

Text: Gal. 5:16-18, 22-26

Title: Be filled with the Spirit: the power of the love of the
justified

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Place: NBBC

Introduction: Hawaii had a senator for many years named Dan Inouye (who was sadly very liberal, by the way). I remember him whenever I read Gal. 5:16, because his name sounds just like the way I was taught to translate the Greek of this verse into English. The verse promises a tremendous victory: "you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." One of the neat things about that promise is the word *not*. It is actually a double negative in the original, and for the Greeks that gives the negative greater emphasis. We were taught to translate the verse to reflect that emphasis as, "If you walk in the Spirit, you shall *in no way* fulfill the lusts of the flesh," and that translation of the word *not* sounds very much like the name *Inouye*.

When Dan Inouye was first sworn into Congress and asked to raise his right hand, he raised his left instead, because his right arm was missing. As a 17-year old, Inouye witnessed the destruction of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. When he was 18, he joined the "Go for Broke" army regiment that was made up of exclusively Japanese Americans.

His website said this about his service in WW2: "Back in Italy as the war was drawing to a close, Inouye displayed 'extraordinary heroism' on April 21, 1945, near San Terenzo as he led his platoon through 'formidable resistance' to capture a key ridge. His Medal of Honor Citation states in part: 'With complete disregard for his personal safety, Second Lieutenant Inouye crawled up the treacherous slope to within five yards of the nearest machine gun and hurled

two grenades, destroying the emplacement. Before the enemy could retaliate, he stood up and neutralized a second machine gun nest. Although wounded by a sniper's bullet, he continued to engage other hostile positions at close range until an exploding grenade shattered his right arm. Despite the intense pain, he refused evacuation and continued to direct his platoon until enemy resistance was broken and his men were again deployed in defensive positions'" (inouye.senate.gov).

I get some goosebumps when I read of this patriot's unwillingness to surrender to the enemy. His attitude matched the pronunciation of his unique name: "In No Way" would he surrender.

Application: That is the attitude Paul has when it comes to our war with the enemy we face, which the Bible calls our flesh. We saw last week that serving the flesh is the opposite of the love of the justified. The flesh is that part of our spirit and body that tempts us to pollute our existence with the evils of verses 19-21, the works of the flesh. Our flesh is selfish, and it offers us a false sense of freedom that is actually the path to our own self-destruction and ruin.

Do we have to surrender to the flesh? Paul's answer is, "In no way!" So how do we win this battle? Well, the answer to that question provided by the verse is pretty clear and simple - "walk in the Spirit".

But what does that mean? How do we do that? I want us to think about three things from this passage that are important when it comes to walking in the Spirit this morning, so that we can say, "In no way," when it comes to the temptations of our sinful flesh.

I. Time of possession is important when it comes to walking in the Spirit (v. 16, "Be walking").

Illustration: Time of possession is a very important statistic in a number of sports. Football is like that. The team that has their offence on the field in possession of the ball for the greatest amount of time is most likely to win the game. Soccer is like that too. If your soccer team can keep possession of the ball and keep the ball on your opponent's side of the field, you are probably going to win that game. In hockey, the key is to keep the puck in the right zone, for then your chances of scoring a goal increase.

Application: The idea of time of possession is in this command to walk in the Spirit. It is a present tense command, so it means that Paul is telling us to be walking in the Spirit or to do this in a continual way. So this is not something we can do just one time years ago and consider ourselves set. We have to maintain possession of the ball. We have to stay on offense. We have to continually walk in the Spirit - day and night, alone and with others, in church or at home.

Now whatever walking in the Spirit continually means, the Galatians were having trouble with it, and their trouble is described especially in verse 7. There we find that walking in the Spirit may be described as running well, and to run well is to obey the God's truth unhindered. To stop obeying God's truth is to stop running well, which is to stop walking in the Spirit.

The truth that Paul refers to here is the Word of God, which comes from God's Spirit, who is its Author. God's Word is not only truth from the Holy Spirit, it is His dynamic power. God used His Word to create the universe. It has great power.

So the key to walking in the Spirit is resisting the influences of falsehood that hinder God's truth from reaching us with its direction and power. Walking in the Spirit requires spending time being influenced by God's Word.

