

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 301, 379, 309, 380

The INTROIT

(Ps.84:1-2,9-10)

P: Behold, O God, our Shield and look upon the face of Thine anointed;

C: for a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand.

P: How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!

C: My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord.

The COLLECT

Keep, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy Church with Thy perpetual mercy; and because the frailty of man without Thee cannot but fall, keep us ever by Thy help from all things hurtful and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Jeremiah 17:13-14

O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, *and* they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters. Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou *art* my praise.

The GRADUAL

(Ps.92:1-2;65:1)

P: It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord:

C: and to sing praises unto Thy name, O Most High.

P: To show forth Thy loving-kindness in the morning:

C: and Thy faithfulness every night. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: Praise waiteth for Thee, O God in Zion:

C: and unto Thee shall the vow be performed. Hallelujah!

The EPISTLE

Galatians 5:16-24

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 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.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

P: Hallelujah! O Lord, deal with Thy servant according unto Thy mercy and teach me Thy statutes. I am Thy servant, give me understanding:

C: that I may know Thy testimonies. Hallelujah!

The HOLY GOSPEL

St. Luke 17:11-19

And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up *their* voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on *his* face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

Gal 5:16 λεγω^{G3004 V-PAI-1S} δε^{G1161 CONJ} πνευματι^{G4151 N-DSN} περιπατειτε^{G4043 V-PAM-2P} και^{G2532 CONJ} επιθυμιαν^{G1939 N-ASF} σαρκος^{G4561 N-GSF} ου^{G3756 PRT-N} μη^{G3361 PRT-N} τελεσητε^{G5055 V-AAS-2P}

Gal 5:17 η^{G3588 T-NSF} γαρ^{G1063 CONJ} σαρξ^{G4561 N-NSF} επιθυμει^{G1937 V-PAI-3S} κατα^{G2596 PREP} του^{G3588 T-GSN} πνευματος^{G4151 N-GSN} το^{G3588 T-NSN} δε^{G1161 CONJ} πνευμα^{G4151 N-NSN} κατα^{G2596 PREP} της^{G3588 T-GSF} σαρκος^{G4561 N-GSF} ταυτα^{G3778 D-NPN} δε^{G1161 CONJ} αντικειται^{G480 V-PNI-3S} αλληλοις^{G240 C-DPN} ινα^{G2443 CONJ} μη^{G3361 PRT-N} α^{G3739 R-APN} αν^{G302 PRT} θελητε^{G2309 V-PAS-2P} ταυτα^{G3778 D-APN} ποιητε^{G4160 V-PAS-2P}

Gal 5:18 ει^{G1487 COND} δε^{G1161 CONJ} πνευματι^{G4151 N-DSN} αγεσθε^{G71 V-PPI-2P} ουκ^{G3756 PRT-N} εστε^{G1510 V-PAI-2P} υπο^{G5259 PREP} νομον^{G3551 N-ASM}

Galatians 5:16-24 — “In Spirit Walk”

INTRODUCTION

- I. IN SPIRIT WALK
- II. AND LUST OF FLESH YOU-ALL CANNOT COMPLETE
- III. NOW THESE ARE SET OPPOSED TO ONE ANOTHER

CONCLUSION

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 301, 379, 309, 380

Galatians 5:16-24 — “In Spirit Walk”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The Epistle reading appointed for the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity is Galatians 5:16-24:

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 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.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

Does life in this world seem hard to you? Does your life seem to be filled with struggle and conflict? Does it often seem as though your life as a Christian is not what it should be? Does it seem as though even your own body works against you? Does it seem as though your biggest fight in life is against yourself? In today’s Epistle reading the Apostle Paul speaks to this conflict very directly and powerfully.

I. IN SPIRIT WALK

Saint Paul begins this section: **“But I say: in spirit walk.”** This is a powerful contrast to the way in which our sinful nature chooses. Our natural inclination is not to walk in spirit. In fact, we ordinarily do not even acknowledge the spirit. We tend to ignore the spirit and give our attention to body and mind and heart. What our body craves and what our mind thinks and longs for and what our heart feels, these are the way in which we are inclined to walk.

