

Transcript offered below unedited

Well, we are at the start of the hour, so let's pray.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

And also with you.

Holy and gracious Trinity one God, we give you thanks for the many saints that have helped to proclaim your name.

In particular today, we give you thanks for St.

Patrick, the way that he was able to inspire an entire nation to learn your love. We ask that you let us shine so brightly with the power of your protection, with your guidance, and with your grace, that we may too shine brightly into this world.

All this we ask in the name of one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amen.

Amen.

All right, a little something for our boy Patrick today.

All right, friends, here we are, chapter four of Galatians.

We're making short work of it. Um, and as I said at the top of the class, we're gonna try to compress chapter four a little bit so we can get a head start on five. What I didn't know when I started this class was that the diocese holds their chrisem mass for the clergy on the

Tuesday of Holy Week, which is smack dab in the middle of our class.

So, we will either get all of it done by next

week, or I will record something with you for the, for the group

finale, so I won't leave you hanging. How does this end?

Don't worry, we will get you there.

Um, but the more we can get done today, the better.

And that's okay, because as I'm about to give our recap of where we've been in

Galatians, you'll see that chapter four, I, I don't wanna say it's

a recapitulation of chapter three, but it, they're very much the same sort of

theme, so I think we'll be able to do this without a problem.

Where have we been in Galatians? Well, we started first by hearing Paul's

passionate plea for us to, to hold fast to the gospel of

freedom, to not get embroiled in giving

up our, our freedom found in C****t by simply listening to a

message from, a false gospel. In his day and age, that

meant people who were trying to get, followers of the Christian

way to also become Jewish first. In our day and age, it can be

many different things. Um, the prosperity gospel, white Christian

nationalism, right? Like, these sorts of false gospel narratives,

are still trying to take our freedom in C****t away to this day.

We hear his passionate plea, but we also in chapter one hear his

apocalyptic vision, where the world was revealed to him

anew, and he was, brought in to be in a si- an
apostle of C****t by seeing the risen Jesus on the road to
Damascus. Then in chapter two, we heard all
about, the way this message was spread in his
life, and contrasting and comparing his personality
with, the Apostle, Peter. Those two very
important powerhouses of the early church, two very different
men, and yet also men of vision. Al- both of them had,
visions from Jesus and, also wanted to make sure
that the gospel of C****t was spread far and wide.

So very different men, went about living that call differently.

Um, but we, we heard about the first council of the church, and
the, an ill-fated dinner party after that.

In chapter three last week, we looked at his deep theological
heartbeat of Galatians, where Paul gets into the thick of it.

You hear his passion. He's mad. Um, there's one verse where
he even says, you know, like, "If, if you're gonna keep going like this, I'd rather
if you just, uh..." Oh, it's, it He gets really
into it. He's like, "If you're gonna go ahead and do circumcision, I hope the knife
slips and you're castrated." Like, that's how mad he gets.

Like, he's, he's not pulling his punches.

Um, because he's, he doesn't want us to settle for anything less

than the gospel of freedom. Uh, of course, the, the
hallmark of that is for, you know, for as many of us who
are baptized into C****t and have put on C****t, there's neither Jew nor
Greek, nor slave nor free, there's nor male or female, for you
all are one in C****t Jesus, the very heartbeat of the, the
Galatians letter. Um, so I'm gonna pause there before we
turn to chapter four. Any questions about that summary or anything that has
been revealed to you in the last week that you'd like to share to the
group?

Um, I think

that I am vaguely beginning to understand

C****t died, and when we

die, we die like C****t did, and then when

we go into the afterlife, we are resurrected with

him.

Mm. Maybe-

Is that a, is that a legitimate... I mean, from the po-

point of view of, from your point of view, is that a

legitimate reading?

Yes, and, and so important for this letter.

Yes, the, the, what Paul is trying to tell us, and you're very

astutely pointing us to, that none of this makes sense without the

lens of the, of Christ's death and resurrection. Right?

The entirety-

Yes, yes. That's okay. Thank you for saying that.

Thank you for saying that.

You're welcome, and thank you for raising your great point.

Uh, and we're, we'll keep looking at that in chapter four, so more to come.

Anybody else? A thought or a question?

Yes, Flory, please. Oh, you might be muted. I think you're muted.

That's okay.

There. Um, I don't wanna delay us, and this

isn't... Uh, Sunday, reading the Nicene

Creed, a line stood out to me

that I wondered if I had always misunderstood it, which is one baptism for

the forgiveness of sins. Are we talking about Jesus's baptism

there or our own? Or both?

Such a great question. In Paul, the, the difference is

actually negligible. Like, he wants you to see that Christ's baptism is

our baptism, Christ's death is our death, and you are so

correct. Like, the, the play of the poetry there is

exquisite because, yes, C****t one baptism was enough for us

all, and then as individuals, we then only are

baptized once so that we are then grafted into that.

And it's not ... Just like Christ's death only needed to happen once, we don't have to keep getting re-baptized, which is a very, important thing in our tradition. Um, we renew our baptismal covenant often, but that's not the same thing as saying we need to be grafted into the covenant brand newly again, which is Paul's whole point with the Abrahamic covenant here too. So, yes, you're absolutely pulling on a very important line here. It's, it's a cool yes and sort of a question, yeah. Anybody else, thought or comment? Harriet, are you raising your hand or are you just pointing at the screen? I can't quite tell. You ...

Uh, okay, you're muted.

I ... Yeah, I'm so sorry. I pushed some button and it's, it's, it's, it's shrouded my whole screen.

And so I'm not raising my hand.

Oh, okay.

I'm just trying to get back to the screen.

Well, in, in C****t all things are possible, Paul says- ...

so God bless you on your journey. All right.

Very good. Well, then let's go ahead and dive into chapter four.

