

Josh Mangelson 00:17

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

Karin Peter 00:33

Welcome to "New'Brew", the *Project Zion* series that takes us through the New Testament by explaining, exploring and experiencing the text, and our guides to the New Testament are Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith. I'm your host, Karin Peter. Again, as we begin, I'd like to remind our listeners that you can view all of the "New'Brew", and "He'Brew" and "She'Brew" episodes, and see Tony and Charmaine's slides on the *Latter-day Seeker Ministries YouTube Channel*. So, check that out. They make great Christian Ed lessons for congregations and groups and families. In today's episode, we are still, it feels like an eternity, and I think it's like the second one, maybe the third one, exploring the letters from Paul, and today we're going to talk about the letter to the Galatians. And my favorite thing about this letter that I remember from seminary classes is that Paul is totally ticked off when he's writing this letter. And he puts that in everybody's knowledge right off the bat, that he is not a happy camper. And so, let's listen to what Paul has to say when he's not happy.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 01:51

Not, not happy.

Karin Peter 01:52

That's the cleanest way I can say that at the moment, because that's not what came to mind. But that's how I'm going to express it. Let's, let's see Paul when he's not at his best. So, what's going on?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 02:01

Well, and I would guess that Paul would say, I think he might disagree with not being at his best. I don't think he...

Karin Peter 02:08

Oh.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 02:09

I don't think he was ashamed of being angry when it was justified. And he would have certainly felt that it was justified in this case. And we'll, we'll try to explain why. He might have been a bit of on a rant but, but you're right, he is not going to let anyone wonder what his attitude is as he's writing this. And it starts out that way.

Tony Chvala-Smith 02:32

I would say of all the literature of the New Testament, Galatians comes closest to being a Lewis Black rant. So, it's...

Karin Peter 02:43

Everybody's queuing up Netflix and googling Lewis Black.

Tony Chvala-Smith 02:45

They'll be shocked that Tony knows that, but they shouldn't be. But, yeah, this, this is really the snarkiest, sassiest, most sarcastic letter in the New Testament.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 02:57

But the reason is because of what Paul feels is at stake, and you have to keep that constantly in front of you, otherwise it just looks like he's being self-indulgent on a, on an anger rant. But no, there's for him the very, very heart of what he has come to know and believe as Christ's work, Christ's presence with us, is at stake. So.

Karin Peter 03:25

Okay.

Tony Chvala-Smith 03:26

So, we have, this is a, an honest to goodness letter, a piece of correspondence, and there's tons of letters. We have thousands of examples of letters in the ancient world, so, it's interesting to compare what goes into a Pauline letter compared to, you know, just general letters, just, you know, common letters in ancient world. But two things to know about a letter as a vehicle for Paul teaching, and we mentioned this with Corinthians, this is ad hoc pastoring, right. There are no pastoral care textbooks. There's not even a New Testament. There's no theological text to work from. Everything is ad hoc, right. Paul's having to work it out, on the fly, based on his experience, his Jewish background, his understanding of Christian traditions he's inherited and received. So, there's ad hoc pastoring, and there's ad hoc theologizing. So, he's, he's got to deal with a situation that's right in his face.

Karin Peter 04:23

I want to, I just want to put the caveat; do not try this at home. Paul was a professional. Do not...

Tony Chvala-Smith 04:29

Exactly, exactly, yes, yes. Especially don't try it from the pulpit. We don't need ad hoc sermonizing, so yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 04:36

Well, I think one of the things to realize here, and this is really important with Paul's letters, is that they are the earliest Christian writings we have. And he is, there isn't a theology, a all the way thought through theology. They're, Christianity's still basically under Judaism, and so it's a sub-sect, you know, underneath that. But there's, there's not a lot in place yet, as far as a consistent idea about even things like, what did Jesus' message in his death and his resurrection mean? What does that mean? So, Paul has, from his own experience, a depth of understanding, his, his Jewish background and his experience of seeing the risen Christ. But he's having to put this into words, and not just for people who are Jewish as well, but for Gentiles who may have just a passing knowledge of the Jewish God. And so, this is quite a challenge to try and draw on all of those things, to explain this, to make it make sense, and to

help people make sense of their experience of the Spirit or their experience of community, or their experience of trying to live in a different way than their neighbors in a Roman culture where this might not be looked upon kindly. So, there's a lot of pieces. So, we get to see, as some people would say, the sausage being made. And, you know, and the parts that, you know, we're not used to seeing as far as Christian theology, but also Christian life. You know, this is, these are new ideas. These, how do we explain them? How do we help people take them in and live them?

Tony Chvala-Smith 06:38

So, we're working through our usual order of stuff. Who wrote this? Well, Paul wrote this. This is his characteristic style. He very likely had a scribe, because at the end of the letter, he says, "Now this part of the letter, see I'm writing this in my own hand," right? So, it means the scribe was trying to keep up with him as he's ranting on which would have been very interesting.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 06:59

But also, isn't that where he says, "Do you not see what big, big letters?"

Karin Peter 07:04

Oh, that's right.

Tony Chvala-Smith 07:05

Yeah. And, and "...let, let nobody trouble me from now on. I bear the marks of Jesus in my body." In other words, he, he has been whipped and beaten, and so on for his, his teaching. And so, he said, I don't wanna have to deal with this stuff anymore, so stop it.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 07:20

But in effect, his writing it in big letters at the end would be a little bit like us using all caps.

Karin Peter 07:27

While we're texting.

Tony Chvala-Smith 07:31

Exactly. But interestingly, this letter, he doesn't name coworkers at the start, so I, it's hard to know what to make of that. Typically, he will name, you know, Paul and Sosthenes or, and so on, but here he doesn't. And what could that mean? It could mean maybe his coworkers were out doing stuff, and he just had to get this out, or whatever. We don't know. Well, the next thing is, where is it sent? So, this is a complicated question because it's sent to the churches in Galatia. But this is complicated because there's, there's the Roman province of Galatia, which is in the southern, kind of, southern part of, of Turkey, and that's the one mentioned in the Book of Acts where Paul goes to Iconium, and Lystra and Derbe, those cities. That's, that's Roman Galatia. But then in chapter three, he refers to the Galatians as Galatians. And Galatai, in Greek, means Celts, there're Celtic peoples. And in the Roman Empire that ethnic group lived further north, and there's no record anywhere else in the New Testament of missionizing there. But you wouldn't typically call residents of the Roman province "Celts" because there weren't many of them down there. So, the question scholars struggle with is did he send this to the church as mentioned in Acts, or is this a whole missionizing venture we don't know anything else

about further north, but we'll just keep calling them Galatians. And they're, they're somewhere from what would be central Turkey today. So, and it's to several congregations, not to one, meaning this letter was carried by someone Paul trusted and was read in each of these communities as they met. I'm glad that I didn't draw the short straw for reading this letter to, 'cause, 'cause this was not likely to be received well, so.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:12

Though it must have been received well enough that it was not destroyed in all settings.