The fact is that apart from the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit, our spirit is dead. This is why the Lord Jesus instructed Nicodemus that we must be regenerated or reborn before we can perceive the kingdom of God. This is why He restated the matter more clearly saying that a person cannot enter the kingdom of God unless he be regenerated by water and the Spirit. Our spirit is dead until the Holy Spirit works through the washing of regeneration and renewal. Until the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit upon our spirit is poured out upon us, our spirit is unable to do anything regarding the life that is in God’s Holy Communion. Sin has cut us off from the

life that is of God. Sin has corrupted our spirit so that it can produce nothing of the life in which God created us to live. Sin kills. The Law shows our sin and reveals our lifeless condition. But the Holy Spirit makes our spirit alive to hear the Gospel so that once again we live by grace through faith.

St. Paul's statement is for true believers only. St. Paul is not writing to unbelievers. For only those who are of Christ have been made alive again in their spirit so as to be able to walk in spirit. Apart from the regeneration that the Holy Spirit works, no one is able in spirit to walk. But for everyone who has been regenerated to the new life of a spirit that is empowered by the grace of God in Christ, walking in spirit is the way in which the person continues. The Holy Spirit sees to it. The Holy Spirit tirelessly works within the regenerated spirit of the believer to keep the person alive in spirit, alive in Christ. The Holy Spirit continually calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the entire Christian Church on earth, calling each regenerated spirit to lead the person to Christ's congregation where He feeds His body and blood to His saints to preserve them in the one true faith by which they have life in His name. He maintains the Holy Communion through this congregating that the Holy Spirit inspires. The Word of God, Jesus, is proclaimed in the congregation. The Word of God, Jesus, keeps His body, the Church, in complete unity in the life that flows from His blood. The Word of God lives within the saints, keeping them alive by the power of the Gospel, so that together we walk in spirit.

II. AND LUST OF FLESH YOU-ALL CANNOT COMPLETE

St. Paul declares the contrast more directly and powerfully as he develops this section of the Epistle. He presses onward, saying:

And lust of flesh you-all cannot complete.

As sinful children of Adam we cannot do what is right and good and holy. As sinful heirs of the sin of Adam, we by nature are corrupt and our spirit is dead to God and the true way of life. According to our sinful nature we journey according to the way of death, the way of sin. Even our best efforts, even our moments of kindness and generosity, are still sinful and selfishly motivated. Thus we hear people promoting such things as "random acts of kindness." How absurd! True acts of kindness are not random. True acts of kindness flow from continual kindness overpowering unkindness. The random acts of kindness are really nothing more than selfish acts of a person desperately trying to justify oneself.

This is not the way of one who in spirit walks. One who in spirit walks does not need to seek justification. One who in spirit walks is justified, by grace through faith. One who in spirit walks, walks according to the leading of the Holy Spirit, who has been poured out upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior in Baptism. In Baptism God declares us to be justified through the righteousness of Jesus Christ our Savior. In Baptism God sanctifies us, restoring us to the holiness of His own image in Christ. In Baptism God restores our identity, the identity that sin steals away and destroys, the identity of God's holy and beloved children. In Baptism God pours His own holy name upon us so that we are again identified with Him alone and not with the devil and way of sin and death.

As those who have been marked by God as His beloved children, as those who have been regenerated unto the life that is in Christ Jesus in His body, we walk in spirit and not according to flesh. This is not a choice that we make, but the reality of what God has accomplished for us. He has separated us from the way of sin and death to live in His grace, mercy, and peace. He has regenerated our spirit so that we now walk in spirit and not according to flesh. The regenerated

spirit is not of flesh. The flesh has its lust and the spirit has an opposite lust. The flesh longs for things of the flesh. The spirit longs for things of the spirit. The flesh longs for things of fleshly satisfaction. The spirit longs for things of spiritual satisfaction. The flesh seeks temporal satisfactions. The spirit seeks everlasting satisfactions. The flesh seeks the way that ends in death. The spirit seeks the way of life everlasting. The flesh longs for things that turn the person away from trusting God. The spirit trusts God and longs for the things that God promises.

