

In this passage Paul expresses the importance of walking in the Spirit instead of relying on our flesh to produce righteousness. He does this by contrasting the flesh and the Spirit and what each produces in our lives. Our flesh produces the sins that the law condemns while the Spirit endeavors to produce in us the behavior that pleases God and is not in conflict with His law.

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19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

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**“Now the works [deeds; products] of the flesh are manifest [apparent; evident], which are these”** – The flesh produces certain behaviors and Paul says these are evident. We are all familiar with the things that people do who are not governed by the Holy Spirit and Paul is about to list some of these things. Just as you wouldn’t expect to get fresh water from a salty source, we need not expect our flesh to produce behaviors that please God (**Jam. 3:11-12** “*Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh*”).

**“Adultery, fornication [illicit sex], uncleanness [moral impurity], lasciviousness [unbridled lust]”** – Our society today is full of people who have given in to their sexual desires, committing adultery, engaging in illicit sexual encounters, following their unbridled lust into all sorts of moral impurity. The lack of sexual restraint being exercised today is the result of people following the desires their flesh.

**“Idolatry, witchcraft [pharmakeía – the use of drugs]”** – We get the English word “pharmacy” from the Greek word used here for “witchcraft” and it refers to the use of drugs, particularly in connection with sorcery or idolatrous practices. Worshiping false gods and delving in the supernatural realm outside of the things of God are practices used to fulfill the desires of the flesh and there may very well be a supernatural element to people’s use of drugs today. Drugs apparently will be one of the things that the residents of the earth will not be willing to repent of during the tribulation (**Rev. 9:21** (The same Greek word Paul used for “witchcraft” is also used for “sorceries”)

*“Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts”).*

**“hatred, variance [contention], emulations [jealousy], wrath [outbursts of anger; expressions of rage]”** – These works of the flesh are the opposite of love, ranging in scale from simple hatred of others through to various other sins that are expressions of hatred being acted out. People governed by these works of the flesh simply cannot get along with the people that they hate and will easily act upon their anger.

**“strife [partisanship], seditions [divisions], heresies [dissension based on beliefs or opinions]”** – Hatred and its sinful actions lead to partisanship, divisions and dissension. These people hate and separate themselves from those who do not share their ideas or opinions. We frequently see these sins being displayed in relation to religion and politics.

**“Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings [drunken parties]”** – Rather than being happy for others, these sins express envy at the position or possessions of others, not being happy with their own state. This may lead to violence and murder. Other sins Paul includes are becoming drunk and engaging in the immoral behavior typical of drunken parties. What little moral restraint these people may have had when they were sober goes away when they get drunk at these parties.

**“and such like”** – Paul realizes that his list is hardly exhaustive, so by saying “and such like” he includes all other expressions of our flesh’s sinfulness. It’s almost like he’s saying “I’ve barely scratched the surface of the sinfulness that our flesh is capable of producing, but you get the idea.”

**“of the which I tell you before”** – Paul is warning them before it’s too late for them to find redemption in Christ through faith.

**“as I have also told you in time past”** – This is not the first time Paul has given this warning to the Galatians. He had warned them of the judgment of God during his earlier visits.

**“that they which do [practice] such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God”** – The Greek word translated “they which do” in this line indicates ongoing action. People whose lives are characterized by these fleshly behaviors are demonstrating that they are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit, which they would have received if they had been born again. As such, they will not inherit the kingdom of God. It’s possible for a Christian to commit these sins, but they will not characterize the his/her life. Paul wants the Galatians to recognize the distinction between those who are guided by their flesh and those who are guided by the Holy Spirit (**Rom. 8:8-9** “*So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*”).

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22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

**“But the fruit of the Spirit”** – In contrast to the list of 17 (not counting the “such like”) sinful characteristics that are produced by the flesh, Paul now lists 9 characteristics that the Spirit produces in our lives. By describing them as “fruit of the Spirit,” it’s obvious that these characteristics are produced by the Spirit and not by our flesh. Also, calling them “fruit” implies that these characteristics grow naturally as the product of the Spirit’s presence in our lives. These characteristics do not and can not naturally originate in our flesh, which is incapable of doing so. Thus the presence of this fruit in a person’s life is evidence that they have been born again.

