

God Cares and Will Provide, Trust Him

DARRELL DELANEY

As a child, I would often wonder when we were going to eat dinner, although we ate it at the same time every day. I would incessantly ask, “When do we eat?” and it got on my mother’s nerves. One day after asking her again, “When do we eat?” she turned to me and said, “Have you ever missed a meal?” This question stopped me in my tracks. After thinking, I said, “No.” She then told me to go and sit down and wait. She was making a point about how she has provided for me all of my life, and she wouldn’t stop today. In this episode of *Groundwork*, we want to look at the concept of providence, where God takes care of all of creation, and how that affects our understanding of finances. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we have been in a four-part series...this is the last one...of God and finances; and in the first episode, we talked about how God views finances and possessions in the Old Testament; in the second episode, we talked about his teachings in the New Testament; and in the third episode, right before this, we talked about the concepts of tithing and stewardship. So now, we want to talk about God’s providential care and the importance of trusting the God who provides for things.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And in some ways providence is actually kind of woven through this whole series, but for this last episode, we saved a singular concentration on providence; and you know, Darrell, in the Bible there are a lot of descriptors...descriptions of God’s character...but the one that we want to zero in on is that God is the providential God. God is the provider. Providence...provider...it is right in there. It is an important word in the Reformed tradition, Darrell, that you and I are a part of, because we believe that we serve a God who is utterly sovereign over all creation, and he cares for all creation; and providence is God’s taking care of his creation. He tends to us, he feeds us, he nurtures us, he watches over us. That is a fundamental characteristic of the God of scripture.

DARRELL DELANEY

And scripture is replete with all of these...we would be all day...it could be its own series...to show all the places in scripture where God is shown as provider in his providential care, taking care of all things, but there is a verse here in Nehemiah Chapter 9:6 that says:

You alone are the Lord. You have made the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them, and the heavenly host bows down before you. So, we see God is the one who creates, and he is taking care of the things that he created.

SCOTT HOEZEE

God is active. Psalm 145 sounds a similar theme as that Nehemiah passage that you just read, Darrell. Psalm 145:15, 16: The eyes of all look to you, O God; and you give them their food in due time. ¹⁶You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, in those two verses, we see God as the creator of life, giving life, but we also...in the second passage you just read...we see that he is sustaining life. So, God is not up in heaven winding up the watch and turning his eyes away, but he is actually paying attention to every detail of all living things; and that is what he does, and that is the evidence of his providence. He is caring for the things he made.

SCOTT HOEZEE

One of the oldest false teachings, or we could call it a heresy, in Christian history...and it may have been a heresy even for Israel...was what we now call *deism*...

DARRELL DELANEY

Deism.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The idea...what you just said: Yes, God set the universe to spinning in the beginning, and since then, he has kind of turned his back and he is doing other things; but he is not really that close to our daily lives. He is not paying much attention to how we live. He is not actively involved. He created it and then he walked away. No, the Bible says; absolutely not. God created it and he continually creates. Actually, there is a doctrine of the Church, which has been neglected in recent times. When we think about the creation, in recent times, because of some, you know, disagreements in the Church about the age of the universe and when did God create and how old is the universe and is evolution true, we kind of think of creation as a one-and-done deal, you know: When did God create? Well, six thousand years ago or fourteen billion years ago? But, in the Bible, there is this thing called *creatio continua*—the continual act of creation, right? God has never stopped creating; he is still creating new daisies; he is still creating new babies; he is creating new pollywogs, and he is creating new vineyards. I mean, God is continually creating, and continually providing.

DARRELL DELANEY

If we serve a God who is continually active in his creation, and paying attention to every detail, that should give us comfort in times of uncertainty. When I feel like I might not have enough money, or I am not going to make the bills, we do know that our God's character has not changed; even the one we are reading about in the Old Testament and the New Testament, his character is still to provide for his children, like a good father does; and then he gives humanity the responsibility by extension to take care of the things that he has given them responsibility for, just like he did with Adam in the garden.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, we read that Psalm 145 line a moment ago, Darrell, that all creatures look to you (God) and you give them their food in due time. The Old Testament, in the Psalms in particular, but also we see this near the end of the book of Job, you know, where God comes to Job, and in answer to his question: Why do bad things happen to good people, God gives him a tour of the cosmos and says: You know what I am doing a lot of the time? I am watching the donkeys cavort in the wilderness; I am helping the deer give birth to fawns; I am feeding the storks up on their scrapes with their nests. God is saying: I am involved with *all* of these creatures *all* of the time. Indeed, it is a very involved God; and we have to know, you know, and particularly now in this series, where we are thinking about God and finances, that has to be enough for us to know that; because the world, Darrell, always wants us to want more.

