

## **Nothing but the Blood (Part 20)**

Galatians 6:7-10

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Those of us who have been baptized know that the water is not magical. It doesn't actually wash away our sins or transform us, but rather baptism is an indicator of the fact that we were already cleansed and changed by the power of Jesus' death and resurrection through faith, which also is a gift from God. We are not saved by anything we did, but rather by what Jesus did. Paul has made it clear that we are saved by faith in Jesus (Galatians 2:16, 20-21; 3:2, 7, 11, 22; 5:1-2). We must keep this in mind in order to understand 6:7-10 correctly, and more generally to correctly understand any passage having to do with righteousness, behavior, works, or ethics. To be absolutely clear, we do not believe in salvation by our own works. But with the message of salvation by faith, Paul gives a warning in 5:13. When we received God's free gift, we were set free from the Law, but also from sin. But we should not use this freedom to indulge the flesh or to enslave ourselves to sinful desires. Salvation is not a license to sin. We must always balance this with salvation by faith. The danger is that we take God's grace for granted and assume it means we can do whatever we want because He forgives all our sins. It's just like the knowledge that the fat substitute Olestra had zero calories made it a lot easier to eat whatever we wanted with no consequences, until we learned of the digestive side effects. Salvation doesn't work like that. When we have faith, Jesus transforms us inside. If we turn our backs on the righteousness of God and live according to the sins of the flesh, it shows that we have not been changed by Jesus, that our faith is not real, and that we have in fact rejected the gospel.

Paul tells us in 6:7 not to be deceived. We cannot mock or belittle God as the pagans once did. We should not so ungratefully treat His grace with such disregard. Paul then uses the common axiom about reaping what we sow. If we sow seeds of a certain plant, that plant is what we will reap. Sowing to please the flesh (5:19-21) reaps destruction, but sowing to please the Spirit (5:22-23) reaps eternal life. We are saved by faith, but our subsequent actions demonstrate what is going on inside, if that faith is real or not. If we truly believe, we have the Spirit, and the Spirit produces fruit in us. It's not always easy to tell if someone has true faith right away. Clearly if they deny the gospel, they don't have faith. But if they say all the right things, we can't tell if their faith is real until we start seeing fruit. If someone says they believe in Jesus but lives

only to please their sinful nature, their faith probably is not real. But if they demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit, their faith is more likely true.

If we look at the fruit of the Spirit in 5:22-23, most of the attributes are manifest in interpersonal relationships. This tells us that God cares about how we treat each other. The signature of Christians is that they love one another. It's more than just loving our family. Everyone does that. It's about loving others, especially in church (6:10). We should do good to all people, but especially to the family of believers. This means that our church community has priority. The prioritization is only necessary because we all have limited time and energy. For example if a couple from our church asks for me to officiate their wedding, I will sacrifice my family time and weekends for the wedding, rehearsal, and pre-marital counseling. However, I am not as willing to do so for those outside of church. We are all limited and must prioritize those in our church community. What would outsiders think if we can't even treat each other well within our own community? We should do good to each other, supporting, serving, and encouraging each other. The work of the Spirit in our lives should be evident, particularly in our relationships. It's an easy message to understand, but hard to put into practice. But we have the privilege of living this life in Christ together.