Scripture: Galatians 3:23-29

Sermon Title: Until Christ Came

Text: Galatians 3:24 -- ".. the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith."

Proposition: Until Christ came people had to be governed by the absolute authority of law, but now faith in Christ makes possible more personal freedom for individuals and easier cooperation for their mutual welfare by groups of people.

Date written: January 15, 1966

Dates and places used:

1-16-66 Damessa + Blancker, colo,

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Introduction:

1. An explorer, who had just returned from an African safari, was describing some of his adventures to an audience of women.

"I suddenly came upon a tribe of

wild women who had no tongues".

"What! No tongues?" exclaimed a few in the group. "How in the world could they talk?"

"They couldn't," he explained.
"That's what made them wild!"
(Laugh Parade, as in Quote, 12/26/65, p. 14)

2. In the Sermon Planning column of our monthly church mailer, "Alamosa Methodist Tidings", we indicated in the "to be thinking about" remarks that this sermon is to help us keep from getting bitter as the Christmas bills come in, by thinking about the "before and after" in reference to the coming of Christ. To put it in the terms of the story of the explorer who found the tongueless women, we are in all

seriousness here contending that the people are much less "wild" when they have faith in Christ. To make this contention more sensible, we will here consider some of the ways that things

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- among humans "until Christ came";
 then try to show that his coming was
 responsible for great improvement.
 In the few minutes at our disposal
 in the sermon period on a Sunday we
 cannot possibly develop a step-by-step
 line of reasoning, but can only indicate some of the reasons we believe
 our proposition to be true.
 - I. Until Christ came personal safety and freedom were not enjoyed by many people.
 - l. A young wife, just learning to drive the family car, had traffic hopelwesly snarled as she tried to make a left turn. Excitedly, she turned to her husband and screamed, "What do I do now?"

"I don't know," he replied calmly.

"But I'm sure if you'll just climb
into the back seat, you can figure it

ut." (Arkansas Baptist, as in Quote,
12/26/65, p.16)

2. Pre-Christian individual rights were pretty well snarled up, too. In the Scripture for today, Paul indicated that when he wrote to show that Christ had enriched the world by mentioning

connected the state of the cone; then the state of the control was responsible for creat introovement.

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some of the evils which his first readers had known so well before they became Christian. He wrote, as we have it in verses 27-28: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christa have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus".

The words "Jew and Greek" indicate

the great cultural and national differences between people of two different nations divided by a geographic barrier. They spoke different languages, they lived across a body of water which was an effective barrier to travel and communication for most of them. They had very different religions, which gave them greatly different outlooks on life (for religion, if really religion, always affects ones conduct and viewpoints). The few who traveled from one country to another were looked upon with suspicion and hositility, for the most part, by the people of the country in which they were visiting. Hatreds and misunderstandings between individuals simply because they were from different nations was common, expected and accepnone of the svile wideh his first readers had known as well before they become Christian. He wrote, es we have it is verses they also they are nother law as for you may there is nother alove to confree the nother alove to serve is nother alove to serve; for you are all one in Christians of Christians alove to serve; for you are all one in Christians.

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could not expect to be guaranteed safety by either his own or the visited ing government, and took upon himself alone all the risk of such travel.

Perhaps you think that all this sounds pretty familiar trains in reference to today's conditions. We'll think about that too, in a few minutes.

3. Paul spoke of there being neithe "slave nor free". As you perhaps recall, the society of the Roman empire had some people who were full citizens, who ran the government, enjoyed its full protection if they had not been chosen to participate in the governing at the moment, eadld hold property and be assured of its protection, and other wise enjoyed much more personal safety and freedom than other inhabitants of the empire who were not citizens. Many more people were not citizens than vere. At the bottom of the non-citizen heap were the slaves; people who were the absolute property of their owners,

ple in our country today. One difrerence, however: there were no humans laws to protect the slave from even the greatest brutality by his master.

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each. The travelor in a foreign countreed could not expect to be emeranised as for or the visite and or the or the visite in a foreign the risk of such travel.

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We don't have to argue the point
that this system of degradation of
human beings is pretty well gone now,
even though it did not desappear from
our own country until about 100 years
ago.

