

“But After That Faith is Come. . .”  
 Pastor Sam Richards  
 Sermon for 20 February 2022  
 Texts: Galatians 3:23-29

**23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a [a]tutor. 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is [b]neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you [c]belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s [d]descendants, heirs according to promise.**

Between **But before faith came** and **But after that faith is come** there is a considerable span of time—from creation to the advent of Christ. Where exactly do we place the second marker? At the moment in time when Christ died, that event was/is the turning point of history. It expresses best the idea of a better revelation which followed the rending of the veil in the temple at the time of Christ’s death by crucifixion. Jesus’ death changes everything. Even before the resurrection, one universe closed as another opened up! A new age dawned **after that faith is come**.

Here are the climatic, and dramatic events which attended the moment in time that **faith came**, these occurrences enable us to declare: **faith is come**. Mark them with me:

**Matt. 27:50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. 51 And behold, the [a]veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the [b]saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. 54 Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, “Truly this was [c]the Son of God!”**

By God, by divine agency, the veil in the sanctuary of the temple was torn, between the “holy place” and the “most holy place,” meaning between a less restrictive and a most restrictive space—the most holy place being where the Ark of the Covenant was housed and the sanctuary where worshippers offered sacrifices and praised God. Among the many meanings, here is an outstanding one: the age of separation was over. God declared himself approachable in a new way. Jesus was that way.

Previously, only the high priest, *only once a year*, entered into this most sacrosanct of chambers to place the blood of the atonement on the horns of the ark, the mercy seat of God. That is what I mean by “most restrictive;” access was restricted. And

Jesus when he pierced the veil, *he did it once for all*. The annual cycle was cancelled, and a once for all Mediator had taken the place of the annual high priest. **Faith is come.** And the sacred cow of the Pharisees, framed in ceremonial law, took a direct hit. And the inference that the law of Moses had come to an end was in front of them. That does not mean that legalists ceased to be. No, the Pharisaical spirit survived to emerge another day. Those who want to control God do not submit easily.

And the sixty foot tall, thirty foot wide woven fabric veil—some inches thick, estimates vary—was torn from **top to bottom** to signify that no human agency could do such a thing! And by this gesture, the separation of God from temple worshippers was terminated: thereby also **faith is come!**

Consider also, the concurrent events: earthquake, rocks split, tombs opened, **and many bodies of the [b]saints who had fallen asleep were raised.** How striking! Even before Jesus was raised from the dead, many bodies were raised in physical resurrection? Yes, the text proceeds to state that **coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.** This event refuted the false teaching of the religious liberals (in that day known as Sadducees); they denied resurrection, afterlife, judgment and miracles. For a moment, at least, their hold on the popular imagination was put in abeyance. There is a striking resemblance between the theology (or lack thereof) of the Sadducees and nineteenth century progressives, the liberal minds that gravitated to naturalism, evolution and the atheistic/secular scientific mindset. When the facts contradict their philosophy, they deny the facts!

**After His resurrection** suggests a lapse of time between Christ's death and this resurrection from the dead that I cannot explain, but I put it forward as revealed truth. *When Jesus did appear*, in his resurrected body, *he did so in a crowd of witnesses—that may a new thought to some of us!*—other **saints who had fallen asleep also rose from the dead and appeared to many in the holy city.** Matthew, after reporting what happened after Jesus' death, adds this episode and then returns to the moment of Christ's death. Thus he reports the eyewitness response of the centurion and those with him *after the mini-resurrection report.* **“Truly this was [c]the Son of God!”** Some variants would have us render it this: **Truly this was a son of God** and, textually, that is where the matter must lie.

We should remember, however, that what the centurion meant by these words—either way— might not necessarily resemble, align with *what they would mean* to a believing Jew, or to a Christian! We cannot on the face of it assume that the centurion made a confession of saving faith although that could have happened. But what is intriguing is that, given this crowd of risen saints appearing in the city, the reality of resurrection would have been on display throughout the town *at the same time*. I have inserted these cultural notes, about Pharisees, Sadducees and Gentiles to remind you of the cultural setting in which **faith is come.**

*The rent veil, the opening of graves and wonders in the sky* such as the darkness at noon that lasted three hours, all pointed, very dramatically, to the **coming of faith** (v. 25) as a very cataclysmic event.

The manifestation of the Christ **in His glorified body** signified the coming of the reign of Christ. That means **for believers** that the law, being temporal, had resigned its office. And it means that sonship, on the basis of faith, had succeeded the custodial care of the law. Galatians 3:25: The law was our tutor to lead us to Christ. These verses (vv. 23-29) from Galatians 3 are vital to a proper understanding of the grace wherein we stand—until Christ shall return in glory!

