



THE SIMPLE GOSPEL

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GALATIANS: A CHILD, NOT A SLAVE

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Scripture Reference: Galatians 4:1-7

Today we'll be reading Galatians four verses one through seven. I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. This is God's word. You may be seated.

Thank you Hilda, and thanks Linda for letting us know what's happening in the summer. The picnic at the park is a really cool time for all of you to be invited to my neighborhood, down there in Cottage Lake. I live here in Woodville and it's a really great time. So I hope you'll make that a priority and put that on the calendar. Good to see you. My name's Donald. If we haven't met one of the pastors on staff here at Doxa and we've been walking through Galatians these last several weeks. It has been good to be reminded of the very simple gospel and it's in its simplicity that we find so much power and healing. We can be a complicated people and frankly just make things way more complicated than they need to be at times.

That said, I have to say Paul can kind of be a downer at times. I don't know that he got invited to a lot of wine tastings. He's pretty wound up in this book. It's been a very intense first three chapters. I mean, he opens the third chapter with this phrase, who has bewitched you? Which is kind of a way of saying you're so dumb, there must be spiritual forces at work. So he's wound up, he's grumpy. I don't know what his deal is there. I know he's really frustrated, but I'm ready for Paul to change gears.

And now in chapter four today we're gonna see that very thing happen. He's gonna soften a bit and he's gonna swing from a full frontal attack on some of the just lacking philosophies that he's encountering and move towards a picture of the sweetness and the goodness and the kindness and the, just really the fulfilling nature of the gospel.

That's a good thing for us. It's a really good thing for us. He's gonna talk about this pure gospel, the gospel that Galatia received but then added to and subtracted from and modified a bit. His argument through the book of Galatians has been this, really threefold, number one, the gospel is not lacking in anything and requires no modification from you. Number two, Christ is able to save and you are not. And lastly, number three, if you trust that Christ is able to save you, you are a new creation. And that's good news for us.

Chapter four builds unsurprisingly on chapter three. And last week we discussed this really massive question that is actually pretty easy for us in our contexts to skip past, which is this, how do you and I get into God's family? As you read the scriptures, you see the importance of family show up incessantly. God is constantly identifying who is in the family and who's not from the genealogies and the constant discussion and the Old Testament of who was helping God's family and who was harming them to the New Testament where we see Jesus really redefine in a huge way how we understand family and it shattered how we look at family for them 2000 years ago. And it does the same thing for us today. So the question becomes what kind of family are we a part of? Where do you and I fit in the family? Do we see ourselves as the favorite kid or as the rejected and neglected child living under the stairs? And Paul is going to double down today on what God thinks about you and I and that family.

Before we get into that, I just wanna talk briefly about two things that I think might prevent us from hearing what it is that God wants us to say today. Maybe you're in here today at Doxa and you don't have a ton of background in church. Maybe you're just exploring who Jesus is, you wanna know what we're all about and you haven't been taught some of the cultural context of these passages. Of course, there's no reason you would know any of that. That's totally okay. I wanna, I want to help that and serve that. So we're gonna talk about two concepts before we go into walking through that together because if I put on my skeptic hat, some of this stuff could seem pretty strange or even offensive.

Now, Doxa, I wanna be clear. God is absolutely offensive to us at times. Sometimes that his way is very different than the way we would do things or the way we prefer things. Jesus offended the liberal and the conservative in his day and he continues that work masterfully in 2023.

In other words, plenty of people have stumbled on the words of Jesus. And if you hang around him long enough, there will come a time when Jesus offends you too. But as a minister of the gospel, I never want us to get tripped up before we actually make it to Jesus. And so I wanna pray for our time together toward that end.

Jesus, thank you for your word. It's a gift. I just suspect that we don't fully understand or grasp your love for us. We need you to change that in us. We need to be able to recognize whatever truth you have for us today to submit our lives to that because you are for us and for our good. So help us see these things clearly, hear these things clearly. Help me as I preach, help this room, hear your voice in the midst of these things. And I pray ultimately we would recognize

just the intensity of the divine grace and love that you have for us. We pray these things for your Glory. Amen.

