

God Redeems

SCOTT HOEZEE

We have all seen the billboards or the homemade signs along the road; the ones that proclaim: Jesus Saves. Now, some of us know that that two-word saying is almost redundant because the very name of Jesus is a Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, and both mean Yahweh saves. Jesus' very name points to his being a savior. In Reformed theology, like almost all forms of Christian theology, redemption is a central pillar of the entire theological edifice. Today on *Groundwork*, we will take up and dig into this vital biblical theme. So, stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

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

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, this is now program three of a four-part series that we are doing on Reformed theology, and the primary themes that Reformed theology derived from scripture. We have already looked at Creation in the first program, and the Fall. Today, we take up Redemption; and then in the final program, we will turn to the Consummation of all things; and of course, Darrell, taking up Redemption now...or Salvation...that is the next logical step after the previous program, when we saw how sin and evil sullied God's good creation.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, Scott; I am feeling really hopeful with this one, because you know the gospel has two parts. There is the bad news, and then there is the good news. We have been talking about how we got to this situation in Creation and Fall—the bad news; and today we are talking about the good news, and it gets even better when we get to the last episode, which is Consummation.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; yes, so where we left off in the last program is that we and the cosmos generally find ourselves in a situation that is going to require intervention. If we are ever going to experience anything other than sorrow, suffering, death and the just punishment for our sins...if anything else is going to come, it is going to be because God intervenes.

Darrell, as we saw in the previous episode in this series, you know, once Adam and Eve succumbed to the wiles of the tempter, that serpent, I mean, God could have junked the whole creation, right? He didn't do that, although a little later in Genesis, in the story of the flood and Noah's ark, God comes close to wiping the slate clean; but after that, though, Darrell, you know, God says: I am not going to do that again. So, the flood came from God's grief over how sinful people got, but after the flood, God said: It is not my grief that is going to lead the way, it is my grace.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, it is interesting that you mention that God actually didn't junk everything that he had done. I love the fact that God leaves the brokenness and dysfunction in scripture, and he shows how he works in spite of it. It is hope for me because I come from brokenness. I don't know about you, but I have a dysfunctional situation and family, and all that stuff that is happening in my life; and if I can see in scripture that God is able to work

through history in spite of brokenness, that gives me hope, Scott. I am so glad that God can work in spite of my brokenness, my hang-ups, my habits, and my problems.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and you know, we saw in the previous program...I mean, the dust of the first sin hadn't even settled, and in Genesis 3:15 God gave a sneak preview of the gospel, saying that somebody will come to crush the head of that serpent that caused all this problem. So, we get hope immediately after the first sin; but then, let's go forward a little bit farther, to Genesis 12, when God really gets this salvation ball rolling when he calls a single man to be his new beginning.

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. ²I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." ⁴So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. ⁵He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, you've got this guy, Abram, right? So, it is interesting how God called Abram out of pretty much nowhere...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

He called him out of obscurity, and he has decided he is going to do something to make Abram a blessing. So, it is really powerful to see that no matter where you come from, you don't have to be high on the hog, so to speak, or come from a royal family, God can call you out of a place where you're considered to be a no-name...a nobody...and God can get all the glory from that story, because you know it was him if he asks you to do something or he calls you according to his purposes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and we have to remember too, because the descendants of Abram—later named Abraham—the nation of Israel—sometimes they forgot that right from the get-go, Israel was never supposed to be an end unto itself. They were the beginning; they were the beachhead; the starting point, from which God would launch the salvation of *all* the nations of the earth. So, that is Abraham. He is a key player. Now, Darrell, let's jump a little bit farther ahead and come to another key player, David.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, in 2 Samuel 7, it reads: ^{11b}The Lord declares to you, that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: ¹²When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴I will be his father, and he will be my son... ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, from that promise, we get the ultimate promise, Darrell, that there will be a son of David one day, who will be the ultimate anointed one, or *Mashiach*...Messiah...the Christ in the Greek. And of course, in the fullness of time, that final Son of David came in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was born as Mary's very human child, but he was, at the same time, the eternal Son of God, and it is going to be his work, his sinless life, his sacrifice on a cross, his resurrection; all of that would finally do an end-run on death, would take away the punishment for sin that we all deserve, and would bring in the eternal kingdom of God, which, as we will see in the final program of this series, will be the place where all sorrow and suffering will be

unmade once and for all.