Karin Peter 09:17

Yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:18

And it was copied...

Tony Chvala-Smith 09:19

Yes.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:19

and passed on to...

Karin Peter 09:20

And kept, yeah. See, I can imagine, like, our congregations today getting a sermon mailed to them from, from some supervising ecclesiastical authority, we won't name names, but to get that kind of a rant coming out, that would spark some resistance.

Tony Chvala-Smith 09:39

Well, chapter three, "You stupid Galatians!" I mean, I highly recommend you not writing a congregation with that. But so, so, when? Well, this, this letter is earlier probably in Paul's writing career after I Thessalonians, maybe before around the time of I Corinthians, but definitely way before Romans. So, so everybody's best guess is like around 54 to 55. Again, that's pretty early for Christian literature, but that's, that's a pretty good ballpark, ballpark guess. And then why? What's the occasion of the letter? Well, that's, we're going to spend a lot of time on that. But the short, the short answer for starters is that this group of churches that Paul founded are defecting from him, because teachers have come in teaching another, what Paul calls "another gospel", which is no gospel. That's a part of his snarkiness. They're teaching another message. And they're, they're basically, they've come in to correct Paul's sort of deficient message, and...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 10:43

As they would see it.

Tony Chvala-Smith 10:44

As, they would see it, and, and so, so Paul is dealing with the prospect of losing all of these communities to another version of Christianity that he sees as highly, highly problematic and have, a

version that has moved away from what is the central message that he and other Christian leaders agreed on that would be preached to Gentile communities,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 11:09

But it is moving back towards traditional Judaism. And so, you, I mean this is another one of those places where you can see that Christianity is still in the, you know, in the cradle of Judaism, and that it's, it's differentness is going to emerge slowly, and the necessity for it to be its own religion. But this is one of those places early on where Paul is saying no, we can't, we can't pick those other pieces up again because they nullify what the original message that he brought to them was, which was...

Tony Chvala-Smith 11:52

Yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 11:53

...which was that it's, you are not made right with God by the doing of stuff, of the keeping of certain rules, that, that Jesus' presence, I'm jumping ahead a little bit, but that Jesus' presence with us, as God's love made real, tells us something completely different about who God is. And that is that we are already known and loved and accepted by God, and that we can live in that knowledge. We don't have to keep proving ourselves. It's, that's not how we get right with God is showing how wonderful we are, how perfect we are, but that God is made, has made it possible for us all to know our worth, in, in Christ. So, so that's the message that Paul said, sees as essential, that this, that believing in Christ, and thus believing in, taking in this awareness that you are completely known and loved by God. That's the turning point. That's this new thing.

Tony Chvala-Smith 13:10

So, let's, we're going to flesh that out a little bit. And what we'll, what we'll do for fleshing that out, we want, we want to step back into a big context, and then a small context, 'cause that's gonna be really important for, for this letter. So, here's, here's the big picture, and this, this is probably not as widely known as it should be in Christian circles, but prior to the year 70 of the Common Era, when the city of Jerusalem fell to the army, army of Titus, and the second destruction of Jerusalem basically, prior to that, Judaism was incredibly diverse, was an incredibly ultra-diverse religion, right. You've got the Pharisees and you've got the Sadducees, and you've got the scribes and you've got the Herodians, about whom we know very little. You've got Essenes out in the desert. You've got Hellenized Jews out in the diaspora, out in the Roman world. And then you've got Jews, for example, in Alexandria, who are mixing Platonic philosophy with Judaism.

Karin Peter 14:10

That's the west coast. That's us.

Tony Chvala-Smith 14:12

Yeah, yeah.

Karin Peter 14:12

That's where we'd be. I'm good with that.

Tony Chvala-Smith 14:14

Yeah. Alexandria, California. So, you've got different Jewish liberation movements, kind of, forming. And then you've got all these Gentile synagogue groupies who don't fully convert, but who hang around the synagogues and who try to adopt as much of Judaism as they can without fully converting and they form this buffer between the synagogue and the rest of the Gentile population.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 14:38

And by the way, in Acts, they see that being where Paul makes his inroads most...

Tony Chvala-Smith 14:44

Yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 14:44

...is with these, these Gentile hanger-ons, the groupies who can fully accept Christ without having to accept all the Jewish law, so they're, they're...

Karin Peter 15:00

That circumcision had people not wanting to go the Jewish route. I mean, that's just...

Tony Chvala-Smith 15:03

Exactly.

Karin Peter 15:03

...bottom line.

Tony Chvala-Smith 15:05

Oh wait, except the Galatians. We'll get there in a minute. But think of these, the God fearers is what they're sometimes called. They're kind of like, they're kind of like Dead Heads, right, following the Grateful Dead around as close as they can get, but. So, then there's also the common Judaism of, the localized Judaism out in the countryside. There's that. And then there's this weird Messianic movement connected to this guy named Jesus that starts within Judaism. And it's, we'll call them Christians just to differentiate them, but they're not calling themselves that yet. And so, in other words, we've got all these different ways of being Jewish in the mid, mid first century. And, and what, what unites these groups is, is a common disagreement. The common disagreement is, what does it mean to be a real Jew, right? There's this Torah thing. How much of this Torah do we follow? How much do you not? Well, how do you interpret it? What do you do? What is it? You know, in other words...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 16:06

What is the role of sacrifices?

Tony Chvala-Smith 16:08

Right, right, right. So, what is the way to be a true Jew? That's, that's going on within Judaism in the first century. And so, so the Christian movement is kind of, that Jesus starts, is within that, within that

milieu. But then here's the complicating thing; this Messianic movement starts attracting all kinds of Gentiles, and so the question comes up, well, these Gentiles who are coming into this Messianic movement, our Messianic movement, how much Judaism do they have to follow to be really in? And Paul's answer is, none.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 16:48

You can hear the traditionalists just gasping.

