of slavery, when a church body, in convention assembled, adopts what it calls a confession, not in accordance with Holy Scripture, and then expects, in fact, demands, that all persons in its corporate membership must acknowledge it. That is a tyranny of consciences which true Christians cannot possibly tolerate. If they do, they sell their birthright as children of God for a mess of human pottage.— Furthermore, it is legalism when a church body instructs its officials, who, as St. Paul writes, do not have dominion over the faith of church members, but should be merely helpers of their joy, 2 Cor. 1:24, to set aside the God-given authority of their rightful pastors and break into congregations, to disrupt the Church of God. All such efforts on the part of synodical officials should, therefore, be repudiated and rejected with unwavering firmness. Weakness in battling such usurpation of power is equivalent to disloyalty to Christ and the freedom with which He has liberated us.

**Chapter 5:7–12: A Lament over the Activities of Errorists.**

You were running well. Who hindered you from giving obedience to the truth? The persuasion (of the errorists) is not from Him who is calling you. A little leaven, leavens the whole lump. As for myself, I have the conviction with respect to you in the Lord that

you will not be considering anything else. But he who is troubling you shall bear the judgment, whoever he may be. But I, brethren, if I am still proclaiming circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? Then the stumbling-block of the Cross would have been removed. Indeed! They should even practice self-mutilation who are upsetting you.

V.7.f. Let us again offer a paraphrase of this paragraph and then select certain points for application. The Apostle, in order to make his discussion very vivid, uses the figure of a Greek runner. The Galatian Christians, in their race toward the goal, were doing well, they were conducting themselves nobly and bravely. See 1 Cor. 9:24–27; 2 Tim. 4:7-8. But they had encountered a hindrance. Certain people had cut in ahead of them, thereby hindering them in their efforts to reach the goal. They were no longer yielding full obedience to the truth which the Apostle had proclaimed to them. But the efforts of the errorists to persuade the Galatians to follow their false teaching were not derived from the One who was calling them, since the God of their salvation had been trying to have them follow the way of grace alone and not of works, as the Judaizing teachers were attempting to make them believe.

V.9. The claims of the errorists might, for the present, seem only an insignificant matter. Their teaching, so the false teachers may have argued or at least hinted, need not be considered as opposed to the Gospel preached by St. Paul. But the Apostle does not share that view. Using the figure of leaven, which is practically always a symbol of evil in Holy Writ, he reminds his readers that even a little leaven, mixed with a mass of dough, leavens the entire lump. Jesus found it necessary to warn against the leaven, that is, the false teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. Matt. 16:6-12. St. Paul fitly describes the immoral conduct of a few members in the congregation at Corinth as a leaven which should be purged out. The insistence of the false teachers in the Galatian congregations upon the retention of just one item of the Ceremonial Law was endangering the very truth of the Gospel. The slightest addition of man's doctrine to the inviolable Word of Truth places the entire structure of Holy Writ in jeopardy.

V.10. Yet the Apostle does not want to paint too dark a picture. He states it as his conviction with respect to them, as a settled confidence in the Lord, that the Galatian Christians would not oppose his declaration, that they would not seriously consider anything else. If they would earnestly scrutinize the situation, they were bound not to take any other view of the false teaching than that, which he himself held, namely that it did not come from God, but from an evil source. For that reason the one, any one, who was troubling them, who was disturbing their faith, was bound to bear the judgment of condemnation. The thought is the same as that in the statement of Christ on Good Friday, namely that the one who was guilty of starting the trouble had the greater sin. John 19:11.

V. 11. Now the reply of the Judaizers might be, as Paul states, that he himself was still teaching and practicing circumcision when it suited his purpose, as in the case of Timothy. Acts 16:3. But this claim lost its strength by the obvious fact that the Apostle was still being persecuted. And his being persecuted had its basis in the fact that he was proclaiming the Gospel of the Cross, and the Cross was a stumbling-block to the Jew. That is, if he were still preaching and demanding circumcision as a prerequisite of salvation, then the Cross would cease to be an offense, for the objection against the preaching of Christ crucified lay in this that believers in the Lord Jesus are free from the Mosaic Law, without the added factor of works performed by the sinner in his effort to merit the salvation offered in Christ.

