

How to Live in Christ

SCOTT HOEZEE

Many of us can recall our first experiences with independence as we grew up. The day comes when you go off to college, or you get your own apartment for the first time, and suddenly you feel free. Mom and Dad are not in charge of your life as they once were, but you can be your own boss; and sometimes it happens that we abuse that freedom. We mess up; we hurt ourselves in the process; and then we realize that freedom without some limits is not a good thing. This was part of what the Apostle Paul wanted to convey to the Galatian Christians as Paul rounded out his letter to them. Today on *Groundwork*, we will dig into that; 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

I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, this is the final program...the fourth program of our short, four-part series on Paul's letter or Paul's epistle to the Galatians. In the first three programs, we saw how exceedingly upset, even angry, Paul was when he heard that some false teachers had convinced the Christians living in the region of Galatia that their salvation would not be complete if they only relied on Jesus. They had a whole bunch of their own works. They had to keep the rules of the Jewish faith. If they were males, they had to get circumcised; they had to observe food laws; and Paul knew that that totally undercut the true gospel. We are saved by grace alone. One hundred percent by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

DARRELL DELANEY

The Judaizers were what they were called. These people were extremists and they would always go after Paul and try to get these people to say: Oh, no; you're not saved yet. There is another level to this thing; there is a level 300 and a level 400 of this, where you have to follow the laws of Moses; you have to do these certain things. You have to basically become a Jew before you can become a Christian; and Paul was so upset about that, because that is actually adding to the pure gospel message of being saved by grace through faith; and so, Paul started out with his anger toward the people who fell off into this, but the reason why he was angry was because later in the letter you see it turns into his love and his longing and his desire to help them and not have them be led astray. So, Paul's mood changes as we get toward the end of the letter.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, Paul spends much of the letter to the Galatians screaming at them, almost: Stop thinking about yourselves...get over yourselves...pay no attention to what you do, but only to what Jesus has done and is still doing for you. That is almost the whole letter; but now we turn to the final two chapters, Galatians 5 and 6, and it is amazing to see that Paul pivots. He shifts a bit. He goes from saying: Pay no attention to your actions to saying: Oh, pay very careful attention to your actions.

So, Darrell, the main thing we want to explore in this program is how those two seemingly contradictory messages actually fit together coherently; because if you ask Paul: So, should we pay no attention to our actions, or pay *good* attention to our actions? Paul would say: Yes. What?!

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, we know scripture does not contradict itself. So, let's get into the scripture here in Galatians 5 and see if Paul can straighten it out for us. It says: ¹³You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. 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. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, it is almost as though Paul is saying now: Okay, I've been telling you in no uncertain terms that you are free from the requirements of the law. You will never get saved by what you do. You are free. But hey, folks, let's not go crazy, okay? You are *not* free in the sense that now you can do whatever you want. You have to use your freedom, *not* to be self-serving or self-indulgent, use your freedom to love and serve others.

DARRELL DELANEY

If you get freedom without any bounds, it is still going to go crazy; and it is still going to be a place where you either hurt someone or you hurt yourself. So, you cannot just go crazy and do whatever you want. There is freedom within boundaries—within limits. You have a sandbox; go crazy in the sandbox; but these are the regulations and this is the way God has called us to live; and if we want to be ambassadors of Jesus Christ, then we must do exactly what his parameters say to do. That is why he brought in "love your neighbor as yourself," Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, exactly; and it is not in Galatians. You know, famously in Romans 6, Paul counters what happened in some parts of the early Church when people took his message *on grace alone* to say: Oh so, we can do whatever we want? Well, let's eat, drink and be merry; for tomorrow God will forgive us anyway. No, Paul says, that shows that you don't get baptism; and it is sort of what he is saying here, too. We are one hundred percent saved by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross; and then his resurrection to new life; but that grace not only saves us, Paul says, it transforms us. As he put it in 2 Corinthians 5: (verse 17 paraphrased) On the other side of baptism, you come out a new creation; and so, you are now led by the Holy Spirit who lives inside you. So, you cannot devour each other, attack each other, belittle one another; because that kind of activity represents the old way you used to live in the flesh, but that got drowned—your old self got drowned in the waters of baptism.