4. Paul wrote of there being "neither male nor female". Now that would seem like a sad state of affairs; and we might argue that Paul was not interpreting his Lord aright! In another of his letters Paul wrote about a "thorn in his flesh", which caused him great pain, but he which by faithful endeavor he overcame. There has been much speculation as to what that thorn was. Some have said it was a wife with whom he could not get along! If that's so, he was a better man than many I've known who didn't get along with their wives, but neither did they overcome them! People who think Paul was unhappily married have said that is the reason he traveled so much! I don't believe he ever was married. from the evidence I read in The New Testament, seriously. But if he had never married, some of the things he wrote which may seem to reflect a bitterness toward women, perhaps simply are a rather strong

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h, Paul wrote of there being "not ther male now female". Note that tricite la odcha has e own nose block ond we sight error that Feel was not al !theirs bro! nid welteroversi dolde , "deal's sid at grout" a tueda of to the red two .wise there all become eathern endeavor as everyone. There dear tuck meenletten as to white if him awar and went mont torit den for bitton of back this office and redded a sex of thetle so, he was a better Tinhib and around avil warm and nea sation too posterio i diterente tem oder a knowl the the uncorrecte will bit os helamest el morana edt et sadt Sia sext your of eyelful theb I leade merried, from the evidence I read in "High New Yorksment, seriously. But it and To anon hat rum young Sad at decay bunded secured id a foother secret words

statement of the Oriental and Jewish attitude, still seen in many Arabic countries, that a woman is man's subordinate, his property, and one who should stay out of public affairs.

There is some of that even today, for some Protestant churches, even (such as the "Church of Christ" (-a denomination that calls itself that allow women no voice in the government of the church; and many other will not allow the recognition and assignment as pastors and clergymen.

If Paul did have such a negative attitude toward women, or a low opinion of their rights, this passage today certainly does not reveal it. His parase "neither male nor female" actually means that in God's sight, and in the sight of people who have become Christian, all people of both sexes are of equal value. This was certainly a new concept, not known very widely efore Christ came. Until Christ came, in many places women could be bought and sold like slaves; and wives were allowed in plural numbers in many of the cultures. In addition, systems of the cultures. In addition, systems

of concubinage were recognized; and prostitution was allowable, sometimes even being a part of the cultic acti-

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vities of a religion.

5. These references to "Jew nor Greek", "slave nor free", and "male nor female" by the writer of our Scripture, when considered in the light of the time in which they were written, show us that until Christ came personal safety and freedom were not enjoyed by many people. We could expand this presentation of arguments to show this, by referring to the absolute power of the rulers in old times, to the chaotic conditions in many places, and to other corcumstances

II. Until Christ came people had to be governed by the absolute authority of law.

custodian until Christ came". He was referring to his Jewish background, mainly, in which there was minute detail and law for about every activity of life. A man who was uncircumcised was not considered qualified as a Jewand a God-fearer. The dietary laws had to be kept precisely. The fast days were mandatory. Many other laws and rules were applicable if one was

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- to be considered as being in the good grace of God, and of his religious leaders. All this was thought necessary, because they thought that God had dictated these rules and laws through the old prophets, as recorded in what is now mostly The Old Testament. Some religious groups today still think of the performance of some acts and rules as either necessary or nighly important. The Jews still hold to their old laws, if they are orthodox or conservative. The Roman Catholics have sens dietary faxt laws, some holy days which must be observed jast so, some sacraments which are considered absolutely necessary, etc. . The Sevent Day Adventists also, follow many old Jewish customs, and consider them necessary to the best Christian performance. Even groups which consider themselves THE christian group, like the Church of Christ, demand baptism in a sertain way, and base church practices -- such as siging with no musical instruments or baptism by immersion as conditions of being
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was not much respect by one person for andther whom he did not know well. nor much cooperation between groups of people for their mutual benefit. Consequently, most governmental areas were small, and usually warring against some one or more other most of the time. This, of course, was anarchy and mankind's necessary exchange of goods and services and ideas was severely limited. Occasionally, by force of arms some power, like Rome, did impose upon large areas an absolute trivate law and authority. There were some attempts at justice, even, though not based upon any idea of the equal worth of all individuals. Such absolut governments were necessary, and when they broke down periods of time resulted which earned such names in the history books as "The Dark Ages".

III. When Christ came, conditions be mumbers of people anaxtheir who believed him and the degree of their dispersion throughout the world.

