

has the other person's welfare in mind, the latter is entirely selfish.

The scene that Paul sets before the minds of his readers is one of dogs or animals preying upon each other. The NJB captures this with "snapping at one another, and tearing one another to pieces." It was not uncommon in the ancient literature to compare bad behavior to that of animals, but such a comparison was obviously meant to be rhetorical and sobering. Mankind is distinguished from the animals by the presence of the image of God within him. He ought not to stoop to the level of animal activity, even toward those with whom one may have violent disagreements. Paul may be subtly referring to his own treatment at the hands of those who had set themselves against him.

Moreover, a call to freedom, which included a willingness to set aside some of the rabbinic strictures in order to receive the Gentiles, could be misunderstood if the foundation of loving one's neighbor was neglected. One's own personal freedoms may need to be set aside in order to effectively love one's neighbor. Here, once again, the rule of love becomes the determining factor in matters of personal *halachah*.

Most interesting is the fact that Paul considers only one option for the Galatian assemblies: unity. How different is his perspective than that of our day. If we consider the stern and even harsh language the Apostle has employed against the Influencers, one would expect to hear (had Paul been living in our day) an encouragement for his followers to "get up and leave" and "start their own congregation." After all, how could those who believed the truth continue to fellowship with "the others" who held such erroneous doctrines?! But such an idea finds no place in Paul's thinking. The only option is remaining together, and so the appeal is given not to allow the animal-like biting and snapping, perpetrated by false teaching, to continue. Such a perspective reminds us that Paul is writing to a Jewish community, not the Christian Church as it came to be known in the following centuries. In the context in which the Galatian community existed, it was impossible to "get up and start one's own congregation." There were only two religious communities: Judaism and paganism. To begin "something new" was simply impossible in light of the Roman sanctions against atheism. While the Jewish community enjoyed the freedom of their religion in which they were exempt from the requirements of emperor worship, and participation in the festivals of the gods, to begin something new meant leaving this protection and becoming vulnerable to the pressures of Roman in regard to religion in general. In short, the two factions we envision at Galatia (followers of Paul's teaching vs. the Influencers), could not have left and gone to "another church." The synagogue was the only viable place of worship for those who believed in the One God of Israel, and the synagogue was viewed as within the Jewish community, not outside of it.

16–17 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Paul now moves into an explanation regarding life lived by the power of the Spirit (vv. 16–24). It is not enough simply to exhort the Galatians to treat each other in the realm of love, or even to enjoin upon them the Torah commandment to love one's neighbor. There must likewise be the ability to

obey such a commandment, and especially in the face of such heated differences. For Paul, such ability for sanctified living was to be found in the work of the Spirit within the believer. It should be noted at the outset that Paul's perspective is simply that the Spirit assists every one who is a believer. He does not begin this section by stating how one might "receive" the Spirit, or how one might gain the power of the Spirit which he or she did not have. It is the presumption of the Apostle that the Spirit has come into the life of every believer in order to assist him or her in living out a sanctified life. What is more, Paul indicates his emphasis on the matter of the Spirit in the believer's life by the opening "I say" (cf. 4:1). He uses this as a way to say "listen up!"

This life of sanctification is characterized by the familiar Hebraic "walk:" "walk by (in) the Spirit." The matter of *halachah* (from the Hebrew word הָלַךְ, *halach*, "to walk") is to be a matter of the Spirit. This does not mean that our *halachah* is an entirely a personal matter, as though the Spirit would lead one person to live one way, and another person to live a different way. Much to the contrary! The Spirit calls each one in the family of God to walk (make life decisions) in accordance with the single standard of God's word. The righteousness revealed in the Torah is the standard by which He leads. Thus, when we are walking in or by the Spirit, we will live in accordance with God's Torah. This fact is highlighted by the common use of ἀνομός, *anomos*, in the Apostolic Scriptures, usually translated "transgressor," "godless," or "lawless."⁴¹ Since the Greek use of νόμος, *nomos* stands for Torah (the Hebrew תּוֹרָה, *torah*, is regularly translated by *nomos* in the Lxx), the first readers of the Apostolic Scriptures would have understood *anomos* as "against Torah" or "without Torah." For Paul, the "lusts of the flesh" are contrary to the life of righteousness taught in the Torah. Thus, to walk in or by the Spirit is to walk in obedience to the Torah; to live according to the flesh is to make one's own fleshly desires the rule of life.

