

The Chiasm of Gal. 5:13-6:2
21 January 1989: April 27, 2015
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A. Overview

1. Ch. 5-6, in addition to being the third panel in the "emotional/logical" alternation dominating the defense of Paul's doctrine, is also the application section of the book. Note the distribution of imperatives:
 - a) 1:8,9 are third persons;
 - b) 3:7 and 4:21 are rhetorical;
 - c) 4:27 (3x), 30 are in OT quotations.
 - d) That leaves only 4:12, 5:1(2x) outside of the application section; 10 in it (5:13,15,16; 6:1,2,4,6,7,11,17)

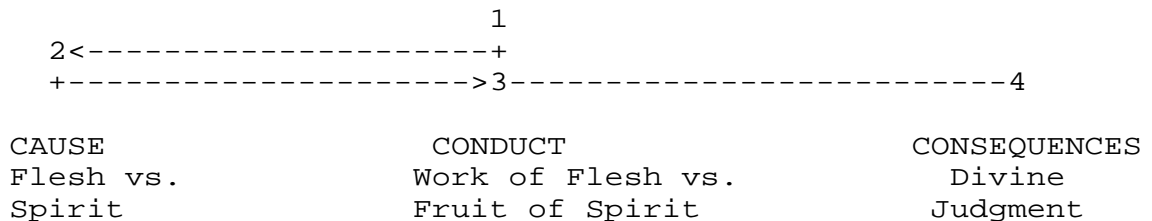
2. The dominant theme is the contrast between flesh and Spirit. NB: Spirit here should always be capitalized. The reference is to the Holy Spirit, who with the Father and the Son is God.

3. Three major structures dominate this section:
 - a) A chiasm from 5:13 through 6:2. Theme: danger of yielding in the conflict of flesh vs. Spirit.

 - b) An alternation from 6:1 through 6:5. Theme: correcting error in believers' lives.

 - c) Another chiasm (or at least, inclusio), 6:6-10. Theme: providing for other believers.

4. Argument of the initial chiasm, 5:13-6:2.
 The chiasm has seven levels, but it helps trace the argument if we group them. The first two describe a particular contrast in behavior, between the love that believers should have for one another and the strife that often exists. The next two trace this contrast to a deeper contrast, the contrast between flesh and Spirit and the struggle that these two continually undergo in the believer. The next two show other consequences of this inner struggle, while the center of the chiasm emphasizes the seriousness of the whole matter. The general argument, then, is from practical problem, to underlying cause, to other practical problems that can stem from that cause, to ultimate result:



B. Specific Contrast in Conduct: Love vs. Strife

1. The believer's true law: love to others.
The outmost element in each panel describes the love that believers owe to one another. These panels have a more detailed correspondence to one another, in four parts. Both appeal to Christian brotherhood; both relate flesh (or Spirit) to freedom (or bondage); both exhort believers to help one another; and both identify this as a law.
 - a) Appeal to them as brothers: 5:13, 6:1a.
 - 1) Suggests the personal, affectionate tone of the letter. He could command as an apostle, but prefers to deal with them from a position of love rather than rank, even as he exhorts them to deal with one another out of love.
 - 2) We will see that the point of the chiasm deals with strife within the church. The term may emphasize, not just that Paul is their brother, but that they are one another's brothers, and should live that way.
 - b) The flesh frustrates liberty, and the Spirit frustrates bondage. (Cross contrasts; syntagmatic division)
We know that liberty and bondage are opposed, as are flesh and Spirit. This pair of elements shows that the flesh and freedom are opposed, as are the Spirit and bondage.
 - 1) 5:13, Freedom vs. Flesh.
 - a> "You have been called to freedom," as described in 4:21-5:1.
 - b> "Occasion for the flesh." This would be inconsistent with your freedom.
 - 2) 6:1b, Bondage vs. Spirit
 - a> "If one be overtaken" (*prolambanw*). Verb indicates surprise, and is used in Wisd. 17:16 (E.T. v.17) of the act of taking someone captive, bringing them into bondage. We have here a believer who has been snared by sin.
 - b> It is sadly the case that a believer can be tripped up this way. 2 Tim. 2:24-26 describes the restoration of heretics in these terms.
 - c> "You who are spiritual." Only those controlled by the Spirit can help deliver someone who has been thus trapped.
 - c) Serve one another. 5:13b, 6:2a.
 - 1) 5:13. Noteworthy phrases:

a> Lit. "through the love," referring probably to the love mentioned in 5:6, which gives expression to our faith. "Through the love that comes from faith."

b> "Serve one another." Verb form of the word for "bondage" from ch.4. After urging the Galatians to avoid bondage, here is the one form of bondage that they should accept: servitude to other believers.