So I want Jesus today to say what he wants to say. But first, let's talk about these two concepts. Number one is the idea of slavery. We will see in today's passage that Paul's gonna talk about slaves and the nature of their relationship to their slave owners. And you might say, especially if you're new to the faith or not a Christian, you might say, you know, if the Bible approves of slavery, I can't really take it seriously and I totally respect that. But here's the thing, slavery in the New Testament is not like the horrific slavery of American history and not in subtle ways is actually remarkably different. This is why many translations will actually use the term bondservant here in these passages.

Let's talk about Greco Roman slavery for a moment. Slaves in ancient Greece were generally not identifiable by their skin color or their physical appearance. Slaves were laborers and construction workers, but they were also small business owners and doctors and lawyers. Both blue collar and white collar workers could be slaves. Greco Roman slaves adopted the fashion, the customs, the diet, the haircut of their owners. And both testaments report that slaves were included in religious practices like Sabbath and festivals. Slaves weren't at the bottom of the social ladder. The day laborer was because of the uncertainty that they faced. And this is why day laborers would actually work really, really hard to acquire open bondservant positions because on the whole slavery was something that they opted into.

Why would they do that? Because it was financially and educationally beneficial. It was like an apprentice program just with higher commitment. And they would take on the trade of their master. If their master happened to be good at their craft, then they could learn some really great skills and entering slavery prevented any interest from being charged on the debt that they owed. So if they were in financial trouble, this was a great motivator.

The smartest bond servants would work really hard and save their earnings. They would purchase out their position as well as other slaves that they trained and then start their own thing. So it looked a lot like what we would consider like a small business buyout. Today, bondservants were capable of reaching incredible positions in society.

Now hear me, even in this far different version of slavery, God still creates guardrails. He tells us in the scriptures that masters shouldn't threaten their bondservants. Deuteronomy 15 describes that every seven years everything is supposed to reset and slaves go free. In fact, when they left, you had to send them with grapes and grain and cattle so that they were equipped to begin a new chapter of life.

So here's the big idea. Greco Roman slavery was very different than the disgusting slavery we had in our history as a nation. To be clear, God is strongly opposed to human oppression and to slavery in the form of dehumanizing or trading humans like property. So if you're new around church, I think you will find that the God of the Bible agrees with many of your sentiments about the value of human life and dignity.

Let's look at one other objection you may have as somebody that's new to this context. In today's passage, Paul repeatedly uses the term 'son' and nowhere does he say 'daughter'. I mean he could have easily at least said child, right? And been gender neutral in that.

Why does this passage only use the term sons and sonship? Is this an example of the Bible oppressing women? The truth is, is that Paul is doing something controversial here, but it's not oppressing women. In fact, he's actually taking a provocative and risky position in the exact opposite direction. He's declaring that women have access to God and salvation in all of the same ways that men do. In the same ways that boys grow up to inherit their family's wealth and land and Greco Roman culture, that without hesitation by the loving father, that men and women will inherit the salvation made possible in Jesus. And in a culture where women didn't have the same legal or family rights as men, this would have been a super unpopular opinion. Paul doesn't care. Paul says, you sir, are adopted like a son and you too will receive the fullness of salvation. You ma'am are adopted like a son and you too will receive the fullness of salvation. So from here on out, when we read this phrase, son or sonship, I want us to read equal heir of the kingdom with an understanding of those things, how the New Testament talks about them.

Here's our big idea for the day. God does not just want slaves or bondservants or employees, but something far more and he's going to explain what we are to him in chapter four. So let's look at it together. Verse one it says, I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the dates set by his father. In the same way we also when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

So Paul is saying before you're old enough to inherit the family wealth, you are more like a worker in the house than the owner of that house. So as a kid, you're kind of like a slave in the house and all the kids in the room said, amen. And while one day you will get the keys, it's not gonna happen until it's time. And that's for your good as well as the good of the family. In Paul's time, not unlike our time, you had to hit a certain age to be eligible for legal transfer of inheritance. And importantly, it's not the child that decides this, but the parent Paul mentions being trapped by elementary principles.

