

CHAPTER 5

In this chapter the apostle comes to make application of his foregoing discourse. He begins it with a general caution, or exhortation (v. 1), which he afterwards enforces by several considerations (v. 2-12). He then presses them to serious practical godliness, which would be the best antidote against the snares of their false teachers; particularly,

- I. That they should not strive with one another (v. 13-15).
- II. That they would strive against sin, where he shows,
 1. That there is in every one a struggle between flesh and spirit (v. 17).
 2. That it is our duty and interest, in this struggle, to side with the better part (v. 16, 18).
 3. He specifies the works of the flesh, which must be watched against and mortified, and the fruits of the Spirit, which must be brought forth and cherished, and shows of what importance it is that they be so (v. 19-24). And then concludes the chapter with a caution against pride and envy.

◀RE▶ GALATIANS 5:1-12

PERSUASIVES TO STEDFASTNESS

In the former part of this chapter the apostle cautions the Galatians to take heed of the judaizing teachers, who endeavoured to bring them back under the bondage of the law. He had been arguing against them before, and had largely shown how contrary the principles and spirit of those teachers were to the spirit of the gospel; and now this is as it were the general inference or application of all that discourse. Since it appeared by what had been said that we can be justified only by faith in Jesus Christ, and not by the righteousness of the law, and that the law of Moses was no longer in force, nor Christians under any obligation to submit to it, therefore he would have them to *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not to be again entangled with the yoke of bondage*. Here observe,

1. Under the gospel we are enfranchised, we are brought into a state of liberty, wherein we are freed from the yoke of the ceremonial law and from the curse of the moral law; so that we are no longer tied to the observance of the one, nor tied up to the rigour of the other, which curses every one that continues not in all things written therein to do them, <880>Galatians 3:10.

2. We owe this liberty to Jesus Christ. It is he who *has made us free*; by his merits he has satisfied the demands of the broken law, and by his authority as a king he has discharged us from the obligation of those carnal ordinances which were imposed on the Jews. And,

3. It is therefore our duty to *stand fast in this liberty*, constantly and faithfully to adhere to the gospel and to the liberty of it, and not to suffer ourselves, upon any consideration, *to be again entangled in the yoke of bondage*, nor persuaded to return back to the law of Moses. This is the general caution or exhortation, which in the following verses the apostle enforces by several reasons or arguments. As,

I. That their submitting to circumcision, and depending on the works of the law for righteousness, were an implicit contradiction of their faith as Christians and a forfeiture of all their advantages by Jesus Christ, v. 24. And here we may observe,

1. With what solemnity the apostle asserts and declares this: *Behold, I Paul say unto you* (v. 2), and he repeats it (v. 3), *I testify unto you*; as it he had said, “I, who have proved myself an apostle of Christ, and to have received my authority and instructions from him, do declare, and am ready to pawn my credit and reputation upon it, *that if you be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing*, etc.,” wherein he shows that what he was now saying was not only a matter of great importance, but what might be most assuredly depended on. He was so far from being a preacher of circumcision (as some might report him to be) that he looked upon it as a matter of the greatest consequence that they did not submit to it.

2. What it is which he so solemnly, and with so much assurance, declares; it is that, *if they were circumcised, Christ would profit them nothing*, etc. We are not to suppose that it is mere circumcision which the apostle is here speaking of, or that it was his design to say that none who are circumcised could have any benefit by Christ; for all the Old-Testament saints had been circumcised, and he himself had consented to the

circumcising of Timothy. But he is to be understood as speaking of circumcision in the sense in which the judaizing teachers imposed it, who taught *that except they were circumcised, and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved*, ~~Acts~~ Acts 15:1. That this is his meaning appears from v. 4, where he expresses the same thing by their being *justified by the law*, or seeking justification by the works of it. Now in this case, if they submitted to circumcision in this sense, he declares that *Christ would profit them nothing, that they were debtors to do the whole law, that Christ had become of no effect to them, and that they were fallen from grace*. From all these expressions it appears that thereby they renounced that way of justification which God had established; yea, that they laid themselves under an impossibility of being justified in his sight, for they became debtors to do the whole law, which required such an obedience as they were not capable of performing, and denounced a curse against those who failed in it, and therefore condemned, but could not justify them; and, consequently, that having thus revolted from Christ, and built their hopes upon the law, Christ would profit them nothing, nor be of any effect to them. Thus, as by being circumcised they renounced their Christianity, so they cut themselves off from all advantage by Christ; and therefore there was the greatest reason why they should stedfastly adhere to that doctrine which they had embraced, and not suffer themselves to be brought under this yoke of bondage. Note,

(1.) Though Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost, yet there are multitudes whom he will profit nothing.