But for Paul, the whole matter of daily *halachah* was viewed from a different perspective than that of Influencers. While the Influencers (we would presume) simply relied upon the rulings of the Sages to determine one's *halachah*, Paul appealed to the constant and present leading of the Spirit. The Sages attempted to manage the Torah by adding rules to cover every possible contingency; Paul instructs us to be led by the Law-Giver Himself. Moreover, while the Oral Torah may have given much wise and clear instruction on how to apply the Torah in every life situation, it was powerless to energize the soul to obey the Torah in the context of sacrificial love. The Spirit, on the other hand, taking the inspired Torah of God and writing it upon the heart, could move the soul to obedience in love—love for God and for one's neighbor. While many of the Judaisms of the day were constantly paying attention to the rulings of the Sages, Paul enjoins the Galatian believers constantly to be in tune with the leading of the Spirit. It should be noted that the imperative "walk" is in the present tense (περιπατεῖτε, *peripateite*) which would give the sense of "constantly walk in or by the Spirit."

Thus, taking up the common verbiage of the Tanach, to "walk in the laws/statutes" of God,⁴² Paul casts the common phraseology in terms of "walk in or by the Spirit." What does this mean for us practically? First, it means that the written Torah, not the Oral Torah, is our first and primary authority for life's *halachah*. As we study to understand the word of God, we seek the illumining

41 Cf. Luke 22:37; Acts 2:23; 1Cor 9:21; 2Thess 2:8; 1Tim 1:9; 2Pet. 2:8.

42 For example, Lev 26:3; Deut 8:6; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16; Josh 22:5; 1Kings 2:3; 3:14; 6:12; 8:58; Ps 119:35.

and guiding help of the Spirit in making life-applications of the sacred text. Secondly, it means that in areas of life which are left open for one's personal decisions, the leading of the Spirit becomes the deciding factor. This means that the good of one's neighbor will inevitably take precedence when two or more viable options present themselves. Thirdly, it means that our *halachah* may be determined on a minority basis rather than a majority. While the perspective of the Sages was that the *halachah* always followed the majority voice, in the realm of the Spirit, the majority may seek to accommodate the minority in matters where there is an acceptable range of options. Note the following Talmudic discussion:

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This is the general rule: after partaking of anything that belongs to the seven species, R. Gamaliel says that three blessings should be said, while the Rabbis say, one that includes three. Once R. Gamaliel and the elders were reclining in an upper chamber in Jericho, and dates were brought in and they ate, and R. Gamaliel gave permission to R. Akiba to say grace. And R. Akiba said quickly the one blessing which includes three. Said R. Gamaliel to him: Akiba, how long will you poke your head into quarrels? He replied: Master, although you say this way and your colleagues say the other way, you have taught us, master, that where an individual joins issue with the majority, the *halachah* is determined by the majority.⁴³

Here, Akiva, who held to a majority ruling, is with a prominent Sage, Gamliel, who held the minority opinion. When asked to pronounce the *birkat hamazon* (blessing after eating), he uses the majority *halachah* though he doubtlessly knew that Gamliel favored the minority. Akiva defends his actions by stating the common rule: *halachah* is determined by the majority.

Now here is an interesting scenario: if one were being led by the Spirit, is it not possible that in this case (where the *halachah* is pure tradition and not specifically laid out in the written Torah), one might not have switched to the *halachah* of the minority in deference to Gamliel? Surely the Torah commands that a blessing be said after one eats (Deut 8:10), but it does not describe what this blessing is or how it should be said. There is therefore leniency as to the exact manner in which this command should be carried out. To defer to the minority would be an act of graciousness—to consider the other person more important than oneself, and to accommodate his position, putting one's own opinion second. This, I believe, is an illustration of how love should be a ruling factor in matters of personal *halachah*.

