

**THE HOLY SPIRIT WANTS TO FILL YOU. (Part 2)****GALATIANS 5:13-18**

The first home I ever owned had a rather odd looking tree right on the back property line. I still don't know what kind of tree it was, but I discovered very quickly what was growing up around it. Poison ivy – a very thick, lush vine. The vine had twisted itself around the trunk of the tree and it had grown up into its branches so that it was hard to distinguish what was the tree and what was the poison ivy vine. I knew the vine had to go, but I was told the best way to get rid of it safely was in stages. Late one fall, I hacked out a six inch section of the vine close to the base of the tree. Then I left those ivy branches all twisted around up in the tree to die off during the winter months. Come spring I pulled out the dead ivy branches and very carefully disposed of them. I congratulated myself for so competently getting rid of the great poison ivy curse. Later that same spring, I happily planted some bushes on either side of the tree. Two days later I came down with the worst case of poison ivy known to mankind! I was a total mess! You see, when I planted those bushes, I had unknowingly handled the underground roots of the poison ivy vine. Those roots were still very much alive and, in fact, contained some of the most potent poison the plant had to offer!

When you first become a follower of Jesus, you're a bit like that tree being slowly but surely choked out by a poisonous vine the Bible calls sin. When you receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord, it's like the Holy Spirit hacks away and destroys the power of sin to send you to Hell for all eternity. He pulls out a lot of spiritually dead stuff from your life. But like those poison ivy roots below the surface of the ground, sin still has this enormous power in your life and mine. Sin is still very much there underneath the surface of our lives, just waiting to inflict its misery on us. No, it can't kill you anymore spiritually, but it can sure make trying to follow Jesus miserable. Learning how to control our sinful nature – and not allowing that nature to control us – is an important part of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

We're in the midst of a series of messages about the Holy Spirit: "Invasion From Above: Why the Holy Spirit Matters." A quick review. The Holy Spirit is a Person. He's God. He's the third member of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son or Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit – three Persons who make up the one God of the universe. The Holy Spirit wants to baptize you which means He wants to indwell you forever. That happens the moment you put your faith or trust in Jesus. Every Christian is baptized into or by the Holy Spirit, but not every Christian is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Back on Mother's Day, we learned that to be filled with the Spirit means to be fully under His influence. We're effectively controlled by Him so that our minds, attitudes, behavior, and thoughts are pretty much dominated by the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit baptizes you, He becomes resident in your life. But when the Holy Spirit fills you with Himself, He becomes President of your life. I'd like us to think more about what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This is part 2. Part 1 was back on Mother's Day.

Let's read our text for today. Paul, the great Christian leader, founded the church in Galatia and then left it to start other churches. Apparently, there was some kind of internal conflict going on at the church. That's why Paul encouraged these folk to live by the Spirit and to be led by the Spirit. Let's reflect today on what it means to live by the Spirit, because at the end of the day it means to be filled with the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit means to live by the Spirit. Sometimes the best way to understand something is to understand what it's not. To better understand what Paul meant to be filled with the Holy Spirit – or to be led by or to live by the Spirit – let's think together about what it means NOT to be filled by the Spirit. For example ...

### **DON'T GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

Remember the comedian, Flip Wilson? He got lots of laughs by saying, "The devil made me do it!" People realized you just can't blame every negative thing you say or do on an evil, supernatural being. The fact remains each of us has something inside of us that's opposed to God and just loves to do what's wrong. The literal Greek word in the New Testament means "flesh", but it often gets translated into English as "sinful nature." What's the flesh? Well, it's not your skin or even any part of your body. Someone's suggested if you drop the last letter off the word "flesh" – the "h" – and spell it backwards, you'll discover the essential meaning of what the Bible means by the "flesh": namely "self." The flesh is all about the self. Now, by using the word "self" in that way, we mean being selfish, self-centered, or self-promoting. But, a person who is ruled by the self can be moral, do good things, and have high ethical standards. You can be very respectable and thoroughly selfish all at the same time. You can educate the self, train the self, discipline the self; nevertheless, the Bible says the self is absolutely opposed to God's control. It can't obey God. "For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will." (Rom. 8:7 NLT)

Back in Galatians 5, Paul provided a few examples of what the flesh looks like – how the sinful nature manifests itself in people's lives. He mentions – "... sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these." (Gal. 5:19-21 NLT) And that's not a complete list by any means! It's just a sample. Here's the point. When you allow your life to be dominated or controlled by your sinful nature, you will grieve the Holy Spirit of God. It's inevitable.

The Bible says, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Eph. 4:30 NIV) That word – "grieve" – is a love word. Meaning what? You can only ever grieve someone who loves you. You can make just about anyone dislike, hate you, despise you, or resent you. But when you hurt someone who loves you, you sadden or disappoint that person. You cause them sorrow. You can only grieve someone who loves you. When Paul told us not to grieve the Holy Spirit, he meant don't offend, sadden, or disappoint Someone who loves you more than anyone else on the planet – the Holy Spirit Himself.