What are those? Simply put for the Jews, it's the mosaic law. It's all of the rules and laws that he gives us in the Old Testament for the non-Jews, it's the pagan religions. It's this sort of melting pot of ideas and philosophies and erroneous theologies that frankly, honestly look a whole lot like what we see out in the world today. And Paul uses strong language to connect these lifestyles to being trapped a prison that we can't escape. He says you've been trapped by something that is basic, not divine. It's not even something godlike that's trapped you.

And so if they were trapped, how could they be rescued? Who would break them free? Verse four -- But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman born under the law.

Okay, so now the good news creeps in. God has had a plan for us trapped by rule following and rule breaking and worldly perspectives. He's brought all of this rescue to us at just the right time. It's funny, we could be fascinated with time travel, right? You've got all these older movies like Back to the Future or Bill and Ted. You've got modern examples like Edge of Tomorrow or Looper or Interstellar. I heard somebody say they went to see a movie and all three of the previews that played beforehand were all essentially tied or related to time travel.

We just love this idea of bending time, resetting time, reversing time, traveling through time. Have you ever thought about what it would be like if Jesus had come into a different time and place? I've actually thought about that a lot of times. I mean, think of the times in history that if Jesus were executed it would've been far different than the Roman instrument of death on the cross. What if Jesus were sent to a small village in Mongolia or to a jungle in the Amazon? I mean we know God likes small known for nothing, one stoplight towns. What if Jesus was born in a barn in Carnation, Washington? <Laugh> What would've changed? Did somebody say Amen? Wow, I bet I know where you live. Uh, yeah. Like what would change? What would change? It's hard to say.

Here's what we do know. God ordained, made a plan for, and chose with intention and full control, the exact time and place that the Son would walk the earth. That he chose this scene through a manger in a tiny town 2000 years ago, but only when the fullness of time had come. And here's what I want us to catch church. It wasn't an accident, it wasn't happenstance. It was an act of precision. And if God the Father is precise with his Son, with all of his power, how precise is he with us and our weakness? What would a God who is the source of all wisdom and the very definition of love do knowing that we were the ones that were trapped and needed rescue?

He is precise with us. Let's read and find out what he does again. Verse four, it says, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Okay, so what does that mean? What does it mean for us to be under the law? The simplest definition is that we are ultimately accountable for the ways in which we choose to disobey God. We are accountable for our actions in this life. The ways that we have not kept God's rules for living. And even the most basic rules we take, look at the 10 Commandments. You and I have clearly demonstrated we are incapable of keeping those for any significant amount of time. Some of you are breaking two or three of them literally right now in this room and you should stop that.

Now the tricky part is that the law is a two-edged sword. On one hand it's good because it reveals the nature of the God that gave it, that he's holy, that he cares about the ways that we live. It set the nation of Israel apart. It provided a rhythm for corporate worship. We love that. But the main thing that it did then and does today is reveal the sinfulness of every single human being on the planet who has ever taken breath.

As Eddie showed us last week, the law is a great diagnostic tool. It is a great fact checker, particularly for those who don't think that they need God. But the law has a dark side too, because diagnosing the disease is great. But what about the cure as it relates to helping us reconcile with God? It's worthless. In fact, it's even worse than that.

GI Packer says, the law can only accuse, condemn, terrify, and kill. And here's what I'm trying to say to someone that's already drowning in condemnation. The law is like being tossed a backpack of rocks. It's not only unhelpful, it's hard, it's dangerous, it's threatening.

So then who is under this law? Well the short answer is all of us, you and me and everyone that we know according to what God says, it's all of us. And it's worth noting that you're under the

law whether you believe in God or not, no matter your skin color, your marital status, your religious views, we are all under the law. And without Christ, we sit under the very law that shows no mercy in illuminating how imperfect we are.

But when you meet this man named Jesus, he is so good, he comes alongside us. He takes all of the condemnation that the law can muster and he punches it in the mouth. And he shields you and I from the harshest words, all of the vindictive plans and the harassing attacks. And he calls you and I his own. And that matters a lot because if you're his, there is a whole bunch of things that change for the better for you, including not having to listen to the accusations that the law brings against us.

