Weighing Sins
(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Bible Matters sources)

Introduction:
A. Human beings have a penchant for pushing limits
   1. Higher, further, faster, better, harder
   2. Led to technological development, records broken
   3. Also led to increased access to and forms of engaging in sin
   4. Humans, who at some level believe they must avoid sin, still try to see just how close they can get to the edge
   5. Our capacity for justification and rationalization is well developed
   6. Culturally, we are skilled at redefining sinful behaviors to make them accepted and even endorsed
B. God is well aware of these tendencies
   1. Hence Gal. 5:19-21 - “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are and the like”
   2. Things similar to the works of the flesh are works of the flesh, and fall under the same condemnation

I. “THINGS LIKE THESE”
   A. Paul did not supply an exhaustive list of sins; he is not pretending every sin that could be listed is listed
      1. Sins have similar traits
      2. One cannot reduce the text to a legalistic base and justify whatever is not explicitly condemned by Paul

II. THE MEANING
   A. It means that we must use discretion
      1. Humans have always been good at coming up with new ways to sin
         a. Rom. 1:30 - “Inventors of evil things”
      2. This requires our capacity for reason and compare similar things
   B. It means that we must learn to see things the way God sees them
      1. Rom. 14:23; 2Tim. 3:16-17
      2. The Bible authorizes everything that is good
      3. If it’s not authorized in the Scriptures by either restrictive or permissive authority, it cannot be a good work
      4. If it cannot be justified by the scriptures, it is sin
      5. Therefore, while many would say that whatever is not condemned is justified, the Bible teaches us the exact opposite: whatever is not justifiable is condemned
   C. It means we must be honest with ourselves
      1. We must not allow our judgment be tainted by our desires
      2. We must be honest about our motives behind our actions
      3. Do they meet God’s standards for motives?
III. THE APPLICATION
A. Weigh the matter according to the works of the flesh and fruit of the Spirit
   1. Gal. 5:17-24
B. Substance abuse
   1. The Bible says nothing about the abuse of recreational mood and mind altering substances
   2. But Gal. 5 condemns the mood and mind altering practice of sorcery
   3. We can also see that it is against the fruit of the Spirit of self-control and goodness
   4. We therefore reason that it is wrong because it is “like these”
C. Gambling
   1. The Bible says nothing about gambling, but in view of what motivates gambling, we discern that it involves covetousness, and that according to Eph. 5:5 and Col. 3:5, covetousness is equated with idolatry
   2. Therefore, gambling is a "thing like" idolatry, and is condemned
   3. Gambling is also a violation of the principle of love
D. This discernment can be used for every practice
   1. Is it related to works of the flesh?
   2. Or does it manifest the fruit of the Spirit?
   3. If we have reason to be convicted that the Scriptures authorize the practice, we can proceed
   4. If we have no such conviction, it is sin

IV. THE GREATER CONTEXT
A. It is less about lists of good and bad deeds, and more about the fact that they represent the greater conflict going on within us, between spirit and flesh
   1. The godly desire of our spirit to do what is right
   2. The wicked desire of our flesh to satisfy its lusts
   3. The spiritual part of us must win the battle - Gal. 5:16-18
B. How shall we win?
   1. Crucifying the flesh and its passions - Gal. 5:24
   2. Fleeing from sin - 1Cor. 6:18
   3. Find the means of escaping temptation supplied by God - 1Cor. 10:13
C. It is a battle that we can overcome and win.
   1. If we set our minds to do so
   2. If we determine to no longer walk in the flesh, but walk in the spirit
   3. If we refuse to get as close to the edge of sin as we can
   4. If we remember that just because something is not explicitly condemned does not make it right
   5. If we pray continually for deliverance from temptation, as Jesus taught His apostles
   6. And if we repent every time we stumble