

(Galatians 5:16-25, NIV84)

"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

Each of us has a sinful nature -- an old Adam -- that serves as a willing participant of the devil and a constant adversary to our daily walk with Jesus. An old friend of mine used to joke that he was going to "work his old Adam to death." That truly is laughable, because the more we "work" our old Adam the stronger it becomes. The only way to "crucify the sinful nature with its passions and desires," is to daily be led by the Spirit.

We don't want to give in to the old Adam, because if we give it an inch it will take a mile. Instead, through daily prayer and meditation on God's word, we ask for God's help and arm ourselves for the ongoing battle that rages within us.

We can't simply reform our old Adam, we have to kill it -- crucify it -- or as Luther said, "the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death." This drowning of the old Adam is done in the daily remembrance of our baptism. But we don't only get rid of the "old," we also live the "new." Luther said, "It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever." This is what it means to "live by the Spirit."

Don't be afraid; we are not alone in this struggle. Jesus is with us to comfort and defend us and by God's word the Spirit strengthens and equips us and instills in us an undying willingness to go to battle daily against our old Adam and to live a life that glorifies our heavenly Father.

Living anew with you in Christ,  
Pastor Golm

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June 2

Living in the Spirit

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:25

We know that certain climates are more conducive to good health than others. For persons who are afflicted with lung diseases, for instance, the high altitude of Colorado or the warm, dry air of Arizona are the climates most likely to bring recovery.

There is also such a thing as a spiritual climate—a climate which will insure the health of our souls and the vigor of our spiritual lives. The Bible tells us that we are to "live in the Spirit". We are to live and move and have our being in the things of God—his Word, his Sacraments, his Church. We are to cultivate and to maintain a close association with those established ordinances through which his Holy Spirit can operate within our lives. There we shall find the most healthful climate for our souls.

But this health of soul is to show itself in vigorous, energetic action. "If we live in the Spirit", says St. Paul, "let us also walk in the Spirit." And walking in the Spirit means spiritual exercise—the exercise of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" -- the very virtues of which we have spoken in our previous meditations.

Have we been living in the Spirit? Have we devoted ourselves to daily prayer and meditation on his Word? And if so, have we also been walking in the Spirit—by deeds of daily Christian virtue?

Remember, our friends cannot see the Spirit who occupies our hearts. They will recognize his presence only as we permit his presence: to become visible in our attitudes and conduct. Are we permitting his inner presence to become evident in our lives?

O Holy Spirit, enter in, And in our hearts Thy work begin! Amen.