2) 6:2, "Bear one another's burdens." Same idea.

d) The true law, 5:14, 6:2b.

Just as there is a true bondage to which the believer may submit, so there is a true law that he must obey, the law of Christ.

1) 5:14, quoting Lev. 19:18, used by first century Jews (Luke 10:27, the lawyer) and our Lord himself (Matt. 22:36-40) to summarize the second table of the law. If the Galatians want to keep the law, they should start here.

2) 6:2b holds us to "the law of Christ" in bearing one another's burdens. James 2:8 calls Lev. 19:18 "the royal law," so here it is the law of the King.

2. The problem of strife among believers, 5:15, 26.

We suspect that such an emphasis on love would not be needed if their love were what it should be, and the next element confirms this. There is a problem in Galatia with strife among the believers. Apparently, as some were tending to follow the Judaizers' teaching and others were remaining faithful to what Paul taught, strife broke out. NB: It is RIGHT to disagree with error, but WRONG to use it as an excuse for ungodly strife and contention.

a) 5:15

1) "But" (in contrast to love).

2) "Bite and devour." Fighting and scrapping among the believers, probably between those who side with the Judaizers and those who do not. Whatever the error, personal attacks are no way to oppose it.

3) Modern application: to joking insults. Prov. 26:18,19. Rudeness and abuse is never fun. It can lead all to quickly to real damage.

b) 5:26

1) "vainglory": It's a hard insight to accept, but the real issue in battles over theological principles is too often the pride of the combattants, not the glory of God. Easy to hide behind "defense of the faith," but keep Paul's

exhortation in mind: "Don't become vain-glorious."

- 2) "Provoking one another," perhaps the act of those who are not following the law, flaunting their Christian liberty, making it "an occasion for the flesh."
- 3) "Envyng one another," the response of those who have begun to follow Jewish ways, and are inwardly envious of the liberty of their more orthodox, but still not spiritual, brothers.

3. The point: Heterodoxy does NOT justify strife and contention among believers. (But contrast Paul's own comments in v.12 with respect to those who are not believers.) May God give us grace to tell the Egyptians and the Israelites apart!
Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, Second Book, XXV.9.

C. Underlying Cause: Conflict between Flesh and Spirit

The inconsistency that believers exhibit in daily life reflects a deeper conflict, between the flesh (sinful human nature) and the (Holy) Spirit. Can be traced to the close linkage between our bodies and our mental/emotional lives: "psychosomatic illness," psychological affect of food allergies and hormone imbalances.

1. What are these two agencies? Recall that man is bipartite, material and immaterial.
 - a) The "Spirit" is the HS of God, who indwells and empowers us.
 - b) The "flesh" is what we inherit from Adam. Our immaterial part has already been redeemed. But we are still waiting for the redemption of our bodies, Rom. 8:23, and the "old chassis" in which the new engine has been installed is beginning to rust out.
2. Four things to keep in mind about the role of the flesh in the spiritual life.
 - a) Paul teaches it. This is not some health-food fad, but part of God's revealed truth about our constitution.
 - b) It can *explain* many things and help us to combat sin. A complete ministry must take account of this side of things. Compare the merger of physical and spiritual in James 2:14-17.
 - c) It does not *excuse* sin. v.21 allows no excuses on the grounds of "low blood sugar" or "candidiasis." The Spirit of God, using both physical and spiritual means, will deliver his people from sin.
 - d) Paul claims that our flesh is the locus of the believer's disposition to sin. But he is not claiming either that flesh as such as evil (our Lord lived in a human body), or that the immaterial part is good (before redemption, it is bad also!)