And it would appear that being led by or in the Spirit results in considering one's neighbor as a deciding factor in *halachic* decisions. I hasten to repeat that walking in or by the Spirit is not some subjective, personal experience that has no connection to the unchanging and objective standard of the Scriptures. Granted, this is often how the phrase is understood in contemporary Christian circles, but such a viewpoint cannot be sustained by the Scriptures. Walking by the Spirit does not mean that one is free to act however one thinks is best, or however one feels at the moment. Paul has just quoted Lev 19:18, and the command to love one's neighbor. In the context, walking by the Spirit is the means by which this command is obeyed. This alone should help us see that for Paul, walking by the Spirit is the same as obeying God's word. Moreover, walking by the Spirit must be

43 b.Berchot 37a.

in concert with the original receiving of the Spirit (3:3), which is by faith, so walking by the Spirit means living in the realm of faith. Finally, walking by the Spirit is the antithesis of “satisfying the desires of the flesh.” Far from some kind of autonomous “do as I feel,” walking by the Spirit means making my life decisions in accordance with the Torah of God which the Spirit writes upon the heart and constantly brings to the believer’s attention.

and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh - The verb “carry out” (τελέσητε, *telesete*) could be taken as an imperative (so RSV / NRSV) but this does not seem likely. Paul’s point is that walking by the Spirit enables one to overcome the desires of the flesh. Once again, by “flesh” Paul does not mean the material aspect of humankind as over against the non-material, but rather he refers to the fallen, sinful nature inherited through Adam’s sin (Rom 5:12ff). Though the believer has been delivered from the power of darkness, and transferred into the kingdom of Yeshua (Col 1:13); and though the old self has been crucified (Rom 6:6) with the Messiah, yet there exists within one’s mortal makeup the remains of the sinful nature. This sinful nature continues to have its bent toward unrighteousness—toward the folly of thinking that momentary pleasure will actually satisfy, or that self-fulfillment is the path to happiness. In short, the sinful nature is still an ally with the enemy and therefore at odds with God. The sinful nature still whispers (and sometimes shouts) “has God said?” But the believer has already won the victory over the sinful nature, having died and risen again with Yeshua, and the indwelling presence of the Spirit secures the constant victory over the flesh through submission to God.

This contrary aspect of the flesh is highlighted by the singular: “the desire (not desires) of the flesh.” All of the debauchery woven into the sinful nature may be summed into one: rebellion against the Almighty. In truth, there are only two ways: that of submission to God, and that of rebellion against Him. The word “desire” (ἐπιθυμίαν, *epithumian*) is neutral and does not necessarily connote something evil—there are good desires. But it is often used in the Apostolic Scriptures of evil desires, and particularly of those things expressly forbidden by God. Coupled as it is here with the word “flesh,” it pictures those desires that are self-centered rather than God-centered, that are therefore contrary to the Spirit and His leading in concert with God’s word. This contrary aspect is explained further in v. 17—

For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. - The structure of the sentence is clear: Paul, in chiasmic arrangement, puts the flesh and its desires as opposite the Spirit and His desires. (Though the verb “desire” is not repeated in the second clause, it surely is understood, thus: “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit sets His desire against the flesh”). The chiasmic arrangement sets the word Spirit (πνεῦμα, *pneuma*) at the center, which highlights Paul’s very point: the indwelling Spirit has made the difference. Some have suggested that the word *pneuma* refers to man’s spirit, not the Spirit of God, and this is a possibility. But in the overall context of this paragraph, it seems certain that Paul is speaking of the indwelling Spirit of God Who sanctifies those who have believed. It is the presence of the Spirit of God that creates the conflict with the flesh. Apart from the Spirit of God, the flesh is at best tolerated and usually indulged. The unregenerate soul knows no difference: the flesh and its desire is the norm.

Thus, the conflict that is portrayed here is one in which the unregenerate person does not participate. Indeed, it is the presence of the Spirit in the life of the believer that sets up the conflict. For man in his unregenerate state seeks

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contentment with the temporal and passing pleasures of life. But when the Spirit comes, enlightening the heart and soul to the reality of the spiritual and eternal dimension, and endowing one's soul with faith to lay hold of the promises in Yeshua, one is no longer content to be numbed by the foolishness of life lived for the moment. Instead, the soul has been raised to a new height, and has grasped a glimpse of the eternal. A new and significant purpose for one's being is realized, and the desire to be holy even as God is holy becomes a reality. Thus, the conflict presents itself only when the soul is awakened by the presence of the Spirit, enlightening the understanding to the truth of God's redemptive purpose.