DARRELL DELANEY

Because the world is constantly pushing us to want more and never be content with what we have, we could easily forget that God has been providing the whole time...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

That he has been creating, and he has been sustaining, and he has been providing. You know, we have never missed a meal; we have always had a roof over our head and clothes on our backs; and we thank God for those things; and as I pray, I teach our children to remind themselves that, hey, these things are not just automatic. Our God is providing them, and he is the one who gives us the ability to pay the rent, to go grocery shopping and things like that; and the stewardship that he teaches us is something that we are going to be learning for the rest of our lives: How do we take care of, and how do we honor God with what we have been given?

SCOTT HOEZEE

And what you teach your children, Darrell, is so important, because in a society that wants us to super-size everything...supersize me, they used to say, you know...super big drinks, super big meals, more, bigger, better, new and improved. The problem with that constant focus on bigger, better, supersized is that what you just said: You are always thinking about getting something more; and therefore, you are never praying a prayer of thanksgiving of what you already got...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And what God has already provided, right? It is a Christian discipline, and you are instilling it in your children. Christian parents do that. It is a Christian discipline to pause, take stock, and say: It's enough; and it's enough because it is what God has given to me.

DARRELL DELANEY

And if we focus on what we have been given as enough and what we need, then it will actually set and quell the desire to want more; but as we go into the next segment, we want to talk about what Jesus has to say about this when he teaches on the subject. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are going to jump into the Sermon on the Mount here in Matthew Chapter 6, because Jesus is talking about God's providential care, when he is teaching about it in Matthew 6.

SCOTT HOEZEE

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ²⁸And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

DARRELL DELANEY

So, Scott, there is so much good stuff in here...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

Jesus initially starts talking about worry; and worry happens when we don't feel like we are going to get what we need to make it; and that actually happens in a lot of people...even believers, where like: Oh, is God going to be able to provide for me like he promised? Are we going to have enough to make it through? And Jesus steers them away from material possessions to find security in. Our security comes from our heavenly Father, who feeds the birds, who clothes the flowers, and we are worth more than they are; so, why wouldn't he take care of us?

SCOTT HOEZEE

There is a rhetorical technique. It is summed up in a Latin phrase: *ad minore ad maius*, from the minor to the major, and Jesus uses this all the time. He says: Look, if God is taking care of a chickadee and you are worth more than the chickadee, you think he is going to leave you alone? Right; if God is taking care of a daylily in the field, you are worth more than the daylily, you think he is not going to take care of you? So, it is *ad minore ad maius*...from the minor to the major. Jesus uses this technique all the time; but the point is, God has got his eye on us. That is what we said in the previous part of the program, Darrell. We are very, very far from being deists, where we think God is aloof...remote...not watching...not caring...not doing anything for us. No; we think God is intimately involved.

DARRELL DELANEY

Jesus uses references that would be aha moments for the people he is talking to; like that reference to Solomon's splendor. Solomon was not clothed in more than these flowers were; and, I mean, long story short, Solomon was a very rich, if not the richest king, in the history of Israel...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And he had a lot of adornments; he had a lot of fancy clothes; he had a lot of things; and Jesus turns it on its head and says: You see these flowers? They are clothed better because the Heavenly Father has clothed them; and you are worth more than those flowers. These flowers are going to be taken up and burned in the fire tomorrow, but God is still taking the time to care for them and make sure that they are clothed correctly. How much more will he do it for you?

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Jesus says some interesting things about worry here, because what he is basically saying is, worry just sucks life out of you. You cannot add an hour to your life by worrying about it.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, in other words, he is saying worry is a dead end. It is life taking; it is never life giving. However, I think we should say at this point something we have tried to say throughout this series, and that is, it is okay to have proper concern...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That your children, for instance, will have enough. And you know, in the beginning of the program, you were blessed, I was blessed, to have a mother who could say to you...my mother could say to me: Have you ever missed a meal? And the answer in my life was: Nope.

