PAULINE LETTERS

V/O: Are you experiencing a crisis of faith?

PAUL KAI: Better call Paul.

V/O: Getting pestered by pesky false prophets?

PAUL KAI: Better call Paul.

V/O: Unsure if God's cool with you reaching for that bacon-wrapped shrimp?

PAUL KAI: Better call Paul.

Hi, I'm Paul of Tarsus, and I'll fight for you. Just kidding. I'm a lover, not a fighter.

CATHOLIC CENTRAL OPENING TITLES

LIBBY: Welcome to Catholic Central. I'm Libby.

KAI: And I'm Kai. Today, we're talking about Saint Paul.

LIBBY: Not the capital of Minnesota.

KAI: The Apostle and the many letters he wrote, which make up the bulk of the New Testament.

LIBBY: Paul is considered the star of the Book of Acts, which would count as much of the movement of the early Church and details Paul's conversion, one of the most epic conversion stories ever.

KAI: Paul was originally named Saul. He was a Roman citizen and a devout Jew who believed so strongly that the Christians were wrong that he went from house to house to find them and send them to prison.

LIBBY: Then one day on the road to Damascus, Saul was blinded by a bright light and heard the voice of Jesus.

JESUS (V/O): Saul. Saul, why are you persecuting me?

PAUL KAI: Who are you, sir?

JESUS (V/0): I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now, get up and go to the city, and you will be told what to do.

PAUL KAI: Okay, but can you turn me in the right direction? I'm still blind.

LIBBY: In Damascus, Saul met the Christian Ananias who restored his sight. He converted and was baptized.

KAI: He changed his name to Paul, and from that moment on, he dedicated his entire life to following Jesus.

LIBBY: Even though he wasn't one of the original Apostles, he's known for establishing much of the foundation of the church.

KAI: In the new Testament, Paul's letters are arranged from longest to shortest, starting with Romans and ending with Philemon.

LIBBY: Paul's letters include some of the greatest hits of the whole Bible.

V/O: Remember the first time you heard this?

FREEDOM ROCK LIBBY:

Love is patient, love is kind …

KAI: Speaking of what Paul wrote, there are two kinds of epistles, or letters, in the Church. The Catholic epistles are universal letters, so the larger Church named after the one who wrote it, such as Peter or James or Jude.

LIBBY: Well.

KAI: Yep.

LIBBY: Paul's epistles are a bit different. They were written to address particular situations.

KAI: Some were letters to specific people in the church, such as Titus, Philemon, and Timothy.

LIBBY: Some were letters to Christian communities, such as the churches and Corinth, Ephesus, and Galatia.

KAI: And some were letters he wrote from prison, which overlap with the other two categories. For example-

LIBBY: What? Prison?

KAI: Yeah, he went to jail. You're about to see why. Paul wrote Philippians, for example, to the church in Philippi while he was in captivity. They addressed many important issues which early Christians faced, such as whether a Christian had to first become a Jew, you know, through circumcision.

LIBBY: Ouch.

KAI: Thankfully, his answer was no. Same with whether Christians had to keep the Jewish dietary laws.

LIBBY: This was really controversial at the time because the question at its core was whether believing in Jesus is enough, and if both Jews and Gentiles could enter the kingdom of heaven.

KAI: Jews were focused on righteousness through adherence to laws and customs, but Jesus said that true salvation is possible through authentic conversion to Him, which Paul upheld.

LIBBY: Paul also states that Christianity is the fulfillment of Judaism through the Resurrection of Christ.

KAI: So, imagine what it was like for Paul's former colleagues to watch him persecute Christians one minute and turn around and say that not only is Christianity true, but that the laws of Judaism are no longer necessary.

LIBBY: Easy to see why they wanted to lock him up.

KAI: Yep, and there's the long belated answer to your question.

LIBBY: Thank you. I needed that.

KAI: Yep. We see a similar theme in his letters to Timothy, where Paul warns of false teachings. He says, "The aim of this instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience and sincere faith."

LIBBY: Paul wanted Timothy to avoid people who argue about the law without truly understanding it. Safe to say early Christians had just as many challenges as we do when it comes to staying true to what Jesus actually taught.

KAI: In many of Paul's letters also dealt with morality, or rather, encouraged Christians to moral sanctity.

LIBBY: At the time, the Gentiles didn't exactly have the same moral foundation as the Jews.

KAI: But morality was a guide to unite Jews and Gentiles with a common goal: to love one another as Christ loved them.

LIBBY: The controversies didn't end in Paul's time, though. For centuries, people have often debated the meaning of Paul's letters.

KAI: The Apostle Peter, aka the first Pope, addresses the challenge of interpreting Paul's letters saying, "In them, there are some things hard to understand that the ignorant and unstable distort to their own destruction."

LIBBY: Even today in some circles, they're misinterpreted.

MISOGYNIST KAI:

Paul says wives should be subordinated to their husbands, so where's my sandwich? Am I right?

KAI: But many verses are misinterpreted because they're taken out of the context of the rest of Paul's writings. Sometimes, even the same paragraph, out of the context of the rest of the Bible and out of the context at the time.

LIBBY: In reality, Paul was radical for his time, especially when he asserted that all people are equal. This message is just as relevant today as it was back then. How do we better love one another, especially those who seem different from us?

KAI: And how can we improve our own life of holiness so that others might get a glimpse of the grace and truth of Christ?

LIBBY: Paul's letters challenge all Christians to be more like Jesus and less like the Pharisees who condemned Him, or the Romans who crucified Him.

KAI: They also challenged Christians to stay true to the message of the gospels – a moral context ensures we don't just love one another, however we interpret that, but instead, as Christ has loved us.

LIBBY: And Paul's example shows us that despite difficult circumstances, it is possible to find peace and freedom in the Christian faith.

KAI: Until next time, I'm Kai.

LIBBY: And I'm Libby. Check out our website at catholiccentral.com for more on Saint Paul.

KAI: And for more on Scripture, subscribe to us on YouTube and look for our episodes on the Bible. We've got a lot.

LIBBY: There's so many books.

KAI: Yes, and many episodes.

LIBBY: So ...

KAI: Not as many as there are books.

LIBBY: Right. Not yet.

KAI: That might be overkill.

LIBBY: That might take years.

KAI: Or under-kill.

LIBBY: Oh.

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