(2.) All those who seek to be justified by the law do thereby render Christ of no effect to them. By building their hopes on the works of the law, they forfeit all their hopes from him; for he will not be the Saviour of any who will not own and rely upon him as their only Saviour.

II. To persuade them to stedfastness in the doctrine and liberty of the gospel, he sets before them his own example, and that of other Jews who had embraced the Christian religion, and acquaints them what their hopes were, namely, That *through the Spirit they were waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith*. Though they were Jews by nature, and had been bred up under the law, yet being, through the Spirit, brought to the knowledge of Christ, they had renounced all dependence on the works of the law, and looked for justification and salvation only by faith in him; and therefore it must needs be the greatest folly in those who had never been

under the law to suffer themselves to be brought into subjection to it, and to found their hopes upon the works of it. Here we may observe,

1. What it is that Christians are waiting for: it is *the hope of righteousness*, by which we are chiefly to understand the happiness of the other world. This is called the hope of Christians, as it is the great object of their hope, which they are above every thing else desiring and pursuing; and the hope of righteousness, as their hopes of it are founded on righteousness, not their own, but that of our Lord Jesus: for, though a life of righteousness is the way that leads to this happiness, yet it is the righteousness of Christ alone which has procured it for us, and on account of which we can expect to be brought to the possession of it.

2. How they hope to obtain this happiness, namely, by faith, that is, in our Lord Jesus Christ, not by the works of the law, or any thing they can do to deserve it, but only by faith, receiving and relying upon him as the Lord our righteousness. It is in this way only that they expect either to be entitled to it here or possessed of it hereafter. And,

3. Whence it is that they are thus waiting for the hope of righteousness: it is *through the Spirit*. Herein they act under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit; it is under his conduct, and by his assistance, that they are both persuaded and enabled to believe on Christ, and to look for the hope of righteousness through him. When the apostle thus represents the case of Christians, it is implied that if they expected to be justified and saved in any other way they were likely to meet with a disappointment, and therefore that they were greatly concerned to adhere to the doctrine of the gospel which they had embraced.

III. He argues from the nature and design of the Christian institution, which was to abolish the difference between Jew and Gentile, and to establish faith in Christ as the way of our acceptance with God. He tells them (v. 6) that *in Christ Jesus*, or under the gospel dispensation, *neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision*. Though, while the legal state lasted, there was a difference put between Jew and Greek, between those who were and those who were not circumcised, the former being admitted to those privileges of the church of God from which the other were excluded, yet it was otherwise in the gospel state: Christ, who is *the end of the law*, having come, now it was neither here nor there whether a man were circumcised or uncircumcised; he was neither the

better for the one nor the worse for the other, nor would either the one or the other recommend him to God; and therefore as their judaizing teachers were very unreasonable in imposing circumcision upon them, and obliging them to observe the law of Moses, so they must needs be very unwise in submitting to them herein. But, though he assures them that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision would avail to their acceptance with God, yet he informs them what would do so, and that is *faith, which worketh by love*: such a faith in Christ as discovers itself to be true and genuine by a sincere love to God and our neighbour. If they had this, it mattered not whether they were circumcised or uncircumcised, but without it nothing else would stand them in any stead. Note,

1. No external privileges nor profession will avail to our acceptance with God, without a sincere faith in our Lord Jesus.

2. Faith, where it is true, is a working grace: it works by love, love to God and love to our brethren; and faith, thus working by love, is all in all in our Christianity.

IV. To recover them from their backslidings, and engage them to greater stedfastness for the future, he puts them in mind of their good beginnings, and calls upon them to consider whence it was that they were so much altered from what they had been, v. 7.