Tony Chvala-Smith 16:53

So that's, that's a dispute in early Christianity between adherents of its Jewish roots who want to say, there's gotta be some, or some of them who say, well, there's got to be a lot. And then some, some early Christian thinkers and preachers like Paul, who are like, no, I think the cross put an end to that. In other words, you, this is not the way, this is not the way to enter into right relationship with God anymore. So that's kind of the background there. And so that's the big picture. And then the specific context of Galatians is, is that these, these teachers have snuck in. You know, Paul, Paul forms these churches, and in Galatians, he describes their, they have experiences of the Spirit. They're totally generous. Paul, Paul came there almost accidentally, wherever this place is, he came there accidentally, but through some illness, and they were so generous to him, and they welcomed him. They, they received this message and experienced the Holy Spirit, and at some point afterwards, these teachers sneak in. And what they tell these probably Gentile converts is that oh, you don't know, do you?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 18:11

Oh, poor you. Oh, you'll, you'll understand better once we've enlightened you and brought you up to speed here.

Tony Chvala-Smith 18:19

In order to be a real Christian, you have to first be a real Jew. And in order to be a real Jew, you have to follow these different rules, and by the way, guys, you have to get circumcised. And so, what Paul finds out is that the Galatians were like, alright.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 18:38

Cool.

Karin Peter 18:41

Not the brightest group there, I mean.

Tony Chvala-Smith 18:45

And so, they have somehow come to believe that in order to be true Christians, they've got to do more stuff. And also, the teachers probably told them, and by the way, Paul isn't a real apostle, he came along later. He didn't know Jesus. He was a persecutor, blah, blah, blah. And so that's part of what infuriates Paul. So, he starts off a letter, "Paul, an apostle, not, not by human beings, or by human design, but by God the Father, and Jesus Christ whom he raised in the dead." Paul, Paul says, I'm called, right? And by the way, all those, all of the other Jewish Christian leaders, and I am a Jewish

Christian, by the way, and I really was advancing in Judaism, but all the other Jewish Christian leaders, they said, yep, he's in. He's one of us. So...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 19:29

Don't be using that.

Tony Chvala-Smith 19:30

Right. The teachers, the teachers mislead you. "They bewitched you," he says. So, this is why he's infuriated, right? He's been accused of teaching a defective gospel. He's not really an apostle. And the worst thing is that the Galatians, the Galatian Gentiles, who have been experiencing Christ through the message Paul preached are now told that they haven't really been, they need more stuff and they say, alright, guess we'd better do that then and so they are, they are, they are backing into a place where Paul, as a Jew, knows that they really, they're not going to function, be able to function in that place. So, so, once he finds out what happens, he hollers this letter at his scribe. And I actually say that because this letter in a few places, when you're reading the Greek text, and the English translation will do this, when you're reading the Greek text, he doesn't complete sentences. You know, like, when you're so angry, you can't even complete a sentence and you run on to the next thought. "What they are makes no difference to me," Paul says. It's like he...

Karin Peter 20:32

The scribe's getting it all down.

Tony Chvala-Smith 20:36

And he describes Peter, James and John as, "...those who seemed to be something."

Karin Peter 20:43

Yeah, I'm hoping we get to some of that conflict by the time we're done with New'Brew because that has always fascinated me. Yeah.

Tony Chvala-Smith 20:51

So, it's, understanding this letter requires you to know that this is a, this is a full-bore legal defense. In other words, Paul uses the type of rhetoric that a defendant in a law court, in the ancient world, would have used to defend themselves. He says, let me tell you my story. So, he rehearses his story. And then he says, and let me refer you to your own experience, dear Galatians, that you're now denying your experience. And then let me show you how the arguments of the teachers don't hold up even in a Jewish setting, right. So, he, it's, this is a classic, it's called apologetic rhetoric. It's the rhetoric of the law court. And so, he's, so he's, he's defending himself, his mission, he's trying to defend them. And he's especially defending what he thinks is the gospel, the message of, the message about Jesus. So, the New Testament scholar, Luke Johnson, says this of the Galatians, that I think is a beautiful statement. Now, the Galatians now, who are now into circumcision, and following food laws and so on that, as Gentiles, they don't need to, but Luke Johnson says, "It's like people who were breathing normally asking to be put on a respirator." I think it's a brilliant analogy. And Paul recognizes that. They are denying the freedom that already had come to them through belief in Christ. And for Paul, faith means freedom. Faith is a, faith is a new kind of freedom before God, and to be a new kind of

community. So, and then this letter really is kind of a manifesto about inclusion, about relating to God by trust, and not by desert, by earning stuff. So, it's really, I mean, it's, it's a very, very powerful revolutionary text. And it helped start a revolution, i.e., the Protestant Reformation. And this is one of Luther's favorite texts, this in Romans, and so it's quite worth the read. And also, here's a secret, church life actually does not like this letter. There's too much freedom in it. So, Charmaine, I kind of went on there for a bit. Anything to add as far as just explaining the...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 23:09

Well, I think we've, you know, we've talked about I Corinthians and, and in I Corinthians Paul having to say, you know, you need to, to tighten up your rules a little bit. You need, you've got some, some walls on your, on your highway here that you need to stay between, you know. And you need a little, you need a few rules. Well, the opposite is true here. What Paul is saying, you needed to lighten up. So, Corinthians tighten up. Galatians lighten up. Quit thinking it has, you have to force this in a particular direction.

Tony Chvala-Smith 23:48

It's like, I don't know if I ever, like, shared this with Corinthians. It's like when Charmaine and I used to be counselors at senior high camps a lot, and one of the ways you sometimes start out is, you know what's right, so, if you want me to make rules, I will make rules. It's...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 24:03

So, there's not rules until there's a problem and then there's rules.

Tony Chvala-Smith 24:06

That's right. And in Corinthians...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 24:08

In Corinthians, yeah, they needed a few of those.

Tony Chvala-Smith 24:10

I hate to have to tell you this, Paul's saying, but no, because you're a Christian you can't sleep with temple prostitutes.

Karin Peter 24:16

Yes.

Tony Chvala-Smith 24:17

It's, I am making a rule there.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 24:19

But, with the Galatians, he's saying why, why are you taking on rules that, that neutralize what you've already been given? So, yeah, it's a whole different approach.