V.12. The gravity of the situation causes the Apostle to add a word of scorn and irony. Referring to circumcision as a form of self-mutilation he calls out: Why, let them practice self-mutilation, namely those who are upsetting the Galatian Christians and causing divisions and offenses in the midst of congregations that had been established on the basis of the free Gospel in Christ Jesus. The bitterness of the Apostle's words was made stronger by the fact that such self-mutilation was the practice of the heathen world at that time and that it was condemned in the Mosaic Law. Deut, 23:1.

Let us now concentrate on the statement which has rightly been considered a touchstone in the proper evaluation of the Word of Truth: "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." For this statement establishes a principle and is supported by numerous passages throughout the Word of God. The classical exposition given by Luther is worthy of our most careful study. Applying the text to the fanatics of his day, he remarks that the enemies were designating him and his co-workers as stubborn, quarrelsome, and intractable people, who for the sake of a small matter were disrupting the Church. But the answer of Luther leaves nothing to be desired in the matter of clearness: "In theology even a small error overthrows the entire doctrine. . . , The doctrine is not ours, but God's whose called servants we are. For that reason we do not permit or change even the smallest iota. . . , Therefore the doctrine must be an uninterrupted and round golden circle, in which there may be no flaw. As soon as the slightest flaw enters in, the circle is no longer perfect. . . . Hence, if thou deniest God in one article, thou hast denied Him in all, because God is not divided into many articles, but is all in every single article, and one in all articles." (St. Louis Ed., 9,644–646.) And when the enemies, on account of this position taken by Luther, brought the charge of lovelessness against Luther, he had his answer ready: "Love may occasionally be neglected, but the Word and faith not in the same manner. The task of love is to suffer everything, to yield to everything. But it is incumbent upon faith to suffer nothing, to yield to nothing. . . . Condemned be that love which is maintained to the detriment of the teaching of faith, to which everything must yield, love, apostle, angel from heaven, etc." (Ibid, 646.645.) Luther has much more to say, in this connection and elsewhere, and he does not mince words. He would not countenance even the slightest error in teaching, contrary to any clear statement of the Word of God.

As humble disciples of the great Reformer we are bound to follow his teaching on the Scriptural principle: "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." For we certainly have plenty of evidence before our eyes to show the correctness of the statement. For decades efforts have been made to bring about union in various Lutheran bodies of America. One document after the other has been prepared and presented to various synods, but all of them, with the exception of the **Brief Statement**, have been found wanting. Instead of an unequivocal insistence upon the full truth of the Word of God and the correct and adequate teaching of the Lutheran Confessions there have been compromises, appeasements, even changes in the doctrinal position of bodies which prided themselves on their uncompromising orthodoxy. Slogans have been coined which state: "It is neither possible nor necessary to be in agreement on all points of Scriptural doctrine." "Cooperation (prayer-, pulpit-, altar-fellowship) may be practiced without full unity of doctrine." "Let us cooperate in the measure of our doctrinal agreement." Rom. 16:17-18 has been blandly eliminated as a text condemning every form of unionism, and other texts have likewise been disregarded as not being applicable to the situation.

At the same time we have heard a great clamor for love, just as we have been accused of lovelessness. And here we cannot refrain from quoting part of a paragraph found in Tulga's **The Case for Divine Revelation**. We read: "Men who have rejected the Scriptural content of love have reduced it to a mere sugary sentiment and offer it as a palliative for the world's ills. Haroutunian, with fine satire (**Wisdom and Folly in Religion**, pp. 25,26) says, 'Love, love, love alone matters! What you believe, rather what you do not believe, is your own private affair. But love you **must**. Love yourself. Love your neighbor. Love all mankind! By love you are saved. God is love. Love is God. Love is the only sure way to life eternal. You are justified by love and the works of love! **Love is the best beloved idol in Protestantism, and the way of love the favorite magic in, it.** Love can do everything. It can destroy all sin. It can stop wars and oppressions. It can bring in the **Kingdom of God**. Such is the Protestant's crown of folly. . . . He is born with a generous supply of love! He only needs to be preached at occasionally, and he will proceed to love the total race of mankind'. The modernist, rejecting the love set forth in Scriptures, offers as a substitute the sentimentalism of the natural man. He is not in love, he is only in love with love. Modernistic ethics depends for power upon the shifting sands of human emotion." (P. 55.) The application of these words to conditions in present day Lutheranism offers no difficulty.