1. He tells them that *they did run well*; at their first setting out in Christianity they had behaved themselves very commendably, they had readily embraced the Christian religion, and discovered a becoming zeal in the ways and work of it; as in their baptism they were devoted to God, and had declared themselves the disciples of Christ, so their behaviour was agreeable to their character and profession. Note,

(1.) The life of a Christian is a race, wherein he must run, and hold on, if he would obtain the prize.

(2.) It is not enough that we run in this race, by a profession of Christianity, but we must run well, by living up to that profession. Thus these Christians had done for awhile, but they had been obstructed in their progress, and were either turned out of the way or at least made to flag and falter in it. Therefore,

2. He asks them, and calls upon them to ask themselves, *Who did hinder you?* How came it to pass that they did not hold on in the way wherein

they had begun to run so well? He very well knew who they were, and what it was that hindered them; but he would have them to put the question to themselves, and seriously consider whether they had any good reason to hearken to those who gave them this disturbance, and whether what they offered was sufficient to justify them in their present conduct. Note,

(1.) Many who set out fair in religion, and run well for awhile run within the bounds appointed for the race, and run with zeal and alacrity to are yet by some means or other hindered in their progress, or turned out of the way.

(2.) It concerns those who have run well, but now begin either to turn out of the way or to tire in it, to enquire what it is that hinders them. Young converts must expect that Satan will be laying stumbling blocks in their way, and doing all he can to divert them from the course they are in; but, whenever they find themselves in danger of being turned out of it, they would do well to consider who it is that hinders them. Whoever they were that hindered these Christians, the apostle tells them that by hearkening to them they were kept from *obeying the truth*, and were thereby in danger of losing the benefit of what they had done in religion. The gospel which he had preached to them, and which they had embraced and professed, he assures them was the truth; it was therein only that the true way of justification and salvation was fully discovered, and, in order to their enjoying the advantage of it, it was necessary that they should obey it, that they should firmly adhere to it, and continue to govern their lives and hopes according to the directions of it. If therefore they should suffer themselves to be drawn away from it they must needs be guilty of the greatest weakness and folly. Note,

[1.] The truth is not only to be believed, but to be obeyed, to be received not only in the light of it, but in the love and power of it.

[2.] Those do not rightly obey the truth, who do not stedfastly adhere to it.

[3.] There is the same reason for our obeying the truth that there was for our embracing it: and therefore those act very unreasonably who, when they have begun to run well in the Christian race, suffer themselves to be hindered, so as not to persevere in it.

V. He argues for their steadfastness in the faith and liberty of the gospel from the ill rise of that persuasion whereby they were drawn away from it (v. 8): *This persuasion, says he, cometh not of him that calleth you.* The opinion or persuasion of which the apostle here speaks was no doubt that of the necessity of their being circumcised, and keeping the law of Moses, or of their mixing the works of the law with faith in Christ in the business of justification. This was what the judaizing teachers endeavoured to impose upon them, and what they had too easily fallen into. To convince them of their folly herein, he tells them that this persuasion did not come of him that called them, that is, either of God, by whose authority the gospel had been preached to them and they had been called into the fellowship of it, or of the apostle himself, who had been employed as the instrument of calling them hereunto. It could not come from God, for it was contrary to that way of justification and salvation which he had established; nor could they have received it from Paul himself; for, whatever some might pretend, he had all along been an opposer and not a preacher of circumcision, and, if in any instance he had submitted to it for the sake of peace, yet he had never pressed the use of it upon Christians, much less imposed it upon them as necessary to salvation. Since then this persuasion did not come of him that had called them, he leaves them to judge whence it must arise, and sufficiently intimates that it could be owing to none but Satan and his instruments, who by this means were endeavouring to overthrow their faith and obstruct the progress of the gospel, and therefore that the Galatians had every reason to reject it, and to continue steadfast in the truth which they had before embraced. Note, 1. In order to our judging aright of the different persuasions in religion which there are among Christians, it concerns us to enquire whether they come of him that calleth us, whether or no they are founded upon the authority of Christ and his apostles.

2. If, upon enquiry, they appear to have no such foundation, how forward soever others may be to impose them upon us, we should by no means submit to them, but reject them.