Um, because we're gonna try to do this in, large chunks, I wonder if somebody would please be willing to read, ch- chapter four, verses one through seven to get us started.

Verses one through seven of chapter four.

I could.

Yes, Dan, please. That would be great.

Okay. My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all property, but they remain under guardians and trustees until this date set by the father. So with us, while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.

And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba!

Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a child, and if a child, then also an heir through God.

Mm. Thank you.

Mm-hmm.

What do you all hear here? It's a, it's a meaty little paragraph, eight verses, and he's, he's doing somersaults on us.

Any thoughts?

I ... There, there's two things that jump out at me, Hilary.

Um, one is the, the whole concept of,
of, of being a child of God and not just a
slave. The law was given to us as a custodian before He
came, to give us a framework, if you will.

And C****t said, "I didn't come to abolish the law, I came to fulfill it." Uh,
and secondly, I think, the ending there is, "Abba Father," that's
such a personal ... Uh, it's like saying daddy.

Um, it, it's such a personal relationship we have with Him.

It's, it's not a corporate thing, in the Jewish tradition.

It's, it's, it's individual, and that's such a, again, a powerful thing to
me.

Well, I didn't ask my dad to say that, but I'll pass you five bucks afterwards
that. That was perfect.

Oh.

You know, in, in this particular passage, those two things, what

it means to be a child of God, get, get hit home

here. Remember back in verse, chapter three, verse

uh ... Sorry, Paul uses the,

the word for guardian. Um, and it's really more of a

slave that was sent t- with a young boy off to school to, to punish him

if he was being bad to the teacher, right?

So already Paul is saying the law was treating us like a child,

right? And, and that's no i- ... We have our own kind of modern understanding of what chil- childhood means, but that's not the case back in the Roman times. A, a child was seen as having no rights whatsoever, except if, if you were an heir, you had some rights coming to you at a certain point.

But, you were basically seen as the ...

Women and children were the lowest of the social stratosphere here, practically a slave, as Paul is saying. In fact, some slaves even had more legal standing, because slavery was not the same sort of chattel slavery as we think of it. Slaves were often more seen as inden- indentured service, servants, depending on the situation, and some slaves would even be given, the, the signet of their household to go and make deals in the marketplaces and actually be a representative of their master.

So when Paul uses himself as a slave, he, saying ...

He calls himself slave of C****t, that's what he's referring to.

But here he goes even further and says, "You're not just children, you are heirs." That's an important thing.

Um, you, you've probably heard this expression before, but I think it's so true.

God does not have grandchildren. God only has children. Think about that for a minute, right?

God is not looking for people, who are grafted into

something just because an ancestor long ago was, was,
interested in God, right? You know, that the covenant relationship was just meant
for somebody long ago. Um, or, you know, it's, it's not enough
that, let's say my dad had faith, but I didn't have faith.

That's not enough for my faith to, to, to matter much in the world, and

Paul's gonna hammer this home in chapter five, right?

To actually have a faith that's active and vibrant- ...

we have to choose it each and every time in our own generation, as our own

p- like, as our own person of C****t, and not just rely on

generations past. So what Paul is trying to say here is a

fascinating one-two punch. One, God has

chosen us not just to be somebody

who's, bowing down to God up in heaven and we're giving

sacrifices to from far away. God is asking us to

become one with God's family such that we are

receiving all of the, the gifts of an heir, including

resurrection and grace, and all the things that we've

talked about in this letter already, freedom itself. And

then our response to it is to be choosing this

childlike faith with, of a personal relationship with God, with this

Abba Father piece, this is one-on-one heart sort of

thing, and choosing it in our generation every single

day, not just relying on generations past. It's an act of faith.

Isn't that a fascinating thing to weave into one paragraph?

Yeah.

And of course, you hear in the Abba Father, the, the
resuscitation of the Lord's Prayer here, right?

You know, the idea when you pray to your Father, Abba is the same word that
Jesus uses when He describes His, His prayer pattern for
us. Really beautiful stuff.

Mm.

We're gonna keep-

Well-

... moving here, but unless there's-

Oh

... somebody has another thought.

Yes-

Yeah

... please, Harriet, go for it.

I just wanna say, this is, this, your comment that God does
not have grandchildren has just blown my mind.

That is such a fascinating concept, and particularly when we're dealing with
Paul, and you know, who, who can be Christian.

That is amazing. Thank you.

Well, and thank you for saying it. You're right, 'cause, 'cause it does go back to Paul's major point, doesn't it, right?

Ev- everybody can be a child of God-

Yes

... not just one certain group of people. Yeah. Thank you, Harriet. Yeah.

Any other thoughts?

Yeah, it's something to be a child of God. What a, what an incredible gift.

All right. Would somebody be so kind as to read verses through ? We're gonna take a big chunk, verses through Clark, please, that'd be great.

"Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years. Fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you. I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong. As you know, I was ... It was because of illness that I first preached the gospel to you. And even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn.

Instead, you welcomed me as if I was an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus Himself. Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that if you could have done so, you would not have torn out your eyes and given them to me. Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? These people those people are jealous to win you over, but for no good.

What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you.

My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone because I am perplexed about you."

Thank you. Again, the passion. Thank you, Clark.

I liked, I like the way you read it at the end, too.

Like, "I'm perplexed by you people." Well done, Clark.

Absolutely. Um, what do you all hear in this, this passage?

One thing I hear is, the personal quality of what Paul is saying. He's relating a personal

experience

and change and evolution and,

a human quality that, that is, is

interesting. It's arresting to read this again.

Mm. Well said, Wendell. Um, this is Paul getting personal,

isn't it, right? You know, he's talking about himself and his change

in that, you know, he had to go to Galatia and he was sick.

You hear him talking about how he-

Mm-hmm

... showed up there with an illness.