DARRELL DELANEY

Not only were you drowned in the waters of baptism, the old life, that is, figuratively speaking. It also says that you were bought with a price; and that means that your body actually belongs to God. It is his possession, and he wouldn't want you to dishonor his body by doing the things you did before you were saved; and so, you have a specific way that you should live now, and you get to live that out of gratitude for what he has done for you. So, don't go back to the old ways; don't go back to where it was before you were baptized. That is not what you are called to do.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and just as a brief aside to make sure that we all understand this as we close out this first part of this program: Paul uses the word *flesh* as a shorthand for a selfish, sinful, self-indulgent way of life; and that kind of life of the flesh is set off against the better life led by the Spirit; but I think it is important that we don't get confused and think that Paul regards our human bodies as an evil thing. Paul is not anti-material; he is not anti-creation; he is not anti-embodiment. Paul knew that our bodies are a vital part of our humanity, and that only when we are bodies and soul together...only then are we complete. So, we don't want to take Paul's using *flesh* to say: Oh, so he thinks our physical nature doesn't matter. There was an early teaching in the

Church called Gnosticism, which was anti-body, anti-creation, but that is not Paul.

DARRELL DELANEY

No; that teaching of Gnosticism was one of the very serious heresies that they wanted to make sure that they stayed away from; and you know, he also believes in the teaching that Jesus came in the flesh, and when he resurrected, he resurrected in the flesh.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we are not using flesh as being ultimately evil as far as material wise. It is a spiritual and figurative language to talk about the passions that you have, the things that you wanted to do before you were a Christian, and the temptations that will bother you until Jesus returns. It is what Paul struggled with himself in Romans 7: (verse 19m paraphrased) the things that he wanted to do that he is not supposed to be doing; also, the desires that he had. So, Paul is trying to make sure that we understand that the appetites and desires that we have need to continue to be resisted and put to death by the power of the Spirit.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, Paul has more to say about that in Galatians 5 and 6; and in a moment, we will turn to that. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

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

SCOTT HOEZEE

And let's dig back into Galatians 5, and now we are up to the 19th verse: The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 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. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we see this contrast of the acts of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit in this passage; and so, this is the part where we answer the question: What do we do and how our lives matter in what we do after that? So, at first, in the beginning of the book, he was saying you cannot earn your own salvation and righteousness by keeping the law, which is true; but now he is saying *after* salvation by grace through faith, you have a certain way you need to live.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; the law points us forward to what grateful Christian living looks like because of the grace given to us. So again, Paul has pivoted from that first part of the letter when he said: Don't concentrate on your works; to now the second part, saying: Ah, but concentrate on your works because you want to be led by the Spirit; and he has been talking about what it means to be led by the flesh; and now, in verses 19-21, he generates a kind of laundry list here, Darrell, of the more specific things he is getting at. It is a real hodge-podge of things.

DARRELL DELANEY

Paul does not, you know, mince words. He talks about these negative things: the witchcraft, the hatred, the jealousy, the fits of rage, even drunkenness and orgies and things of that nature, because those are the things that will not inherit the kingdom of God; and I love that he doesn't, like, mince any words; he doesn't stutter; he goes right into it and says this is not the way we are called to live, but he also shows that there is a way that we should live.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And he doesn't really stratify these sins like we sometimes do. You know, we often think: Well, the sexual matters, you know, orgies and stuff like that, that is really serious. Paul doesn't make any distinction between that...that is serious...but he doesn't make any distinction between that and other things that we all struggle with, including factions and dissensions and discord; and of course, ironically, Darrell, in the history of the Church, within congregations, but also within whole denominations, sometimes when we are debating various issues, like the role of women in the church, or sexuality issues, or maybe the Christian's relationship to the government, or you know...when we debate those things because we want to get them right, that is what ends up leading us to dissensions and factions and discord. It would be funny if it weren't so sad and broken; but Paul is saying it is all bad; and then he goes after a few other things that many of us struggle with.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; you know, he talks about envy, anger, things like that; and it is really interesting how...debauchery...it is a real old word. Debauchery means you are drinking way too much and you are going to get into drunkenness.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, when you are in the place where you are uncontrollable and it is taking over your life, things like that, this stuff is where Paul is zeroing in, because some people consider this to be just partying and whatnot, but it is actually way more serious.