Tony Chvala-Smith 24:35

So, Karin, we'll switch now to explore and, and see questions, observations you have. We'll start there and we have a few things to chime in too.

Karin Peter 24:43

So, one of the, one of the first things I was hoping that we could hear a little bit more about goes back to what you said about that, that discipleship, that being a Christian is, you don't get it by earning it, by doing things. First off, in our contemporary culture, that has been shifted to, you become a good Christian by not doing certain things, which I find fascinating, I'm talking about rules. But, and so that's that whole faith versus works situation, that whole idea, that of faith and works. And when we talk about faith in our contemporary setting, it's passive, it's equated with belief. What is Paul talking about?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 25:32

Well, Paul is definitely talking about something more than an idea that you just keep in your head, you know, this idea, oh, I believe in Jesus, I'm good. This is about, for him, belief means letting this, both the knowledge and the experience of God's love that came with, it was possible because of Jesus' message and, and all that he did, death, resurrection. It's, it's letting that change us, letting that change who we are as a community. So now we're, we're not seeing each other as higher and lower, but somehow, this new life that we have in Christ makes us equal to each other. And so, we're trying to live that, we're trying to live in this new way. And, and that means we have to become self-aware of some of the things in us that would keep us from doing that. So, you know, this is kind of, this is kind of spiritual practices, you know. It's, it's how do I, to, how do I change my orientation to myself, to others to the world? And so that's what belief here means. It's about changing the way you live in every day, the way you think about yourself and about other people, the way you think about God, not as some power that's gonna smite you first opportunity they get, but a power that is wanting you to know your value and worth in the world, and how do you live into that. So that's what belief in Jesus means. It means taking on this whole different attitude, this whole different approach to life.

Tony Chvala-Smith 27:22

And when Paul tries to explain what faith is, he's talking about radical trust, and his primary image is Abraham from the Hebrew Bible. He pursues that a little bit here in Galatians, now he'll flesh it out more in Romans, but Paul's completely captivated by the idea that long before there was law and rules, there was God making a promise to Abraham and Sarah, and they trusted it. So, Abraham, put his trust in God, and God reckoned it to him as righteousness as a, in other words, God took Abraham's trust and said, you and I, you and I, baby, we're in a right relationship, because that's what I need. I need, I need you to trust me that I can come through on this. And so that's, and then in Romans, when Paul fleshes that out a little bit further, he talks about God promised Abraham and Sarah offspring, and they're old, and, "...as though they were dead, they, they hoped beyond hope." So, this is, for Paul, faith is a whole bodied flinging yourself on the message of the goodness of God, trusting your all, trusting your whole self to it. He doesn't see it as, it's not a virtue. It's not something you, you work up to. That would defeat it. It's simply awakened as you hear this message, and you just give yourself to it. The closest analogy I can think of in human experience, is the experience of literally falling for someone, falling in love with someone, falling for them. This is our English language, how we talk about it. There's this sense of absolute, unself-aware, un-, complete abandonment of the self in trust towards what one, one is

encountered by. That's, that's, for Paul, the gospel. He preaches about Christ crucified and risen. That awake, it awakens that. In Gentiles, that's the right relationship with God.

Karin Peter 29:24

So, that puts a different spin then when we talk about faith versus works, because then works become actually a manifestation of distrust. So, if we have to follow certain laws, if we have to avoid certain behaviors in order to be faithful, are we, are we saying that we're distrustful of that relationship and that *[inaudible]*?

Tony Chvala-Smith 29:43

If we've just, in that case, then we've just turned the divine human relationship, not into a gift but into a commodity and barter?

Karin Peter 29:49

Yeah, into a transaction. Yeah, absolutely.

Tony Chvala-Smith 29:52

Absolutely. So, Paul's language is highly personal and relational. And for him, faith has a content message about the Messiah who, who is crucified and raised from the dead and now present, and now sending the Spirit. There's, it's not like, it's not just any old thing, it's connected to that. But faith here is, you, you're, you're, you're jump, you're jumping down the hill on your skis. That's about it, right. And so, and that's quite, that's quite different, because in church life, we tend to treat faith as a transaction. You need to do this, this and this, be this, this, and this, don't do this, this and this.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 30:38

You have to have enough of it to get what you want, whether we're talking about prayer...

Karin Peter 30:42

Oh yes.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 30:42

...or God's favor in some way, in some, in some denominations.

Tony Chvala-Smith 30:46

And, oh, and in American Christianity, especially Protestantism, we connect it with feelings. You have to feel a certain thing too, right? You have to feel like you were born again. You have to have an experience of a particular kind and so on. Paul doesn't mean any of that. Faith is radically entrusting yourself to a God who has made a promise that God's going to come through for us in Christ. That's it. You throw yourself on that. So.

Karin Peter 31:14

And trust with abandon.

Tony Chvala-Smith 31:15

Yep, yep. So then, for Paul, like in this letter, works, whatever works they are, would be, would be faith working through love, right? It's...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 31:28

It's after the fact. Faith comes first, actions follow. But what he's upset about is where people are saying, the actions have to come first. And then maybe you're okay with God.

Tony Chvala-Smith 31:42

And thus, he refers in chapter five to the fruit of the Spirit. Oh, it's not the fruit of our moral life. It's the Holy Spirit he's talking about: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, meekness, self-control, and so on. These things, the Galatians, like, we want rules. We want the Torah and Paul says, you don't need that. The Spirit is in you.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 32:02

It's already giving you what you need.

Tony Chvala-Smith 32:03

Love, joy, peace. Follow that. Do that, right? That would be faith working through love. So, but it's, strangely it's a little too radical for most church life, I'm afraid.

Karin Peter 32:19

Well, I think, I think if we're honest, all of us can say there are times when we've moved from that because we want different things from our religious experience. So, we want control, or we have an agenda, or we want certain things to happen, or...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 32:33

Or, we want status, or we want...

Karin Peter 32:35

Want status, yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 32:36

Then somebody else or more...

Karin Peter 32:38

So, the whole idea of a level playing field, equal around the table, live in, in these fruits of the Spirit, that doesn't sound as much fun as the way the game is played in many places.

Tony Chvala-Smith 32:54

Well, yeah...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 32:54

Because the way the game is played in those settings is borrowed from our cultures...