DARRELL DELANEY

Of course not.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But there are children who miss meals in this world, and their mothers cannot do anything about it, right? They are in an impoverished situation. They are going through a famine or they are going through a drought; and some of us go through lean times. We said at the very, very beginning of this series that our listeners have often sent in questions about: Where do you cross the line from proper concern to have enough money to the kind of worrying that Jesus is speaking negatively about, like in Matthew 6? It is hard to know where that line is, but there certainly, we need to point out, having due concern, particularly in lean times, that isn't sinful worrying, that is just being prudent.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we are called to be responsible Christians as well. We cannot over-spiritualize the fact that there are tangible needs in our lives; and what I have found it that sometimes God will answer the prayer in an unconventional way. So, okay; I need X amount of money for my rent. I don't have that money; but then, someone comes and they bless me, by not giving me the money, but they go straight to the landlord and take care of the problem. Like even in my own life, when I was going to college as an undergrad, I am filling out my FAFSA forms and I realize I don't have the tuition in in time for the classes, and they would drop your classes if you don't pay in twenty-four hours, but the academic dean held my classes. I don't know what caused him to do that...actually I do, it was God...that held my classes so that I could attend on the first day, and then I was able to have the FAFSA come through at a later date. So, I didn't get the money in the traditional sense...I didn't get the tuition paid on time from my pocket...but God still solved the problem, providing the fact that I could go to college. We have seen God do many things that are unconventional, if we don't narrow him down to: Well, you have to send me the money right now to my hands. If we don't limit God, we can see him blessing in tremendous ways.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; God can solve our problems and provide...we are thinking about providence...he can provide for us in a lot of creative ways that go beyond just maybe the most obvious solution that we can see at any given moment; but certainly, you know, our belief in God's providence is tested when there are tense times, right? When there are times when we are not engaging in sinful worry, but we are properly a little nervous about something...we are properly a little concerned about something; and certainly, you know, when people lose a job that they never thought they would lose, when the mortgage is due and it is just not there, these are things that properly concern us. These become proper petitions in our prayer life to God, but we pray to God...that is one of the things we have been saying in this episode...when we pray to God, we are not praying to a god who is far away and that we have to sort of say: Oh, God; I know you haven't been watching, but you know, we are running out of money here. We don't have to tell God that; he knows. We have to believe that somehow, some way, in the end, he will still provide, even though there are moments when we say: I have no idea, God, how you can do this.

DARRELL DELANEY

And so, it is also important that Jesus says that. He says; Don't pray about those things or don't seek after those things. The pagans seek after them; and your heavenly Father knows what you need before you ask him. He promises to give us what we need, not everything we want. But as we wrap up this episode, we want

to look at some practical applications. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this fourth and final episode of our four-part series on God and finances. We are thinking a lot about providence, Darrell, in this particular episode. God, we have said, is not aloof...he is not blind...he is not far off, thinking other thoughts that have nothing to do with us, and our lives, and our kids, and our finances. He is actively providing for all creatures, including all of us. So, let's conclude the whole series here, Darrell, with five observations...five practical takeaways.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, the first one, I would think, is that God is not holding out on us. On the contrary, he has given us the best of everything. He has given us the beautiful creation; he has given us his one and only Son, whom he loves, for our salvation; he has given us each and every day. So, Satan had this trick, where he tried to get Adam and Eve to...Oh, did God really say: Don't eat from that tree? He was trying to get at: Is God really good? Is God holding out on you? Why wouldn't he give you that tree of the knowledge of good and evil...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

If he says that he is good? So, if we trust the fact that God is not holding out on us, that he is literally watching over us and giving us what we need each day, peace and contentment will set in our hearts.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, this is literally the oldest trick in the book! God is holding out on you, Eve. God is holding out on you, Adam. Your best life now is available, and God is holding it back, right? The oldest trick in the book. Anything that leads us to be discontent, unthankful...you know, the original sin may not have been pride, as we have often been taught. It was covetousness.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Eve coveted the fruit that God said they couldn't have. When we covet, it is a way of saying God hasn't given me enough. So, lesson number one: God is not holding out on us. We believe in a generous God. Lesson number two; and this follows directly on that: Don't take matters into your own hands.