Now, we know from Acts and that

Paul took at least two different missionary j- journeys

out to the, the area of the Galatians, probably more, but

those were kind of ill-fated trips.

Like, every time, like, the, he would arrive, he would have some sort of physical

ailment. And we also know from other parts of Paul's message that he

describes himself as having a physical ailment that, like a thorn in his

side. We don't know exactly what that means.

Some people have suggested everything from epilepsy to depression, right?

Like, so the, the scholars are torn.

But what we know is that there are times when he's needed care given to

him. This is unlike some of his relationship

with other churches, where he came in and gave them care first as a pastor. They, they embraced him and took care of him. So there's a, there's like a pain here for him.

He's like, "Look, I, I, I know I started this church, but you are also in my heart.

I can't believe, I can't believe that you would trade your freedom in for something like this." Like, and, and to forget, in this case too, he would see circumcision, and that, that intense surgery for adults- ... circumcision, right?

And be like, "It, it pains me to see you in literal physical pain when you helped me in literal physical pain." So there's a, there's a ...

You're right, Wendell. There's a transformation that he's trying to remind them of, and to say, "You, you saw the freedom.

Don't go backwards."

Mm.

For me, personally, when I hear that,

I, you know, I think about the fact that I've been a baptized Christian since, I think, what, Dad, month two of my life?

Yeah.

Yeah, about two, yep, two months in.

And how often I keep turning back to sin again and again, and I, and I've been baptized.

I've been freed from this. Why do I keep existing in these

patterns that have caused me harm and other people harm, right?

It's, it confuses and confounds me, and I think that's where Paul's passion comes in. Is that what you were seeing too, Wendell, in that kind of vein?

I, I think so. Yeah, I think what he's also doing is establishing, intentionally or not, a sense of community-

With, with the people he's speaking to.

You know, all have sinned. And, and that

experience, is

n- not separate, but is identical with being sons and daughters of God.

That's right, because God's looking on His, children the same fashion. Yeah.

Right.

Other thoughts?

Yeah, I've got... Uh, I, I find it humorous that, you know, in the opening of this, it seems like Paul always needs to go back and scold us a little bit.

And here he is, he's saying, "You know, so you've found God, you know God, but you're going back to these bad principles, and but have I wasted my time on you? I feel like I've wasted my time." But then at the very end, you know, he says, "My dear children,

again, I'm going through childbirth pains for you.

I wish I could be there with you." And that's so personal and loving to be in that position. It's, it's, it's the alpha and omega, two different realms.

Absolutely. It-

I think every, I think every parent has said it to their child.

I was gonna call you out there, Dad, but I'm like, I know I've been, yelled at a, a certain time in my life. Uh, rightfully deserved, I'm sure.

Oh, I know. I know.

And it's just as you're saying. Sorry, Dad, go ahead.

Yeah.

Th- there's, there's something that jumped out at me a- and I, I just picked up on this. I, I've read this before, but i- in every, in every deceit and lie, there's a kernel of truth in it. And when he says, "Have I become your enemy by telling the truth? They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them." We just, the other night, my wife and I were watching a, a documentary on, on, on cults-

Oh, yeah

... and it amazes me that all cults start with this, this, the, the truth, the foundation of the Bible, if you will, and they take it and twist it a bit to, to amplify and glorify the leader.

And I think this is... I- it's, it's so timely where we are right now, I think.

Yeah. Yeah, the idea that, that if we aren't careful ... I, I think P- I think Paul's trying to remind us who is a trustworthy guide in all of this, right?

And he does that from the beginning of the letter.

And, and we have to wonder about that ourselves.

When we are trying to, to follow what is the ultimate truth of our faith, of our religion, et cetera, how do we know who's trustworthy to follow? Paul starts us there in the book, where he says, one, you know, don't just trust me as Paul.

Trust me because I was tur- I was learned, self-taught and directly bent from Jesus himself.

Like, he makes that apocalyptic chain very clear.

And I think that's important for us as well, because once he then learns from Jesus, he then becomes a part of a Christian community. We too should be, be th- be looking to follow in that direction.

One, having a relationship with this Abba Father, where we too are... You know, maybe we don't get the crystal clear vision of literally seeing Jesus on the road as Paul did. Perhaps we will.

But, but having a relationship where we know Jesus in our heart,

and then a Christian community that helps us test this

out, so it's not just rattling around in our brain, right?

And that's the, that's the trustworthy path that Paul wants us to

take. Otherwise, as what Paul is saying here, is there are plenty of people who

want to lead you somewhere, plenty of people, and, and where they wanna lead you is

often to give them money, to give them power, to give them

influence, right? You know, and sometimes they'll say really, really great things

to do it. Um, and, and I think that's where Paul's bringing us.

Yeah. Any other thoughts? Gabby, you have your

hand up. Please, Gabby and then Clark.

Oops, sorry. Um, I have very noisy animals, so I keep

muted. Um, yeah, that's, that's something I think

about a lot, and I really agree with your dad, Hilary,

about that this time it's particularly poignant because,

you know, there does appear to be a lot of cult-like,

behavior going on in leadership levels.

But, you know, when I often think about, you know, how, how do we

distinguish, you know, what's true, what's not, and, you know,

and, and I always come out with, Jesus

told us, you know, a tree by its fruits.

And I find, um... And, and Paul,

you know, really articulated really well the fruits of the spirit, which is

really helpful. So you can see that with Paul.

He's living that out, that, that love, that humility,

that,

s- slow to anger, although I'm not s- so sure anymore when

people-

Maybe slow to become un-angry or something.

But, but, you know, I... Anyway, Corinthians

you know, details love beautifully, so

I just look to seeing the fruits, you know, how

a... And of course we all mess up and we all have

our,

our, you know, shortcomings and so on, but you

can usually, you know, see patterns of goodness when

people are living, I think, in a real- in a re- in a,

healthy relationship with, God.