Again, JI Packer says, when the law accuses you, terrifies you, reveals to you your sin, threatens your soul with the wrath of God, and eternal death. Then you need strong faith in Christ as if there had never been any law or sin, but only Christ's grace and redemption. You need to be able to say - and listen, Doxa to this - law, I will not listen to you... the time has come for me to be free and I will not put up with your tyranny any longer.

That's good. That is the kind of confidence that Christ gives us. I think there's somebody in here who needs to write that down, put it on a post-it, place it on your bathroom mirror, throw it on the dashboard of your car because it is so easy for us to forget how gentle and inviting the voice of Christ is. Doxa, I want to tell you some really, really good news. The voice of Christ, it does not sound like the bully in your head. The voice of Christ is kindness, is gentleness, is a fierce, fierce love.

So what does it mean to receive adoption? Now importantly, Paul is not just borrowing from what we think of when we hear the word adoption. We think of a small child without a parent or guardian being entrusted to a new family for their care. And there's absolutely aspects of that that apply to our adoption. But Paul was pulling from the Greco Roman form of adoption, which was a ceremony when an adult received sonship. And most often it was when a wealthy person either had no kids or they lost their kids and they had to essentially select a suitable heir that then became their son. And after filing papers, they immediately, the son would begin a new life. All their previous debts were canceled. They gained access to all the property and the father became liable for the behavior and actions of the son.

This is a kind of a picture of what you and I receive when we trust Jesus. Only instead of taking applications from leading candidates and filing papers, Jesus chooses to walk the spiritual graveyard and take any dead rotting corpses that want new life. He comes to us in our hopeless state. He moves towards us while we sit sprawled out on the sidewalk with two broken legs. I mean, it's hard to overstate our helplessness and it's also why any religious notion that we contribute or get credit for our salvation is so offensively off the mark.

I think it's easy for us when we think about salvation, to think of it in such a way that it is only the removal of negative things to return us to a neutral position, right? Like a loan I can't pay off is zeroed out. The disease is cured. So now I'm back to normal health. My sin is taken off of me, my guilt is taken off of me and I'm finally back to zero. Church, that is not what salvation is. Salvation is not just negative, brought to zero. You actually gain something so profound. We gain righteousness, we gain spiritual giftings, we gain a new heart. I mean there's a lot of ways

to describe what we gain, but here Paul was painting it as a picture of our sonship, that we gain sonship - what the NIV translates, 'full rights'. And so what we can see in this verse is this movement from slave to son to heir. And that's true for all of us who have trusted Christ.

Let's talk for just a moment about the difference between a slave and a son. Cuz I think it's important for this to be clear for a slave or bond servant, the relationship is essentially tied to duty productivity. If you are a slave owner and a slave comes to you making a request the same way that many of you would do so at your, your employer and saying, Hey, I need a new computer. I need to add some people to my staff team. The slave owner is gonna approach that conversation as, okay, what is this gonna cost me? What is this gonna set me back? And bondservants can come and go and it won't necessarily have a big emotional impact on you as a slave owner.

A son on the other hand, belongs to the Father no matter what. He eats at the same table as the Father. There's a resemblance to the Father. And it's not just clothing, the son is not an earned position, but it is a deep connection decided by their birth, which I might mention the the son has very little part to play in terms of the planning or productivity. It's not a relationship for productivity. I mean a newborn basically produces two things, noise and something else. <laugh>. And some of us here, we think that we're sons, we would say academically or mentally or in the scope of Bible study. Yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm a son. But the truth is, is that we act like slaves.

You might think that God wants you to constantly critique yourself and always be striving to be better and to make sure that you nail your spiritual life and to dig down inside yourself and rise to the occasion and strength and make sure you represent God well. And the truth is, is that sounds a whole lot more like the prince of darkness has planned for your life than it does the Lord of light. And some of us are swimming in it. For some of us it's honestly all we've ever known.