How can I grieve the Holy Spirit? In the Bible, He's called the Spirit of truth. When you lie or when you're deceitful, you will cause the Holy Spirit sorrow. He's also called the Spirit of faith. So when you fail to trust the Lord and let unbelief rule your life, you grieve the Holy Spirit. He's also called the Spirit of grace. When you allow yourself to get all bitter, hard, unforgiving, and unloving toward God or other people, you grieve the Holy Spirit. He's called the Spirit of holiness in Scripture. When you let unconfessed sin pile up within you or you tolerate, excuse, or rationalize away attitudes and behavior that can't possibly please God, you grieve the Holy Spirit.

Paul reminded us a healthy Christian life will always be full of personal and inner struggles of one kind or another. "The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions." (Gal. 5:17 NLT) Within you and me are two natures that make war against each other: the old, sinful nature we got at our physical birth and the new, spiritual nature we received when we were born again spiritually. Each nature wants to control or dominate the other one. When a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, he or she is continually and constantly allowing the new, spiritual nature to defeat the old, sinful nature.

Now right here is where many followers of Jesus get confused. The fact you have this inner struggle going on isn't a sign you're failing spiritually. Not at all. In fact, quite the opposite! It simply means the Holy Spirit is really present in your life and has committed Himself to the task of making you like Jesus. When the Holy Spirit starts His work in your life and mine, He shines His light into the dark areas inside of us. Then He will give you the desire to get rid of all the spiritual trash that's accumulated in your life over the years. Those attitudes and behaviors were there all along, but they just didn't seem all that bad until the Holy Spirit showed up!

If you're feeling disappointed in yourself this morning, or amazed at how spiritually weak you are, or ashamed at what God has revealed in those dark corners of your heart and mind, or you're feeling powerless to do much of anything about it, you should actually praise God. That's right, praise God! The fact you recognize any and all of that spiritual junk inside of you for exactly what it is – spiritual trash - is evidence the Holy Spirit is alive and well within you. Despair isn't a happy feeling. But there is a healthy kind of despair. Until and unless the Holy Spirit brings us to a place of utmost despair over the vast distance between ourselves and an absolutely holy God, we'll never experience what it means to be filled with the Spirit, or to live by the Spirit, or to be led by the Spirit.

So, if you want to be filled with the Spirit, get ready for a big fight... with yourself! There's a story about an Eskimo fisherman who came into town every Saturday afternoon. He always brought his two dogs with him – a black dog and a white dog. He'd taught them to fight each other on command. Every Saturday afternoon in the town square, the people would gather and these two dogs would fight while the onlookers took bets on who would win. One Saturday, the black dog won, but the next

Saturday, the white dog might win instead. Either way, however, the Eskimo always won! His friends asked him how he managed to always pick the winning dog. He said, "Well, I starve one dog and feed the other one. The one I feed all week long always wins on Saturday because he's stronger." There are two natures within each of us struggling for control of our lives. Which one is going to win? It depends on which one you feed. If you feed your spiritual life daily and allow the Holy Spirit to empower you, He will control you. But if you feed your old, sinful nature – the flesh – it will dominate.

This inner, daily struggle can be a place of real discouragement for many followers of Jesus. It's easy to assume all of our spiritual battles will be over and done with once we put our trust in Jesus. But, the fact is that's actually when they begin! We used to just give in and allow our old, sinful nature free reign over our lives. But now with the Holy Spirit living in us, we're starting to resist and fight against its domination. Don't get down on yourself. Don't see yourself as some kind of spiritual failure because you don't always resist the temptation to give into that old, sinful nature. Learn to see yourself from God's perspective instead of from your own perspective.

I heard about a man who purchased the ruins of an old mansion on one of the islands in the Caribbean. It had once been a fabulous house, but now scraps of lumber lay everywhere and the roof leaked badly. But to the man who bought this wreck of a home, it was special. He loved that old house. Even in its rundown condition. Why? Because he was already able to see it as it was going to be someday. Beautiful. Restored. Perfect. In the meantime, he was working on it with his limited resources, his ingenuity, and his love. The Holy Spirit, in a far greater way, sees you and me today as we will be in the future. Beautiful. Restored. Perfect. He's working on us with His unlimited resources, all of His power, and all of His love. When we're filled with the Holy Spirit, it means we avoid grieving Him in any way. But it also means NOT doing something else, too ...

### **DON'T QUENCH THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

The Bible says, "Do not quench the Spirit." (1 Th. 5:19 NIV) Another translation says, "Do not stifle the Holy Spirit." (1 Th. 5:19 NLT) There are many metaphors or word pictures of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. He's compared to wind, water coming out of a spring, a dove, and also a fire – fire that purges and purifies the hearts of God's people. That's probably what Paul had in mind when he used the word "quench" in a letter he wrote to Christians living in the city of Thessalonica.

To quench means to put out or to put a damper on a fire. You can put out a fire in at least two ways. You can extinguish it by throwing water or dirt on top of it or even smothering it with a blanket. The passage we read back there in Galatians 5 says, "For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love." (Gal. 5:13 NLT) We can put out the fire of the Holy Spirit by just letting the old, sinful nature inside of us have its way. Just allowing it keep on controlling our lives.