Tony Chvala-Smith 33:01

Exactly.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 33:01

...where our worth is, is highly metered and judged by all kinds of criteria in our cultures, in our societies.

Karin Peter 33:13

Yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 33:13

And, yeah, lots of us Christians find it easier to kind of use that as our default rather than this other thing that is what makes us Christian in the first place, is this radical act of love on God's part, seen in Christ.

Tony Chvala-Smith 33:31

Is Christian faith grounded in a gift or is it grounded in stuff we do? And I think for a lot of, a lot of people, it's the latter. When for Paul, and by the way for Jesus, it's grounded in the former. This is, you've been gifted into a whole new way of life. And so, yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 33:50

Some of the folks who find it hardest in our culture are those that we think of as perfectionists, people who have worked very hard in their life to accomplish things, and to make a difference for themselves or for others. And so, the idea of doing and accomplishing and measuring, and doing things that can be seen in the society as good and valuable and important, real, a real trap, in this case, to what Paul is pointing to as God's gift.

Tony Chvala-Smith 34:28

Right. For Paul, Paul's arguing against an idea that's really rife in our culture, which is that your work, your, your worth is dependent on your value and your value is dependent on what you can produce, or what you're achieve-...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 34:42

Or how you're seen...

Tony Chvala-Smith 34:43

Right.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 34:43

...or what you have, or...

Tony Chvala-Smith 34:45

Yeah. And for Paul, Christ has started a whole new world that's completely different from that. That's why Christ is so central to Paul's theology. Christ is the initiator of this whole new world and churches have forever, ever after been trying to catch up to that, or modify that, or turn away from that, because we might...

Karin Peter 35:08

Manage it.

Tony Chvala-Smith 35:09

Right. We much, we much prefer the older world with its, with its status markers, and its who's in and who's out and, and with its love of religious resumes and so on. So, Paul says, no, that's garbage. Stop that.

Karin Peter 35:27

Okay, well, that kind of leads into my second question. In reading through Paul's letters and the other New Testament letters, Paul often invokes grace in his salutations or in his blessings at the beginning and at the end of the letters. When he uses that word, what is he meaning and is it different from what we hear in our context?

Tony Chvala-Smith 35:53

So, grace, the word charis in Greek, is also connected to the word charisma, gift, grace, gift, charis, charisma, grace, gift. God's, God's relationship with human beings, the divine human relationship, an encounter that comes through Christ, is solely gifted. It's gifted to us. That's what grace is about. It's initiated by God. It doesn't come because we were smart, or moral, or wonderful, or in need, whatever. It's, it's just totally a, God is lavishing a gift upon us. That's what grace is about. And that's why it's really hard, especially in cultures that work on the basis of merit and not and not, not, grace the gift.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 36:40

Inherent, inherent value of everyone, yeah.

Tony Chvala-Smith 36:42

So, I don't want, does that help a little bit?

Karin Peter 36:45

It does because we, we've, we use it in so many different ways. We're gonna say grace over our dinner, or we talk about grace, almost as, you know, through God's grace I have, and then we turn around with our list of things we have to do to earn that grace. So, we, it's almost like we, we have lip service to the word because it's scriptural, but we're not really acting in a way that says that we understand what it is.

Tony Chvala-Smith 37:16

Yeah. Yeah, that's, that's definitely, it's, that's both culture and human ego at work there. I think, you know, we, we always think we need to have somehow earned something, right. And that if it's a gift, some how I'll squander it? Well, of course, God knows we'll squander it. So, yet, God lavishes...

Karin Peter 37:37

We're human. He made us. There's no surprise there.

Tony Chvala-Smith 37:40

But the other thing for Paul that, for Paul, to be saved by grace, its primary immediate value for Paul is that, therefore, we can't brag about being Christians, right? We can't, we can't brag.

Karin Peter 37:56

Ouch, ouch. You just, you just, you just alienated part of our audience, yes.

Tony Chvala-Smith 38:03

Well, then, then our work here is done. Paul's like, if, if everything we have is by grace, and we didn't deserve it, then it's obviously not based on whether we're better, or good, or what, it's, it's a gift, and therefore, we can't brag about being saved. We're so wonderful. God loves us so much. It's, it's, it's meant, it's meant to humanize the church...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 38:30

Humble us.

Tony Chvala-Smith 38:31

...and humble, yeah, exactly. If you really, if you really get the idea of grace, you can't say I am, I am so smart and wonderful because I'm a Christian. Say, holy cow, I can't believe I've been drawn into this. I to-, this, this is totally beyond me. There's nothing about me that deserves this, really. And just think how differently Christians would act in the world if they really believed that.

Karin Peter 38:56

Yeah.

Tony Chvala-Smith 38:57

So, that's...

Karin Peter 38:59

Food for thought, maybe more than I wanted this morning as we record this, but good nonetheless. While we're on the topic of Paul's salutations, what else can we learn in the letters from Paul, just by his salutations? They always fascinate me. Sometimes he talks about people.

Tony Chvala-Smith 39:15

Yeah.

Karin Peter 39:15

Sometimes he greets in different ways. What's going on with salutations in these letters?

Tony Chvala-Smith 39:19

Well, I mentioned ancient letters, and this was not one of my specialties because it's, I mean, my hat's off to the, the, the scholars of the ancient world who focus on epistolography, that is the study of ancient letters. Honestly, though, Karin, ancient letters follow a formula that you don't depart from. "Person X to person Y, Greeting. First of all, I thank the gods for you always and I thank..." You always start off with the...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 39:50

Or a Christian one might be, "I thank God for you and I thank God for the association we have."

Tony Chvala-Smith 39:56

So, in an ancient letter, if you miss part of the, if you, if you leave out part of the letter form, oh my gosh...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 40:04

You're, you're sending a message.

Tony Chvala-Smith 40:06

Yeah. It's, it's a loud and immediate message, and so, nobody, you don't break from the form.

Karin Peter 40:12

So, it's a message of disrespect if you do not offer the salutation in the appropriate way.

Tony Chvala-Smith 40:17

Right. And you also have to offer, offer reference to the gods at the end of the letter too and, oh my gosh. So, so Galatians...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 40:25

So, yeah, so how's this different?