Do you hear the enslavement in those kinds of expectations? Do you hear this transactional, if you do great, then I'll love you a little bit. Church, those ideas are like steel bars that build a prison for us because Satan looks for slaves. God looks for heirs, God looks for sons, God looks for daughters.

What's crazy to me is that knowing what I know about humanity and even just my own heart, God would've been completely justified and right to step into the scene, to intervene in human history and just say that we were his slaves. But he didn't. In his abundant grace, he chooses to do something far more than establish a professional working relationship, a contractual obligation. We don't just get his rule over our lives, his marching orders, his employment. We don't even just get fire insurance for the hell that our rebellion deserves. We get relationship, and I'll say this as reformed Christians, we know that God is passionate about his glory, but we forget that he is passionate about our flourishing. He's passionate about our relationship.

Let's read these last two verses. And because you were sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying, Abba! Father! And so you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Who is the Spirit of the Son? It's the Holy Spirit. And why do our hearts cry, Abba? Well, Abba, as you may have heard if you've been around church for a while, is a simple Hebrew word that means daddy. It's the language of a young child. I have, uh, in my neighborhood in Woodville, there's a Jewish family that moved in. They had moved from Israel, they live a few doors down, they have four boys. And last summer I was cleaning up something on the back deck and over the top of the fences, the fence line, I could hear one of the younger boys bouncing on their trampoline trying to get his dad's attention, presumably because he had just learned a new trick or something. And he's calling inside for his dad, abba! Abba! Desperately trying to get his attention, yearning to be seen, yearning to be celebrated.

Most of us know, babies usually say dada before they say anything else, including mama. Uh, which, you know, causes a lot of despair for the moms. Most speech therapists agree it's because just the simple consonants are easy, easier to articulate. It's easier for a baby to say, da da da, than mamamama. Some child psychologists though, they believe that because they see their own life so enmeshed and connected to their mom, the dad is actually the first one that feels like an outside object. The mom is not an outside object because they are so connected. And I love that picture because that shows the kind of tightness and intimacy and connection and tone for this language, Abba.

You know, when a young child enters the world, it assumes that it's okay to ask for things as an infant. It cries out because it expects that somebody's gonna show up. And then as it gets a bit older, it starts pointing to things right and groaning and grunting and then groans and grunts turn into words. I want more puffs. Right? And as they get older, they start to use lots of words to repeat the questions over and over and over and wear you down like little terrorists, <laugh>.

But here's the point, to withhold their questions, to believe that it's not okay to ask, to suppress the vocalization of their needs, that's actually learned not the other way around. We are coded and crafted in such a way that we know that we have to depend on something greater outside of ourselves. And I'd be willing to bet that some of us here have forgotten what it feels like to call the Father, Abba, in our prayers. We have forgotten delight that he takes in meeting our needs, that we are not a bore or a burden to him. We've forgotten that even when the world has punished us or scolded us for making our needs known, that that is simply not his way.

So why do we cry out Abba? Because we need him desperately.

We'll close together with this. If you zoom out a bit on this passage, you see two sendings. And they are different and they accomplish something different. And Tim Keller, as is often the case is so helpful here. He says in verse four, God sends the Son into the world outside of us and the Son makes us sons and daughters of God the Father. And so no matter what we feel, Jesus is sent into the world outside and changes our status. In verse six, God sends the Spirit into our hearts inside. And the Spirit makes us feel like sons and daughters. So he doesn't change our status, he changes our experience because you can be adopted and not experience adoption. And some of you know exactly what I'm talking about.

My son and daughter, my son is 13 and my daughter is 10 for a couple more weeks they belong to me. They are biologically mine. They have my DNA and they are legally mine to care for and

protect. I can show them a birth certificate that has their name and my name and a fancy stamp in the corner, right? I can prove this. But their legal status according to the government matters very little to them. If I threaten them, harm them, or otherwise lead them to believe that I don't want them around. So their status could be very different than their experience.

On the flip side, when my kids nestle in on the couch alongside me to watch a movie or hear my voice, celebrate them on the baseball field or when I tuck them in at night and remind them that they belong to me forever, these experiences do not change their status, but they certainly might change their experience.