DARRELL DELANEY

And so, the New Testament makes it clear that salvation cannot be found in anyone else. We read in John 14:6 Jesus himself saying: “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me. He is the one who makes it clear; and Paul the Apostle is frustrated when the Galatian church does not understand this.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; you cannot find salvation anywhere else, Paul says. So, in Galatians, he says: ^{2:20}I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing.

So, Darrell, we have to pause on that because, you know, sometimes we get messages that we hear, even today yet, that maybe there are lots of different paths to God; lots of different ideas; maybe salvation is about rewarding the faithful or you know, something like that; or salvation comes to those who are just a little nicer than some people. No; the Bible makes it very clear: Jesus, in that John verse you just mentioned, Darrell... Paul here in Galatians 2 makes it very, very clear...there is just one way, and it goes through the cross. You don't get to salvation by going around the cross; you have to go through it.

DARRELL DELANEY

This is the only way, and God has made it clear; and of course, God is not a human being that he would lie or make up these things; and God is telling us the truth so that we can acknowledge that and understand where we are in the kingdom. Since we are talking about redemption, he has actually given us a path to which we may be saved.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, that is sort of the broad, bird's-eye-view of the biblical plan of salvation; the salvation history, as it is sometimes called. Basically, this is what makes you a Christian, right? So really, all of Christian traditions say we are saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Certainly, Reformed theology says that; but in just a moment, we will get a little bit more specific to the Reformed tradition to see some Reformed distinctives on this major theme of Redemption. So, stay tuned for that.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And if you want to have a window through which to see distinctly Reformed emphases when it comes to redemption or salvation, Darrell, I think a great place to go would be the confessional document from the early 17th Century called the *Canons of Dort*. In the years following the Protestant Reformation in the 16th Century, some different schools of thought emerged as to just how a person becomes saved through Christ Jesus the Lord; and when in the early 17th Century Reformed churches tried to hammer this out, they held what was called the Synod of Dordrecht, and from that emerged the *Canons of Dort*, from which emerges the Five Points of Calvinism.

DARRELL DELANEY

The Five Points of Calvinism, also known as Tulip, total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. I don't know if Calvin would agree that there are *only* five points. There is much more going on in the Reformed tradition than that, but this situation came out a situation where they needed to be clear on how the process works, and these are the five points that they came up with; but you would propose a different order, wouldn't you, Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, Tulip is easy to remember, and it does include all the five points, of course; and I guess sort of some of the people in the Dutch Reformed tradition, they like having a tulip as a symbol or something; but if you actually follow the order of the *Canons of Dort*, it would have to be Utip...but you know, who has ever heard of an ultip? So, we go with Tulip to remember it, but actually ultip...the ordering is important in the *Canons of Dort* because we start with the first primary doctrine, which is what the letter U stands for, and that is Unconditional Election.

DARRELL DELANEY

Unconditional election...we know that God is the initiator of the conversation that is salvation. I was reading a book called *Sit, Walk, Stand* by a man named Watchman Nee, and it is basically on the book of Ephesians, where we are going to go next; and he talks about how we sit in the fact that God has already made movements—God has already initiated the conversation, and then we walk and we stand on the truth. The point is that God is the one who initiates the conversation of the grace conversation. He is the one who begins that, and it shows it as well in Ephesians.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; I mean, some people kind of think John Calvin made up election or something, and we will talk in a minute that election can sometimes be controversial, but Reformed theologians like John Calvin, and the theologians who worked at the Synod of Dordrecht and produced the *Canons of Dort*, they didn't make it up. They derived it right out of scripture. So, as you just said, Ephesians 1:

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. (And now this, Ephesians 1:4) ⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, ⁹he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. ¹¹In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, unconditional election. God is choosing, not because of what we might do or what we are going to do, not because we have anything good in us at all. He is choosing because of his own sovereign election. He is like, I am going to choose these people, set them apart for my purposes, and that is what I can do because it is within my jurisdiction as God to do. It can be a very controversial topic, this unconditional election. It could be really, really frustrating and confusing for some folks, right Scott?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and some don't like it because then they think it embraces also the opposite of election, which is *reprobation*; and so, the idea is that God looks at the human race and he says... So, people lined up and God says: Yes, yes, no, yes, no, no, no, yes, no. So that he actively chooses who will be saved and he actively condemns those who won't be saved. That is really not what the *Canons of Dort* say. Reformed theology says: Yes, God actively chooses those who will be saved, but everybody else are just left in the condition to which their own sin and evil led them. So, God doesn't actively condemn anybody. He only actively chooses. We could do like a four-part series on this question alone, Darrell. You may or may not think that works, but that is what unconditional election asserts; and then, Darrell, we can go to the I...Irresistible Grace.

DARRELL DELANEY

Irresistible grace...this one is beautiful because God, when he extends his grace, it cannot be rejected or resisted. When you taste and see that the Lord is good, you are not going to want to resist anyway, because

who has ever experienced the fullness and beauty of God's grace and mercy and unconditional love in their lives in a way where they are like: No, I don't want any of that! I feel like irresistible grace is showing that God, because he displays how good he is, it is actually the fulfillment of why we were created, and we respond in our spirit in a certain way.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Romans 8:28: We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. The work of redemption is one hundred percent the sovereign work of God...

DARRELL DELANEY

One hundred percent.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And when it comes to you, it is irresistible. You will be saved, and you will delight in that; and Darrell, all of that, though, is necessary in the *Canons of Dort* because of what that T of tulip, or ultip stands for, and that is Total Depravity; but that is not actually...total depravity isn't quite what the *Canons of Dort* says, is it, Darrell?

DARRELL DELANEY

No, it isn't. I mean, total depravity is when it is completely, one hundred percent damaged and there is no redemptive value, but I think that it would be more accurate to say: Total inability; because God can yet still find redemptive...a way to redeem those things that are broken; and I am glad that he has given us the way to find salvation and repent in him, based on his power and his grace. So, I think total inability is more accurate than total depravity.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And it comes right out of scripture, too. Ephesians 2: As for you, (Paul writes) you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. So, you were dead, Paul says here to the Ephesians. You know, my high school religion teacher used to have an analogy. He said: You know, there is a big difference between a sick dog and a dead dog. If you've got a sick dog, you can whistle for the dog, and you know, it might be a struggle, but the dog could get up and walk across the room and come to you when you whistle to him. That is not going to happen with a dead dog. You can whistle all day long; he is not going to move.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and so, there is nothing that we can do, unless God intervenes divinely; and as we come to the close of this program, we want to give you some final thoughts on some application on the theme of redemption. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

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.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We have covered a lot of ground in this episode already Darrell. We have seen the plan of salvation that was announced already in the Garden of Eden in the immediate aftermath of that first sin. We traced God's plan through the call of Abram, the founding of the nation of Israel, the promises made for the line of David, and now they all climax in the incarnation of God's Son in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth.

DARRELL DELANEY

And Jesus saving us, like you said in the introduction. This is the most important act of redemption there is in human history. The fact that he takes his life and sacrifices it for us on the cross, taking up all our sin upon himself and paying the ultimate penalty so that we can actually partake of his righteousness. So, we see the ultimate righteousness and peace kiss on the cross. It says that in Psalm 85, and we see that fulfillment in the cross of Christ.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; that is the big view there, that it is a hundred percent redemption...a hundred percent God...zero percent human actions and decisions and so forth; but Darrell, as we close out this program, we want to do a couple applications; and I think the first one we can look at is that we are called to lead lives of gratitude. We cannot do anything to get ourselves saved, but once we are saved, we are called to cooperate with God's Holy Spirit living inside of us.

DARRELL DELANEY

And it is beautiful gift that we receive his salvation, and out of gratitude for that gift, God has called us to live a certain way. Once we get the false meritocracy out of the way...we cannot pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps, so to speak. We do recognize and come into agreement that we are sinners, that we need salvation from God, who divinely intervenes. Once he does that act, now, out of gratitude of him saving us, we get to live a new life. That is what Romans 6 reminds us, we get a new life. We have been baptized into his death; we have been raised in the life of resurrection; and out of gratitude for that, we live a new way.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, Darrell, we did a series here on *Groundwork* not too long ago from Paul's letter to the Galatians, and one of the things we noted there is that Galatians is a great place to go to see the twin ideas that you could never do anything to get yourself saved, but once you are saved, there is actually a lot you do now need to do; and you can kind of see that in the arc of the letter to the Galatians.