So, Gabby, I feel like you should get points, gold star, because-

Oh

... this is exactly where Paul's going in the next chapter.

Oh.

Right? You know, because he brings in the fruits of the spirit as

a, like a litmus test. You know, like, do you see

these things, love, patience, self-control, discipline?

Like, and it's, it's, it really does help us to put on
the lens of discernment to say, "Do I see this in my own
life, and do I see it from the people who are trying to lead me and tell me
things?" Five, points to Gabby, gold
star. Clark, please, I think you were gonna say something
too.

There you go. Chapters, verses

really, and really speak to me about zeal
and being zealous, and z- zeal can be re-

That's basically what Paul says here in one way.

Zeal can be really good. You know, our, our-

People in our different ministries in St.

Columbus are really good focusing on doing what
they do really good, really well.

Zealousness can be really bad also, and

I think it ... We focus on that,

this is me speaking personally, not, not from Paul.

I'm not as smart as him. Uh, at any rate, it,

in our day-to-day politics on the far left

and the far right, the spokesmen are

excessively zealous. They think that they have the

only answer. They think that anybody

even a little bit in further off the spectrum than they

are, are, defective in some way or

another. And, in deep blue C- blue

DC, I've gotta say, it goes both ways-

Mm-hmm

... that, that zealous- zealousness can be not so good as

well as good in other contexts. Yay for verses

Oh, Clark, what a beautiful and important point you're making, and you're so

right. Like, Paul, o- o- once you become a mystic, and

Paul's very much a mystic here, you do away with dualistic

thinking, right? Thinking that it has to be this or that, like, a- to the

extreme only, right? You know, that the world is black and white.

Or as Paul said in the, the verse right a- above this in chapter three, that

there's Jew or Greek or slave or free or male or female, right?

You do away with that and you remember that to, to

have a zealousness, in, in yoga we call this Tapas, right?

Like, it's, it's a fire that you wanna keep in your belly so that you will

be vigilant for the Lord and, and for His work, but not the sort of

fire that consumes you and everybody else because you think you're right.

And Paul knows something about this first-hand, doesn't he?

I mean-

Mm

... having been a zealot himself and murdering Christians for what he thought was the very law that he's now trying to make sure that, that we don't, succumb to. Not because the law was bad, but because if we become too zealous for it, we're making a god out of the law. Clark, you're making a huge point here. Thank you. Really good point.

Anybody else?

Tom, did you have your hand up before? Did I miss that? No, okay.

Sorry. All right, let's keep going.

Chapter four is becoming very meaty. I love the conversation.

You all are so brilliant. Theologians, every one of you.

Um, if somebody would read verses

and we're gonna take it to

please. through

Thank you, Wendell. That'd be great.

I'm reading for the, from, a different, Good News

version-

Great

... which was, was, written to,

for primarily ... Well, it was partly for

people for whom English was not a first language, and so

they're, they're trying to get through a different way.

That's great.

So it's through what?

Uh, through

Okay. Let me ask those of you who want to be subject to the law: Do you not hear what the law says?

It says that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman, the other by a free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the usual way, but his son by the free woman was born as a result of God's promise. This can be taken as a figure.

The two women are two covenants, one of which, Hagar, that is, comes from Mount Sinai, whose children are born slaves. Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia, and she is a figure of the present city of Jerusalem, a slave, along with all its people. But the heavenly Jerusalem is free, and she is our mother. For the Scripture says, "Be happy, woman who has never had children.

Shout and cry with joy, you who never felt the pains of childbirth. For the woman who was deserted will have more children than the woman living with a husband."

Thank you.

Mm.

Now, um-

Mm

... as, as I look at it, I think we could probably even take it a little further.

Wendell, would you mind finishing out that chapter, through ?

Sure.

Thanks.

Now you, my brothers, are God's children as a result of

His promise, just as Isaac was. At that

time, the son who was born in the usual way

persecuted the one who was born because of God's

Spirit. And it is the same now. But

what does the Scripture say? It says, "Throw out the

slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman will

not share the father's property with the son of the free

woman." So then, my brothers, we are not the

children of a slave woman, but of the free woman.

Thank you very much. This is obviously gonna need some

unpacking, but anybody wanna start with what you're hearing in

this?

I don't blame you if you don't wanna start. That's okay.

I, I will.

You'll, you'll take a stab at it, Dad. Thanks. Go for it.

Um, when, when Abraham and Sarah, Sarah could

not, if you remember, couldn't bear children, so the custom of the day was you can,

you could have a surrogate, person come

in and, and, bear a child for you.

And of course they did that with the slave Hagar, who, who bore,

Ishmael. Is that correct?

That's right.

And, and then lo and behold, Sarah had a child and it was Isaac.

So the whole problem we have today, the whole conflict with, the

Muslim world and the Jewish world is, the firstborn son

was from Hagar.

Right.

And, and, and all the inheritance goes to the firstborn son, correct?

However, it wasn't through, through, Sarah-

And again, you talk about the law and how confusing that could be.

Paul said, "You wanna go rely upon the law?" Well, you know, w- we are born

from, w- from the lineage of, of Isaac,

but what about Ishmael? And it, it's a, it's a real muddy mess.

If you wanna go down that road, we can talk.

Yes. I like how you describe that, Dad.

Yes, Paul is doing a brilliant thing here.

He takes his listeners all the way back to Genesis, and wants to do so because that's where the Abrahamic promise comes into play first and foremost. And it ...