Moreover, freedom doesn't mean we just live any way we want to live. If you're living by the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, and being filled with the Spirit, your attitudes and behavior are going to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Freedom in Jesus isn't about being free to go out and commit more sin. No, this is freedom NOT to displease God anymore. Before Jesus, we had little choice. Sin was our master. Now, because the Holy Spirit lives in us, we have a choice. Now we can please Him, not grieve Him. Now, we can fan into a flame His love and power, not quench or stifle Him.

But God's people in Galatia were struggling with another issue. Legalism. That's another way to quench the Holy Spirit. Legalism happens when you reduce a relationship with Jesus just to keeping rules and observing codes of conduct. I'm not referring to the clear rules in the Bible itself like the Ten Commandments, for example. No, instead I'm talking about all the other "do's and don'ts" we add that the Bible never mentions. Some Christians have more rules than the Bible does! Legalism has an unpleasant spiritual odor. It "smells" like spiritual pride. It "smells" like needing to feel superior to others. It "smells" like making following Jesus something you measure and achieve by your personal effort. Nothing puts out the fire of the Holy Spirit – quenches Him – quicker than spiritual pride or legalism. Nothing destroys Holy Spirit-filled joy more quickly than trying to keep rules and regulations God never asked you to keep.

You can put out a fire by extinguishing it. You can also put out a fire by simply removing its supply of fuel. It's said one reason forest fires are such a problem out West is a failure to remove all the thick, dry underbrush that fuels those fires. Is there a kind of spiritual fuel that keeps the fire of the Holy Spirit burning brightly in your life? Yes, indeed, there is. Spirit-filled followers of Jesus have learned the importance of regular, personal devotional time with God. It's often referred to as a quiet time. It's something we stress in our discipleship triads here at KRBC. Time spent with just you and God meditating on Scripture and praying. It's not some legalistic requirement. God's not going to love you more or less based on whether you observe a quiet time. But it is a way to keep the fire of the Holy Spirit burning in your life and mine.

Brother Lawrence, a French Roman Catholic monk back in the 1600s, wrote a little book that's become a spiritual classic. It's called "The Practice of the Presence of God." In that book, Lawrence made this observation, "We cannot avoid the dangers and the reefs of which this life is full, without the real and constant help of God. Let us ask Him for it without ceasing. But how can we ask Him without often thinking of Him? And how can we be with Him without often thinking of Him? And how can we often think of Him without the holy habit of doing so?" A holy habit. You simply can't keep a fire going without fuel of some kind. If you're going to be filled with the Holy Spirit day after day over the long haul of life, you will feed a hunger for more of God's Word and a thirst for prayer. Pretty simple. That's one way you and I get and stay full of the Holy Spirit.

I believe Paul mentioned another kind of spiritual fuel: giving ourselves away to other people in the name of Jesus. "For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your

freedom to serve one another in love." (Gal. 5:13 NLT) I'm always impressed when I meet a follower of Jesus with a rich, deep devotional life. You can just tell they're on speaking terms with the Almighty every day. I'm impressed when I meet a follower of Jesus who has a spectacular spiritual gift he or she uses to give God glory and build up Jesus' Church. But nothing impresses me more than a follower of Jesus who just routinely and sacrificially finds ways to be a blessing in the lives of others. Other people will love being around you because you're all about serving them! No, God doesn't expect us to do everything. But He does expect us to respond when He sends an opportunity our way to touch someone else's life with His love and grace. When you make the most of those opportunities – that fuels the fire of the Holy Spirit's power and presence in your life. You will be filled with the Holy Spirit.

When you visit the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., you should stop and be amazed by a world famous sculpture: a huge head of Abraham Lincoln made by a man named Gutzon Borglum. He's also famous for carving the four Presidents at Mount Rushmore. One day when Borglum was hard at work on the Lincoln head, he was interrupted by a family who came to visit his studio. The face of Lincoln was beginning to emerge on one side of the massive block of stone set there on the floor of the studio. While the two parents were visiting with Borglum, their five year old daughter gazed in wonder at the giant features of Lincoln's face. After a few minutes of intensive study, the little girl scurried over to Borglum. She tugged at his pant leg and asked him, "Is that Abraham Lincoln?" The famous sculptor answered, "Yes, it is." The little girl then asked him, "But how did you know he was inside there?"

If you're a follower of Jesus, there's an image inside of you that is far more imposing and grand than Abraham Lincoln. The image is of Jesus – His character, His greatness, His goodness. That's the shape your life and mine is intended and meant to resemble. Now, it's true, the image of God in you and me has been marred, broken, and obscured. Just because we became followers of Jesus doesn't mean that image gets restored immediately. Our rough edges can still be very rough. But God, through His Holy Spirit, dwells in your spirit. The fact is the image of God can emerge a bit more in your life every day if you will co-operate with the Holy Spirit. And when you co-operate fully with the Holy Spirit, you get filled by Him and you get filled with Him.