Therefore, St. Paul reminds us that we who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit walk in spirit and cannot complete the lust of flesh. The flesh cries out for all sorts of satisfaction. But the spirit has no longing for these things and turns us away from them to receive the things that the Holy Spirit provides. Because in spirit we walk, we cannot complete the lust of flesh. Yes, the temptation arises within us. Yes, the temptation seeks to grow to become sin in our thoughts, words, and deeds. But the temptation dies because we are walking in spirit through the means of grace. Because we walk in spirit, the longings of the flesh die out, being ignored until they have no power remaining to distract us. Because we walk in spirit, what begins in flesh dies in flesh as the spirit draws near in the congregation to the means of grace to be fed and strengthened by God in His Holy Communion. What the flesh initiates cannot be completed because we walk not according to flesh but according to spirit.

III. NOW THESE ARE SET OPPOSED TO ONE ANOTHER

St. Paul spells this out for us very clearly with what he writes, saying, “**Now these are set opposed to one another.**” The flesh and the spirit are set opposed to one another. The longings of the flesh are set in opposition to the longings of the spirit and the longings of the spirit are set in opposition to the longings of the flesh.

This is not the way that God designed us. God created us to be in perfect harmony with our flesh and our spirit to be one in true communion with God and with all of humanity. But the devil tempted man to walk not in spirit, that is, not in complete and dependent faith in God’s goodness, but to seek to be selfish. The devil tempted the man to seek to be reliant upon self, to become selfish at the core of man’s being. The devil sought to establish a separation between flesh and spirit so that man would choose to walk according to the flesh, relying upon his own reason and strength rather than walking in spirit in complete and absolute reliance upon God. Adam made this complete by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, first allowing his bone of his bone and his flesh of his flesh to eat of it without even a word of opposition. This act of choosing a way that separated flesh from spirit was the end of life for mankind. For this is the very definition of death, the separation of the flesh from the spirit. What God proclaimed happened exactly as He had forewarned, “**The day that you eat of it you shall surely die!**”

But God’s desire is not that sinners should die, but that they should be turned back again to the way of life, back to the image of God, which is Christ. And so the LORD came and called out to Man to call Man to life again. The LORD called to Adam, calling him out of the darkness into the light of the truth. Adam and his wife tried to cover their sinful flesh. This is way of the flesh. We all do likewise, seeking to cover the problem rather than exposing it to be taken away. This is because we cannot take away the problem. But we insist nevertheless to try to deal with the problem according to the flesh.

The LORD has come to us to take the problem for us. For our sake He cursed the ground from which the flesh is formed. He cursed the ground so that the death that the flesh has chosen would return to the ground. The LORD Himself made Himself to be flesh so that He could take

death into His own flesh for us. Taking our sin, He took our death and died with the curse in His own flesh. He was buried with our sin, but because He is God, because He is holy, sin could not remain in His flesh but remained buried in the ground. Jesus rose in the purity of His own flesh and gives us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink so as to restore to us the purity that only His flesh and blood have. Thus He keeps us until the day that our flesh is transformed and the incorruptible is ours forevermore.

But the flesh is set opposed to the spirit. According to our flesh we resist the spirit, even to the point of calling God a liar regarding His means of grace. We turn from His means of grace back to our flesh and try to be good Christians according to the flesh. But the flesh is set opposed to the spirit. The things generated of the flesh are flesh and the things generated of the spirit are spirit. Good works of the flesh are flesh and are set opposed to the spirit. They lead away from the means of grace to selfishness. Rather than longing for the gifts of God the flesh seeks to become the giver. This is the most horrible kind of selfishness, attempting to steal God's glory for self, seeking to be God rather than God's dependent child. And this manifests itself in all the works of the flesh.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 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.

