
Inquiring Minds Want to Know

DAVE BAST

What happened to Joseph? Who was Julia? How do I reconcile women in church leadership with passages that seem to forbid that? Is it right to criticize other religions or churches? These are some of the topics and passages you have asked *Groundwork* to discuss this year. We are always glad to hear from you, so stay tuned, and together, we will dig into scripture to try to come up with some answers.

SCOTT HOEZEE

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

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast; and of course, one of the great things about doing *Groundwork*, Scott, is getting feedback from listeners; either over the air or online, or to the podcast. In the old days, when I first started doing radio, we would get listener letters...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

Which were welcome. A few of those, I guess, still trickle in; but mostly now, it is through e-mail and social media that we hear from you, our listener.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; you ask questions. Sometimes, they are questions that come right out of specific programs we have done. Other times, they are something we haven't covered, actually, but something that people are just curious about; or, I think we will see that in this program, too, something that some of our listeners are just struggling with or have some questions about, and wanted to hear us talk about it. So, let's get to it. We heard from one listener named Julia.

DAVE BAST

I enjoy hearing about the Bible, but I do have questions about the New Testament, like what happened to Joseph? She is, of course, referring to Mary's husband, Joseph...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

Not the Joseph of the Old Testament...and I want to know more about the unknown disciples of Jesus. I learned about an unknown disciple, whose name was Julia. I think that made her ears perk up...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

That is her name. She is only mentioned one time in the last chapter of Romans, and I have been wanting to know more about her, and the other unknown disciples. Is there a way you could help me learn more about her and the others? What were their lives like? How did they help Jesus? There is so much that I would like to learn and understand. Which is great! So would I, you know?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; it does raise your curiosity. The Julia figure, in particular, whom Julia asked about, is in Romans 16:15, whereas we will see in just a few minutes. There is actually a whole list of people at the end of Romans that Paul greets, but in Romans 16:15, Paul writes: Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. Thirty-five people, in fact, are listed by name at the end of Romans 16; and Paul is greeting them, and/or returning greetings to these people...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But, to our listener, Julia's, point; actually, we know absolutely nothing about any of them.

DAVE BAST

Well, almost any of them. There are a couple of names that appear elsewhere in the New Testament; most notably, Timothy, who adds his greetings to Paul's; so, Timothy is a fairly prominent figure. He is in the book of Acts. He is Paul's young disciple and assistant; and of course, there are two letters—Paul's last two letters, probably—are addressed to Timothy. Early on, Paul mentions Aquila and Priscilla, or rather, in reverse order: Priscilla and Aquila, a husband-and-wife team. Priscilla, the wife, is always, interestingly, mentioned first whenever they are referred to; and they appear in the book of Acts. They were Paul's co-workers, literally, in the tent-making business, but also in ministry, where they were significant; and now, apparently, they have made their way to Rome. So, Paul had been with them in both Corinth and Ephesus, and he greets them in Rome; but, as you say, Scott, most of these thirty-five names...they are just names...that is all we know.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; to us... I heard the great preacher, Fred Craddock, preach a sermon on this passage once, of all things, in which his refrain was: Don't call this a list, like it is something dry and boring. It is not a list. These were living people, known to Paul; and as we always say, Dave, when we are looking at the letters—or the epistles—in the New Testament, we are reading somebody else's mail. Romans was not written to you or to me, or to anyone today. It was written to specific Christians, whom Paul *did* know, and he knew them by name. These were saints; these were friends; these were fellow disciples—servants of Jesus Christ—and we maybe will never know this side of heaven who a lot of those people were, but they were known to Paul, and that makes it very precious in a way, that their names were preserved.

You know, it is interesting when you think about it. There are not that many names in the Bible in general, and certainly in the New Testament. I mean, for instance, of all the people Jesus healed, you know almost none of their names. These people cross his path; he heals them: The widow of Nain, he raises her son; but what was his name? What was her name? We don't know.

DAVE BAST

Actually...yes, there are only two names in all those miracle stories of Jesus. One is Jairus, the synagogue ruler...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

Whose little girl Jesus raised. The other is Bartimaeus, the blind man that Jesus healed at the end of his ministry; and one very interesting suggestion made by a New Testament scholar is that the reason those people are named is because they became part of the early Church, so people knew them. That is another thing I think we can conclude from these names. How small the earliest Church was. You know, people knew one another. Even living in different cities, it was such a...there were so few of them that they were personally related. It was an intimate kind of fellowship—the communion of the saints. They know each other; they loved each other, and cared. So, all of these greetings are flying back and forth; it is kind of heartwarming in a way. In fact, many of them were relatives. Paul, several times in Romans 16, mentions so-and-so, my kinsman, or somebody who was in the Lord before me, or somebody who is like a mother to me. So, you have this sense of how important relationships were.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Although we don't know the names of a lot of the people Jesus talked to, preached to, healed, raised from the dead, even; those names are all known to God...

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we get a smattering of names here and there, but there is never really...in God's sight, there are no anonymous disciples. We might wish we knew more about them, but the good news is, God knows about them. God knows their names. He knows your name, my name, Julia's name, everybody's name; and there is something very beautiful about that.

DAVE BAST

You know, there is a tradition of a tomb to the unknown soldier...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

Very often, when a soldier like that is unidentified, they will put on their grave marker: Known but to God...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

And all these people are known to God, even though we don't...yes, even Joseph, you know...Jesus' stepfather—Mary's husband...he disappears after the Christmas story.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we have noted before, too, in other maybe Christmas or Advent programs here on *Groundwork*, that Joseph in the Bible never speaks a word. He is mentioned in Matthew and Luke, but he never speaks. There is no word attributed to him. He speaks through his actions; but right, then after that, he disappears. Most scholars suspect that he was quite a bit older than Mary...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that by the time Jesus was an adult...life spans were not very long in the first century...so Joseph, we think, was probably gone...he had died...

DAVE BAST

Yes, he had died, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Before Jesus began his public ministry.

DAVE BAST

So, Mary was a widow, right. So, here is the thing; you know, the emphasis is not necessarily on these people as individuals. Really, the emphasis in the New Testament is on what the Spirit can do through ordinary people. One interesting point: Paul did not found the church in Rome. The most important church in that whole part of the world was not begun by Paul. We don't know who began the church in Rome. It was these same anonymous...maybe it was Julia, you know. Maybe she was one of the first evangelists to bring the Gospel to Rome.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, indeed; and one thing we *do* know about the list of names there...and it is not just a list, I understand, from Romans 16, is that there were a number of women in key leadership positions; and that, actually, is going to set us up for the next part of this program, when we will take up a listener question related to women in church leadership. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DAVE BAST

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

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Dave, on this program, we are considering some questions that we have received over the last year from our listeners. We just had a question from Julia about some of the shadowy, unnamed, and occasionally named, people in the New Testament; but now, here is a question from a listener named Allen, and here is what he wrote.

I appreciate your discussions of scripture. I notice you invite us to share topics that you would like to hear discussed. One topic I have become concerned about is the issue of women in the leadership of the Church. I recently started attending a church that has several female pastors, some of whom are daughters of the senior pastors—a man and a wife—but I have a hard time reconciling this with passages like I Timothy 2, which says: ¹¹Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹²I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet; ¹³for Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor; ¹⁵yet, she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith and love and holiness with self-control.

DAVE BAST

And then he goes on to refer to another passage: I Corinthians 14:33-35, which says: ³³For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. ³⁴The women should keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the law also says. ³⁵If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

And now, Allen's question, again: What I find problematic is the fact that Paul seems to go back to the beginning, to Adam and Eve, in the first one, and to the law in the second one, in these passages to support his statements; thus preventing the claim that it is a cultural issue. Could you clarify this, please? Thanks, says Allen.

Well, you know, here we go. Yes, we are going to take this on, and we hesitate a little bit—I hesitate—Scott, I know you do, too; because this is an issue about which honest, sincere, and Bible-believing Christians disagree. It is a little bit like baptism, and I hate to hash out these things, where there is something to be said on both sides. You know, you can go to one extreme or the other with this issue, and sometimes people do.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

I don't think we want to do that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I mean, just very quickly, the two extremes. Some will say: Well, Paul was just wrong. He was wrong. He was anti-woman, but you know, he was from the First Century, so when it comes to these passages, just cross them out...

DAVE BAST

Yes, I think that is what Allen means when he says: You cannot dismiss it as a cultural issue.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I think probably most of us are not at all comfortable just crossing out any part of the Bible; so, that is not helpful. The other extreme would be to say: Well, Paul is clear as crystal here. It is very easy to see that women just cannot be preachers—they cannot be in leadership—so, that settles that; and don't try to interpret those passages. That just gets in the way, so just accept it at face value. It is clear as crystal. That is also kind of an extreme, because these passages are difficult, and they do cry out for thoughtful, careful interpretation, as do all passages, right?

DAVE BAST

Right, yes; I mean, you cannot help but interpret the Bible. It is not always straightforward; and frankly, very few people would argue that we absolutely have to simply apply this to the letter. So, women should keep silent in church? What, in the bathroom? In the Sunday school room? In the nursery—they are not allowed to make a peep? You know, that is pushing it to the...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Can they sing? Can they sing in the choir?

DAVE BAST

And you cannot avoid the realization that there are cultural differences between our time and Paul's; that is was a different culture to which he addressed himself in this matter; and our culture has changed.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But, even more so...and we mentioned this earlier in this same program...again, we are reading somebody else's mail. There was something going on in Corinth, there was something going on in Ephesus, where Timothy was working, that was troubling enough...something was happening that was disturbing the peace. We don't know what, exactly. Maybe women were speaking out of turn; maybe they had not had the chance before to learn theology or the Bible because they had not been permitted to read the Bible, maybe before; and so, maybe they were getting ahead of themselves, and Paul is saying: Wait a minute; don't speak out of turn. Something was going on that Paul knew about, and the Corinthians knew about...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And the Ephesians knew about, but we don't.

DAVE BAST

And, we also have to notice that I Corinthians 14 is talking about what is going on in the service—in the worship services of the church...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Maybe it is something chaotic going on.

DAVE BAST

It is not laying down a universal law for all Church practice of all times and in all places. It is something that was happening there. The thing about the Timothy passage is, I mean, it is just weird. Women will be saved through their childbearing. There is nothing like that anywhere else in the New Testament. It is very puzzling what Paul is getting at here; and the fact that he says: Eve was deceived. They were both deceived; the Bible is clear.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; both equally punished and upbraided by God for it. So, this passage is by no means clear or easy. It really does require thoughtful, careful interpretation. Volumes have been written on this. We cannot even begin to scratch the surface of it; but, whatever he meant about childbearing, whatever spin or take he is putting on the Adam and Eve story, we need to interpret this very carefully; and it may be, indeed, that he is not laying down an enduring principle. One of the reasons I think we can suspect that that is not how Paul thought, is to look at the overall direction or the arc or the trajectory of the New Testament, which especially for the First Century A.D., was very progressive on the roles of women, and it started with Jesus.

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely; I mean, there is a basic rule of Christian doctrine, or biblical interpretation, and that is that you have to interpret everything in light of the whole. What the Church fathers called the rule of faith. What is the basic...so, you have to put things in context. You don't just take one, especially if it is obscure or difficult, and we are not quite sure what is going on in a given passage. So, part of the context in which we put this, frankly, is a chapter like Romans 16, where Paul ticks off numerous women, one of them named Junia, he calls an apostle, probably in the broader sense of a missionary or a minister. He mentions Priscilla and Aquila, and they are mentioned elsewhere, where she is teaching Apollos, and straightening him out in his doctrine—one of the evangelists of the early Church. So, there were women engaged in the ministry of the Word in the New Testament Church; so, we take that as part of the context.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And again, it started with Jesus. Women were a key part of his larger band of disciples. They stayed true to him at the end when the men fled...

DAVE BAST

First witnesses to the resurrection...all women.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The women preached the Gospel first on Pentecost. You know, Peter goes to the Joel passage that your young men and young women will prophesy when the Spirit comes; and of course, there are all those passages, like in Galatians 3, that talk about how in Christ all the dividing walls that keep people apart—all those distinctions and classes—they are gone. Neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, we are all one in Christ Jesus; and so, a lot of people have made also the analogy to slavery, because you can quote three or four passages where Paul seems to approve of slavery: He tells slaves to be submissive; he tells slaves to keep their station and obey their masters; and yet, the New Testament in general proves itself to be

anti-slavery...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We did a program on the letter to Philemon a while back, where Paul never comes right out and says: You know what? Your runaway slave, Onesimus, you shouldn't even have a slave, slavery should be gone. He never says that directly, but everything else he says to Philemon says: You cannot have a Christian brother be a slave. So, Paul is undermining it from the inside.

DAVE BAST

Let's kind of wrap this up. I think we have maybe gone over our time here; but I think you can tell where Scott and I are both coming from on this particular question; but, I will say, too, I struggle with those passages like I Timothy 2 and I Corinthians 14, because I want to take the Bible seriously. I do not want to just blow it off.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

It is a struggle. Maybe this is one of those things where we can agree not to judge one another, but to continue to strive together to seek the mind of the Spirit and the meaning of the Word when it comes to women in ministry.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And to Allen, who is encountering this in real-life ministry, I think for both men and women, we judge people's calling based on their giftedness: Is the Spirit working through them? Is there an external confirmation of a given person's internal sense of call? These are the things I think we look at in the Church, and to follow where the Spirit is leading; but, in just a minute, we are going to close out this program looking at a question about how do we talk about people in the church; people with whom we disagree religiously?

We will take that up in a moment.

Segment 3

DAVE BAST

I am Dave Bast, along with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, where today we are discussing some of the questions. We are trying to answer some of our mail today, and respond to things that you have raised about the Bible, or doctrinal issues; and here is one final question, kind of a simple one: Is it right or okay if in church we put down other religions or criticize other churches?

I think, to begin with, we need to distinguish, maybe, between a slanderous kind of attack and simply pointing out differences or stating the truth.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; particularly today, thanks to social media, but also just global travel and immigration, we today are regularly going to bump into Muslims, Hindus, people from Judaism and so forth; so, we are going to bump into other religions; and at times, particularly if you think of the three great faiths of the world—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—they all have something to say about Abraham; they all have something to say about the nature of God; they all have something to say about how we are saved; they all have something to say about Jesus; but they do not all say the same things; and so, I think in our preaching and teaching in the Church, it is only doing a service if we point out, lovingly, accurately, and kindly, but point out what the differences are. What do we believe about Jesus that is different from a Jehovah's Witness or from a Muslim? That is not putting them down; and indeed, if all we are doing is setting up a straw man to stand for

all Jews or all Muslims, and then knocking it down; or just, you know, sneering, or making people laugh at people from other religions, that is wrong...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But, teaching discernment is helpful.

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely; as you say, Scott, to ridicule another religion, or even non religion. I remember I was attending a conference once, and I happened to be in the company of a preacher I very greatly admired, and we were coming out of one of the presentations, where it was a preacher I didn't really admire, and he was going on and on, kind of poking fun or ridiculing atheists; and my friend turned to me and said: I'll bet he has never really encountered a real atheist in his life. He has never talked to someone seriously. It is easy, as you say, to set up straw men, and then knock them down in order to gain applause from our audience; and that is just wrong; that is not anything we need to do, nor do we need to dwell on what is wrong or negative about other faiths. We need to be positive about Jesus...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; preachers are in the pulpit to proclaim good news—our Good News—not, indeed, to put others down. Again, teaching, discernment, seeing the differences is fruitful. The listener asked about other religions: Is it right to put down other religions? Maybe we can just expand this a little bit: Is it right to even criticize fellow Christians? So, let's say there is a well-known preacher; maybe someone like Joel Osteen, or someone like a Pat Robertson or a Jerry Falwell, Jr., and they have a big megaphone, and when they speak, they are quoted in all the newspapers, show up on TV. What if we conclude that they are spouting heresy? What if we conclude that what they are saying does not line up with the Bible? We don't have to put them down to point out that they are in error. In fact, you know, Dave, in the New Testament, Paul seems to assume that Christians are going to do a lot of rebuking of each other—a lot of pointing out, you know, of errors. So, I think we can do that lovingly, gently, bearing the fruit of the Spirit; but when even a fellow Christian or another well-known pastor is speaking something that is not biblically right, I think we only help our own people as pastors if we point that out.

DAVE BAST

Yes; a couple of passages come to mind. One, of course, from the Sermon on the Mount: Judge not, lest you be judged. So, be careful when we condemn others, especially if we do it in a real judgmental tone or spirit...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

But, John, in I John, says: Test the spirits to see whether they are from God or not. So yes, we have to be discerning, although not necessarily judgmental in a real condemnatory way. For many years, Scott, I was involved with Words of Hope, and we did a lot in the Middle East, and in other Muslim countries to try to share the Gospel there; and I will never forget something one of our Arabic partners said to me early on: We never criticize Islam in our programs. We don't go negative. Kind of like you wish politicians would do that. Don't go negative, yes; don't go negative because the most important thing you can do to win people to Christ is to love them.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Amen. Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Dave Bast, 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.

Please connect with us at our website, groundworkonline.com; share what *Groundwork* means to you; and, as we had on this program, share questions or topics you would like to hear more about on *Groundwork*.

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