SCOTT HOEZEE

He also mentions a few other things that we know: Witchcraft, hmm, maybe we haven't struggled with that, but also idolatry; and you know, we all know we can make an idol out of almost anything: our looks, our success, how much money we have, a political party or leader, our country; we can make an idol out of anything; and Paul says that those who freely and repeatedly revel in those things...indulge in those things...just live that way without any effort to try to check it or stop it, they are just not going to be people who are going to inherit the kingdom of God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, just to pick up where you talked about witchcraft, Scott, I think...I know that when I think of witchcraft, I don't think of someone taking a wand and waving it and saying a few magic words or whatnot. I actually think of people who use their power to manipulate to try to get things that they want that they are not supposed to have. So, any con work, any deception, any lying that kind of gets you what you think you want, I think that can also be constituted as the behavior that God says you are not going to inherit the kingdom if you continue to practice that on a regular basis.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and I think we really want to be clear here. Paul is not saying you are out of the kingdom; you are not in the kingdom if you struggle with these things, because we all do. I mean, he talks about fits of rage. I don't know about you, but I have been known to lose my temper in my life, right? I have been known to envy

more successful neighbors or co-workers sometimes. I have probably participated in the factions and discord in churches at times. Paul isn't saying that when we struggle with these things, or even when we fail and we sin, oh, well, that means you are out of the kingdom. That proves that you have not inherited the kingdom. No; he is saying if you are persistent in doing these things; if you have no desire to change; you never repent of them; you never reform your ways, this is just the lifestyle you have chosen to be consistently rude and drunk and angry; well, that shows that you haven't been touched by grace in the first place. So yes, those people won't inherit the kingdom, but just struggling doesn't mean that you are out of the kingdom. But as Galatians 5 closes, Darrell, there is something real positive as well.

DARRELL DELANEY

Now Paul turns his attention to the nine fruit of the Spirit; and if you have been following this show for a long time, you know that we did a nine-part series on the fruit of the Spirit back not too long ago. It was probably the longest series we have ever done, and if you haven't listened to it, you might want to go back and find it, because it is really good. We are not going to be able to get into all of the things, but these are the things that happen when the Holy Spirit gets ahold of your life; he bears fruit, and this is an example of that:

SCOTT HOEZEE

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. We can know the summary, the kind of curious thing Paul writes. After he makes this list, he says: (verse 23b) Against these things there is no law. What an interesting way to put it; you know, some of the stuff that Paul had talked about as works of the flesh actually is also illegal. It is illegal to be drunk in public; it is illegal to drive while drunk; it is illegal to have brawls and fights that are sparked by anger. Some of that stuff is actually illegal, but Paul says you cannot imagine that anybody would ever outlaw kindness; you cannot imagine that anybody would outlaw self-control or patience. There is no law against these things because they are universally recognized as good.

DARRELL DELANEY

It doesn't matter what society, what culture, what ethnicity; if you have a civilization with a group of people who are agreeing on certain rules...everyone knows killing is wrong; everyone knows defrauding your neighbor or lying or slandering...all that stuff is wrong; but they also know that kindness is good; peace is good; love is good; and so, they are always going to have an agreement around what those things mean. They may debate the details, but generally speaking, God in his Word said he has put his law in our hearts so that we know what is right and we know what is wrong; and the Spirit is the one who actually gives us the ability to do these things; and that is why I believe Paul is saying keep in step with the Spirit.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Keep step with the Spirit; one of Paul's many imperative command statements. Look, the Spirit is leading us down the paths we need to travel in life, Paul says. So, keep up with the Spirit; match your steps with the Spirit and you cannot go wrong; and that is the Holy Spirit that Jesus sent to us after he ascended back into heaven to do exactly that.

So, Darrell, to return to the question and the issue that we mentioned at the beginning of this program, in answer to the question: Do our actions and works and behavior matter or not? Paul's answer is they matter not one bit when it comes to how you get saved, but they matter a whole lot once you *are* saved...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because being saved means also being transformed. You are a new creation. The Holy Spirit is your moral compass on the inside, so keep step with that Spirit. But Paul has a few closing things to say also in the short chapter of Galatians 6; and as we wrap up this program and series, we will dig into that. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening 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 we now turn to the final chapter in Paul's letter or epistle to the Galatians. Paul begins by warning people: Don't be proud and conceited; but then, he writes these words in Galatians 6:7: Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A person reaps what they sow. ⁸Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. ⁹Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

DARRELL DELANEY

Garden language; farming language...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

Sow this, reap that; and there is a cause and effect that happens when you do what you are called to do. Unfortunately, the opposite is true as well. If you do bad and you sow that seed, then you will reap things that are bad that are happening to you. I think Jesus said this in Luke 6:38. He says: Give and it shall be given back to you; a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over. Whatever measure you use, is the measure that is going to come back to you. So, I think Paul is kind of alluding to that, where he is trying to make sure you understand that there is a cause and effect that happens when you do things.

