

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 Jamaica + Blount, Colo.,
1-5-68 - Alton, Colo.

Topic: Galatians 3:28-29

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Text: Galatians 3:28-29 -- "The Jew and the Greek, the slave and the free, the male and the female, all are one in Christ Jesus."

Proposition: Galatians 3:28-29 teaches that in Christ, all are one, and that the law is no longer binding on those who are in Christ. This makes possible more personal freedom for individuals and greater cooperation for their mutual welfare by groups of people.

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Garland 5.25-29

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

Introduction:

I. The first, and last, but not least, of the things that we should describe to an audience of women.

"I suddenly came upon a tribe of wild women who had no tongues." "What! No tongues?" exclaimed a Jew in the crowd. "How in the world could they talk?"

"The tongue," he explained. "That's what made them wild!"

(Frank Waters, as in Waters, 12/25/25, p. 10)

2. In the former Russian column of our monthly church paper, "Allegory of the 'Wild Women'", we indicated in the "to be thinking about" remarks that this sermon is really a new form of the "wild" as the Christians like to see it, 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 such less "wild" when they have faith in Christ. To make this contention more sensible, we will first consider some of the ways that things

among humans ^{we've} "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.

1. A young wife, just learning to drive the family car, had traffic hopelessly 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 out." (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~~

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 out." (Parables of Jesus, as in photo.)

2. Pre-Christian individual rights
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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 Christ 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 hostility, 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 accep-

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ted. The traveler in a foreign country 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 ~~today~~ in reference to today's conditions. ~~We'll think about that too, in a few minutes.~~

3. Paul spoke of ~~there~~ being neither "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, ~~could~~ hold property and be assured of its protection, and otherwise enjoyed much more personal safety and freedom than other inhabitants of the empire who were not citizens. Many more people were not citizens than were. At the bottom of the non-citizen heap were the slaves; people who were the absolute property of their owners, as a cow, horse or dog belongs to people in our country today. One difference, however: there were no humane laws to protect the slave from even the greatest brutality by his master.

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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 disappear 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 ~~by~~ 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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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) allows women no voice in the government of the church; and many other churches will not allow ~~them~~ ^{women} 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 phrase "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 before 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 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 circumstances~~

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

1. Paul wrote "the law was our 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 Jew and 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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extend this consideration of treatment
to show this, by reference to the
Epistle to the Hebrews in which
it is stated that the law was in
itself a shadow of the things to come,
and that it was a disciplining school
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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 highly important. The Jews still hold to their old laws, if they are orthodox or conservative. The Roman Catholics have ~~some~~ dietary ~~fast~~ laws, some holy days which must be observed ~~just~~ so, some sacraments which are considered absolutely necessary, etc.. The Seventh Day Adventists~~x~~ 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 certain way, and base church practices~~ --such as singing with no musical instruments or baptism by immersion, as conditions of being Christian.

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was not much respect ~~by~~ of one person for another 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 ~~ones~~ ^{countries} 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 ~~absolute~~ law and authority. There were some attempts at justice, even, though not based upon any idea of the equal worth of all individuals. Such absolute 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 ^{became} were much better in ratio to the numbers of people ~~and their~~ who believed him and the degree of their dispersion throughout the world.

1. A Methodist preacher was summoned once to the bedside of a Baptist woman who was very ill. Meeting the little

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III. The Christian Era, conditions
which began to change in the
middle of the first century
and led to the rise of the
Christian religion.

1. A Methodist preacher was summoned once to the bedside of a Baptist woman who was very ill. Meeting the little

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 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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as individuals. This is the spirit in which ^{some} Christian organizations of this country welcomed some clergymen from Russia ~~years~~ some years back, ^{only} to be greeted by bitter and prolonged attacks from others who called themselves Christians but couldn't stomach a sincere effort at mutual understanding. If we are Christian, we've got to make every effort to keep the doors open 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.

3. Technically, I suppose that today 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 ~~today~~.

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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~~ governing 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 ^{even} put to death some Christians on such a surmise, without ~~even~~ even a trial.

Conclusion:

1. We think that we have gotten across our thought, and indicated at least some of the areas of history/^{and modern-day life} 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, many injustices still in the world. However, it is because of a general awareness of the demands 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 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 act upon it.

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