The blessings of walking in the Spirit is the blessedness described by the first Psalm (Ps. 1:1-3). Note how both that Psalm and our passage speak of the fruitfulness of a man blessed this way. To walk in the Spirit continually is very closely related to resisting ungodly, sinful, and scornful influences, and to delighting in God's Word day and night.

So to be walking in the Spirit, learn to love to read your Bible like you love watching sports, playing video games, or enjoying a good movie. Begin your day reading a passage and getting on your knees to discuss that passage with the Lord. In prayer ask the Holy Spirit to show you what to do that day and to give you the power to do it, and you will be well on your way to spending a day walking in the Spirit and in no way fulfilling the desires of the flesh. Get that good start on time of possession.

When it comes to walking in the Spirit continually, time of possession is related to time in God's Word.

II. Do-overs are important when it comes to walking in the Spirit (vv. 17-18, 24).

Application: In this passage Paul recognizes that this war against our flesh is not always going to go well (v. 17b). This recognition is something he mentions in greater detail in Rom. 7:15-25, a passage that sets up his discussion for the role of the Holy Spirit's power in the life of the believer in chapter 8. The issue is that our flesh causes us at times to fail to do what we want to do as regenerated sinners, and to do what we know we should not do.

But in our passage Paul counters that fact by saying that when we do fall to the flesh, we are not under the law (v. 18). We are not under the law, even when the flesh wins, because of what verse 24 mentions – our flesh with its affections and lusts was crucified with Christ. Our Savior was already punished on the cross for everything that my flesh produces, past, present, and future, so I get all the do-overs I need to get walking in the Spirit right again in any area of my life.

Those do-overs work the way 1 John 1:9 tells us they do: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Do you see the power of this resource this morning? In our battle with the flesh, we can rise up again from each and every defeat. It almost makes you feel sorry for an enemy that has to oppose us when we have that kind of power in this battle.

So why then is the Spirit quenched and grieved in the lives of many believers? Why do we not avail ourselves of this great victory that confession of sin can bring? Delay no longer. Rise up again against the flesh and enjoy the new victory that is ours for the taking each time we fail. Do that often enough, and the failures will become more rare over time until complete victory in that area of your struggle with the flesh is finally won. Do-overs are an important part of walking in the Spirit.

III. Fruit-inspection is important when it comes to walking in the Spirit (vv. 22-23, 25-26).

Illustration: The battle of the trenches is important in football. That battle is one that sets the defensive line against the offensive line. These are the biggest and strongest guys on the team, and they line up nose to nose waiting for the ball to be snapped so that they can demolish one another.

Sometimes an offside penalty is called on one of the players who comes off his line before the ball is snapped.

Application: The word Paul uses in verse 25 translated *let us walk* is actually different from the word in the original command of verse 16 – *be walking* in the Spirit. It is a word that means *to line up correctly with* something. Paul urges believers here who live in the Spirit because they are born again also to line up with the Spirit in a practical way in their lives.

That means that we need to take an honest look at our lives and see whether what we see there better matches vv. 22-23 or something like verse 26. If what we see in ourselves lacks the fruit of the Spirit and includes the pollutions of the flesh, we are not walking in the Spirit. What do we do then? Well, we walk in the Spirit. How? Remember points 1 and 2. We confess our sins, and we get back into the Word.

Where do we line up this morning? Have you born the fruit this past week of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance? Or have you born the fruit of the works of the flesh, the vainglory and pride of verse 26, the disunity and disagreeableness of that chapter. On what side of the ball do we line up? Once we answer that question correctly and honestly, we will know whether we have walked in the Spirit, claiming the wonderful promise that we will in no way fulfill the lusts of the flesh, through His power and not our own.

Conclusion: How about today and in the week to come? Are we going to fulfill the lusts of the flesh today? Do we see that our answer can be, "In no way!" This is the promise of God, who never lies.

We can determine to be in the Scripture today and to resist influences that pull us away from its truth. And when we need to, we can ask for the mercy we need to do a do-over. God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We need not continue to quench and grieve the Spirit. He can forgive us.

Time in God's Word, confession of sin, and honest fruit-inspection—"Walk in the Spirit, and you will in no way fulfill the lust of the flesh." Count on it.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching