

I Belong: So I Live for Him

SCOTT HOEZEE

Sometimes we get a little suspicious of words like *therefore* and *however*. Maybe somebody gives you a great gift; you accept it happily, but then you hear: Now, I have given you this gift; therefore... Or: There is absolutely no charge for you to receive this gift; however... We always wonder: Hmmm, if I take this gift, am I obligated to something else? Well, belonging to Christ does carry some implications, but they are wonderful ones, as we will explore right here on *Groundwork*. Stay tuned.

DAVE BAST

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Dave, this is the fourth and final program in a series about belonging—I belong...we belong to Jesus; and we have been digging into scripture throughout this series, but the scriptures that we have been digging into have been kind of organized and framed for us by the first question and answer of the classic Reformed catechism, the Heidelberg Catechism from the 16th Century, and its well-known opening verse about what is your only comfort in life and in death, and the answer is belonging...belonging to Jesus.

DAVE BAST

Yes; in fact, this is so precious...these words...to people in our particular tradition. More often than not, I think, if I go to a funeral of an older church member, they will have this printed in the little funeral brochure that they hand out, you know; maybe on one side there will be Psalm 23 and on the other side there will be question-and-answer 1 of the Catechism; and now we are prepared to hear the whole answer, which begins: My only comfort is that I am not my own, but belong body and soul in life and in death to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. And now the last bit that we are going to focus on today.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and so, Jesus has kind of been the subject of all the verbs in this series...Jesus is the chief actor; but now, we will get to that last part, where the camera swivels a little bit toward us, because it says: Now, *because* I belong to Jesus, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life, and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him. So, now we are talking a little bit more about something we have to do here...live for Jesus.

DAVE BAST

Right; our response. So, as you said, Scott, there is a pivot here, and we get some of those troubled connecting words...or they can be troubling, you know; there is a string attached, it sounds like, and that is what we are always concerned about. We hear a free offer, and then comes the *but* or the *nevertheless* or the *therefore* or the *because*, you know: *If* you accept this wonderful, free offer...oh, here is the fine print...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

And it is tempting to think of it that way, but it is really more good news, isn't it?

SCOTT HOEZEE

It actually is, because even though we are going to shift and will be talking about that in this program, about how we behave now...how we live...

DAVE BAST

What is our response.

SCOTT HOEZEE

What is our obligation? But, notice what the Catechism line did *not* say. It did *not* say: Because I belong to him, I need to get my act together and shape up and start behaving like a good, moral person...

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

No; it didn't say I have to do this. It said: Because I belong to him, Christ makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready. So, the camera is still on Jesus.

DAVE BAST

Yes, it is; and Jesus and his Spirit...so, the Holy Spirit is introduced at this point, and it starts with assurance, which is one of the great works that the Spirit does in us; and again, we are led into pretty deep waters here biblically...passages in John that speak about the work of the Holy Spirit...how Jesus promises to send him, and in that way he will be with us...he will be present in and through the person of his Spirit. It also deepens our understanding of what it means to belong to Christ. It isn't just this transaction where Jesus has bought and paid for us, and so he owns us, kind of like a master and slave; but he actually comes to dwell in us through his Spirit, so we are joined to him in this most intimate way. It is, as Paul says: Christ in me...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

Christ in you, the hope of glory. I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. So, there is this sort of mystical union, some have called it, between Christ and us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and so, if we are going to talk about Christian living, or our morality, if you want to put it that way, you could ask the question: Well, okay; what are we talking about here? Is this about what God is doing in us, or what we decide to do every day? And the answer is: Yes; it is both. It is what God is doing in you, activating your choices every day.

DAVE BAST

And as I think we will hope to prove in the next few minutes, you have to remember both of those things; you have to keep a hold on each one of them together, because you can kind of go off the rails in either direction...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

And say: Oh, it is all God. I don't do anything, just let go and let God, some have said. It is all up to him; or on the other hand say: Well, no, you know; God saves those who save themselves; and I have got to get after it, and it is really on me...the burden is on me.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we have looked at this in other programs in different connections on *Groundwork*, Dave; but one of the things we have said...and a great biblical image is a fruit tree...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Think of our lives as a fruit tree and think of our good works and our moral choices as being like apples on an apple tree; and one of the things that happens...and we don't mean to do this...but one of the things that happens is, apples on a tree are really easy to see. The roots underground are the key to the tree, of course, but you cannot see them; but you can see the apples; and so, after a while you kind of forget that if I didn't have the roots of grace...if Jesus' living water was not flowing into me through the roots of God's grace that saved me, I couldn't grow an apple in my life; but, you can see the apples...you see the moral deeds...but you cannot see the roots, and the roots are not that pretty anyway compared to a nice shiny, red apple; and so, we kind of forget where it comes from. It is God in me growing the apple, not just me growing the apple. God does not love me because I grow so many good apples; he makes me grow good apples because he loves me!

DAVE BAST

He loves me, yes, that is the best way of thinking about it; and really, this is biblical, too; a famous passage from Paul's letter to the Ephesians: By grace you have been saved through faith; not because of works, lest anyone should boast...but, Paul then immediately adds: He has done this in order that we might do good works, which he has prepared for us...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Which *he* has prepared, yes.

DAVE BAST

He has prepared ahead of time that we should walk in them. So, yes; here is the great truth: Christ assures us of eternal life—everlasting life. We can be sure. Do you know you are saved? Yes, we can be sure because the Spirit testifies to that. We will look at that in just a bit, but he also prompts us to live lives of fruitfulness...of fruit-bearing to the glory of God, ultimately.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And you know, that is a very biblical theme there, Dave, that we are assured of our salvation because of the fruit we grow in our lives; and so, if God wants to come to us and say: What does the moral fruit you grow mean to you? The answer should not be: Well, it means I am a good person. God will say: No; it means you have been saved. That is proof that you have been saved by grace because that is why you are growing this fruit. It has nothing to do with you per se; it is all grace; and let's dig into a little more scripture, Dave, in just a moment to see a little more implications of how this whole thing of divine obligation to live this way plays out.

Segment 2

DAVE BAST

I am Dave Bast, along with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and right now, we want to dig into a classic passage about the obligation of those who have been given the Spirit...who have been born again through faith—by grace through faith in Jesus Christ...and the obligation then to pursue a life of good works. So, this is from Romans 8, and I will begin at verse 12, where the Apostle writes:

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation... (there is that word) we have an obligation, but it is not to the flesh, which is to say, to our sinful nature, to live according to it; ¹³for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if, by the Spirit, you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship, and by him we cry: Abba, Father. ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children; ¹⁷and if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ; if indeed, we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, as you pointed out as you read those verses from Romans 8, Dave, Paul does use the word *obligation* here; and again, in most of life when you talk about obligation, the focus is on us. In fact, you used to hear this phrase: *noblesse oblige*...

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The obligation of the nobility, or the noble obligation that wealthy people have to give their money away. If you have more money than anybody else...other people...than you have kind of this nobility obligation...the obligation of the nobility to give your money away...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And not just be some sort of a tightwad with it.

DAVE BAST

Well, actually, it was even in older society, like in the Middle Ages, when the concept arose, you had the obligation to protect people lower down on the social order because they worked the land, and they didn't have weapons; but you did, and if need be, you had to die in order to...that was your obligation for their sake. So, yes; this wonderful idea that, to put it in biblical terms, to whom much has been given, much will be required.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and again, there is that sense of obligation that it is all about us, but Paul makes it clear here, as we were saying earlier in the program, from the language used also in the Heidelberg Catechism, that this really is only secondarily about us. It is mostly about God's Spirit in us activating our ability to live for God. It is the Spirit who has adopted us into the divine family...who lets us call the almighty God of the universe Abba, Father. Paul makes it clear: Yes, this has to do with how you live, but it is all about the God inside of you.

DAVE BAST

Yes, right; and if you look closely at that Romans 8 passage, you notice there is a negative and a positive to this. So, we get this wonderful gift of assurance. The Spirit convinces us that we are God's children in the

fullest sense. The Spirit teaches us to call him Daddy, you know, Abba, this intimacy with him; but the Spirit...here is what it means from now on to live for him in catechism terms: What does it mean to live for Christ? Well, negatively, it means we start to put to death...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

In the power of the Spirit, all the bad things that we can do with and through our bodies; and then, we bring to life all the good things that God wants us to do...the acts of love. So, there is a positive and negative; and in classical theological terms, the first one is called *mortification*—the putting to death of sin; and the second one is called *vivification*, or the coming to life of the good.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And again, it is all about sort of letting that Holy Spirit in you be your internal moral compass. It means you trust the Spirit is leading you down the right paths and making you avoid bad paths. You trust that the rules God gave us—the laws God gave us in the Bible—are for our good. They are not arbitrary hoops that God just likes to watch us jump through like performing dogs in a circus; no, those laws are the instruction manual for the cosmos. This is how you live delightfully and safely.

DAVE BAST

They are the owner's manual for the human organism. Yes, this is how it works.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And it is all grace; it all happens because God is at work in us; and you know, Dave, we have maybe mentioned this in passing on other programs, but there is a great test case, as it were, about all of this on display in Paul's letter to the Galatians.

DAVE BAST

Right, yes; which is another book that we have done a study of on *Groundwork*...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

And you talk about all grace, and don't focus on what you do in order to be saved, but then, again, there is this same pivot in the book of Galatians as we get to the end.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; I mean, after Paul had left Galatia false teachers came in, as they often did, and said: Paul only gave you have the Gospel. Jesus is great! He really got the ball rolling, but now you have to complete salvation by doing...doing...doing...doing; and they believed that; and Paul heard it, blew a gasket, and spends the whole first three...four chapters of Galatians really kind of yelling at them, to say what it boils down to is: Forget about your deeds. Will you please stop thinking about what you *do*! It doesn't matter; it is all grace; and then, as you say, before the letter ends, all of a sudden he starts talking about what we *do*!

DAVE BAST

Here is what you do, yes. It is such a tough thing to hang on to...the remembrance...the realization to get it down deep in our bones that nothing that we do can make us acceptable to God; or more acceptable than we are already by grace. Nothing that we do can earn our place in heaven. I love the way a British theologian once put it: You cannot get to heaven by taking the stairs; you have got to take the lift...or as we would say in North America: You have got to take the elevator. You have to just rest in the grace of God and he will do it all; but...but then, okay...what comes next?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and so, Paul says, in Galatians again, having said for chapter after chapter, what you do doesn't matter. Now, in Galatians 5 he says: ¹³Well, now you, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free; but don't use your freedom to indulge the flesh, rather serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴The entire law is filled in keeping this commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself. ¹⁹Now, the acts of the flesh are obvious: Sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery; ²⁰idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like (quite a list) I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

DAVE BAST

There is that warning, you know; if you don't put to death the works of the flesh, you will die, Paul says; but then he goes on: Here is a whole series that we have done on the fruit of the Spirit: ²²Love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control... 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 (let's walk by the Spirit).

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, now all of a sudden, in a book where Paul has said: Don't think about your deeds, he is ending that same book, or letter actually, with a whole bunch of imperatives—command statements; and again, how is that not contradictory? Why didn't Paul read this letter when he was finished and say: Oh, for goodness' sake, I totally contradicted myself. Well, he didn't contradict himself. Grace saves, and then grace transforms.

DAVE BAST

Yes, right; or we could say the same thing about faith. The great 19th Century preacher, Spurgeon, once said: Faith that does not change your behavior will never change your destiny; and the reason is, it is not real faith. So, it is a classic Christian both/and, and the Bible is full of them...both/ands. We hang onto both pieces; and we will think about what that might look like in day-to-day life in just a moment.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

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

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we are concluding, Dave, the fourth and final program in a four-part series about how we belong to Jesus. We have been taking our cues from the question-and-answer 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism, but also digging deeply into all the scripture passages that the Catechism drew on; and today, we have been talking about living for God...being wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Jesus, and to live for Christ...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we just said sort of the classic both/and. There is nothing you can do to get yourself saved, but once you are saved, there is a whole lot you need to do to evidence the fact that God's Spirit is living in you and activating a new kind of living; and most all Christians...except maybe for some very libertine types who really just don't care...but almost all Christians *do* want to live good lives; but the question is, how do we talk about those good lives, because there are a couple of mistakes—equal but opposite mistakes—we can

make in how we frame up our moral living.

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely; and well, let's take one example—one extreme—and you know what? I am going to talk about our tradition again. This whole series has kind of been about that—the Heidelberg Catechism—the Reformed tradition. One group of Reformed people that are quite notorious in the public imagination are the Puritans. One wit once defined a Puritan as someone who is desperately afraid that someone somewhere was having a good time...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, right. It's not nice, but...

DAVE BAST

The killjoys, right; and in our particular tradition, Scott, you and I know this from growing up, there is a tendency to sort of judgmentalism—to kind of...even though we know better in theory through our theology...in practice, we tend to look at our lives and say: Well, you know, God...of course God loves me and accepts me. Look at the life I live; and especially compared to that next-door neighbor of mine. Why, you know what? He mows his lawn on Sunday. He doesn't go to church like I do. He washes his car outside...blatantly...in the open, you know. He is probably sleeping off Saturday night and all the beer he drank; and here I am dressed in my Sunday best and parading to church...you know...with my Bible under my arm.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; I give ten percent of my income to the church, and he just buys a big boat and more beer. So obviously, I am going to heaven and he's not because I am good and he's not. Well, we do want to be good, moral people, but this attitude is a problem, because it is not respecting grace enough. Again, it is not respecting the fact that it is God's Spirit who is enabling me to do all of these wonderful things. These are all little gracelets that are flowing from the big grace. I shouldn't be proud of these achievements; I sure shouldn't use it as the basis of comparison...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

When we use our morality as the only point of comparison with non-believing neighbors, that means we are forgetting that if it weren't for grace, we would be one of those non-believing neighbors.

DAVE BAST

Absolutely; you know, that reminds me of a very famous quote. It was attributed to a Puritan, who, in seeing a condemned prisoner being taken off to execution said: There but for the grace of God go I...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

Which is to say: I am no different, you know. We are all the same, but God has somehow, in his love, touched my life and given me his Spirit and brought me to Christ, and all praise to him. No credit to me.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, that is one extreme that is not a right way to frame up Christian living...being proud of it and using it as a point of comparison, if not using it as sort of like a bludgeon with which to beat up on our neighbors; but there is another extreme, which is just as bad, and that is to say: Ah, just trash talking your good deeds...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Oh, all my works are like filthy rags. I know nothing I do is good enough for God. I have no idea how good I am, or I just feel guilty all the time; and I think when I appear before the judgment seat, 50/50 at best...heaven or hell. God is going to give me a thumbs up or a thumbs down, and I honestly don't know which way that is going to go. I just never do enough, and what I do do stinks, and... Well, that is not a helpful attitude either.

DAVE BAST

Right, yes; and again, we all know either real examples or the caricature of the preacher who just heaps guilt on people: Oh, you are so awful...you are so horrible...you miserable sinners...you stinking...you know...rotten, no-good...nothing you do... Yes, you know, we need to kind of hold onto this balance that, no, our good works still have imperfections in them; no, we never do all that we should do. As Jesus said: In the end of the day, you are going to say to me: We were but unworthy servants. Even the rewards God promises us will be of grace; but nevertheless, we can bear fruit. Jesus said: If you abide in me, you will bear fruit; and that fruit is going to be good...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and we should be grateful for it, not trash-talking it, right? In the name of piety, I think a lot of us have trash talked. We have demoted the goodness of our good deeds; and if, as we said, Dave, if all the good that we do comes because the Holy Spirit lives in us and is activating that, how dare we demote that in importance! This is the Spirit's work in you. Yes, as you just said, imperfect, yes. You are not being saved because of it; no, but is proof that you are saved...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is the fruit of the grace that lives in you by the Holy Spirit, so don't trash-talk it; don't say it is filthy rags and a stinking pile of dung. This is the work of God in your life. Be grateful.

DAVE BAST

Be grateful; and let it add to your sense of assurance...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DAVE BAST

Because I would not do that thing if it were up to me. You know what? I would not go to church if it were up to me. That is the Spirit prompting me to give thanks to God—to worship him. I would not believe in Jesus if it were up to me; and the fact that I do...the fact that I have this sense that I really do love him...I give great thanks for that, because when I am tempted to doubt, when I am tempted to question, when I am tempted to despair and say how could God love somebody like me, I turn back to him and I say, like Peter, Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you. And that, too, is the Spirit speaking with my spirit, reminding me that I am God's child.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because...as we have said throughout this whole series...all of that is true because we belong to Jesus Christ our Lord; thanks be to God.

DAVE BAST

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

Connect with us at groundworkonline.com to share what *Groundwork* means to you, or tell us what you would like to hear us discuss on *Groundwork*.

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