

Now That Faith Has Come

Galatians 3:23-29

Trinity Lutheran – Kearney, Missouri

June 23, 2013 – Fifth Sunday After Pentecost



In the name of the Father, and † of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. In ancient Greek and Roman culture, oftentimes a rich father would commit the training and rearing of his son to what was known at that time as a pedagogue – or, more commonly to us today, a custodian, a teacher, or a tutor. The role of such a person in Paul’s day was far different from what might be going through your mind as you consider what teachers and tutors do. A pedagogue was most often a male slave who was “put in charge” of a young boy at a very early age – and was thus given the responsibility of seeing to it that he learned his lessons, kept himself in top physical shape, minded his manners, and stayed out of trouble. Once the boy reached what was considered to be a proper age, he would no longer be “under the supervision” of his life-long appointed pedagogue. Indeed, by properly doing his job, the pedagogue would have made himself obsolete!

Well, in today’s Epistle lesson, St. Paul equates the Old Testament Law with all its countless rites, rules, requirements and ceremonies, as a kind of pedagogue. “The Law,” says Paul, “was put in charge over us. We were held prisoners by the Law, locked up by the Law until faith should be revealed.” Or, putting it another way, Paul here teaches that God gave His Old Testament people the Law as a way of training them and raising them up properly – as a method to make sure that they learned right from wrong, good from evil, and of course, minded their manners – much like a pedagogue would train his young charge. Under the Law, says Paul, God’s people looked forward to that day when they would “come of age,” that day when “faith should be revealed” by the coming of the Christ.

As a Christian I pray that you know that because faith has come, you are now no longer

“under the supervision of the Law” – that you – whether male or female, for Paul also teaches that your standing before God has nothing to do with gender – that you have been made to be a son of God through faith in Christ Jesus – the One who faithfully obeyed and suffered under the Law for your sake, and for the sake of us all. In other words, now that you have “come of age,” as it were, you are “full citizens with God’s people, and members of God’s household.” You have, as St. Paul would say later in this same letter to the Galatians: “received full rights as sons.” It’s as if God has said to you: “You have come of age. Though you still have some growing up to do as you press on toward the maturity of the Christian faith, you no longer have any need for a pedagogue to be standing over you, watching your every move. You are no longer under the slavery of the Old Testament Law to tell you when you are to worship, how much of an offering you ought to give, or how you are to conduct yourself as a child of God. All those obligations have been fulfilled in My Son, the Christ, your Savior!”

So, now that faith has come, dear Christian, consider anew how great that freedom is which your crucified, risen Savior, Jesus Christ, has won for us all! No longer do you have any obligation under the Law to observe the Sabbath by coming to worship on Saturday, or performing all sorts of mandatory prayers, sacrifices or other duties. You are now free to worship in God’s House every week, not because you have to, but because you want to, because “you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” Worship has now become your joy and delight – that place and time where and when you are now able to “gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple” – that is, in His House, His Church.

Just consider for a moment how your release and freedom from the slavery of the Law has affected your offerings to God and the work of the Church. You are no longer bound by the Law of Moses to “set aside a tenth of all that you produce each year” as we read in the book of Deuteronomy. Your giving is no longer an act of obligation, but an act of love. It is no longer the requirement of one who is a slave, but instead, the gift of a son which is freely given! You can now give, not in keeping with some unattainable demand, “not reluctantly or under compulsion,” but because “you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” Sons of God, you see, need not worry about food or clothes, for if their heavenly Father can feed the birds of the air, clothe the lilies of the field, and even know how many hairs there are on your head at any given moment, how much more shall He not take care of those who are His sons?

Sons of God, then, have no need to worry or doubt their Father’s gracious provision and care. They simply give their best gift and then say with Abraham as he prepared to slay his only son on the mount of sacrifice: “God Himself will provide.” Christians, then, are not to be like the stingy, tight-fisted misers the Old Testament Law tends to create. No, Christians are to freely give with an open hand and a generous heart that rejoices in what they have heard their Lord Jesus say: “Freely you have received; freely give.” They know, and are fully confident, that God’s Word is always faithful and true – and that their heavenly Father already knows what they need. They seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, knowing that according to God’s good will and pleasure all those other things will be given to them as well.

And while you’re thinking about the freedom we all now have in Christ, consider also how this freedom that is yours in Christ has affected the way you treat one another. As St. Paul says here: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Is St. Paul not saying that in Christ, all distinctions between persons – who is

rich, who is poor, who is wise, who is foolish, who is superior, and who is inferior – all distinctions have been abolished, “for you are all one in Christ Jesus?” That is precisely what Paul is saying. You are all members of the same body, and “no one ever hated his own body, but feeds and cares for it.” Your brother’s needs are now your own, and you fill those needs quickly and willingly as God gives you the ability. Your brother’s faith is now also your own, so that together you are able to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus” – worshiping, working, studying, playing, confessing your sins to one another, and confessing your faith to all.

Here in this text St. Paul is announcing to you that the Law, which was for a time put in charge of you in order to lead you to Christ – that the old pedagogue, the old custodian who at one time imprisoned you – has now died. Now you have been “justified by faith,” declared to be guilt-free “sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” Now that faith has come, you are no longer “under the supervision of the Law.” And now that you believe, dear Christian, allow that same freedom – that freedom which is yours through the forgiving blood of Christ – allow that freedom to give shape to your Holy Communion. Do not gather at this Table because you feel you must, as if your participation in this Meal is an obligation the taskmaster of the Law has placed upon your shoulders and life. No, come because you are sons of God, “Baptized into Christ.” Come, not because you are slaves any longer, but because you are “heirs” – “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.” Indeed, as Dr. Luther of sainted memory reminds us, the entire glory of the kingdom of Christ has been transferred to you, given for you in the body and blood of our Lord Jesus. Believe it, receive it, and live in it, for His name’s sake. Amen.

And now that peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in that one true faith in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.