DARRELL DELANEY

Of course, Paul doesn't not mince any words, because he is upset with the Galatians at one level because they have these different doctrines that are trying to confuse them, and he is trying to set the record straight. He shows them what God has done and then he shows them what God will do, in Chapter 1 and in Chapter 3. In Chapter 1, it says:

⁶I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷which is no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. He says that in Chapter 1.

In Chapter 3, he says: ¹You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. ²I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the words of the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?

So, Paul was trying to make sure they understand it is by faith.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, it is kind of funny. Paul spends a good bit of the letter to the Galatians saying to the Galatians: Pay no attention to what you do. You cannot get saved that way. Pay no attention to your deeds. But then, the last half...or almost half of Galatians, Paul says: Now, pay very close attention to what you do, right? Here is Galatians 5: ¹⁶So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh

desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh... ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Darrell, that is one application for this program on the theme of redemption. Redemption by grace alone is one hundred percent the sovereign work of God, but that is what leads to lifelong works of gratitude. We want to live every day as kind of like a giant thank-you card to God in Christ for saving us.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is a beautiful thing; and I think also, Paul picks this up in Philippians Chapter 2:12b, 13, where he says: You continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, (but remember) ¹³it is God who works in you to will and to work according to his good purpose.

So, he shows it again, but he just flips it around in Philippians, the same thing. It is not about what you do, but yet, it is about what you do *after* God does what he does.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and then finally, a second application. Despite what we have emphasized, Darrell, on this program, in terms of redemption being all about God, and God's choosing the people who are going to be saved, that, Darrell, does not mean that we don't keep proclaiming the gospel.

DARRELL DELANEY

It's true because, I mean, God makes it clear: Number one, he has given us a great commission in Matthew 28 that tells us to go and make disciples of all nations and teaching them everything Jesus has commanded them to do. But he also wants to make it clear...Paul the Apostle makes it clear in Romans 10, we cannot receive the conversion that happens without hearing the gospel, like it says in Romans 10. It says: ¹⁴How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

So, I don't want people to think: Oh, this is just for pastors. No, we as believers are called to share the stories of what God has done. So, we are proclaiming that good news to everybody around us so that they can hear the message of hope, and then turn.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, it is true...it is true. We cannot tell just by looking at somebody's face whether they are elect or not, right? We cannot tell whether they are somebody God has elected for salvation. We cannot tell just by looking at them, but we shouldn't conclude: Well, so it doesn't matter if I tell them about Jesus or not. I mean, if God has elected them, they are going to get saved no matter what. They don't need me. No; we have to remember that God uses us as the tools...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

By which his election gets carried out. So, to say: Well, I don't have to say anything, since the game is fixed anyway, you know; it is all prescribed, so... No, no; we have to continue to witness in word and in deed. In fact, here is the *Heidelberg Catechism*, a key Reformed confession, question and answer 86. It says: Christ, having redeemed us by his blood, is also restoring us by his Spirit into his image, so that with our whole lives we may show that we are thankful to God for his benefits; so that he may be praised through us; so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits; and so that by our godly living, our neighbors may be won over to Christ.

So, that sovereign election...which as we said earlier in this program, that unconditional election...which when it comes to us is irresistible grace...it doesn't just save us, it changes us, as you said earlier, from Romans 6. We have a new identity after our baptism, and that, then, calls the shots for how we are going to live from then on out.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, it is a beautiful thing; because, I mean, redemption is the gift that God has given; and I love the fact that that redemption gift was not a Plan B from God; it was Plan A the whole time, and that is why we live in gratitude to what God has done and who he is, because it is by grace alone, thanks be to God.

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 study the scriptures to help us understand the consummation of all things, the fourth and final major theme in the Bible's story. Connect with us at our website, groundworkonline.com. Share what *Groundwork* means to you, or make suggestions for future programs.

DARRELL DELANEY

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