

Love: the Guiding Principle for Christian Living

DARRELL DELANEY

As we continue in this study of the book of 1 Corinthians, we see there are no shortage of issues for a church so small in number, it is a wonder that all these things were going on. In today's episode, we will look at the problems that the Corinthians were having in corporate worship and fellowship, and what the Apostle Paul has to say to help them. All this and more on today's episode of *Groundwork*. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

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

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we have been in a series here, we are in the thick of it; this is the sixth of a seven-part series; and in the last episode of *Groundwork*, we talked about how Paul addressed in the 10th Chapter of 1 Corinthians, where he talked about the issue of Christian freedom, and he wanted to help the ones who are actually having issues with one another, because one group of them would want to be free and eat whatever they like to eat...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And then the others...they came from a place of food sacrificed to idols, so it became a stumbling block to them. So, how do they have fellowship with one another; how are they able to work together? To be able to show love to my brother or sister means that I might have to abstain from the things that are a challenge to them.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; freedom is great, but love is greater. That is sort of the bottom line. We should want to be the servant of all...that is what we talked about in the last episode...and let love set the tone. Now, we are going to move into Chapters 11, 12, and 13. That is a lot of ground to cover in this episode, and we are going to deal with some different issues, Darrell, but the bottom line is going to be the same. It is going to be all about love again, love for one another.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, as love undergirds this whole theme of these next few chapters, we are going to start in this chapter, where we are talking about love feasts. Just imagine if you had some people over for dinner, and they come in and they totally disregard that you invited them, and they are rude and obnoxious to you. They trash the place. They are drinking too much, and they eat all the food before the other guests come, and they are very rude to you, and leave you with the cleaning bill. That right there is kind of a nutshell version of what the Corinthian church is going through. They are not showing love to one another in these get-togethers and the gatherings they had, and that is causing all types of problems that Paul needs to address.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And you know, it would be bad enough if that happened at my house or your house...we invited some folks over and they were that rude, or people are arriving at different times, and most of the food was gone from the potluck before others arrived; and if this were only...if this love feast, right, that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 11...if that also were just a church potluck, that would be rude enough, right? But, the thing is, is that we know that in the early Church, what you call love feasts...it does appear to have been a communal meal, but it incorporated the Lord's Supper...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It incorporated the sacrament. This isn't just an ordinary potluck we are talking about, where people are being rude and unloving toward some members of the church, this is the sacrament of our Lord. That magnifies the offence here hugely.

DARRELL DELANEY

That actually points to the problem that they have with unity and community with one another. It says here in 1 Corinthians Chapter 11:17-22 in the following directives: In the following directives I (Paul) have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. ¹⁸In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. ¹⁹No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. ²⁰So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, ²¹for when you are eating, some of you go ahead (and eat) with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. ²²Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the Church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; no warm fuzzies from Paul on this one. This is pretty serious, because again, it does incorporate the Lord's Supper into this. So, they are corrupting a sacrament; and the ironic thing there, too, Darrell is that, you know, by partaking of the one body of Christ, we are supposed to become one body in the Church...

DARRELL DELANEY

Exactly.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And to have divisions like this and stratifications like this, where the rich people could get off work earlier, show up and eat all the food, and then the poor people, who had to work later, they go hungry. I mean, that is not just a social faux pas, that is not just kind of, you know, not being Martha Stewart nice...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

This is the Lord's Supper; and Paul talks about that. He says: Look, I received from the Lord what I passed on to you (this is verse 23): The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

That is what you are doing at these love feasts, Paul says, and it comes straight from Jesus; so, when you mess this up, you know, you are messing up some directives that come directly from our Lord.

DARRELL DELANEY

Scott, I just want to go back to what you were saying about how these people were treating each other, and I can ashamedly admit that I have sometimes had this “clique mentality,” where I just want to hang around people who are like me, people who have things in common with me, and that, I see, is a problem that is happening in the Corinthian church; and you cannot display the unity of the body that comes from the Lord’s Supper that you are talking about eating, and have this kind of attitude and mentality towards one another; and the fact that Christ instituted this very thing, Scott, means it is special, it means it is sacred, and we don’t want to forget the host of the meal, who is Christ himself; because Calvin teaches that he is somehow present when we are having the meal together. So, we don’t want to forget the host.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, the Roman Catholics always refer to the bread as the host, and because that is associated with the mass and so forth, a lot of us Protestants have moved away from that kind of language, you know, because it sounds too Catholic...