Tony Chvala-Smith 40:28

Galatians is different from Paul's other letters, because Paul leaves out the thanks giving. He goes, he goes from Paul, an apostle, this long thing about not, not, not by human design or whatever, but by God who raised Jesus from the dead, and then the first, when the letters, the body of the letter starts, instead of saying, "I thank God for you always in my prayers, because I want, you, you're so amazing, and I just, the Spirit is so powerful." No, no, no, Paul doesn't say that. The first thing Paul says is, "I am dumbfounded that you, that you have so quickly given yourself to another gospel." I mean, it's like, this, this is the, in the ancient world, this is the equivalent of a letter with a hand that reaches out and slaps you in the face.

Karin Peter 41:16

I can only imagine what it would be like to hear that letter and not hear the thanks giving and instead to hear the verbal slap. That's amazing.

Tony Chvala-Smith 41:29

Yeah, that's why I was, I was rearranging my sock drawer on the day that they picked the person to deliver this letter.

Karin Peter 41:35

Yes.

Tony Chvala-Smith 41:36

Ah, sorry, I'm busy. I've got stuff going on here. I don't know how you would actually read that letter to...

Karin Peter 41:41

Yeah.

Tony Chvala-Smith 41:41

...people assembled in somebody's house of different social classes, who have, you know, some of whom have recently been circumcised. And you know, it's like, how do you, how do you, how do you, how do you read this letter? They...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 41:55

I can think of some people who would enjoy it.

Tony Chvala-Smith 42:00

There, there surely was one person...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 42:01

Religious, religious mercenaries who are happy to do that.

Tony Chvala-Smith 42:06

So, there's one person, was one person in each of those Galatian communities who's like, I don't like what we're doing here. I think Paul would disagree, but they can't speak up. And then the letter is read, and they're saying, "Oh, yeah."

Karin Peter 42:18

About time.

Tony Chvala-Smith 42:20

So yes. So, these conventions, these letter writing conventions carried a lot of social weight, and so to depart from them is, it's definitely saying something loud and clear. So, yeah.

Karin Peter 42:34

And hard for us to pick out because we don't have, I mean, our, our writing style and our writing manners are so different, that we wouldn't necessarily pick that up. All the more reason to have a good one volume, Bible commentary on the NRSV Annotated Bible Commentary, at hand.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 42:52

And an *Introduction to the Bible*.

Karin Peter 42:54

Absolutely. Those work over here. Yeah. Yeah. It's really amazing what you can, what you can glean from this that really enhances your discipleship. You don't have to be a Bible scholar to want to have good reference works.

Tony Chvala-Smith 43:11

Absolutely. And if you have a good, if you have a good study Bible, you'll discover that Paul isn't always watching his language very carefully in Galatians. So, for example, in chapter five, Paul's, at this point Paul is pulling out his hair. And he's, he's like, I have no idea what to do with you guys. My little children, you know, until Christ is formed in you, I'm such, in such turmoil, and then he says, "I wish that those who were troubling you would castrate themselves." In other words, the Galatians have now made circumcision, at least the males, the be all end all of what it really means to be a true Christian. And Paul says, I wish those people who'd come in and taught you that, the Greek verb is a strong verb, ekkokoptomi (sp), which means lop off. So, we have no visuals for that, for this.

Karin Peter 44:08

Don't bother going to the *Latter-day Seeker Ministries YouTube Channel* for that. Nope, nope, nope.

Tony Chvala-Smith 44:14

Literally, that's what Paul says. He says, he says that he's so frustrated that...

Karin Peter 44:18

Right.

Tony Chvala-Smith 44:19

...Paul, the Jew who knows all about this, he's a Pharisee, for goodness sakes. That was his background. He knows all about this. And so, he's just like, I can't believe this. And you guys are now into circumcision. It's like...

Karin Peter 44:33

Right, yeah. It helps to really understand his state of mind that he is that distraught over.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 44:40

That's a great word.

Karin Peter 44:44

Okay, so we've made some little foray into how that might look for us today and what Galatians might have to say, but how do we further experience this letter?

Tony Chvala-Smith 44:57

Yeah, well, one more thing probably we should cover is the idea of justification, justification by faith, which is really, really important in Paul's theology, but also in subsequent Christian theology. And so, we'll just take a quick look here, and then we'll move on to experiencing the text. But this is just a couple of lines from Galatians 2. "We ourselves..." Paul, Peter, and so on, "...are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners..." That's Jewish language to describe the outside. "Yet, yet, we know that a person is justified, not by the works of the Torah, but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing works of the Torah, because no one will be justified by the works of the Torah. If justification comes to the law, then Christ died for nothing..." he says. I think that's really key to the whole letter. So, you know, justification by faith is a doctrine, really important in Lutheran churches, important in Catholic churches, and so on. But it's, it's commonly used as a sort of tag; do you believe that we are justified by faith and so on? What does it mean? Well, millions of pages of scholarly ink have been poured out on this, but the Greek verb is dikaiōo, and those, those verbs in Greek that end with two o's; o o [pronounced: ah' ō] that signifies that the verb causes something to happen, so to justify, and there're various meanings here. To cause to be just could mean to acquit, to find not guilty, or to vindicate, as Gary Wells puts it. To set things right is another way to put it, or to restore or establish right relationship. All those meanings kind of come into the word justification. And it's pretty clear that, that for Paul, these meanings fade into each other, but definitely this is about right relationship. That is, how do we, especially Gentiles, how did, how do you Gentiles come into a right, healthy, proper relationship with the God of the covenant? It's actually by faith in Jesus Christ, right. And that's, that's Paul's argument. So, it's interesting in Paul's letters, when you look at all his letters, when does he use justification language, and he only uses it when the issue is some people trying to impose Jewish legal practices on Gentile Christians. That's the only time he uses it. So obviously, justification is a thing that is part of his Jewish framework, but it's, it's not something we do, right. Justifica-, we don't, justification, not something we do, earn, achieve. It's not about us making something happen. It's a gift. In short, we receive justification. And the simple way to think of it is that we, we are accepted fully by God, simply by trusting in Christ. Now, for Paul, trusting in Christ would probably include baptism. He wouldn't see that as separate. But, the, what's primarily at stake there is the act of trust. So, when you take Paul's theology as a whole, the word justification functions like other words related to what God has accomplished. So, Paul uses the word salvation, meaning deliverance or liberation. He uses the word redemption, which comes from the ancient slave culture. It's about release, setting a slave free. He uses the term reconciliation, which comes from ancient politics, about bringing estranged cities together. Sanctification means being claimed and set apart, and then to be called as God's action and drawing us to Christ. In other words, in all of these things, including justification, the actor is God, not us. And so that's, again, what Grace is. Grace is God's initiative and action that precedes our action in creating a whole new relationship for us. So just to sum it up, basically, the Christian life, according to Paul, is about being set free to ride the wave of divine love poured out in Christ. It's not religion, per se, which is often about doing this, this, this and this, but radical life upending trust that a whole new world is being born. I mean, that's, I'm trying to,

best I can, sum up. Justification places us in that brand new world that's being born, ushers us into it. And, for Paul, the Galatians' big problems is that they, they are ushering themselves out of it. So...