St. Paul lists these in the order that they most powerfully manifest themselves in our lives. Right at the first of the list is our sexuality. God made us to be sexual creatures, but in our corrupted flesh we pervert our sexuality so that it works against the spirit. What God gave to us as something spiritual, what God gave to us to demonstrate in our flesh the blessed communion that He established for us in His Communion, we pervert and abuse so that rather than directing our spirit to long for the things of God, instead our flesh longs for the things of self gratification. By this the communion of marriage is adulterated, taking hold even before marriage through fornication and uncleanness and lasciviousness.

But this is really nothing other than idolatry, looking for sufficiency from self through what one can acquire or accomplish for self through actions of the flesh. This idolatry shows itself through witchcraft, also called magic. But the word that St. Paul uses here is *pharmakeia*. Can you recognize it? That's right, it is the word from which we have *pharmacy*. Medication! How many ways do we today substitute the pharmacy or medication for faith in God? This is witchcraft. This is idolatry. This is trusting in the works of the flesh rather than walking in spirit. Besides sexual abuse and perversion this is likely the most prevalent manifestation of idolatry among us today.

But then, who can count the ways in which the longings of the flesh oppose the longings of the spirit? Hatred or hostility flares up in us even over something so insignificant as someone cutting us off in traffic. Variance or contention arises because we imagine that we have a right to our own opinions. And what are opinions? To opine is to express what one thinks. When we give our opinions, telling ourselves that we have the right to do so, what is this but pure expression of selfishness? How can such things lead to anything but contention? Emulations or zealous actions, these stem from our own presumptions of self-importance, imagining that we need to press ourselves and our understandings upon others. This leads to wrath or passion or indignation. Then we encounter strife. Then we see development of seditions or dissensions,

literally, double-standings, so that rather than unity there are two or more stands being taken within the congregation and plots against each separate stand. With these heresies develop, which are literally “takings for oneself” or “choices.” A heresy is a choice or preference in what one holds to be doctrine. A heresy is taking doctrine so as to shape it according to what one determines according to one’s own reason. Then there are the more individualistic works of the flesh of enyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like. Of all of these the apostle says:

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.

Those who have been regenerated to be of Christ do not walk according to the flesh. When they realize that they have acted in accord with the flesh in opposition to the longings of the spirit, they repent and receive God’s forgiveness. This is the way of those who in spirit walk. They do not continue in the works of the flesh, but are turned back again to walk in spirit, which means to rely upon the work of God rather than their own works. This is what God does for us in our spirit by the continual work of His Holy Spirit through the means of grace.

CONCLUSION

The sum of what St. Paul is teaching us is that walking in spirit is equal to repentance unto forgiveness. Walking in spirit is not what we choose to do, but what God has chosen for us and has given to us. Walking in spirit is the opposite of walking according to flesh. According to our flesh we seek to do for ourselves. According to our regenerated spirit we trust what God has done and continues to do for us. Repentance is the work that God does through the means of grace to bring us back into this walking in spirit. We do not turn ourselves from the works of the flesh through works of the flesh. God is the one who turns us from our works of the flesh by regenerating our spirit and preserving us in the new life that He generates in us. In this connection we need to consider what it means that God works in us the repentance unto forgiveness. We need to understand what forgiveness really is. Forgiveness is more than merely saying to us that our sins are no longer counted against us by God. When God forgives us, He actually takes our sin for us. He actually takes our sin so that we are set free from it. He not only sets us free from the consequences of our sin, but He actually sets us free from the sin itself so that sin has no further power over us. He sets us free not only from the guilt and the shame, but even more importantly, He sets us free from the rule of sin over us. When God forgives us, He gives to us the new life that Christ purchased for us with His suffering and death and guaranteed for us with His resurrection. God not only sets us free from the punishment and condemnation and consequences of sin, but He sets us free to live in the holiness that sin has stolen from us. He sets us free to live as His pure and holy children again. This is why Jesus established for us the cup of the New Testament in His blood. As we partake together of this blessed gift we receive again and again the life that is in His blood, the life of holiness and purity that only His blood can provide. God gives us faith and through that faith His grace is given to us. But for our sake He continues to call us to the holy Supper to forgive us what we need to continue in that faith and truly to live as those who in spirit walk. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.