We should note more closely what is meant by the final clause of this verse: *so that you may not do the things that you please*. The question at hand is how we should understand the Greek *ἵνα*, *hina*, translated "so that" by the NASB. To what does *hina* attach? Does it show the results of the conflict between the Spirit and flesh in general, or does it rather indicate the purpose of the flesh? It would seem clearly that the latter is correct: the purpose of the flesh (here personified as the antagonist of the Spirit) is that the believer might be hindered from doing what he or she honestly desires to do. Thus, we should understand the verse this way: "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, and the goal of the flesh in setting its desire against the Spirit is so that you may not do the things that you please." It is therefore the duty of the believer to "put to death" the flesh (cf. Col 3:5; Rom 6:11) in order that its desire might be overcome. This is the struggle of sanctification, to yield to the Spirit and not to the flesh. Moreover, the ability to accomplish this task is given to us through the indwelling Spirit Who applies the intercession of our High Priest, making His requests for our holiness (cf. John 17) a reality in our lives through the application of the inspired word of God. Yet this is a cooperation between God and the regenerate soul. Sanctification is a constant struggle so long as we remain in our mortal state. Only when mortality is transformed into immortality will this struggle be over.

This perspective of sanctification goes contrary to the often taught doctrine of modern Christianity, in which it is expected that God will accomplish our sanctification apart from our own efforts. The life of faith is one of conflict and struggle, not heavenly bliss and comfort. While we surely participate in the joy and comfort of our salvation as a foretaste of our final reward, we must reckon with the fact that our current life in Messiah involves a warfare that is on-going. Our full and complete rest awaits the world to come. So long as we live in this fallen world, and retain within our own souls the effects of the sinful nature, we will likewise remain within the struggle for sanctification.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Torah.

The resolution of the conflict described in v. 17 is clearly laid out here: being led by the Spirit is the prime characteristic of those who have been born from above (cf. Rom 8:14). The believer must yield his or her will to the leading of the Spirit, for the Spirit leads in the paths of righteousness, preparing the bride for the Bridegroom. Those who are led by the Spirit are shown to be sons of God.

In contrast, those who are under the condemnation of the Torah, are

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those who have not been born from above. They remain “dead in their trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). As such, they are objects of God’s wrath, and are characterized by their sins which draw the condemnation of the Torah: “the soul that sins shall die” (Ezek 18:4).

Paul uses the term “under Torah” (ὑπὸ νόμου, *hupo nomon*) 11 times.⁴⁴ In general we may categorize the use of this phrase under two main headings: 1) under the condemnation of the Torah, 2) under the errant teaching that a Gentile gains righteous status through becoming a proselyte (i.e., submitting to the Torah as the rabbis defined it).

Under the Condemnation of the Torah	Legal Jewish Status brings Righteousness
Rom 6:14-15; Gal 4:4-5; 5:18	1Cor 9:20 (4x); Gal 3:23; 4:21

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In reality, the two uses are united in the fact that those who relied upon their status as Jews (i.e., becoming a proselyte with the idea that this ritual would bring right-standing before God) remained under the condemnation of the Torah. Yet in 4:21, “Tell me, you who want to be under Torah, do you not listen to the Torah?,” Paul must be using the phrase “under Torah” to describe those Gentiles who were contemplating undergoing the ritual of a proselyte in order to gain a status which they felt they did not possess. Either way, the point of being “under Torah” would be that there was no genuine faith. “Under Torah” describes those who were either outside of the realm of Israel’s salvation message (i.e., pagans) or were relying upon one’s status (whether Jewish or proselyte) as ascribed by rabbinic law. Thus, from Paul’s perspective, “under Torah” describes those who did not have the indwelling Spirit, and thus were neither “led by the Spirit” nor were engaged in the conflict against the flesh. In contrast, those who were not under the condemnation of the Torah, nor who were relying upon their “Jewish status” for right standing before God, were those who had come to rely entirely upon the promise of salvation through the Messiah. Rather than being identified primarily by their ethnic status, they were known as being “led by the Spirit.” Their *halachah* was governed first by the rule of love rather than by strict adherence to the *halachah* of a particular sect or rabbinic authority. “By this will all men know that you are My disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