For those of you who remember, like you were just hearing Dad say, the, the pro- the promise comes first to Abraham when he's Abram and Sarah when she's Sarai, saying that, that all of their offspring are gonna multiply like the sands in the desert and the stars in the sky, and that the covenant's going to be along that f- that particular family until, as Paul says, God opens this wider. But as Dad was just saying, what Paul is also trying to say is it's not as, it's not as simplistic as just this son is going to inherit because Abraham and Sarah, if you'll recall, can't ... as Dad says, couldn't r- couldn't conceive, so they take matters into their own hands.

Without consulting God about the plan, they go ahead and bring Hagar, who is their slave woman, and recall what I just said about slavery, different than chattel slavery, although I'm not trying to make it sound like Hagar's life was easy by any stretch of the means. It's just a, it's a word that has a different meaning for us now. Hagar was given to Abraham. By that, we mean that she was Sarah's, slave woman, and thus Sarah decided, "This is how I

can ... Any offspring that comes from her will belong to me," which, again, is problematic in its own right. You can hear the problems here.

Anybody who knows that story knows it didn't go well.

There was a muddy, muddy mess, as Dad says.

Like, the, the family was contentious.

Um, Sarah was jealous of Hagar, and e- and eventually was made pregnant as God said she was going to, even though they were well past the age.

Mm-hmm.

Why is Paul bringing all of this? Like, what, why get to, back into this, this strange family dynamic? Two important reasons.

One, because he is dealing with people who say, "You have to belong to the Abrahamic covenant of, of the right son," and he's reminding us that is a h- that's a construct that actually can get a little confusing if you actually wanna look at it. Like, the con- it's not the construct that matters, and it makes the covenant more important than, the second point he's making, more important than God. God's w- God's invitation for us to become sons and daughters and children of God, beyond any one legal contract, even a legal contract that God made with Abraham, because God is now opening it up through Jesus, the new Abraham and the new Adam.

It's a complex argument, but the reason he goes into this rhetorically is because he's trying to talk to an audience that has been told, "You have to do this the Jewish way, and the Jewish way is circumcision a la Abraham." And he's like, "Even that story is not as black and white as you think it is." Does that help explain it a little bit?

Mm-hmm.

Do you ... Yeah. Anne, do you have a question?

I thought, I think I heard your, your, your voice.

No? Okay. Any ... I know it's a little muddy, but any other thoughts or questions about why Paul might be spending so much time on Abraham and Sarah and Hagar and Isaac and Ishmael?

Well, just one thought that I have is that Jesus is an important figure in the Muslim tradition, Isa.

That's right.

And so that he's not seen as divine, but, but that carries on from that, that story, so he's revered in that tradition as well.

That's absolutely right. He's seen as a, as a prophet and a wisdom teacher.

That's right.

Right.

Yeah. And, and it ... You know, I think if Paul were living today, not to presume to know what Paul would say- ... but I, I think he would, he would point us to the point of like, well, even these divisions that we are making, between religions and traditions, eventually that will be God's to, to sort out anyway, you know? So why are we making more of the division, than the fact that there is a, there's a kinship with one another that transcends the religiosity we put into it.

He, he would never water down the importance of C****t.

Don't h- don't hear me say that. But there's a, there is ...

And he gets way more into this in Romans, so if you love this, read Romans.

He gets way into Isaac and Ishmael in Romans.

But there's a, there's a universality of,

of God's love that Paul really does

proclaim, and says, you know, it's not, it doesn't really matter what barriers

we wanna put up. God is in the disrupting barriers

business, and just destroys barriers.

And that, I think, is the beautiful message of freedom here that Paul keeps wanting

us to hear. Yeah. Good point, Wendell.

Any other thoughts?

If we were going to make a rhetorical argument today, what

examples would you use from life, you know, to try to convince people

of, the wideness of God's mercy that can't be contained to a binary of, of sorts? What would be an example you might use?

Mm.

I'll, I'll do a softball, and that's-

Okay

... as an adoptive parent,

I re- realize you can love a child, or that's my

only conception of love, just as much as a biological lineage following the rules kind of a thing.

Thank you. What a perfect example 'cause Paul's talking about adoption here in this very way. Yes, that it ... The heart, the heart is not concerned with bloodlines or, you know, like, whatever, the, a certain way to get a chi- ... The heart is, is so much wider in its capacity. And if that's true of us humans, think of what it is with God.

Yeah. Thank you, Gardell. Perfect example. I agree with you.

That's probably one of the best ways to get to the heart of this. Okay. Yes, Harriet, please.

Yeah, I, I guess I'm

... Even though he does say that this is allegory, I'm, I'm

troubled by raising the issue that some

people are slaves and inheritors of

slaves. And of course, I'm sure in our South, this passage was
r- read a lot. So I, I'm just pointing that out that
this, th- this issue i- is raised that we are not all
humans equal.

Yes. Thank you. Um, unfortunately you are,
very correct that there are passages of Pa- of Paul,
particularly, Philemon in, in particular, that have been used
in, especially in America, to promote slavery,
which is, as we, as we ended last week, and I, I kind of named a
whole list of people who've used this to proclaim freedom and
peace-

Mm-hmm

... including Martin Luther King Jr. himself. Uh, it's ...

You can see how, back to the trusted source, how
important the person who's helping somebody interpret something really
becomes, right? You're like, "What are their motives?" And, and
that's why Paul brings us to chapter five, where we're about to turn, but
like-

Mm

... to say, how will you know if the way a person is
interpreting this falls in line with the actual freedom that God gives us?
'Cause if you're free, maybe you can say anything you want about it, right?

You might be able to say, "Hey, he mentions slavery, so slavery must be good." Which in fact what he's trying to say at the ...

I, I would make the argument as we just did, he's trying to say that slavery is only a human construct, an evil and destructive one at that, and in fact, we are all ... There is no slave or free, as he said back in, in chapter three.

Mm-hmm.