3. 5:16,25. Need for an active obedience to the Spirit, in addition to passively enjoying the life that he gives.
 - a) 5:25 distinguishes two states: living in the Spirit, and walking in (lit. "staying in line with") the Spirit.
 - 1) "living in the Spirit:" HS brings life. He is the "Spirit of Life" in Rom. 8:2; Rev. 11:1; "quickenning Spirit" in 1 Cor. 15:45. 2 Cor. 3:6, "The letter [of the law] kills, but the [Holy] Spirit gives life"; the agent of resurrection, Rom. 8:11. Salvation is the spiritual parallel of physical creation. Physically, God made man of clay, and breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul (Gen. 2:7). Now, "Spirit" also means "wind, breath." Same root as "re-spiration." God gives us spiritual life by "breathing" into us his Holy Spirit.
 - 2) "Stay in line with the Spirit," as on the playground with the teacher. He not only gives *life*, but also *leadership*, and we must follow him.
 - 3) Note that these two are distinguished from one another! Not everyone who claims to live in the Spirit is staying in line. Otherwise this instruction would be unnecessary.
 - b) This is the distinction between "position" and "practice." Other exx. in the NT:
 - 1) Rom. 8:5-13, contrasting "after the Spirit" (practice; vv.5-7,12-13) with "in the Spirit" (position; 8, 9-11) (ABBA chiasm, break at shift from 3rd to 2nd person)
 - 2) Col. 3:5-15. Contrast commands in 5-9a, 12-15 (practice) with statements in 9b-11 (position), and v.3 with v.5.
 - c) Thus 5:16 promises that if we walk in or by the Spirit, we positively absolutely (*ou mh*) will not fulfill the sinful desires that the flesh thrusts upon us. Cf. Rom. 8:4, which indicates that this is the way in which we are to fulfill the righteousness of the law! Not by seeking salvation through the law, but by following the leadership of the Spirit who has already saved us.
 - d) Common problem among believers: how to get victory over sin? NOT by seeking another means of salvation. Rather, drawing on the resources of the Spirit who has already saved us.
4. 5:17,24. The conflict between flesh and Spirit, and how to resolve it.
 - a) 5:17 Our struggle
 - 1) The Spirit and the flesh have opposing desires.

- 2) They fight against one another.
- 3) The result (*contra* Burton, later scholars seem more ready to admit ecbatic usage of *ina*): we "cannot do what [we] wish." I take this to mean the same as in Rom. 7:19.
 - a> In the parallel of Rom. 7:15-18, *qelw* is used only of will to the good, though see Gal. 4:21. Jn. 1:13, "will of the flesh."
 - b> The following verse seems to present a contrast.
 - c> Lord's words in the Garden (Mat. 26:41): "the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." The general direction in the believer is a desire toward good and a constitutional weakness. The struggle is not symmetrical. Cf. 1 Pet. 4:2, contrasting men's lusts to God's will.
 - d> If the Spirit's agency here were strong enough to keep them from doing the will of the flesh, why need Paul have written this letter to them?

b) 5:24, our decision.

- 1) "Those who are Christ's"--lovely phrase. The emphasis is not that I have received him and all spiritual blessings in him (though that is true), but rather that he has received me. Cf. John 10, "those whom the Father has given me."
- 2) "have crucified"

In English, this verb is passive, and in the past tense. Leads to a puzzle.

 - a> It is certainly true that in *position*, we have been crucified with Christ, identified with him in his death: But the NT always expresses this with passives (2:20; 6:14; Rom. 6:6) or intransitives (Col. 3:3). We did not crucify ourselves. This was done to us by the HS.
 - b> But we are told to "kill" our earthly members (Col. 3:5), the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13). These are exhortations to practice. The method, presumably, is to reckon ourselves dead with Christ (Rom. 6:11), to make this fact a brilliant consciousness in our minds.