Karin Peter 49:37

Yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 49:37

Yeah, exactly.

Tony Chvala-Smith 49:38

So...

Karin Peter 49:39

Maintaining the divisions that the, the false teachers who came behind him.

Tony Chvala-Smith 49:45

Right.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 49:46

Exactly.

Tony Chvala-Smith 49:46

And just one other thing here is that Charmaine and I had an interesting conversation about. All this language, this Pauline language is so, so common in Christian circles that it becomes kind of like cliches, but trying to recapture the radicalness of it in Paul is really important because it gives us whole new ways to think about Christian faith. I mean, liberation, release, set free, you know, set free to ride a wave of divine love. I mean, it's like, those are whole different ways to think about what, what Christianity is really about.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 50:19

Yeah. And so, we're gonna go on into the experience part. And our goal in the experience part is to look at the experience of real people who are writing, in this case a letter, or the people that they're writing to, the recipients. And we're going to do that today. We're look at a little bit more at what would this have meant, what would the situation with the Galatians have meant to some of those who received this letter? So, we'll see if there is anything in their reality that can speak to ours today. So, we know lots of people have been injured by scripture and are hesitant to trust it, or even to make themselves vulnerable to what it may say. And, but perhaps it's really more accurate to say that many people have been injured by people using scriptures in harmful ways. And so, one of the things we always want to do is say, how are we approaching scripture so that you can have a, kind of, a look-see at that? So, we approach scripture as, they're human authored writings that are heavily flavored by their worldview, their culture, their language, and their personal situations, as we've seen here, with Paul in Galatians. And over time, these writings have helped Christians connect to the reality of God and to help them to grow in their faith and their understanding of God. So, in this way, scripture can be a place where we meet, or maybe even are introduced to Jesus, the Spirit, God, but we don't see scripture as

God dictated words, but as the author's attempts to write down their experience and understanding of how God was at work in the world in their time, so that future generations would know. That means that the cultural norms of their times, with all of its blind spots, and its biases, may be present in these writings, as they would be in ours if we were writing something that was read centuries later. So, one of the things we try to do is to not determine if a scripture is valuable by whether it would say exactly what we would say today, because how could it really? It was written 1000s of years ago in a completely different culture, and language, and place. But, there always is the "but" when it comes to scripture, but the purpose of scripture is really to give us a window into someone else's relationship with God, and then to see what might be useful to us in our own relationship with God. So that's what we're going to be doing as we go into the explore part. And today, we'll examine a piece of Galatians and see if it reveals things that have relevance to us, and that can speak to our time and situations. Today's passage shows how radical and world upending, that's kind of funny, I didn't know that Tony was going to use the phrase "life upending", but we both ended up with that, of the early Christian message. What if someone told you, the rules we used in our religious life to live a righteous life, they don't count anymore? The ways we have in our society determine whose most important, they've been done away with. What would it be like to hear that said? And in some ways, that's, that is what Paul is saying. So, going to go ahead, and. So, our passage is Galatians 3:23-29, and it's just a short one, but there's a lot in it. And it really captures a good sense of what Paul is trying to say in this whole letter. So, and it'll make sense now that we've talked a little bit about whole thing about circumcision and the law. And, but then, where does he go with this? So, "Now before faith came..." meaning faith in Christ or before Christ came, "...we were imprisoned and guarded over, guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore, the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian..." And here the word disciplinarian is like the person who in this, in this time would be a slave who accompany children to school to make sure they got there safely. We might think of a crossing guard. So, the law is seen as that kind of a character who helps to keep us safe and on the right track. So, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian. "...for in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God through faith. As many as you were baptized into Christ, have closed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise."

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 56:05

So, you can hear in this passage, the heart of Paul's message and Paul's heart, I think as well, as to why Jesus matters so much, and why he is so angry that they just tossed it aside in order to be ruled by the law. What did that, the message that we are all one in Christ mean to those who heard it? What was at stake by taking on the law instead? What Paul taught about Christ, it equalized people. Women were as important as men. I mean, that's astounding to think about in that time. It's astounding to think about in this time, as we see women's lives being regulated in, in ways that are, are becoming more and more oppressive. Jews were not closer to God than the Gentiles or the Greeks were. Slaves were as important to God as their masters. What an, what an amazing thing to say. This is revolutionary stuff, especially in a highly stratified culture, and Rome was definitely a highly stratified culture. So obviously, in this group in Galatia, or these groups in Galatia, Paul is, that he's, that Paul's addressing, there are women, there are slaves, there are Gentiles, probably a whole bunch of Gentiles, there's probably a few Jews as well, some freeman, maybe there's even some Roman citizens. So, if