Right? So it, it, it's hard for me to imagine somebody reading the gifts of the spirit, the fruits of the spirit, reading chapter three's conclusion of there is no, slave or free, and not somehow seeing that, that Paul is proclaiming freedom for all. But what ...

But we, what we can't lose sight of here is that people have been able to.

Yes.

Like, people, people can take any old thing and twist it and, and just make it that much evil by taking something very, very good, which what, is what makes Paul so angry. And so if you're feeling angry about how people can use that to, to, to promote slavery, you're correct. This goes back to Clark's idea of zeal.

This is where we should have some zeal, and be angry about that because,

any time people are, are using, s-

scripture to prove their point of why they need to keep people enslaved and

keep themselves in power and keep themselves making more money, you can believe

it's probably a false gospel narrative.

So yeah, you're getting to the heart of why Paul even wrote this letter here,

Harriet.

Mm.

Good point.

I, I, I think too, Hillary, that I, in this context, Paul is saying we

are the, the slaves to, to sin and to the law.

Um, i- i- if you wanna, if you wanna bind yourself to the law or, or rely upon the

law, you are a slave. You're a slave to that.

Uh, not so much the, the physical being a slave.

Uh, and again, in Philemon he was saying that, you know, if, if you're a

slave, if you're not, wherever you find yourself, that's okay

because, because you're no longer under the law.

And that's an important message.

I ... W- we're, what we hear in Paul is him speaking to the realities of his

day, right? You know, like, he was infinitely relatable

in that he was taking things what we would call ripped from the headlines.

Mm-hmm.

So if we were talking about this today, we might, instead of talking about

just slavery versus free, we might say something like, you know, somebody who is, not a natural born citizen but an immigrant, right? Like, we w-

Right

... we might make something like that as a, an example of actually those distinctions only matter because we've put up borders that says this country is here and that country is there. You know-

Mm

... like, that's, that's a manmade artifact-

Mm

... artifact that, that Paul is railing against. Yes, please, Harriet.

I don't, I don't mean to get into the weeds, but,

just looking at "Tell me, you who desire to be subject

to the law, will you not listen to the law?" And I thought the

law began with Moses, and so the people of Abraham were

not u- That was not the law.

Yeah. So-

So I just-

Good point. Yes. The, the law itself comes

down from Moses, and so that's another part of what Paul's trying to say.

He's like, "Look, even before there was a law, there was the covenant.

And so, like, we're actually-"

Mm

... "more interested in being in the covenantal relationship because the law-"

Mm-hmm

... "came later because you all needed a disciplinarian,"

as he's saying.

Right.

" 'Cause y'all couldn't get it right." So yes, like, yeah, I

mean, that's it too. Like, it's, it's that the law isn't even the main

point to begin with. The, the, to begin with-

Mm

... is the p- is the, um-

All that

... familyhood of, of people.

Right.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Lena, please.

Doesn't Paul also say that,

you

... Abraham got to where he got to because of his

faith, his faith. There was no law, but he

surely had faith.

Thank you.

And when you think about what he did, you have to have faith, you know, to just take up and go to an unknown,

uh-

That's absolutely right, and it reminds us of what we were saying last week,

in that, that verse where it, it could read that it is it ...

faith in Jesus's faith that we're, concerned ...

Because Abraham's faith was pretty good, and it still wasn't

perfect. Jesus's faith is the perfect faith, and so we have faith in

Jesus's faith. You're, you're absolutely right.

The faith piece is the, is the critical juncture point here.

Are we going to live as though we believe that we're free?

That's his main question for us. Yeah.

Let's turn to chapter five and see what that would look

like, you know? Okay, we've spent a lot of time now talking about sin, a lot of

time talking about what it feels like to be, captured by

sin, and then giving ourselves over to something else, like the law.

Now, how do we know what freedom looks like?

If somebody would be so kind as to read chapter five, verses

one through

six. Thank

you, Gardell.

Christian liberty.

When C****t freed us, he meant us to remain free.

Stand firm therefore and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. It is I, Paul, who tell you this.

If you allow yourselves to be circumcised, C****t will be of no benefit to you at all. With all solemnity I repeat my warning: everyone who accepts circumcision is obliged to keep the whole law. But if you do look to the law to make you justified, then you have separated yourselves from C****t and have, let's see, fallen from grace.

Is there one more? Christmas?

Yeah.

Or Chri- Christians, you are told by the Spirit to look to the faith for those rewards that the righteous hopes for.

And then verse if you don't mind.

Okay. Since in Jesus Chri- in C****t Jesus, whether you are circumcised or not makes no difference.

What matters is faith, that it makes its power felt through love.

Here we go. Thank you. The word Paul is using there is agape, one of the most important words in the whole New Testament, the type of love that isn't just,

I like, you know, wh- when we describe, "I love pizza." It's not that.

Uh, it's not like saying, I love my brother or

sister or my dad, right? It's not that kind of love.

It's the sort of love that is self-giving, sacrificial love, the sort of

love that is, a service love that gives of its whole

self. Um, and always used in conjunction with the way

Jesus loves, of giving, giving God's whole self, Jesus' full, whole

self. Um, they have different words for love within the New, the

New Testament, but that one in particular is often reserved for Christ-like

love. So when we hear it, our ears think, "Ah, the way Jesus

loves." So what do you all hear in that, in that first part of chapter

five?

Yes, please, Lori.

I, I'm, I continue to be confused by a lot that Paul is

thinking.

That's okay. It's Paul.

But, is he saying that, that, I mean, apparently

some people did follow the false

teachers and, and went through Judaism to

become Christian and were circumcised, but is he saying here that

so you're out of luck, or is ... Can they still have

faith and

redeem themselves?

Yeah, great question. There's never, there's never a chance that you can't always come back to God, so, so good point. Like Paul ...