VI. The danger there was of the spreading of this infection, and the ill influence it might have upon others, are a further argument which the apostle urges against their complying with their false teachers in what they would impose on them. It is possible that, to extenuate their fault, they might be ready to say that there were but few of those teachers among

them who endeavoured to draw them into this persuasion and practice, or that they were only some smaller matters wherein they complied with them that though they submitted to be circumcised, and to observe some few rites of the Jewish laws, yet they had by no means renounced their Christianity and gone over to Judaism. Or, suppose their complying thus far was as faulty as he could represent it, yet perhaps they might further say that there were but few among them who had done so, and therefore he needed not be so much concerned about it. Now, to obviate such pretences as these, and to convince them that there was more danger in it than they were aware of, he tells them (v. 9) that *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump* that the whole lump of Christianity may be tainted and corrupted by one such erroneous principle, or that the whole lump of the Christian society may be infected by one member of it, and therefore that they were greatly concerned not to yield in this single instance, or, if any had done so, to endeavour by all proper methods to purge out the infection from among them. Note, It is dangerous for Christian churches to encourage those among them who entertain, especially who set themselves to propagate, destructive errors. This was the case here. The doctrine which the false teachers were industrious to spread, and which some in these churches had been drawn into, was subversive of Christianity itself, as the apostle had before shown; and therefore, though the number either of the one or the other of these might be but small, yet, considering the fatal tendency of it and the corruption of human nature, whereby others were too much disposed to be infected with it, he would not have them on that account to be easy and unconcerned, but remember that *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*. If these were indulged the contagion might soon spread further and wider; and, if they suffered themselves to be imposed upon in this instance, it might soon issue in the utter ruin of the truth and liberty of the gospel.

VII. That he might conciliate the greater regard to what he had said, he expresses the hopes he had concerning them (v. 10): *I have confidence in you*, says he, *through the Lord, that you will be none otherwise minded*. Though he had many fears and doubts about them (which was the occasion of his using so much plainness and freedom with them), yet he hoped that through the blessing of God upon what he had written they might be brought to be of the same mind with him, and to own and abide by that truth and that liberty of the gospel which he had preached to them, and was now endeavouring to confirm them in. Herein he teaches us that

we ought to hope the best even of those concerning whom we have cause to fear the worst. That they might be the less offended at the reproofs he had given them for their unstedfastness in the faith, he lays the blame of it more upon others than themselves; for he adds, *But he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.* He was sensible that there were ~~some~~ *some that troubled them, and would pervert the gospel of Christ* (as Galatians 1:7), and possibly he may point to some one particular man who was more busy and forward than others, and might be the chief instrument of the disorder that was among them; and to this he imputes their defection or inconstancy more than to any thing in themselves. This may give us occasion to observe that, in reproofing sin and error, we should always distinguish between the leaders and the led, such as set themselves to draw others thereinto and such as are drawn aside by them. Thus the apostle softens and alleviates the fault of these Christians, even while he is reproofing them, that he might the better persuade them to return to, and stand fast in, the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free: but as for him or those that troubled them, whoever he or they were, he declares they *should bear their judgment*, he did not doubt but God would deal with them according to their deserts, and out of his just indignation against them, as enemies of Christ and his church, he wishes that *they were even cut off* not cut off from Christ and all hopes of salvation by him, but cut off by the censures of the church, which ought to witness against those teachers who thus corrupted the purity of the gospel. Those, whether ministers or others, who set themselves to overthrow the faith of the gospel, and disturb the peace of Christians, do thereby forfeit the privileges of Christian communion and deserve to be cut off from them.

VIII. To dissuade these Christians from hearkening to their judaizing teachers, and to recover them from the ill impressions they had made upon them, he represents them as men who had used very base and disingenuous methods to compass their designs, for they had misrepresented him, that they might the more easily gain their ends upon them. That which they were endeavouring was to bring them to submit to circumcision, and to mix Judaism with their Christianity; and, the better to accomplish this design, they had given out among them that Paul himself was a preacher of circumcision: for when he says (v. 11), *And I brethren, if I yet preach circumcision*, it plainly appears that they had reported him to have done so, and that they had made use of this as an argument to prevail with the Galatians to submit to it. It is probable that they grounded

this report upon his having circumcised Timothy, ~~411B~~ Acts 16:3. But, though for good reasons he had yielded to circumcision in that instance, yet that he was a preacher of it, and especially in that sense wherein they imposed it, he utterly denies. To prove the injustice of that charge upon him, he offers such arguments as, if they would allow themselves to consider, could not fail to convince them of it.