you were going to try to live this radical equality that Christ brings, what does going back to the law mean? So just to take a little perspective of the women, and the slaves. So, the, the Jewish law was formed in a patriarchal society. Only men bore the signs of the covenant with God, the circumcision. Men were the readers of scripture, the writers. Men were the clergy. Men were the decision makers. The law, in many ways, reinforced cultural male dominance, placing the woman, keeping the woman in a subservient and secondary position, without an independent identity or an independent connection to God. Slaves in the culture, in the Roman culture, were often not even seen as having their own persona, their own identity. That was, they were to take on the persona of the master or the household. So, Paul's message of freedom in Christ would have completely changed how a slave saw him or herself. But, if the law is the way, then the cultural norms are still in place. A male slave would not even have control over his own body as to whether he was going to be circumcised or not. It's, you, so you get to see the, the complications here for people who, at one point were told you are equal in Christ to everyone else, and then going to the law brings with it this going back under the cultural norms. So, this turning back would, it would end up marginalizing a segment, probably a sizable segment, of the population of these churches; women, slaves, both men and male slaves, and children, and it would be reinforcing the inequities and the inherent social privileges of part of the group. So, it's completely undermining the social change that they've been trying to have. Basically then, taking on the law, in order to be seen, to be seen by some people as a better Christian, would undo all the things Paul sees Christ as making possible. So, the radical equality that Paul says exists in our midst, because we are one in Christ, is undone. It's just been cast aside, and ultimately, you are once again, bound by culture. So, a couple of questions to consider; When have you found yourself constricted, judged, or pigeon holed by community, society, or culture? And just for you to take a minute or two to think about those times when you know what that feels like, when you've experienced that, and then, to go to where the text wants to remind us to go. What would it mean to you to have all the ways that one person is valued over another, replaced with a promise of an equality where you are just as valuable, just as valuable as the richest, or smartest, or most famous person in the world? What would that be like, after having experienced the other? And that's the message. The amazing truth is what Paul says life in Christ, or life with Christ, makes real. So, don't toss it. You know, what he's saying, you don't understand how valuable what you have is. Don't throw it away.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:01:54

So, this passage from Galatians 3, 3 suggests another avenue to pursue that I wanted to, to look at, and it's one that all people in all times face. And we can see it as a temptation that runs through human experience, through all time. So, we're not alone in this. But you'll, you'll notice we mentioned it briefly; the Galatians are quickly convinced that Paul's message was faulty, and that they now, they're on the inside. They have the inside scoop. By doing this additional thing, circumcision, or this set of things, taking on Jewish law and customs, they think they will be closer to God, smarter than Paul, and seen by those, those Judaizers coming from Jerusalem, as truly belonging. I mean, who wouldn't want all that, really? They were driven by what lots of us are driven by; the idea that I can make myself more than I was, and more important than others. So, the idea is that we can be closer to God because we are better or we're more pious, or more religious, or more male, or more zealous for the rules, more creative, more informed, more insightful, more wise. You get the idea. There's all of these things. We just, we can get closer to God if we're just more of those things. But the reality is that this kind of quest is really fueled by our ego. Everything can then become an opportunity to prove that we are better,

higher, smarter than others. We are the makers of our worth, or our value in this picture. So, the heart of Paul's message undoes all of that. It says that God has made a way for all people to have equal standing with God, and it's not by doing impressive stuff, or by showing off our religiousness. No, we are right with God by believing that God loves us, and that's what faith in Christ means. God wanted us to know that all of God's creation is loved, and Jesus' life and ministry were all about showing everyone that we are all God's children. So, believing in Christ means believing that God's love is for all and it rules out vying for approval from God, or making someone else look bad, or competing for brownie points from God, or convincing others that we are more obedient, or more prayerful, or more whatever. The list is, endless. God's love, shown in Christ, is a great equalizer. And, no wonder the Judaizers, those people who came in and tried to undo what Paul had been doing, no wonder they couldn't let it stand. They were all about showing that they were better than Paul's converts. They wanted converts made in their image. It would show that their way of thinking was superior. And so, we get, begin to understand why Paul is really angry. I mean, who wouldn't be when this precious gift of being totally accepted by God is ripped away and replaced with a merit based, provisional acceptance, that you always have to be proving yourself, when who Christ was, I'm going to say who Christ was is God's love present with us, and what he did demonstrated, which was God's care for all creation, all people, when that is dismissed, we are stuck once again, with all the rules and regulations that imprison people, because they make us believe that you have to please God by being perfect, or at least you have to be better than other people. Oh, I'm better than that. So, where does that take us in our own inner thoughts? What if how cool you look, how religious or spiritual you are, how famous you are, how much people respect you, how much power or authority you have, what if none of that counts? And what if you knew deep, deep, deep, down inside, at your very core, that Jesus says you are of equal value and are equally lovable as anyone else, what happens when we let that take root deep inside of us? Where do you think freedom would blossom in your life, knowing that? And then, just a last thought, what in you resists believing this? And if you have a few moments, I'd invite you to take some time to journal your fine, findings. What is it you resist? What, why is it hard to believe this? And then if you want to go back to the passage and see if there's new insights that appear. So, some places to explore and experience.

Karin Peter 1:08:03

Thank you, Charmaine. So, we've gone from Paul being totally ticked off, you stupid Galatians, to this gift of life upending and world upending love, that we need to trust God's love in Christ with abandon. So, thank you for that journey today, for that, and some levity when we talk about Paul. I won't say I'm getting to like him better, but maybe a little, as we go along. Are there any last thoughts on Galatians before we bring our episode to a close?

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:08:47

This letter you need to sit with and read, and reread, and reread, I think. I would say one thing. The good news about Jesus is meant to enrich and extend our humanity, not imprison and constrict it. So, if, if your understanding of the good news is constricting or imprisoning your humanity, might not be the right good news.

Karin Peter 1:09:14

All right. Well, on that, we'll, we'll bring our episode on Galatians to a close. I did find a quote for Galatians. It actually comes from Nadia Bolz-Weber, from her book, *Pastrix*, which is one of my favorites. Since we've kind of explored how Paul is trying to help people understand that there's no longer religious or social or cultural or personal divides, when we talk about life in Christ, Nadia Bolz-Weber, who's a Lutheran pastor and famous writer and speaker, was complaining about some people that she was othering in her own life to someone wise, who said to her, "Nadia, the thing that sucks is that every time we draw a line between us and others, Jesus is always on the other side of it. Damn, she says." unquote.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:10:16

Perfect.

Karin Peter 1:10:19

One of my favorite quotes by her. So, with that, we hope you will join us for our next episode. We're going to look at, I think it's Philippians and 1 and 2 Timothy next time around?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:10:29

We'll just do one, probably just...

Karin Peter 1:10:32

Philippians or. Oh, okay.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:10:32

We'll just do Philippians.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:10:34

And then we'll do 1 and 2 Timothy the time after because Karin, we want to extend your stay in the Paul-...

Karin Peter 1:10:43

All right, well, I probably need it. So that's good. So, until then, our next "New'Brew" episode on Philippians. I'm Karin Peter. This is "Cuppa Joe" our "New'Brew" episodes. And I've been here with Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith, our scripture guides. Thanks so much for being with us.

Josh Mangelson 1:11:12

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