But what Paul is trying to say is, if you do this, you have to do all of it to actually, like if you were going to live as, somebody under the law, that means all of it too, and you have to do it perfectly, which nobody ever does, is part of his point.

You know, there's the Ten Commandments, and then Moses comes down off the mountain and gives another on top of those and then every rabbi after that gives their own midrash that has interpretations on the law and more laws on top of that. So, like, guess what? You gotta, you gotta do it all perfectly and then keep up to date on the newest of laws, and even then you still won't get it right. Like, so Paul's like, "Good luck." Like d- why would you do it?

So, yes, to your point, it's more, more rhetoric to be like,

"Come on now." You know?

In for a penny, in for a pound. Yeah.

Sorry, Dad, what, what did you say?

In for a penny, in for a pound.

In for a penny, in for a pound, exactly, and you'll never, you'll never get it all the way. You'll never get it. It's the

idea of, how,

how terribly sad it is, it, or would be,

if we thought we had to earn our way to God, we would get it wrong

every, and like never have a way to get to God.

If you let yourself think about that, Good Friday's a good day to contemplate that,

that truth, because on Good Friday we sit at the foot of the

cross. Um, most communities, and it's true of St.

Columbus, we don't even have communion from the reserved sacrament, so you feel the

absence of, of the, of C****t. Not that

C****t is gone from us, but there's an absence of C****t we're supposed to

contemplate, of how sad and utterly,

unachievable it would be, to become heirs and, and children of

God without God reaching to us, and that's what Paul is, is,

is getting at the desperate heart of that here. Yeah.

Other thoughts?

Well, that's interesting because it

sounds more like you become a slave in the American way.

Ooh.

You never can escape it if you're trying to follow the

law, and you're always failing, and you're always in this

disadvantaged position. You just ...

And then your children are born into it, and you d- it takes

a greater act to lift you out, and then you're, it all falls away.

Gardell, I think that's so stu- I never thought about the idea of how, how much more like chattel slavery this becomes for us who have that, part of our history, like that we understand it here in America, and how absolutely correct you are. There's no getting out of it because remember Paul thinks of sin as the water we s- we swim in, like that, the, the, oppressing force that we need to be liberated from, and there's no one liberating us without C****t.

Yeah, great point. Anybody else?

Yes, Anne, please.

Um, well, the last line I just love, six, about for in C****t Jesus neither circumcision or uncircumcision counts for anything. The only thing that counts is faith working through love.

I mean, that seems to say it all, but it also kind of relates back to, chapter four a little bit about the hereditary, you know, where you have to fit, you have to be of a certain lineage. Um, that doesn't count for this. Everybody's accepted who wants to come to C****t.

Yes. And that's the brilliance of what Paul is saying.

There's no more distinctions. Hard for us humans.

Like, our brain likes distinctions.

Like, it actually helps us stay safe sometimes, you know, to be like,

"Okay, that's good, that's bad, that's hot, that's cold.

Touch it..." You know, like, like our brain, it helps us stay alive, 'cause we make quick decisions about this or that.

But you can see when left unchecked how detrimental that can be, because, something like racism gets baked into that, right?

You know, like-

Mm-hmm

... if we quickly see white good, black bad, we have a problem that we actually need to unlearn, that our brain actually needs to unlearn. And what Paul is saying is the, the law actually, can get us trapped in that thinking, because it can make us say somebody who's circumcised, good, somebody who's uncircumcised, bad, right? And we've seen this in religion.

You know, like, people who, who we, we think are predestined good, people who are predestined to h**l bad, right? You know, like-

Mm-hmm

... w- as though we can make these distinctions, when it's only God.

G- God's the only one who can make distinctions, and God's said no distinctions.

Really difficult for us humans to rise above it, but Paul is trying to say learn to. Keep learning to let your, your binary lens continue to drop. Really

hard work. Anybody else?

Well-

Yes, please, Gabby. Oh, Lena and then Gabby.

Yeah. In view of what we've been saying, it just boggles the mind

as to how some people, some people, some human beings can say o- on what basis that you will be going to h**l and we will be going to heaven.

Yeah. It does boggle the mind.

The more, the more I hear you and what everybody else here has been saying, the more I do not understand that view.

I just do not understand.

I, I'm with you there-

So thank you, everybody, for what you've said, and Hillary

... Lena, I am right there with you that it's, it's, um...

There is such a wideness in God's mercy, to quote that hymn here.

Mm-hmm.

Like the wideness of the sea, right?

Like, there, there's no way to even see the end of it except if we start putting things in, like, like circumcision, like law,

like racism. Like, whatever it is that we put as a distinction is the

only distinction that's there, and Paul says it's a sin. So yeah, very much so.

Gabby, please go ahead.

Um, yeah. Um, I'm so glad you mentioned that.

That's one of my favorite hymns that, um...

So I really love it. But,

I'm just... Uh, and I'm glad you mentioned that this

love, you know, it's not the, you know, I love

chicken nuggets whatever type of love.

It's, you know,

it's that, um...

Well, we all know it when we feel it and see it, that sort of, you know,

sacrificial, but m- you know, full of mercy and

grace. But I'm struck by, that the law is fulfilled by love

your neighbor as yourself

or the golden rule, and, that it

is perfectly... Like, it's, for me, you know, everyone's

different, the golden rule is universal.

You know, in every relig- every world religion, every indigenous religion has

some version of it, whether it's pos- positive or negative.

So for me, that is, the closest thing we've got to an

objective

moral compass. But yet it's so

perfectly subjective, because to love your neighbor as

yourself requires us to know and love ourselves, to really truly love other people. So, um... And yet at the same time, it requires s- you know, sacrifice and mercy and, and, you know, trying to comprehend. People's situations are different to ours. So for me, there's just a lot in there, in that, that statement, that fulfills all the law. It, you know, it sounds so simple, the love your neighbor as yourself, but, it probably takes a lifetime to be able to do it with, um-

And what you're really pointing us to is what a mature faith looks like, right? You know, Jesus, w- in Jesus' time, Jesus could have never imagined, that we would have to face, nuclear war, right? Like, that's not something Jesus, told us an exact teaching on, right?