SCOTT HOEZEE

God set up the universe in a certain way, Paul says; and the way things go is that you reap what you sow. God is under no obligation to suspend the law of cause and effect of certain actions leading to certain predictable outcomes just to make life easier for somebody. Look, if you treat people kindly, you bear those nine fruit of the Spirit we looked at in the previous segment of this program, goodness is going to boomerang back on you. You be considerate of others, and guess what? You know, others are considerate of you. Sometimes we call it, you know, paying it forward or something, you know...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That is how it goes, Paul says.

DARRELL DELANEY

When you lend a hand, you know...if actually, you receive a hand lent to you, you want to extend that same mercy to people because of that kindness; and unfortunately, if you are on the other side of it, and you are doing things where you are rude to people, or when people are rude to you, it can be very easy to return that same gesture, which we are called *not* to do; and so, my prayer is that we would allow God to use us as instruments of righteousness, that we would sow the seeds, and not because we think we are going to get something back.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think that is another thing that needs to be said is that we don't do it because we know we are going to get something, because that reward isn't the real reward. We do it because it is right to do...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And because the Spirit is leading us. Hopefully, that would be a reward in and of itself.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; now, as this letter comes in a for a landing, a couple other things: Paul has been very forceful in this letter, maybe more than any of his twelve letters, and to make sure the Galatians know that this comes from him personally, he writes in Galatians 6:11: See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand! It is thought that Paul dictated his letters. They were written out by somebody else who was kind of a secretary or the technical term is an amanuensis; and it has also long been speculated that after his Damascus Road encounter, Paul had some real vision problems. So, if he is going to write something with his own hand, they are going to be really big letters.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and some people believe in 2 Corinthians that, when he is talking about the thorn in his flesh, that that is actually what he could be talking about, poor eyesight and whatnot; and if Paul writes with his own hand, he is probably going to write in larger letters so that it can be visibly seen by him, as he has them sent over to the church, but there could be various reasons why he is saying: I write by my own hand; and one of them could be because of the authority he is speaking with.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; this is me; this has really been me, people; all along; so, pay attention. I am invoking my full apostolic authority here; but then, Darrell, Paul makes one last warning.

DARRELL DELANEY

In verse 15 of Chapter 6, it says: Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation. ¹⁶Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the Israel of God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that is pretty much where the letter ends; and it goes back to the main theme of the whole book, those works of the law don't get you saved; what counts is, you are going to be a new creation by grace alone; and because you are a new creation, now you will live a certain way, too. Okay; so, we have seen that; but there is a little line here, Darrell, that we often overlook; and when he is wishing peace and mercy, he refers to the Church as the Israel of God; and here it is a clear place where Paul identifies the Church of Jesus Christ as the new Israel. Israel of old is gone now, but all that God promised to Abraham about his descendants...all that God ever promised to the nation of Israel...all that God ever promised to Abraham, Moses, David...they all find their yes in Jesus; and in the new Israel that Jesus formed by his Holy Spirit in the Church.

DARRELL DELANEY

And so, Paul alluded to that in Chapters 3 and 4, especially. We talked about this in the last episode, is that the ones who believe like Abraham did, and are credited righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ, are heirs of the eternal reward, which is God's presence and being a part of his family. So, God has been, from the days of old, engrafting people of every tribe, language and nation into that new family of God; and in the book of Revelation, you see them all worshipping around the throne of the Lamb. So, the idea is that God's people will be the missionaries who will bring his message of Person and work of what he has done to the whole world, so that people would know they are not saved by works, but they are saved by faith in Christ; and now they have a new way to live because of it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The bottom line of Galatians, and it is still a word for us in the Church today, Darrell: Never take your eyes off of Jesus on the cross; never take your eyes off the fact that Jesus did it all. Don't let anyone make you doubt that. Don't fall for any scheme from any would-be preacher who would suggest that God only really loves the people who first manage to clean up their own acts and live a certain way. Salvation is not a reward for good behavior. Never, never forget that. But also, don't forget: We have been changed by our baptisms.

DARRELL DELANEY

And the baptism is the reminder that we have been connected with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection; and Paul calls us to live into the faith of the gospel by believing and trusting in Jesus alone.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; lean into it. Lean into the full grace of the gospel. Know that God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself; although we are still living in a broken, fractured, often painful world, we are already now, simultaneously living in the new creation that will be the fullness of the kingdom of God. That is the gospel; and we can never thank God enough for it.

DARRELL DELANEY

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

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SCOTT HOEZEE

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