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laughter at the door, he said, "I am very pleased that your mother called me to visit her. Is your pastor out of town?" "No," replied the child, "He's at home, but we thought it might

be something contagious and we didn't want to expose our preacher to it".

(The Scandal Sheet, as in Quote, 12/26/65, p. 14).

These Baptists hadn't completely absorbed the Christian spirit of concern for all people, but at least they showed some signs of thoughtfulness for one whom they liked!

It is the Christian respect for each and every person as a beloved child of God that has made Christ's influence so good for the world, since Christ came.

2. We still have national animosities, as witness our feeling for the Chinese or Russian or Cuban communists. However, there are within our Christian churches large blocks of those who have faith in Christ who insist that even though we must oppose many of the

even though we must oppose many of the communist principles and their efforts at forceful or subversive expansion of their personality-degrading system, we can still respect and care for them

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Galatians 3:23-29

as individuals. This is the spirit in which Christian organizations of this country welcomed some clergymen from Russia greek some years back, to be greeted by kitter and prolonged attacks from others who called themselves Christians but couldn't stomach a sincer effort at mutual understanding. If we are Christian, we've got to make every effort to keep the doors apen for person to person and group to group contacts within peaceful and safe frameworks. Until Christ came, there was not much effort made at this sort of thing. There's not enough made now, even by Christian people, but at least some is made. Understanding of each other does not always bring agreement and cooperation, but it is necessary to recognition that every person has longings and hopes and needs similar to every other one.

there are no slaves in the world, or we do not know of them. However, we speak of "the free world" as a contrast to communist-dominated areas to .

This implies that there is not freedom in the Soviet countries. From all we can read, this seems to be true in many assess of their lives. The news

3. Technically, I suppose that today

62-53:8 sus Carala of divide and at mind a lambivibut an off thorn seem once were orch, fo rected by bitter and prolonged attack Cross others who called themselves Contestant but couldn't stomed a since sw 11 . warbasteneben frutem to trolle ere Christian, we've sot to make every works, thill thrist come, there was thing. There's not enough hade now, even by Christian people, but at least dose to anthusiarehall .obsm st eros ind compension, but it is necessary so recentified that every person has reffers about her secon has exclused .ogo word o there on thos would accompa I .. (Lisainder a ..) ow or wewell .moult to world for ob ev communist-dominoted eress to the molecult ton st eredt tadt settort ste in the Soviet countries. From all we can read, this seems to be true in

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media also tell us that the effort of atheistic communism in Russia and China to stamp out Christianity have not been successful. In fact, we are led to believe that the stubborn faith of some of the Christians in these countries is leading gradually to the relaxing of oppressive rules in many areas of life in those countries. If this is true and a good case can be made to show that it is —, the Christian faith is still very relevant in today's world in setting men free.

4. When Paul spoke of there being neither "male nor female" among believers of Christ, he was saying that each person is of equal value to God, to Christ, and to other Christians. If this is so, then a person can serve on religious government bodies of religious groups, or in any area of leadership within society, according to his or her ability. Granted, there are conditions of a sex, such as pregnancy, which exclude one from some activities -- but these are things which determine ability. If one has the ability, he or she should be considered the person for the position. This, I think, is the sense in which,

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neither "male nor female". This does not mean that promiscuous sexual relations are permissible. Some of the non-Christian rulers in the early days of our faith understood this "neither male nor female" phrase to mean an approval of promiscuousness, and but to death some Christians on such a surmise, without even a trial.

Conclusion:

- 1. We think that we have gotten across our thought, and indicated atife least some of the areas of history/ which can verify it that until Christ came the concepts on which people base their attitudes toward and actions for other people were harmful to others and to society.
- 2. Since Christ came, however, Christians have had the concept of the worth of each individual because he is a child of God, as their central social concept. They have not acted on this with one accord, and there are many, manyx injustices still in the world. However, it is because of a
- general awareness of the damands of Christian respect for the individual that we are aware of the rights and

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- privileges which all people should have, simply because they are people. Those who would scorn the church and people of christian faith because of our imperfect performance need to be aware of how much better things are than they were until Christ came. This does not excuse Christians from making the effort to do ever better for their
- Lord as they work with others, but it does point out that we should not be scornful of the effects of our efforts, for they's have been many and great.
- 3. As Paul put it, "the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith". If we are faithful to Christ, we will seek his will as best we can, and seek to adt upon it.

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