Or that we would be in a climate change crisis of our own making, right? That's not something Jesus speaks directly to, except that He, He gives us the tools, as you're saying, to live a mature life of faith. If, if the principle is to love God, neighbor, and self, then we have to really think about is war ethical?

Um, is, is destroying the planet ethical? Right?

Like, the, these, these sorts of questions become the, the, the litmus point for a, a mature faith to really wrestle with.

Um, yeah, very good.

All right, anybody else?

Okay, let's keep going, and then we'll be lined up nicely for the fruit of the spirit next week. Um, would somebody please read verses through... Let's take it all the way to through

Thank you. Go for it, Florie.

Oh, I think you might be muted, my friend.

You were running well. Who prevented you from obeying the truth? Such persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. A yeast leavens a whole batch of dough.

I am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise, but whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. But, my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I'm still preaching circumcision?

In that case, the offense of the cross has been removed.

Mm.

I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves.

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters. Only do not

use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.

For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Thank you. Yeah. A bitterly sarcastic line there in You know, like, he's basically saying that when they perform this circumcision, he hopes the knife slips. Like, that's how ... that's how he's- he's really getting into it.

I mean, Paul doesn't mince, mince his words, pun intended.

Yeah.

Who has a thought?

Save us from terrible puns.

What are your thoughts on this section?

One thought-

Well, one-

Oh, please, go Window. Go right ahead.

Yeah. One thought I have is to love your neighbor, you, um... it's complicated, because,

you have to know your neighbor.

And, I- I teach,

Sunday school to, pre-K and K

kids and we

were talking about the Good Samaritan the other day,

and that's your neighbor,

and that's challenging. And in today's context,

sometimes my neighbor is a person with whom I totally

disagree on important issues. How do you love that

person? That's a challenge to me.

That's right. That's right. I think it's a challenge to literally anybody who's

taking it seriously. You know, Jesus even says, you know, it's easy to

love somebody who loves you. What... you know.

You're right.

That's, that's easy. The trick is the love your enemy part, love your neighbor who

is the one who is pushing against you. Yeah, you're so right.

You're so right.

I, I think the section here that kind of jumped out

at... you know, with, with, with the freedom of, of

grace and under the law, it also comes with responsibility.

And kind of piggybacking on what Gabby said, I think the law, it- it's all

about intent. Um, I- I've made mistakes so that...

under the best intention, you know. Does that make me a bad person?

I don't think so. It just, it just, for all the right reasons.

But when Paul says here, um...

if I could find it here really quick. Yeah.

"For you, for you were called to freedom, brethren,

only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through

love be servants of one another." Uh, you know, with the Epicureans, we

should eat, drink, and be merry, 'cause it doesn't matter what you ...

Uh, that, that's not the intent of the law, and Paul is kind of telling them that.

You have great freedom now, don't take it as, as a license

to do whatever you wanna do, 'cause it- it- i- comes back to how you treat people

and how you treat yourself and the intent of it all.

Uh, that's a pretty important message.

I think it's really huge, because people, people...

if you just read the first part of Galatians, you would know that Paul's mad and

he was a serious guy, but you might have thought he was like, "So do whatever you

want. You're free." No, no, no, no.

Paul is not interested in us just having a feelgoodery here of, like, anything

goes. What he's about to move us into, and why it's a good

place for us to pause, is he's about to say living

outside of the law is actually much more serious,

much harder, in fact, and actually puts you at a

higher threshold, for what is, what counts as good behavior. Because you no longer have the disciplinarian just slapping your hand when you do something wrong like a little kid. We expect more from adults in their ethical behavior than little kids, right? Now, you might say, "Ugh, then maybe I do wanna go back to the law." What he's gonna remind you over and over again is, but you are C****t. You, you don't... you're not just some Joe Schmo anymore, right? Like, you're not just a little kid anymore. You have... you are C****t. You have been baptized and are C****t to the world. Which means not only do you have an obligation to do this, you actually have the power to do this from the Holy Spirit. And, and it's, um... what he was going to want us to see is that the more we live this way, the more we live the fruits of the Spirit, the more the Holy Spirit and our will become knit together as one. So it will actually be harder for us to live outside of the way God wants us to live than if we just were just doing the law anyway. Right? So that... we're gonna pause there as a little precursor to, don't worry, Paul's not just a feelgoodery. It is not some hippy-dippy anything goes. But actually, though, he's gonna tell us what real freedom looks like. It's the freedom to love. Yes, Anne, I see your hand. Go for it.

Um, I had a question about what that term, um...

it's, it... right, right before verse it says, "In that case,

the offense of the cross." I, I don't understand that.

Ah. Paul will use the phrase the foolishness of the cross or the offense of the

cross or the scandal of the cross often in his writings,

because he wants us to remember how very scandalous it is that we

have a God that's, one, willing to die the death on a cross, which

was considered by the law a scandalous way to be, right?

You know, like, C****t shouldn't even be our Messiah by the law, because He was

hung on a cross, which would have been the worst way to die.

But also the scandal of God loving us beyond what we want, like,

w- what we could even imagine. So the scandal is that God is

doing something that no self-respecting god would ever do, and if we

don't see that, we lose how important the cross is. Yeah.

Thank you. Thank you.

You're welcome. Thank you, all. We'll see each other next week.

Yes.

I'm looking forward to it.

Bye.

Thank you, Hillary.

Thank you. Bye, Dad.