1. If he would have preached circumcision, he might have avoided persecution. If I yet preach circumcision, says he, *why do I yet suffer persecution?* It was evident, and they could not but be sensible of it, that he was hated and persecuted by the Jews; but what account could be given of this their behaviour towards him, if he had so far symbolized with them as to preach up circumcision, and the observance of the law of Moses, as necessary to salvation? This was the great point they were contending for; and, if he had fallen in with them herein, instead of being exposed to their rage he might have been received into their favour. When therefore he was suffering persecution from them, this was a plain evidence that he had not complied with them; yea, that he was so far from preaching the doctrine he was charged with, that, rather than do so, he was willing to expose himself to the greatest hazards.

2. If he had yielded to the Jews herein, *then would the offence of the cross have ceased.* They would not have taken so much offence against the doctrine of Christianity as they did, nor would he and others have been exposed to so much suffering on the account of it as they were. He informs us (~~412B~~ 1 Corinthians 1:23) that the preaching of the cross of Christ (or the doctrine of justification and salvation only by faith in Christ crucified) *was to the Jews a stumbling-block.* That which they were most offended at in Christianity was, that thereby circumcision, and the whole frame of the legal administration, were set aside, as no longer in force. This raised their greatest outcries against it, and stirred them up to oppose and persecute the professors of it. Now if Paul and others could have given into this opinion, that circumcision was still to be retained, and the observance of the law of Moses joined with faith in Christ as necessary to salvation, then their offence against it would have been in a great measure removed, and they might have avoided the sufferings they underwent for the sake of it. But though others, and particularly those who were so forward to asperse him as a preacher of this doctrine, could easily come into it, yet so could not he. He rather chose to hazard his ease and credit, yea his very life itself, than thus to corrupt the truth and give up the liberty of the gospel. Hence it

was that the Jews continued to be so much offended against Christianity, and against him as the preacher of it. Thus the apostle clears himself from the unjust reproach which his enemies had cast upon him, and at the same time shows how little regard was due to those men who could treat him in such an injurious manner, and how much reason he had to wish that they were even cut off.

~~483~~ GALATIANS 5:13-26

PRACTICAL GODLINESS ENFORCED

In the latter part of this chapter the apostle comes to exhort these Christians to serious practical godliness, as the best antidote against the snares of the false teachers. Two things especially he presses upon them:

- 1.** That they should not strive with one another, but love one another. He tells them (v. 13) that *they had been called unto liberty*, and he would have them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free; but yet he would have them be very careful that they did not *use this liberty as an occasion to the flesh* that they did not thence take occasion to indulge themselves in any corrupt affections and practices, and particularly such as might create distance and disaffection, and be the ground of quarrels and contentions among them: but, on the contrary, he would have them *by love to serve one another*, to maintain that mutual love and affection which, notwithstanding any minor differences there might be among them, would dispose them to all those offices of respect and kindness to each other which the Christian religion obliged them to. Note,
1. The liberty we enjoy as Christians is not a licentious liberty: though Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, yet he has not freed us from the obligation of it; the gospel is a *doctrine according to godliness* (~~508~~ 1 Timothy 6:3), and is so far from giving the least countenance to sin that it lays us under the strongest obligations to avoid and subdue it.
- 2.** Though we ought to stand fast in our Christian liberty, yet we should not insist upon it to the breach of Christian charity; we should not use it as an occasion of strife and contention with our fellow Christians, who may be differently minded from us, but should always maintain such a temper towards each other as may dispose us by love to serve one another. To this

the apostle endeavours to persuade these Christians, and there are two considerations which he sets before them for this purpose:

(1.) *That all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, v. 14. Love is the sum of the whole law; as love to God comprises the duties of the first table, so love to our neighbour those of the second. The apostle takes notice of the latter here, because he is speaking of their behaviour towards one another; and, when he makes use of this as an argument to persuade them to mutual love, he intimates both that this would be a good evidence of their sincerity in religion and also the most likely means of rooting out those dissensions and divisions that were among them. It will appear that we are the disciples of Christ indeed when we have love one to another (~~John~~ John 13:35); and, where this temper is kept up, if it do not wholly extinguish those unhappy discords that are among Christians, yet at least it will so far accommodate them that the fatal consequences of them will be prevented.