The law, as Calvin opined, in “so far as it is a rule of life, a bridle to keep us to the fear of the Lord and a spur to correct the sluggishness of our flesh . . . so far as it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness **that believers may be instructed in every good work** (2 Time. 3:16-17), remains as much in force as ever . . . and remains untouched (not revised, redacted, or deleted).” This is Paul’s stance on the inspired word of God!

And, because it is enormously helpful to cite, Calvin continues to enumerate the terms in which the law is abolished: “in annexing to work a reward and a punishment, in promising life to those who keep it, and curses all transgressors. Meanwhile it requires for man the highest perfection and most exact obedience. It makes no abatement, gives no pardon, but calls into severe reckoning the smaller offenses. . . all such qualities of the law, Paul tells us are abolished, so that the offices of Moses is now at an end, and so far as it differs in outward aspect from a covenant of grace.” This is as brief and concise a summary of what the law can, and cannot do that I know of on the books—so to speak. The law “keeps Christ at a distance hidden by the covering of ceremonies.” (John Calvin, Commentary)

Verse 26: **for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.** “It is both unjust and unreasonable in the highest degree that the law should hold believers in perpetual slavery.” Friends, according to what we read in the word, God has never allowed perpetual slavery, nor permanent exile and dispersal (the Diaspora) to so bind his people. The human race has endured the longest bondage of all to sin and the prince of this world—even that in due season he chose to end through the sending of his Son. These conditions were all temporal until the freedom **which is called sonship**, yes, arrived with the arrival of faith.

This is indirectly proven by the fact that the Galatians had by faith become children of God. ***Political freedom is a mere shadow compared to the liberty that is had in Christ alone.***

Freedom from government tyranny, COVID restrictions, vaccine mandates and passports are important, not only as defensible rights, but as preaching moments. We should take every opportunity to turn the discussion of civil rights in the spiritual direction because **if Christ has made you free, you are free indeed.** If this falls outside the purview of conservative causes, that in no way hinders us from speaking truth to power. Let’s make sure we do speak when and while we can. An elite claim

to power is a flimsy life-jacket in the torrents straight ahead. They are children of God on the cusp of becoming freemen in Christ by faith.

**For as many as received him, to them he gave the power to become sons of God, even to them that believed on his name.** (John 1:12) Yes, by faith. *It is by faith that we have obtained adoption, by faith likewise we have obtained our freedom.*

Verse 27. Here is a principle that Calvin espouses: “The greater and loftier the privilege of being the children of God; *the farther it is removed from our senses and the more difficult it is to obtain belief.*” **For as many of you as were baptized in Christ have put on Christ.** Here, in a few words, Paul explains what it means *our being united, or rather made one with the Son of God so as to remove all doubt that what belongs to him is communicated to us.* He uses the metaphor of a garment to say, the Galatians have **put on Christ** meaning that they are so closely united to him that *in the presence of God they bear the name and character of Christ.* They are viewed **in Him, rather than in themselves.**

Now, given that baptism is not efficacious in all, the analogy is apparently weak. One is not saved by being baptized! And it is very apparent that not all who have been baptized are equally regenerate. That is what efficacious means here. But all ceremony, rituals and ordinances labor under similar constraints. Why is that? Because “For believers the identification (in baptism with Jesus’ death and resurrection) is genuine and real, but for hypocrites, it is empty and devoid of significance—it is a mere external show, rather than an “outward manifestation of an inward state of grace and truth.”

***The corrupt condition of faithless men causes this misapprehension.***

But for believers, the truth remains clearly associated with the symbols—they represent the grace of God regardless of the spiritual state of the observers. The ungodly do not see God, they cannot. And the conduct of men cannot subvert the faithfulness of God, nor the efficacy of his signs. Thus we are correct to declare that true believers, when they are baptized have indeed **put on Christ . . .** as surely as they have **cast off the old man!**

**After that faith had come.** “A man has faith in God as the Creator of the universe, as the Father of man, as the moral ruler of the universe; but that *is not the faith that admits into the saved family.* A man may assure himself that he has scientific ground for his faith in theism, but that is *a long way from the faith that saves the soul.* To put faith in manhood, or kingdom, or pope, or progress, or church, or creed, as the object of faith is simple to divert the mind *from that which saves.* *Faith in the beautiful, the good, the noble aspects of the race, in the poetry and yearnings of the higher humanitarianism are interesting to talk about* but to put them forth as the dark passages through which men are to find their way *into the family, is to shut the door of hope* in the face of the great sinning, sorrowing, race.

Not without meaning is the early 19th century German philosopher Johann Fichte's despair of raising men into the blessed life since they are so far beneath the reach of his philosophy. Paul here opens the door of hope, and shows how a man can become a new child of God." (Mitchell) **For as many as received him, to them he gave the power to become sons of God, even to them that believed on his name.** (John 1:12) . . . **for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.** (Galatians 3:26)

**Amen**