Unfortunately, this verse (Gal 5:18) has been regularly understood by Christian commentators to mean “if you are led by the Spirit, you no longer need to obey the Torah.” But we know that this was not Paul’s perspective. In Romans 8, where he gives an even fuller exposition of the work of the Spirit in the believer’s life, he contrasts living by the flesh with living by the Spirit, even as he does in our immediate text. The one whose mind is set on the flesh experiences death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life. How is this so? The one who relies on the flesh is under the condemnation of God, a sentence of death. The one who is led by the Spirit, is a child of God (v. 14). But note carefully how he characterizes the “mind set on the flesh,” i.e., the one who relies upon the flesh (Jewish status) as sufficient for right standing before God:

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the Torah of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Rom 8:6–8)

44 Rom 6:14-15; 1Cor 9:20 (4x); Gal 3:23; 4:4-5, 21; 5:18.

Hostility toward God is further described as the inability to submit to the Torah of God. For Paul, submission to the Torah is not the same as being “under the Torah.” Being under the Torah is the state of one who would rather do his own thing (the flesh) than to do the will of God. His being “under Torah” is a reality rather than a willful decision. The person who has not been reborn by the Spirit, who still has a heart of stone upon which is impressed, not the Torah of God, but the desires of the flesh—this one is unable to submit to the Torah as a matter of delight and one’s own desire. And as such, he remains condemned in his sin. The final indictment is that the one who is governed by the flesh “cannot please God.” In contrast, those who are “led by the Spirit” are the “sons of God,” meaning that they not only have God’s will as their desire, but that they are able to submit to God’s will (Torah) and to live out a life of obedience.

19–21 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul now gives us one of his lists, a long list of sins which characterize the life governed by the flesh. The conclusion is that those whose lives are characterized by these things “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” This shows conclusively that Paul is not talking about levels of maturity among the faithful, nor is he contrasting those who have faith plus the Torah with those who have faith without the Torah. For Paul, there are two categories: those governed by the flesh, and those who are led by the Spirit. The former are under the wrath of God, and, apart from a radical change through the work of the Spirit, will inevitably face condemnation at the bar of God’s justice. The latter are those who are led by the Spirit, have engaged in the struggle of sanctification, and who are promised eternal life.

He makes the point that the deeds of the flesh are evident (*φανερός*, *phaneros*), meaning that there is no need to prove that they are contrary to the holiness of God, nor that those who live by the flesh are characterized by such things. He will make the stark contrast in v. 22 by showing the “fruit of the Spirit,” those characteristics which are likewise evident in the lives of those who have been born from above through faith in the Messiah.

It seems likely that by using the phrase “deeds of the flesh,” Paul was making a direct parallel to the “works of the Torah” referred to earlier (vv. 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10), for those who relied upon circumcision as the means of gaining right standing before God were not endowed by the Spirit, and could not, therefore, overcome the natural inclinations of the sinful nature. He therefore accredits to those who would rely upon the flesh the very thing that they confessed to despise.

The structure of the list is insightful. He begins and ends with those sins which were most egregious to the pious Judaisms of his day: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, and sorcery. Everyone would agree that these constituted the essence of paganism. He ends with envying, drunkenness, and carousing, again, the characteristics of the pagan society in which Galatia existed. But sandwiched in the middle of these obvious pagan vices are those sins which may have, in a growing way, characterized the faction

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in the Galatian community: enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, and factions. The result of the Influencers had been to bring about division and strife—to set members of the community against each other, to such an extent that the community as a whole may have been more and more known for their divisions.

Following is a table with the terms employed in Paul’s list, and brief description of each:

Greek	English	Definition
πορνεία, <i>porneia</i>	immorality	used particularly of prostitution and of all sexual misconduct
ἀκαθαρσία, <i>akatharsia</i>	impurity	a general word for a state of impurity, both physical and moral. Here, most likely of sexual impurity, which would include all manner of sexual sins.
ἀσέλγεια, <i>aselgeia</i>	sensuality	also “debauchery,” which could include “wanton violence” or “insolence.” Connected with the two former terms, it probably means “sexual excess.”
εἰδωλολατρία, <i>eidololatria</i>	idolatry	worship of idols; often in Jewish sources, as well as in the Tanach, sexual sin and idolatry are linked together.
φαρμακεία, <i>pharmakeia</i>	sorcery	This comes from the word for “drug,” (note English “pharmacy”) because drugs were so often used in magic and sorcery. Attempting to contact spirits through drug inducement was common in Hellenistic culture.
ἔχθραι, <i>echthrai</i>	enmities	“Hostile feelings and actions.” Used of the hostility between God and sinner (Rom 7:7), between Jew and Gentile (Lk 23:12; Eph 2:14).
ἔρις, <i>eris</i>	strife	the sense of rivalry; of attempting to take sides and win over the other.
ζήλος, <i>zelos</i>	jealousy	here in a bad sense; zealous for one’s own way without regard for one’s neighbor.
θυμοί, <i>thumon</i>	outbursts of anger	loosing one’s temper; open display of anger; the flare up that comes in heated arguments.
ἐριθειαι, <i>eritheiai</i>	disputes	selfish ambitions, the fuel for the former outbursts of anger, which result in division and contrary spirits.
διχοστασίαι, <i>dichostasiai</i>	dissensions	no doubt given to strengthen the former term; divisions between those who should be united.
αἱρέσεις, <i>haireseis</i>	factions	the word that eventually came to mean “heresies”; the divisions or factions which come as a result of selfish ambitions.
φθόνοι, <i>phthonoi</i>	envyings	“the grudging spirit that cannot bear to contemplate someone else’s prosperity” (Dunn, <i>Galatians</i> , p. 306)
μέθαι, <i>methai</i>	drunkenness	a life given over to the abuse of substances which alter one’s grip on reality
κῶμοι, <i>komoi</i>	carousing	excessive feasting, characteristic of the wealthy Roman society.

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Paul ends with a catch-all: “and things like these.” The unifying factor in all of these is that they are the result of living according to the sinful nature, the “flesh.” They are self-centered, self-fulfilling, and self-worshipping.

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Paul had warned the Galatian congregations against these things, and here he warns them again: the message of the Influencers would take them in a direction they surely did not want to go. Far from bringing them closer to the Almighty, the way of the Influencers had already begun factions, and if they were to succeed in their message being received, they would doubtlessly plunge the community into irreconcilable division and failure. The only hope was that they might heed Paul's warning, and cling to the truth as it is in Yeshua.

As noted above, Paul considers those who will inherit the Kingdom of God (one of his terms for the world to come) to be those whose lives are marked by holiness—the result of the indwelling presence of the Spirit. “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). The idea that one can “receive Jesus” and be assured of a place in the world to come apart from the struggle for holiness is not founded upon the Scriptures. Rather, the presence of the Spirit assures that such a struggle will occur, and what is more, that those who engage in that struggle will be victorious. For it is the purpose of the Spirit that all who are called by God to salvation will become conformed to the holiness exemplified in the life of Yeshua Himself.

22–23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

In contrast to the list of sins and vices, the product of the flesh, Paul now gives a list of those things which are characteristic of the Spirit's work in the believer (*δέ, de*, translated “But” by the NASB, is used as a coordinating connector). Fruit is the result of being attached to the tree and branches, supported by the root. It was therefore a ready metaphor for those things which are the inevitable effect of a given cause. Thus Yeshua taught, “You will know them by their fruits” (Matt 7:16, 20). And Paul speaks of the “fruit of light” (Eph 5:9) and the “fruit of righteousness” (Phil 1:11). It should also be noted that the word “fruit” is singular, emphasizing that each characteristic is attached to the work of the Spirit. Thus, Paul returns, as before, to the experience of the Galatians in their conversion to faith: the Spirit was evident among them, and as such, must still be at work in their midst and in each of their lives. Therefore, rather than the sins of division and selfish strife, the fruit of the Spirit should be evident in their community.

Perhaps there is no list more well known and memorized of Paul than this one. The nine elements listed, however, should not be taken necessarily as a complete list, any more than the list of sins and vices in the previous verses would be considered exhaustive. Rather, these characteristics of the Spirit and His work in the lives of believers are given to note categories of relationship, both between the believer and God, and the believer and his fellowman.

It is not clear if Paul has developed a particular structure for this list, or if, like other lists he offers, it is simply given without a designed structure or order. Surely these nine items are in direct opposition to the list of sins given above, for in each case, the will of God and the good of one's neighbor is the deciding factor.