**Galatians 3:23-29**

**23** Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. **24** So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. **25** But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, **26** for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. **27** For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. **28**  There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.

**“Another Year Fear In Christ”**

Grace to you and peace from He “who is and who was and who is to come,” Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen. As 2015 is now hard at work unfolding from one time zone to the next. Plenty already had their opportunity to celebrate in other parts of the world. There is nothing religious about a new year. It merely shows the mechanical ticking of the clock that hangs over all our lives. Time as we have it from day to day is in terms of the law set within creation. Yet, since Christians are still celebrating Christmas, even time becomes overshadowed with the birth of Christ. The question to ask tonight is one of Law or Gospel. Are we enslaved to the shifting times of man or free to the eternal truth for us in Jesus Christ?

Where the world wakes up tomorrow to the first day on a new calendar year. There is cause for us to wake up to more than the Law of time, but to the eighth day when it was time for Christ’s circumcision. Luther tells us, “Therefore if you do not look at anything beyond the flesh, you will remain permanently under the time of the Law…Therefore the time of the Law is not forever; but it has an end, which is Christ” (Luther’s Works). Without the Gospel to be for all times, places, and people, the Law turns even time into our enemy. St. Paul says, “Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.” Return to the promise of baptism for another year is free for you in Jesus.

1. There are plenty of “buts” about the past.
2. To look back is not always so clear as it seems.

- We should remember the good, BUT how do we answer the bad?

* Despair will consume life or anger will turn to hate God as if He was the cause of evil.

- We can say also God was there, BUT what receives the glorious attention?

* Self-satisfied and puffed up over righteousness of work will not lead to faith in the Gospel.

1. Yet, where was Christ this past year?

- There is regret, grief, and questions, BUT God’s Son came in the flesh to be cut for us.

* He was called “Jesus” meant He feels the sting.

- Works matter for life, BUT even the Old Testament Law had no meaning apart from Christ.

* “The law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.”

1. There are plenty of “what ifs” about the future.
2. What ifs easily poison life with discontent.

* What if I fail or cannot fix it. What if this happens or does not happen. What if I do this differently than last year.
* Solomon warns against such distraction, “Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.” (Proverbs 28:14)
* “What ifs” are a guaranteed way to kill whatever God will give by His grace to sinners.
* The Law lets us hunger for Christ and not wrestle over empty works as if they can save.

1. Yet, where will Christ be this new year?

* He promises there will be hope in Him against the unforeseeable future.
* Jesus says, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33)
* His love will abound to fill us with the good things that He gives by Word and Sacrament.
* “Sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear.” (Psalms 40:6)

1. The fact about the present then means it is for you in Christ.
2. Baptism speaks the better word of forgiveness not to the cutting of flesh, but by water and the Spirit.

* “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
* Being dressed with Christ means freedom that the Law can never give by rights or works of man.

1. Even when time zones separate us from the new year, we have a celebration that is everlasting.

* “…You are all one in Christ Jesus.”
* It means being heirs by faith in the promise from God that is eternal rather than limited to a certain time, place, or people.

Time tonight continues to tick on as it does. People will lift up all kinds of things while other will just go to sleep, but the treasure does not truly come until tomorrow. For the circumcision of Jesus shows us God is serious to save a world trapped in a prison of the Law. Any resolutions by man however glorious and good cannot compare to God’s Son who resolved to fulfill the Laws demands in our place. Return to the promise of baptism for another year is free for you in Jesus. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.