The trick here is that the verb is past, at least in English, and some believers haven't done this yet.
 - c> The tense in question is aorist, which does not necessarily emphasize time. It can be used in a general sense to express a general truth: 1 Pet. 1:24, "the grass withers, the flower fades." So here: "Christians crucify the flesh." It may not have happened with you yet, but if you are Christ's, it will happen. God will bring you to reject your old way of life. If he does not, you are not his child. If you put it off, you only

invite further suffering.

3) "affections," *paqmmasin*, but this suggests a bad sense to the word that it nowhere else has in the NT. Elsewhere, it refers to the sufferings endured by believers. So here, the emphasis is on the sufferings that the flesh causes. These "lusts" that we reject when we seek to follow the Lord are not pleasures, but sufferings.

c) Taken together, these elements show both the cause of our frustration (the inner struggle between God's Holy Spirit and our unredeemed flesh) and the step we are expected to take to deal with it (crucify the flesh; recognize that we are dead with Christ and resolve to live to please him).

5. The bottom line in 16-17, 24-25 is that the Spirit can overcome the flesh. We must crucify the flesh by reminding ourselves continually of its defeat at the cross. We must walk in line with the Spirit. These are active decisions on our part--and yet, like everything else in our salvation, we cannot do them in our own strength. Such decisions, as painful and courageous as they are, are only possible for those in whom the Holy Spirit resides.

D. Generalized Description of Conduct

So far, we have gone from a specific conflict in the believer's life (the love that one would expect, and the strife that one often sees), to the deeper underlying conflict (between the flesh and the Spirit) that causes this difference in behavior. Now we move back from cause to effect. This time, though, we look at the wider range of effects, not just love vs. strife, but the broader sweep of what the flesh does and what the Spirit does. We begin with the implications of the Spirit for the question of legalism, and then trace broader implications.

1. 5:18,23b. Freedom from law in the Spiritual regime. These elements tell how to avoid the "under law" problem previously identified in 3:23; 4:4,5,21. The law is only for an unlawful person (1 Tim. 1:8,9). If we follow the leading of the Spirit (5:18) and produce his fruit (5:23b), the law does not apply to us. It has nothing to do with us. "A vine does not produce grapes by Act of Parliament; they are the fruit of the vine's own life; so the conduct which conforms to the standard of the Kingdom is not produced by any demand, not even God's, but it is the fruit of that divine nature which God gives as the result of what he has done in and by Christ." (S.H. Hooke, cited in Bruce)

2. Catalogs of fleshly and spiritual activities
Note the contrast between "works" (emphasizing labor and individual effort) and "fruit" (produced by a natural inner life).

a) Works of the flesh: general topics of Sex, Idolatry, Strife,

and Intoxication.

1) Sex:

- a> Adultery: any sexual relation between a married person and someone not married to them. Remember Christ's admonition in Matt. 5:28 that a lustful look is adultery. Flirtation and dilly-dallying are forbidden by this just as much as complete physical union. When you married, you promised to "forsake all others and cleave only to" your spouse. Be sure you "forsake" as well as "cleave." Hugging and kissing in the church across marriage lines is not a sign of Christian love; it is a temptation to fleshly adultery.
- b> fornication *porneia*: any sexual relation not within marriage. Includes adultery, but also includes premarital relations. The Lord's instruction about lustful looks applies here, also. Rules out pornography, self-stimulation outside of marriage, fast dating.
- c> uncleanness *akagarsia*: more general still than fornication. Any kind of unlawful sexual activity, including homosexuality. And certainly nails down the sensual thoughts.
- d> lasciviousness *aselgeia*: "wantonness." Unrestrained wilfulness. People aren't restrained any longer about their sin! The unbeliever thinks that he is enjoying freedom in acting this way. In fact, he is showing a severe lack of self-control! Not restricted to sexual deviation, though in Paul it tends to be associated with such activities.

2) False Gods:

- a> Idolatry *eidwolatreaia*: Originally, worship of graven images. But Col. 3:5 includes covetousness with this. Worship of things rather than God. New car? Bigger house? Fancy computer? Latest video game? (Have I left anyone out?) Putting anything in God's place in our affections, devotion, dedicated service.
- b> witchcraft *farmakeia*: refers in antiquity first to drugs in general, then to poisoning, then to sorcerers. The link between drugs (especially mood-altering ones) and the spirit world has always been strong. Cf. the medieval alchemist. Nor has the link disappeared in our day. Cf. use of hallucinogenic drugs in Native American spirit worship. One reason to stay clear of drugs--they open you up to other spirits. For another, see the end of the list.

