

Nothing but the Blood (Part 19)

Galatians 6:1-6

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We look to Galatians 6: 1-6 where Paul addresses the importance of community in Christ and why it's needed. Back tracking a bit to the previous chapter, Paul discusses what it means to be freed by the blood of Christ. At the time, the Galatians might've been tempted by influencers to fall back on old habits of obligation to obtain God's favor; but because of the blood of Christ, that obligation was and still is no longer necessary. So, what does it mean to be free? Are we completely free to do whatever we want? Not entirely. Yes, we are free from our old chains by the blood of Christ, but we are to be slaves to one another.

In Galatians 6:1, Paul begins with our obligation in keeping each other on track with our faith. Of the two reasons that typically draw brothers and sisters away from the faith, one of them is temptation. Temptation, with its shiny allure and ability to fill voids, can easily pull the faithful away if it goes unchecked. A modern example of this would be dating a non-believer. Technically speaking, dating a non-believer isn't wrong when looking to the Bible for answers because dating didn't exist. Standard practice, at the time, was to simply choose the women they wanted and go straight for marriage; no trial "dating" period allowed. However, given today's day and age, it goes without saying that dating a non-believer can easily lead a fellow believer to become side tracked as temptation slowly lures them away from spending time with God and their Christian community. That's not to say that non-believers are bad, it's just that they don't understand the importance of staying in step with Christ. It is during these situations when we are responsible to hold our fellow brothers and sisters accountable with staying on track with their faith. At the same time, we must guard ourselves from being drawn out too when reaching out to bring our fellow believer back to the faith.

On the other hand, when it isn't temptation drawing the faithful away it's hardship. In verse 2, Paul touches on the other cause that typically causes people to fall away from the body. Paul says that we are not only called to hold each other accountable, we are called to carry each other's burdens and support one another in the face of difficulty; it is during difficulties when it's all too easy to turn away from God when it feels like prayers are going unanswered. For our primarily Chinese congregation where the cultural habit leans towards being reserved, being vulnerable can be difficult; especially when the subject falls on hardship. How then can we share

each other's burdens if we are not being allowed to mourn with one another? In order to fulfill the laws of Christ, we must be proactive in lightening the load of a fellow believer while being willing to share our burden with those who are trying to support us.

When it comes to the actions of the community and staying on track, Jesus and Paul were on the same page. In Matthew 13, Jesus teaches the Parable of the Sower; in this story, seeds are sown into various locations and they either die off or thrive depending on their circumstance. This passage is all about staying on track with the metaphor pointing to the individuals whose faith dies because there is no root for them to withstand trouble or because their faith is choked by weed-like concerns over worldly things, whereas the faith that flourishes belongs to the one who hears the words and understands it. Just like Jesus, Paul warns of the ways in which Satan draws us away from our faith through temptation and hardship.

Moving onto verses 3-5, Paul flips the subject of his discussion from the community to the individual. Here, he speaks directly to those who feel themselves better than the rest and therefore feel like they don't need to be part of the body; to those, Paul says "you're kidding yourself." This type of arrogance has no place in the body because no one is better than the other. God does not and will not compare when He judges you. He does not require the same amount of works from everyone nor is there a mold that He expects us to fit into. When the day comes when you stand before God, you will stand alone as He judges you and you only on what you've done with the gifts He has blessed you with.

Yet again, we find Paul on the same wavelength as Jesus when we refer to the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25). Jesus recounts the story of the master who gives his servants different amounts of talents. While two of the slaves went off and found ways to increase the amount, the third decided to bury his gold. Upon returning, the master was pleased with the servants who brought back more than what he originally gave them; but, was upset when the third servant did nothing profitable with his share of gold. The message behind this parable runs in the same vein as Paul's focus of how you use your spiritual gifting to serve the community.

With verse 6, Paul continues his focus on the individual but changes the subject to teaching and learning. No one in the body can be "self-sufficient" and teach themselves; this applies to everyone. Again, Paul admonishes those who think they don't need to be part of the body because they can teach themselves. Certainly, while some of us are spiritually gifted with teaching, we all need to be open to learning together.

Paul's overall message teaches the importance of staying on track as a body. We need to be accountable for one another. We need to share each other's burdens. We need to have mutual respect. Finally, we need teach and learn the word of God together. We are in a community together; so, we must be obligated to one another. Yes, we are freed by the blood of Christ, but we must be enslaved to one another.