#### Chapter 5:13-25: **Confirming Christian Liberty by Walking in the Spirit.**

For you have been called to liberty, brethren. Only do not abuse your liberty as a base of operations for the flesh, but through the unselfish love keep on serving one another. For the entire Law receives its fulfilment in one statement: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if you are biting and devouring one another, look out lest you be consumed by one another.—But I say, Through the Spirit order your life's conduct, and the desire of the flesh you will not permit to reach its goal. For the flesh has the constant desire in opposition to the Spirit, but the Spirit in opposition to the flesh. For these are standing in opposition to each other, so that you may not do these things which you have a desire to do. But if you are being led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. But the works of the flesh are manifest, works of such a nature as fornication, uncleanness, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, enmities, strife, jealousy, out-bursts of anger, party-spirit, divisions, factions, envyings, drunkenness, carousings, and the things such as these, concerning which I am telling you beforehand even as I told you in advance, that those who are in the habit of practicing these things shall not inherit the kingly rule of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. But they who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts. Since we are living through the Spirit, let us also through the Spirit march in rank and file. Let us stop becoming vainglorious, challenging one another, envying one another.

Let us again proceed to paraphrase the paragraph and discuss its main thoughts. The first statement serves as a transition, based on the argument of the preceding paragraphs, in which the Apostle had so strongly emphasized the nature of true Christian liberty. Christians have been called to the possession and the enjoyment of liberty in Christ. The Savior Himself made the announcement: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8:36. But the Apostle finds that a warning is in place against

the abuse of this liberty. Cp. Rom. 6:1,15. It is an ancient reaction of man's sinful nature to say: If I am free from the Law, I may do as I please. However, the control of man's sinful nature over his person and actions is broken the moment he comes to faith, so that the freedom of the Gospel cannot be made the base of operations of the flesh, the evil inclinations of man's heart. The very opposite is true, as the Apostle states, namely that believers are servants (slaves) of one another through love. Here we have the great paradox of the Christian's life, which Luther has so well expressed in the statements: "A Christian is a free lord over all things and subject to no one; a Christian is a servant of all things and subject to all men." The love of God calls to all Christians to keep on serving one another.

V.14. The Apostle gives a brief explanation by stating that the whole Law stands fully obeyed in that one word: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Lev. 19:18; Matt. 5:43. This is the sum of the Second Table of the Law. In showing such neighborly love a person complies with the whole Law and its demands. And "loving one's self" is not an acknowledgement of a love of self, beside which the love of the neighbor is now to have a place. It is rather that unselfishness is to take the place of selfishness. Let love rule in the heart, then you cannot but do what will be of service to the neighbor. And the perfect example which should be before our eyes at all times is that of Him, who told His disciples twice on the evening before His death: "This is My commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." John 15:12; 13:34.

V.15. If such love exists and is active among Christians, then there will be no biting and no devouring, as is the case of wild animals in deadly struggle, so that the upshot will be consuming of one another. Thereby he rebuked all party spirit, all division-making. The externalization of activities, the pietistic trends in life led to bitter feuds in the Galatian congregations, which in turn threatened to disrupt them completely.

V.16. The Apostle now offers the proper suggestions to bring about conditions as they were well-pleasing in the sight of the Lord of the Church. He tells the Christians to conduct themselves in agreement with the mind of the Spirit of God. For if that is the case, they would not be governed by the desires, lusts, evil impulses of their naturally depraved heart, their flesh. John 3:6. They would not bring to fulfilment in action the evil impulses of their fallen nature, they would not permit them to reach the goal which they desired.

V.17. This means, of course, that there will be a continual battle between the flesh, the evil nature of man, and the Spirit of God who brought the Christian to faith. It is the battle which the Apostle so vividly describes in Rom. 7:5-23. The flesh is constantly striving to suppress the life, of the Spirit, and the Spirit is just as determined, and more so, to subdue the flesh. And all too often the result is that the Christians are led to do the things which they do not desire, just as the opposite is true. The believer must learn to say NO to the motions of sin, while he, at the same time yields to the guidance of the Spirit of God in everything.

V.18. This is asserted by the Apostle in the statement that those who are being led by the Spirit are not under the Law. They are no longer willing servants, slaves, of sin, and therefore they need no slave-driver to keep them in order. If a person walks on the straight and narrow path only because he fears the curse of the Law. he is not in tune with the ways of the Spirit. The Christian, as Christian, is not under the Law, and the Ten



Commandments are to him only a convenient list of works which aids him in knowing the will of God.