3) Strife:

This is the longest section, reflecting the importance of this problem in Galatia, in the form of contention in the church over the false teaching. However grave the error is, it is also a grave error to let it lead to strife and division among those who acknowledge one another to be brethren.

These terms grow progressively more specific. The first four or five describe abstract attitudes. The next three or four describe the division that results from these. Finally, "murder" is the extreme manifestation of these attitudes.

- a> hatred *exqrai*: "hostility," opposite of love, what our state toward God was before the Cross (Eph. 2:16).
Opposite of "love" in the Fruit of the Spirit.
- b> variance *eris*: wrangling, contention. Used in earlier Greek for athletic contests. Used in Paul in generally negative sense, including references to conflicts over geneological interpretation (1 Tim. 6:4; Tit. 3:9).
Opposite of "peace" in Fruit of the Spirit.
- c> emulations *zhlos*: Translated elsewhere, "zeal," which in itself is not bad (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2, where Paul exhibits it, after the example of God). "Eager desire," which shades easily into "jealousy" in our sense of the word. Adds the notion of personal interest to *eris* "variance".
- d> wrath *qumoi*: like *orghs* "anger," but more impulsive and external. Losing one's temper; public outbursts. Used of God only in Rom. 2:8, where his outward judgment is in view.
- e> strife *erigeiai*: In earlier Greek, had two meanings: "a mercenary spirit," and "seeking office." Leads to two possible meanings in the NT: "selfish ambition" (from the mercenary idea), and "party spirit" (from the political one). Either fits well here.
- f> seditions *dixostasia*: Politically, seeking to turn people away from one order to another; then the dissension that arises from such activity. This is what the Judaizers were doing in Galatia.
- g> heresies *haireseis*: not in the modern sense of a false teaching, but rather of a clique of people segregated by their distinct opinions. Cf. 1 Cor. 1, "I am of Peter, I am of Paul."
- h> Envyings *fqonoi*: Like emulation (*zhlos*), this arises from a perception that someone else is better off than we are. But the two work in opposite directions. Emulation or jealousy seeks to be as well off as the other person; envy seeks to pull him down to our own

level. Illustrated by Matt. 20:15.

i> murders *fonoï*: The ultimate form of interpersonal breakdown.

4) Intoxication

The last two focus on the abandon of rational behavior. Note that these activities, which so many in our age consider "a little innocent fun," are here condemned as sin.

a> drunkenness *meqai*: It is sinful for us to relinquish control of ourselves and our reason to any substance.

b> revellings *kwmoi*: wild parties, in Greek society often held in honor of a citizen or in the worship of a god. NB: We can be carried away with group fervor just as with wine. Both sorts of intoxication are wrong! There is no license for personal abandon!

5) and such like: This is not an exclusive list!

b) Fruit of the Spirit:

We should distinguish these from "gifts" of the Spirit. The "gifts" are restricted, limited to specific people, for special tasks or ministries. The "Fruit" is the heritage of every child of God. Recall our conclusion in our study on spiritual gifts, that the NT places much more emphasis on the Fruit than on the Gifts in terms of day to day church life.

The singular *karpos* (cf. regular use of plural, Luke 3:8, James 3:17) and the many parallels with 1 Cor. 13 show that we are to think of the one fruit as "love," with the other items being its manifestations or results.

1) love *agaph*: In Paul, almost always of man to man (2 Thes. 3:5 is only exception). Burton traces three elements: Admiration, desire to Possess, desire to Benefit. These elements are present in varying degrees in different uses of the word.

A	P	B	Reference
-	-	+	
-	+	-	
-	+	+	God's love in saving sinners
+	-	-	
+	-	+	Loving God obediently
+	+	-	Love for righteousness or things
+	+	+	Marriage love

To follow this clue out, our love for one another should lead us to regard one another positively (A), desire to be with one another (P), and seek one another's good (B).