(2.) The sad and dangerous tendency of a contrary behaviour (v. 15): *But*, says he, if instead of serving one another in love, and therein fulfilling the law of God, *you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another*. If, instead of acting like men and Christians, they would behave themselves more like brute beasts, in tearing and rending one another, they could expect nothing as the consequence of it, but that they would be consumed one of another; and therefore they had the greatest reason not to indulge themselves in such quarrels and animosities. Note, Mutual strifes among brethren, if persisted in, are likely to prove a common ruin; those that devour one another are in a fair way to be consumed one of another. Christian churches cannot be ruined but by their own hands; but if Christians, who should be helps to one another and a joy one to another, be as brute beasts, biting and devouring each other, what can be expected but that the God of love should deny his grace to them, and the Spirit of love should depart from them, and that the evil spirit, who seeks the destruction of them all, should prevail?

II. That they should all strive against sin; and happy would it be for the church if Christians would let all their quarrels be swallowed up of this, even a quarrel against sin, instead of biting and devouring one another on account of their different opinions, they would all set themselves against sin in themselves and the places where they live. This is what we are chiefly concerned to fight against, and that which above every thing else

we should make it our business to oppose and suppress. To excite Christians hereunto, and to assist them herein, the apostle shows,

1. That there is in every one a struggle between the flesh and the spirit (v. 17): *The flesh* (the corrupt and carnal part of us) *lusts* (strives and struggles with strength and vigour) *against the spirit*: it opposes all the motions of the Spirit, and resists every thing that is spiritual. On the other hand, *the spirit* (the renewed part of us) strives *against the flesh*, and opposes the will and desire of it: and hence it comes to pass *that we cannot do the things that we would*. As the principle of grace in us will not suffer us to do all the evil which our corrupt nature would prompt us to, so neither can we do all the good that we would, by reason of the oppositions we meet with from that corrupt and carnal principle. Even as in a natural man there is something of this struggle (the convictions of his conscience and the corruption of his own heart strive with one another; his convictions would suppress his corruptions, and his corruptions silence his convictions), so in a renewed man, where there is something of a good principle, there is a struggle between the old nature and the new nature, the remainders of sin and the beginnings of grace; and this Christians must expect will be their exercise as long as they continue in this world.

2. That it is our duty and interest in this struggle to side with the better part, to side with our convictions against our corruptions and with our graces against our lusts. This the apostle represents as our duty, and directs us to the most effectual means of success in it. If it should be asked, What course must we take that the better interest may get the better? he gives us this one general rule, which, if duly observed, would be the most sovereign remedy against the prevalence of corruption; and that is to walk in the Spirit (v. 16): *This I say, then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*. By the *Spirit* here may be meant either the Holy Spirit himself, who condescends to dwell in the hearts of those whom he has renewed and sanctified, to guide and assist them in the way of their duty, or that gracious principle which he implants in the souls of his people and which lusts against the flesh, as that corrupt principle which still remains in them does against it. Accordingly the duty here recommended to us is that we set ourselves to act under the guidance and influence of the blessed Spirit, and agreeably to the motions and tendency of the new nature in us; and, if this be our care in the ordinary course and tenour of our lives, we may depend upon it that, though we may not be freed from the stirrings and oppositions of our corrupt nature, we shall be