DARRELL DELANEY

When you take matters into your own hands, it is showing that you do not trust the Lord's timing or pace when it comes to his providential care. Sometimes we think God is moving far too slowly, so we take matters into our own hands. I will give you two examples: One is from Achan in Joshua Chapter 7; and God tells Joshua's army: Don't take any of the possessions; devote them to the Lord; but Achan decides to take a piece of gold and hide it under and bury it in his tent; and he says: I am going to take this for me, and he coveted what was God's; and the fact that he took matters into his own hands and didn't trust in God's provision led to some deaths for the soldiers; and the sin in the camp really hurt them because he took matters into his own hands. The other example is Ananias and Sapphira in Acts Chapter 5.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; they sold some property. They weren't really required, per se, to give all the money to God, but they *said* they were giving all the money to God, and hiding some of the rest of it. So, it was their lying that got them into trouble, not that they didn't give one hundred percent of the sale of a certain piece of property to

God. They lied, and they lied because, again, the same thing: Well, if we don't hold this back, God is not going to come through for us. So, we are going to take care of ourselves. So, they wanted to hide it from God, as though: A) God wouldn't know they were doing that; and B) Assuming God is not on top of stuff, including what they need. Obviously, we have said this whole series long, Darrell, of course we have to work! Work honestly, we read from Ephesians earlier in this series. Work honestly with your hands so you can have something to share with those in need. Of course, we don't just sit back and say: Oh well, God provides. I don't need a job; I don't have to try hard to be a good employee. No, no, no; but on the other hand, we don't try to live in such a way that says, well, God is not going to come through, so I have to take this on my own and do it my way. No.

DARRELL DELANEY

That is true. There is a book that talks about a practical atheist when you live as if God doesn't exist, and you work as if God isn't working on your behalf; and that is an issue when you take matters into your own hands. God is actually there, and he wants to help us. Another thing that he calls us to is to practice contentment. We see Paul in Philippians 4, who wrote this letter to the Philippians while he was in prison. He said that he found the secret to being content whatever the circumstance...whether he had a lot, whether he had a little...and he could trust God in hard circumstances when it felt like ends were not going to meet. This is why he said: I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I do like in that passage that Paul said: I have *learned*...I have learned the secret to be content whether I have a lot or a little. It is a reminder that even as believers, we do have times of lean years; we do have times of having a little; but Paul says: I have learned to be content.

A fourth lesson that we can use to close out this series: We continually pray for God's provision. Give us this day our daily bread. In other words, you pray that every day. Every day, it is a reminder of who gives you your bread and to whom to give thanks when you get it. It is a discipline to continue to pray for God's providence in your life.

DARRELL DELANEY

When we say grace at every meal, we say: Thank you, God, because this is a resource, but you are the source. You are the one who gives us this bread, and we thank you for that. And it is a constant reminder to remember who it comes from, and our God calls us to do that each and every time we eat. It builds our faith; it quells our fears when we pray and talk to God about the things we worry about, and it will give us peace.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So: 1) God is not holding out on us. 2) Don't take matters into our own hands. Trust God. 3) Practice contentment. 4) Pray for God's provision; and fifth and lastly: Always, always, always remember that when you are blessed, remember where it came from; and that goes back to something we looked at in another program, from Deuteronomy: When you get to the Promised Land, and you have everything you need, in ways that will be totally different, Israel, than when you were in the wilderness...a place of scarcity...still, you have to remember it is all God all the time; and that is what we have to remember.

DARRELL DELANEY

The scripture says that every good and perfect gift comes from above, because Jesus reminds us that our heavenly Father is taking care of us; and when it comes to finances, God has us covered because he gives us what we need; and for those who are in lean times, I think it is a wake-up call for those who have plenty to become the blessing...to be generous...to share what they have, because in the old economy God had, there were people who took care of each other in community; and I believe that he is also calling us as believers to take care of one another in community; and we see God's hand in that because he is the one who is generous first.

SCOTT HOEZEE

All of this stems from the providence of God; and if it is one thing that we know, and that we have seen throughout this series, believing in a providential God who tends to our finances and tells us what our right attitude toward money should be, none of that is to say that life is always smooth sailing, right? Our belief in God's provision can be tested during the lean times, but our belief in providence in those times provides comfort and hope; two things we really, really need: Comfort and hope. Yes, seasons of scarcity come, but it is not that God isn't concerned. He is still watching over us.

DARRELL DELANEY

And the beautiful thing is that we are all marching toward shalom. When the end of times comes, when everything is happening and nothing is missing and nothing is broken, that will be when we rejoice, but we can actually practice that today in individuals and in communities and amongst one another to be the blessing that God has called us to be, thanks to his providential care.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Darrell Delaney; and we hope you will join us again next time as we continue to dig deeply into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives.

Connect with us at our website, groundworkonline.com. Share what *Groundwork* means to you. Tell us what you would like to hear next on *Groundwork*.

DARRELL DELANEY

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