Differs from *filew* by being more deliberate, bearing more of a moral character of choice. (NB: One can love wickedness, John 3:19).

- 2) joy *xara*: 1 Cor. 13:6, "rejoices in the truth." To be distinguished from gladness or happiness: Can coexist with suffering (cf. Philippians, which has the highest concentration of the word in the NT, written while Paul was in prison). Based on our relation with God, knowing that our sins are forgiven and that we enjoy his favor.

What does this have to do with love? Phm. 7 (cf. 20) is most direct statement. Rom. 15:32, resulting from the encouragement we bear to one another in love? Cf. 2 Cor. 1:24; 2:3, believers deriving joy from one another. 2 Cor. 7:13 makes this explicitly the result of the interaction of believers. Phil. 1:25, Paul wants to remain on earth to advance their joy. Phil. 2:2, "fulfill ye my joy." Col. 2:5, their order brings Paul joy. 1 Thes. 2:19,20, calls them his joy. 2 Tim. 1:4, seeing Timothy will bring Paul joy.

The basic insight is that we are one of the most important means for God to bring joy to other believers! Think of that the next time you are tempted to strife. Not only is it unpleasant, but it is the very opposite of what you are supposed to produce!

- 3) peace *eirhnh*: 1 Cor. 13:5, "is not easily provoked." If we truly love other believers, we will live in peace with them. 2 Cor. 13:11, God as the one who gives both love and peace to his people. This is the result; the next several characteristics give the means to this end.
- 4) longsuffering *makroqumia*: 1 Cor. 13:4, same word. "Long-tempered" as opposite of short-tempered. Patience with people (as opposed to circumstances or things). Does not act hastily. Cf. 1 Mac. 8:4, reason for Roman dominance over the world: never making peace under defeat. This is the most specific of the next three.
- 5) gentleness *xrhstoths*: 1 Cor. 13:4, same word. Mellowness, mildness, benignity, kindness. Cf. Isaac in Gen. 26:20-22. More general than *makroqumia*, which focuses on response to evil.
- 6) goodness *agaqwsunh*: 1 Cor. 13:6, "rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth." Zeal for goodness and truth; conformity with all that is "good." The word originates in biblical Greek. Globally encompassing, beyond *xrhstoths*.
- 7) faith *pistis*: 1 Cor. 13:7, "believes all things." Usually interpreted here as the (less common) passive sense of "faithfulness," but the parallel with 1 Cor. 13:7 suggests that the active meaning is entirely appropriate. Love does

not have a suspicious nature. In a world in which everybody is out to get everybody else, it takes the work of the Spirit to let us live in trust toward one another; and without this, there can be no love.

- 8) Meekness *praoths*: 1 Cor. 13:4, "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." Notice the characteristics of those in Ps. 37 who inherit the earth, foremost among them the meek (11): vv. 3,9,11,22,29,34. Meekness is a trust in God that refuses to compromise obedience for self-enrichment or self-preservation. Not = apathy or lack of courage. If we love others in Christian love, we will not function in pride or self-sufficiency, but in dependency on God; and they will not despise this dependency, but will love us for it.
- 9) temperance *egkrateia*: 1 Cor. 13:7, "endures all things." Ability to keep passions under control. 1 Cor. 9:25, applied to the athlete, who must keep the training rules, rather than giving in to his appetites. Differentiates Christian love sharply from carnal love to which one "abandons" oneself.

E. Consequences: Judgment on those Following the Flesh (21b)

1. He had warned them before of this, probably when he evangelized them. The importance of solid practical instruction to young believers. Not just doctrine, but how they should live.
2. Note that though good works cannot get us into heaven, wicked ones most definitely can keep us out. Puts the lie to "easy believism." Your fondest hopes of "eternal security" are worthless unless your life shows the results of the Spirit's work.

F. Summary:

Guide to Christian conduct. We need to understand

1. *Why* certain actions are wrong (e.g., strife, because it destroys our relation of love with others);
2. *How* to perform right actions (by crucifying the flesh);
3. *What* becomes of those who do follow the flesh (God's judgment).