And Doxa, I wonder if some of us here, we know what it's like to carry around a birth certificate that says that we belong to Jesus, but we know very little about the tenderness and the enjoyment that God has for you. That God does not just love you because he has to, but that he likes you.

That's a hard and foreign concept for many of us. Up on the screen you'll see an image from the cover of Brennan Manning's book, *Abba's Child*. If you have a hard time believing that God likes you, I don't know that I can commend a better resource to you. Brennan Manning was a man who had a rollercoaster of a life. He had many addictions and just had a lot of brokenness in his life. And frankly, I think it makes him highly qualified to talk to us about the love of God and about God's kindness towards us. This picture's on the cover of that book.

My daughter played softball this spring for the very first time and very proud of her. She's worked really hard. She's learned just a ton along the way and she recently made the All-Star team. And one of the first activities that they did together as an All-star team was to participate in this sponsored event called The Challenger's Game. And the Challenger's Game is basically a baseball game held for children with special needs. And it includes a variety of kids with a variety of disabilities. And each player from the challenger's team is matched up with a player from the All-Star team who essentially just stays with them and helps 'em to try and get through one complete inning of baseball. And so I'm sitting there this last Wednesday up against the fence and I'm watching just sort of the chaos of this game unfold. I mean, some kids are sprinting in circles, others are playing in the dirt, others are throwing tantrums and most of them are just doing their best to hit or pitch or catch.

And many of the special needs teams, the special needs players rather, they struggled with basic motor function. And so it presents some real challenges. But between the athlete partners and the parents of the special needs kids, they were just some truly beautiful moments of victory and joy.

And there was one moment that particularly shook me. There was a boy about 14 or 15, tall lanky wearing a Seattle Mariner's jersey. And it was clear that his use of his hands and arms was pretty limited. And so as he walks up to the plate, his dad walks up with him and his dad reaches around him and grabs the bat. And after a few tries, they put the bat in the ball and they shuffled down to first base, hand in hand. Now, overwhelmed by the noise of the crowd and just the joy of being on base, his son started just convulsing with emotion. And it was in this moment that he buried his face into the neck of his father.

The next kid at the plate was a kid in a wheelchair, who was super coordinated and first pitch swings the bat and hits the ball to shortstop. And so now that boy on first base has to make it to second. But he was so excited that he couldn't use his feet. And so his dad pulls him in close and with his son yelping and twitching and facing the wrong direction, walked him intently and gently to second base. And it took a while, but the dad's face was one of kindness and he just kept looking at the place they had to get together. And I felt for the slightest moment, God say, that's you and me. That's you and me.

Doxa, the greatest impact on your relationship with God is not just what you think God is like, but if you think that he likes you. If you have trusted Christ to save you, there is nothing left for you to add to belong to Christ's family. There is nothing left for you to take away to belong to Christ's family. There is nothing left for you to financially support to belong to Christ's family. There is no addiction left for you to break, to belong to Christ's family. There are no amends that you need to make to belong to Christ's family.

Jl Packer again, in *Knowing God*, he writes, if you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child and having God as his Father.

So how do you really know if you believe this, what's the litmus test? In some ways it might be easier to describe what it looks like to forget it. And so I want to read these indicators of a tired soul. These are things that I think reveal to us that perhaps we have forgotten that we are sons and daughters. So please listen to this list. Tell me if any of these things sound familiar to you. Inner restlessness, underlying anxiety, a vague nervousness, deep emotional weariness, obsessive in our thinking, an inner irritability and agitation, the inability to sit still and be quiet. Our relational attachments become scattered. We become ambivalent or avoidant. We are immersed in a fantasy world with risky dreams or dreaming of escape. That there are works of the flesh more common in our life rather than fruit of the Spirit. We feel an inner numbness. People are tedious to us. We lack internal energy to give attention to our spiritual life. We have a lack of enthusiasm for life. We become hopeless, depressed and defensive. These are the indicators of just a tired soul.