kept from fulfilling it in the lusts thereof; so that though it remain in us, yet it shall not obtain a dominion over us. Note, The best antidote against the poison of sin is to walk in the Spirit, to be much in conversing with spiritual things, to mind the things of the soul, which is the spiritual part of man, more than those of the body, which is his carnal part, to commit ourselves to the guidance of the word, wherein the Holy Spirit makes known the will of God concerning us, and in the way of our duty to act in a dependence on his aids and influences. And, as this would be the best means of preserving them from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, so it would be a good evidence that they were Christians indeed; for, says the apostle (v. 18), *If you be led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.* As if he had said, “You must expect a struggle between flesh and spirit as long as you are in the world, that the flesh will be lusting against the spirit as well as the spirit against the flesh; but if, in the prevailing bent and tenour of your lives, you be *led by the Spirit*, if you act under the guidance and government of the Holy Spirit and of that spiritual nature and disposition he has wrought in you, if you make the word of God your rule and the grace of God your principle, it will hence appear that you are not under the law, not under the condemning, though you are still under the commanding, power of it; for *there is now no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; and as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,*”

⌘ Romans 8:114.

3. The apostle specifies the works of the flesh, which must be watched against and mortified, and the fruits of the Spirit, which must be cherished and brought forth (v. 19, etc.); and by specifying particulars he further illustrates what he is here upon.

(1.) He begins with *the works of the flesh*, which, as they are many, so they are manifest. It is past dispute that the things he here speaks of are the works of the flesh, or the product of corrupt and depraved nature; most of them are condemned by the light of nature itself, and all of them by the light of scripture. The particulars he specifies are of various sorts; some are sins against the seventh commandment, such as *adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness*, by which are meant not only the gross acts of these sins, but all such thoughts, and words, and actions, as have a tendency towards the great transgression. Some are sins against the first and second commandments, as *idolatry* and *witchcraft*. Others are sins against our neighbour, and contrary to the royal law of brotherly love, such

as *hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife*, which too often occasion *seditions, heresies, envyings*, and sometimes break out into *murders*, not only of the names and reputation, but even of the very lives, of our fellow-creatures. Others are sins against ourselves, such as *drunkenness and revellings*; and he concludes the catalogue with an *et cetera*, and gives fair warning to all to take care of them, as they hope to see the face of God with comfort. Of these and *such like*, says he, *I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that those who do such things, how much soever they may flatter themselves with vain hopes, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* These are sins which will undoubtedly shut men out of heaven. The world of spirits can never be comfortable to those who plunge themselves in the filth of the flesh; nor will the righteous and holy God ever admit such into his favour and presence, unless they be first *washed and sanctified, and justified in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,* ~~1~~ 1 Corinthians 6:11.

(2.) He specifies the fruits of the Spirit, or the renewed nature, which as Christians we are concerned to bring forth, v. 22, 23. And here we may observe that as sin is called *the work of the flesh*, because the flesh, or corrupt nature, is the principle that moves and excites men to it, so grace is said to be *the fruit of the Spirit*, because it wholly proceeds from the Spirit, as the fruit does from the root: and whereas before the apostle had chiefly specified those works of the flesh which were not only hurtful to men themselves but tended to make them so to one another, so here he chiefly takes notice of those fruits of the Spirit which had a tendency to make Christians agreeable one to another, as well as easy to themselves; and this was very suitable to the caution or exhortation he had before given (v. 13), that they should *not use their liberty as an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.* He particularly recommends to us, *love*, to God especially, and to one another for his sake, *joy*, by which may be understood cheerfulness in conversation with our friends, or rather a constant delight in God, *peace*, with God and conscience, or a peaceableness of temper and behaviour towards others, *long-suffering*, patience to defer anger, and a contentedness to bear injuries, *gentleness*, such a sweetness of temper, and especially towards our inferiors, as disposes us to be affable and courteous, and easy to be entreated when any have wronged us, *goodness* (kindness, beneficence), which shows itself in a readiness to do good to all as we have opportunity, *faith*, fidelity, justice, and honesty, in what we profess and promise to others, *meekness*,

