

Saint Thomas” and Saint Thomas’ Church of the Air
 Fourteen Sunday after Trinity
 September 6, 2026
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Walk in the Spirit
 And ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh

With this week’s Epistle, the Trinity Season Survey of Essential
 Christian Doctrine
 presents the question: “How is a Christian to live this life?”

St Paul has been banging away on this topic now for a few weeks
 And we can no longer put it off.
 It’s important; if a little uncomfortable.
 So, let’s consider it.

Paul makes the point that the Jewish law was powerless to make us
 Righteous,
 Or to put our hearts and souls
 into the required condition for salvation.
 The law only defined behavior.
 Paul is qualified to write about the Jewish Law
 And how it effected lives.
 Remember, he was well educated in the rabbinical school
 Of Gamaliel in Jerusalem
 And for many years in his earlier life
 Paul was a devout and practicing Pharisee.

So Paul writes that obedience to the law could preserve people
 from committing
 Those grosser sins he calls works of the flesh;
 But obedience could not produce those interior
 Fruits of the spirit
 Necessary for salvation.
 He asserts that the two things are contrary to each other.

Let's follow Paul as he takes us on a deeper dive.

He observes that we humans have an inborn tendency
Or natural desire to sinful behavior that he calls
The "lust of the flesh";

To our 21st Century ears that sounds like things
Concerning sex and our bodies.

But Paul uses the term "flesh" in a broader sense;
To include all those activities
that by our nature, we are lead
to yearn for or drift toward.

The important point is that if we fall victim to the lusts of the flesh
We cannot achieve eternity with God.

He notes that those abuses are opposed by the Spirit of God:
The Holy Spirit.

The two war against each other throughout our lives.

He calls them contrary to each other.

The life we lead in response to our sinful nature

Juxtaposed by the life we lead in the Spirit of God.

When he wrote his Epistle, Paul was dealing with pagan practices
in Galatia.

But he might as well have been pointing to us today.

The more our society drifts away from Christianity
And we remove God from the public square, schools,
Our customs and practices

The closer we become to the
Pagan world that Paul was battling.

Just in case we didn't get it

And To make things more clear

Paul recites one of those lists of the things he has observed
Or heard about, that people in Galatia
Were doing that ruined their lives.

He has had similar concerns for other congregations that he planted
 And has sent letters containing similar lists
 To the Corinthians and the Romans.

Paul classifies this list of the flesh in Greek as “sarx”.
 Literally meaning human flesh
 Those practices he has seen in the pagans
 For which he is so worried would harm his people.

There are 17 of them here.

The first four deal with the abuse and improper deviations
 And excesses of sexual intercourse
 The activities that we first associated with fleshly lust.
 Something so important
 that Paul did not shy away from writing about them.
 Adultery, fornication and uncleanness and lasciviousness.

The next two (idolatry and witchcraft) concern ritual sins.

Idolatry is not only the worship of graven idols
 and things made by hands of man,

But idolatry occurs

where one’s chief affections are on objects
 or persons other than God.

Witchcraft is sorcery:

tampering with the powers of evil;
 dabbling in the occult.

Both of these two are closely linked in Old Testament times to
 pagan religious practices.

The next nine deal with our societal lives and how we interact with
 each other.

Most of them are obvious and need no discussion here
 but four of them are words
 with meanings no longer used today
 and I must explain them.

Variance refers to causing discord among people.
 Purposefully creating divisions to diminish
 trust among people.

Emulations we could call jealousy today.

Strife is self-ambition or a contentious temper.

And seditions are causing dissention among people.

The final two concern the abuse of alcohol.

These then are the sins of the flesh into which we are led;
 The sins of the natural life.

These 17 vices manifest the life we would have
 if we were lead only by our nature.
 Pretty horrible.
 You can understand why Paul is so worried about his people.

He then contrasts the lusts of the flesh with the “fruit of the Spirit”
 for which he uses the Greek term “pneuma”.
 A life led in the fruits of the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost.
 By and large the pneuma are self evident;
 Love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith.
 But there are three that bear some explanation;

Where the 1611 translators gave us “longsuffering”
 In today’s language we might say patience with others.

Meekness today would be more akin to courtesy and consideration
 for others.

Temperance would be self-control.

Paul, having outlined two ways of life
 One driven by the lusts of the flesh: “sarx” in Greek
 And the other by the fruits of the Holy Spirit:
 “pneuma” in Greek;
 Paul now puts them in motion.

He observes that the fleshly life lusts against the Spirit
 And the Spirit against the flesh.
 The two are contrary,
 the one against the other.

He next observes that if we are led by the Spirit
 We are not under the law.
 For the law has nothing to say about the life in the Spirit.
 We are free of the law.

Those who are Christ’s live in the Spirit
 Here Paul uses the word “crucified”.
 He says that those of Christ have crucified
 Their life of fleshly lusts, with its passions and desires.
 Those who belong to Jesus have sacrificed
 Their natural tendencies toward the fleshly life
 And instead, live a life of love, joy, peace
 And the other fruits of the Spirit.

So now, perhaps we can answer the question we posed at the
 opening a moment ago:

How should a Christian live this life?

And now, perhaps the answer, given by Paul at the beginning of
 today’s Epistle makes imminent sense:

Walk in the Spirit
 And ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh

Walk in the Spirit and know the joys of this Christian Life.

Walk in the Spirit and know Jesus.

Walk in the Spirit and know God.

Walk in the Spirit and know eternity.