Lastly, if it takes you a long time to bounce back after you fail, and this one is extra insidious because we can be deceived into thinking that if we hate ourselves, we will prove that we deserve another chance. And that self-loathing is the same as humility. And the truth is, it's not. Hating yourself doesn't prove that you take your sin serious. It proves that you think that God's patience and grace are insufficient to carry you.

Doxa, the things that we do have no power over our status as his kids, God will always love us. And the resounding chorus of the whole Bible is that you really are loved. The resounding chorus of the whole Bible is that you really are loved.

Brennan Manning, one of my favorite quotes of his says, Define yourself radically as one beloved by God. This is the true self. Every other identity is illusion.

Now, I don't know about you, but I read through that list and I see some of that stuff in my own chest. I think it's really easy for us to forget our sonship. It's really easy to forget. I recently popped on Facebook. Don't ask me why. I usually don't do that. And I saw a memory pop up

that said 14 years ago on this day. Have you anybody ever seen this? Yeah, they're ridiculous. I hate those things. Said 14 years ago on this day, and it was a picture of me and some friends. And the truth is, I had zero recollection from where that picture came from. I don't remember those people, that group of people being together. I don't remember anybody taking that picture. I don't remember ever seeing it before. Now I know AI is getting really advanced and growing really fast, but I didn't assume when I saw that picture that it was a fake. I assumed that I forgot, right? I assumed that I let it slip or maybe I just didn't see it before.

Church, the same thing is needed when we hear about God's love for us. When you assume that you have a tendency to forget that God is constant and unchanging and kind, this saves you a lot of laps on this track of, I don't know if you're really there, God. I don't know if you really care about me, God. What if we all just assume that we are quick to forget and that we tend to let our thoughts and our minds and our feelings and our hearts get way down the wrong path? That happens frequently in our lives. What if we were suspicious of our own assessments and trusting of what God says instead of the other way around? I think it might help us stop living like slaves and start enjoying being sons and daughters. I think it might help wake some of us up from the spiritual life that has felt flatlined for a really long time.

You know what I pray for? I pray that Doxa would be the kind of place where those of us that inherited a ton of brokenness and addiction and emotional abuse and neglect, we were convinced early on that it wasn't okay to make our needs known. I pray that we would learn how to cry out to Abba. I pray that Doxa would be the kind of place that God would see fit to shatter generational curses and begin a new life and a new way of relating a new shoot in the family tree, maybe a family tree that's filled with deadwood and broken branches.

I pray that God would work in Doxa in such a way that it would be the kind of place where slaves become sons and daughters with full access to the freedom and the salvation that we are often afraid to believe in, that we would experience the power of God in the every day, because yes, God sent his son, amen. But he also sent his Spirit so that we could experience his grace and not just talk about it, that we could have freedom for ourselves and not just promise others that God eventually, possibly, maybe could one day give it to you.

I pray that Doxa would make disciples not just ones that mentally agree that were paid for, that we would do more than carry a heavenly birth certificate around with us, but instead bury our faces in his neck walking the wrong way and let him carry us around the bases. May it be, may it be. Let's pray.

Jesus, I know for a fact that I underestimate your love for me. And I'm pretty confident that there's many people in this room that do the same. And I know that you've changed our status, but we cry out to you to send your Spirit, to help us understand what is actually true about our lives. What is actually true about the affection that you have for us. I wish that we could see, if we could just for a moment, glimpse how little our performance actually impacts our relationship with you. If we could just taste for a moment the kind of sweetness and kindness and grace that you show us. And I recognize that for many of us, we have never experienced that kind of thing in other relationships on this earth, but you give us something better.

Would you give us the courage to believe that it's true? Would you give us the kind of surrender in our hearts to stop manufacturing all of these counterfeit gods and instead rest in the fact that you delight in us? Could we just rest for a moment? But you're not just contractually obligated to love us because you're supposed to do that kind of thing, that you actually like us. I believe it's true, and yet I need you to help me with my unbelief. So help me, help us and help Doxa be the kind of place where we lean in on these things for our good and your glory. Amen.