wherewith to govern our passions and resentments, so as not to be easily provoked, and, when we are so, to be soon pacified, and *temperance*, in meat and drink, and other enjoyments of life, so as not to be excessive and immoderate in the use of them. Concerning these things, or those in whom these fruits of the Spirit are found, the apostle says, *There is no law against them*, to condemn and punish them. Yea, hence it appears that they are not under the law, but under grace; for these fruits of the Spirit, in whomsoever they are found, plainly show that such are *led by the Spirit*, and consequently that they are not *under the law*, as v. 18. And as, by specifying these works of the flesh and fruits of the Spirit, the apostle directs us both what we are to avoid and oppose and what we are to cherish and cultivate, so (v. 24) he informs us that this is the sincere care and endeavour of all real Christians: *And those that are Christ's*, says he (those who are Christians indeed, not only in show and profession, but in sincerity and truth), *have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts*. As in their baptism they were obliged hereunto (for, being baptized into Christ, they were baptized into his death, ~~and~~ Romans 6:3), so they are now sincerely employing themselves herein, and, in conformity to their Lord and head, are endeavouring to die unto sin, as he had died for it. They have not yet obtained a complete victory over it; they have still flesh as well as Spirit in them, and that has its affections and lusts, which continue to give them no little disturbance, but as it does not now *reign in their mortal bodies*, so as that they obey it in the lusts thereof (~~and~~ Romans 6:12), so they are seeking the utter ruin and destruction of it, and to put it to the same shameful and ignominious, though lingering death, which our Lord Jesus underwent for our sakes. Note, If we should approve ourselves to be Christ's, such as are united to him and interested in him, we must make it our constant care and business to crucify the flesh with its corrupt affections and lusts. Christ will never own those as his who yield themselves the servants of sin. But though the apostle here only mentions the crucifying of the flesh with the affections and lusts, as the care and character of real Christians, yet, no doubt, it is also implied that, on the other hand, we should show forth those fruits of the Spirit which he had just before been specifying; this is no less our duty than that, nor is it less necessary to evidence our sincerity in religion. It is not enough that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well. Our Christianity obliges us not only to die unto sin, but to live unto righteousness; not only to oppose the works of the flesh, but to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit too. If therefore we would make it appear that we do indeed belong to Christ, this

must be our sincere care and endeavour as well as the other; and that it was the design of the apostle to represent both the one and the other of these as our duty, and as necessary to support our character as Christians, may be gathered from what follows (v. 25), where he adds, *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*; that is, “If we profess to have received the Spirit of Christ, or that we are renewed in the Spirit of Christ, or that we are renewed in the spirit of our minds, and endued with a principle of spiritual life, let us make it appear by the proper fruits of the Spirit in our lives.” He had before told us that the Spirit of Christ is a privilege bestowed on all the children of God, ^{<R046>}Galatians 4:6. “Now,” says he, “if we profess to be of this number, and as such to have obtained this privilege, let us show it by a temper and behaviour agreeable hereunto; let us evidence our good principles by good practices.” Our conversation will always be answerable to the principle which we are under the guidance and government of: as *those that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, so those that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit*, ^{<R045>}Romans 8:5. If therefore we would have it appear that we are Christ's, and that we are partakers of his Spirit, it must be by our *walking not after the flesh, but after the spirit*. We must set ourselves in good earnest both to mortify the deeds of the body, and to walk in newness of life.

4. The apostle concludes this chapter with a caution against pride and envy, v. 26. He had before been exhorting these Christians *by love to serve one another* (v. 13), and had put them in mind of what would be the consequence if, instead of that, they did *bite and devour one another*, v. 15. Now, as a means of engaging them to the one and preserving them from the other of these, he here cautions them against being desirous of vain-glory, or giving way to an undue affectation of the esteem and applause of men, because this, if it were indulged, would certainly lead them to provoke one another and to envy one another. As far as this temper prevails among Christians, they will be ready to slight and despise those whom they look upon as inferior to them, and to be put out of humour if they are denied that respect which they think is their due from them, and they will also be apt to envy those by whom their reputation is in any danger of being lessened: and thus a foundation is laid for those quarrels and contentions which, as they are inconsistent with that love which Christians ought to maintain towards each other, so they are greatly

prejudicial to the honour and interest of religion itself. This therefore the apostle would have us by all means to watch against. Note,

(1.) The glory which comes from men is vain-glory, which, instead of being desirous of, we should be dead to.

(2.) An undue regard to the approbation and applause of men is one great ground of the unhappy strifes and contentions that exist among Christians.