Vv. 19,20. The apostle here, first of all, presents a list of the evil works which are ruled out in the life of the true Christian: Fornication, unfaithfulness of people in the married estate and all illegal sexual intercourse; uncleanness, sexual impurity of every kind; debauchery or wantonness, not limited to the impurities of the flesh, but includes all forms of loss of restraint, with shameless outraging of public decency; idolatry, in which man builds a god out of his own imagination; witchcraft and enchantments, as used by men throughout the ages; enmities or expressions of hatred; strife or quarreling, wrangling (cp. James 2:16); jealousy, the attitude of mind which begrudges another any and every good thing; outbursts of anger, of hostile feeling due to the inability of man to control himself; party-spirit or self-seeking; factions, when men, on account of false teaching or a sinful life or some other impure motive, form groups to hurt the true Christians; envyings, closely related to the jealousies spoken of above; drunkenness, the addiction to intoxicating beverages; carousings, revellings, especially in the form of riotous processions and drinking parties which are drawn out till late at night and make a mockery of decency. And with these sins the Apostle groups all the transgressions of a like nature, of which he further states (in v. 21), that he has already given them instructions concerning these matters and is now telling them again that those who are guilty of such practises will not inherit, will have no part in the kingly rule of God. In other words, they exclude themselves from its privileges and glories.

V. 22,23. On the other hand, the Apostle gives a list of fruit of the Spirit, that which He produces in the believers: love, the unselfish devotion to the service of others; joy, the inner happiness which rejoices in God our Savior; peace, the feeling of internal quietness which passes all understanding, the tranquillity of mind based on the consciousness of the right relation to God; long-suffering, the attitude of mind which readily suffers or endures also the enmity of the opponents; kindness, the gentleness which mellows the strongest character; goodness, the quality of moral worth which is always ready for service; faithfulness, the dependability which must characterise the believer; meekness, the quality which enables the Christian to deal with all men without harshness; temperance or self-control, mastery of one's self, of all desires and impulses which may lead to evil. In a wonderful rhetorical understatement the apostle declares that there is no law against such virtues, in other words, that they fully meet the requirements of God's holy will.

V.24. In view of the fact that all true Christians belong to Jesus Christ, having put on Christ even at the time of their baptism, they have crucified their sinful flesh, they see to it that the old Adam is daily drowned with, all affections and lusts, both as they may affect the spiritual life and as they may seek to gain the power over a man's heart.

V.25, 26. Since the life in the Spirit and by the Spirit is a fact, therefore Christians are also to march together, shoulder to shoulder, in a glorious army of the Lord, ordering their conduct according to the marching orders of their great Leader. And to bring this about should refrain absolutely from becoming vain-glorious, proud, and supercilious, especially in the groups which we designate as Christian congregations. For if believers are given to empty pride, they are very apt to provoke one another on account of envy. This danger is especially great where there are strong and weak Christians in the same group. Cp. Rom. 14:1 to 15:3 and 1 Cor. 8.

Let us now make the application, of a few thoughts as contained in this paragraph. For one thing we are bound to note that the Apostle strongly denounces discord among Christians. He uses the strong expressions of biting and devouring one another, which may lead to the total annihilation of any group of believers. There is only one consideration which should govern the life of a Christian organization, namely that of serving one another in love. All self-seeking is ruled out on the basis of Christ's example. 1 Peter 2:1,21–23. This feature of church life cannot be too strongly emphasized. Another item in this connection is closely connected with this demand, namely that in the battle between flesh and Spirit the latter must remain the victor. As one of our hymns has it: "Lord, when we fall and sin doth stain, Absolve and lift us up again; And thro' the Sacrament increase Our faith till we depart in peace." It is true that practically every believer will find reasons for lamenting, with the Apostle: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. 7:24. But he will likewise find reason to cry out, with the same Apostle: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Rom. 8:2. And as we make our life a consistent struggle against our sinful nature, and especially as we learn to rely completely on the Savior's power, knowing that we can do no good thing without Him, we find that we gain more and more victories for the Spirit, by the Spirit.

And in one respect we must exercise caution in a steadily increasing degree, namely in battling against the vice of vain-glory, against pride, against the feeling of being neglected, under-estimated. In this respect the old Adam likes to walk around with a chip on his shoulder. We must remember: We are not all alike, we do not have the same disposition, the same abilities. But in one respect we should **be** alike, namely in following the Lord's precept: "By love serve one another." The sum and substance of this paragraph is found in Phil. 2:1–5.

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