**“is love [agápē: selfless love], joy, peace”** – The Greek word used for “love” refers to a love that seeks the best of its target, even at its own expense. It is the type of love that God has for us and that He enables us to have toward others. The joy that comes from the Spirit is not based on circumstances, and is thus different from happiness. The peace that the Spirit gives is based on a trust in God, regardless of the circumstances. It is a peace that passes all understanding (**Phil. 4:7** “*And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*”).

**“longsuffering [patience; endurance], gentleness [kindness], goodness, faith”** – The tendency of the flesh is to become impatient, irritated and quit when things don’t go our way, but the Spirit helps us to endure and be patient in adverse circumstances. The Spirit also leads us to be good and kind to others, even when things aren’t going our way. Faith helps us to trust that God will take care of us even when circumstances might imply otherwise.

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23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

**“Meekness** [*gentleness*], **temperance** [*self-control*]” – The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives also helps us be gentle when our flesh might want to be aggressive toward those whose behavior is displeasing to us. Additionally, the Spirit helps us have self-control, preventing us from yielding to the flesh and its desires.

**“against such there is no law”** – The works of the flesh lead to the very sins that the law condemns but Paul points out that none of the characteristics that the fruit of the Spirit produces is condemned by the law of God. The Holy Spirit always leads us to behave in a way that pleases God.

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24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

**“And they that are Christ's”** – Those who belong to Christ through faith in Him. They are now born-again, with the presence of the Holy Spirit working in their lives to produce the fruit of the Spirit. Paul points to these people in contrast to those who are seeking salvation through the law and by doing so are depending on their flesh's flawed and tainted ability to keep the law.

**“have crucified the flesh with the affections** [*passions, particularly of a sexual nature*] **and lusts** [*forbidden desires*]” – Our flesh has many sinful desires (vs. 19-21) and those who do not belong to Christ do little to resist them. However, those who do belong to Christ have a desire (which comes from the Spirit) to resist the flesh's sinful inclinations by “crucifying” it so that it cannot tempt them to follow its passions and desires. Paul is not speaking of a literal crucifixion, although he is likely using that word in association to Christ's literal crucifixion. Paul uses the word figuratively, expressing how that the Spirit leads and enables us to control our flesh so that we will not fulfill its sinful desires. The word “crucified” is in the aorist tense, which means that it doesn't refer to having occurred any particular time frame. Paul seems to be saying that it is in the nature of Christians to resist the flesh's desires, while unbelievers follow their fleshly desires with little resistance.

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25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Positionally, Christians live in the Spirit because they are born-again and have the Holy Spirit indwelling them. Being born of the Spirit, they now have eternal life. Paul is saying that our walk should match our position. We should live our lives yielded to the leadership of the Holy Spirit so that our lives reflect the internal spiritual reality of His presence and the fact that we belong to Christ. It would be inconsistent and even unnatural for a person who has genuinely been born-again to behave like unbelievers who follow their flesh.

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26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

**“Let us not”** – Paul lists three sinful characteristics produced by the flesh that the Galatians might be tempted to fall into if they are depending on their flesh to obtain righteousness through the law. Paul seems to be mentioning these sins as part of the caution that he will address in the next verse (**Gal. 6:1** “*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted*”).

**“be desirous of vain glory** [*conceited; eager of empty glory*]” – Those who rely on the law for righteousness often become proud of themselves, thinking themselves superior to others because of their perceived righteousness. However, Paul calls this “vain glory” because the glory they seek is not real or attainable because our flesh is simply not capable of obtaining righteousness through the law.

**“provoking** [*to call out; challenge; irritate*] **one another”** – Pride in our own self righteousness can cause us to gloat or brag, challenging others with a “holier-than-thou” attitude. Such provoking is selfish and not seeking the best of others. Instead it seeks to inflate our pride.

**“envying one another”** – Those who do not perceive themselves as righteous as others based on how well they keep the law can become jealous or envious of them. However, this envy is not based on reality since no one has obtained righteousness through the law. In fact, such envy is sinful expression of the flesh since it reflects a dependence on the flesh to produce righteousness.