DARRELL DELANEY

Sure.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But you are right; the bread is the host, because Christ is the host. He is the one who is in charge of this particular potluck, if you will, right? He is the ultimate host; he is the one who we are sitting at table with; and so, we want to be like him and recognize what that means for our context, because you know, in verse 29 Paul has a very famous verse, which has made a lot of people nervous for centuries, which is: You are going to eat and drink judgment onto yourself if you fail to discern the body; and a lot of people think that means discerning the bread and the cup and getting their theology right...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, they have the theology of the Lord’s Supper. That is not the body Paul means. Paul means discerning the body of Christ, which is your congregation, and you are treating people this way, you are acting in an anti-Jesus way. You are not discerning that you are part of one body with these other believers, and you are supposed to love them—you are supposed to use your freedom to make other people’s lives better, and that is certainly what the Lord’s Supper is supposed to do.

DARRELL DELANEY

And because Christ, in his way of instituting this supper, did that in the process of loving one another, and in the context of serving one another. That is the standard by which this whole meal and these whole feasts are supposed to happen; and theologically speaking, if we think about how we were the poor beggar, and we were unable to attend or pay the debt of our own sins, Christ himself provided a way by his own sacrifice so that we could even have this meal; and so, because he showed the love example, we need to make sure that we show the love example in our everyday lives.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; think of the Gospel of John’s context, where Jesus institutes this meal, and it was preceded by foot washing, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Jesus stripped down, and he did the menial servant task of cleaning all their dirty feet; and he said: Now I have set you an example. That is my new commandment for you, love one another. So, to *not* show love for our fellow members in the middle of taking the Lord's Supper, which was going on in Corinth, that was something that Paul found to be more than just a little bit troubling, to put it mildly.

DARRELL DELANEY

That's true. In just a minute, we are going to dig deeper into the next chapter to talk about a completely different topic; however, the theme of love will still undergird it; so, stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this sixth episode, the second episode to last of a seven-part series on 1 Corinthians. Darrell, we have just been in 1 Corinthians 11, a fairly well-known chapter to many of us, on the Lord's Supper, and how they were not celebrating the Lord's Supper in the spirit of love and unity that is the very heart of communion—the very heart...even that word *communion*...we are supposed to be in communion with each other; and so, Paul said: Look, you have to discern the body, which is the believers around you, and you are supposed to love them.

Now, we are going to move into Chapter 12, and now that image of the body and the need to love within that body, is going to come even more to the forefront.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, Paul does this thing where he wants to make it even more real for us by using this body language that he is going to use in Chapter 12; and it really reminds me of playing with my kids when we get a puzzle out and we start putting the pieces together. Some kids will work on a corner, some kids will work on putting the colors and shapes together; and we all have the box to look to, Scott, where we see, okay, this is the reference of where we are going with this; and what I see is that that puzzle connection fits...no pun intended...it is designed to help us understand it. The Holy Spirit has given different pieces of the gifts to people in the body, and then we are supposed to fit them together to see what all God is up to, and Paul uses this analogy in Chapter 12.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You cannot put a puzzle together without having the guiding picture, and Paul wants the body of Christ to fit together by keeping our eyes on Christ Jesus...

DARRELL DELANEY

Exactly.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And recognize that we are his body now. We are his sort of temple on earth, but like all bodies, right...just like on most jigsaw puzzles, except for some of those really nasty jigsaw puzzles that are like just all white clouds...you can clearly tell that there are different parts of the puzzle; and in the body of Christ, there are different parts, and we need all of the parts fitting together, working together, if we are going to look like Jesus...if we are going to look like what the picture on the cover of the puzzle box is, which is Christ.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I think it is important that Paul is pointing out that each and every piece of that puzzle, and each and every spiritual gift, if we are going to keep to scripture, is absolutely important; and he makes it clear that there are no indispensable pieces of it. If you look at verses 15 and on, it says: If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But in fact, God has placed parts in

the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

SCOTT HOEZEE

²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” ²²On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker, are indispensable, ²³and the parts that we think are less honorable, we treat with special honor. And the parts that aren’t presentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.
Great image!

DARRELL DELANEY

Man, I am excited about it, too, Scott, because it removes...it decentralizes the specialist, who I just need to be a pastor or I have to have a doctor degree or I have to be called as a missionary... No; everyone has...if you are a believer, Scott, you have a gift...at least one spiritual gift...and that gift is not indispensable or inferior to whoever you have who has those titles or those achievements. I am not knocking them, I am a pastor myself; but the idea is that every believer has a gift, and that gift is important.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And the body cannot work without it; and it doesn’t matter what your gift is, or whether you are out front in the church, or way behind the scenes; whether you are listed in the bulletin as having a special task to do on a given Sunday, or you are somebody who is, you know, just doing something else; the body cannot work without everybody. In fact, I think Paul’s got a little bit of humor going on here. I mean, can you imagine seeing just a giant eyeball rolling down a sidewalk? Or just a giant ear leaning up against a building? We would say: That’s not a body, that’s an eyeball! That is an ear, that is not a body. So, the ear can hear, what is it going to do? So, the eye can see, it cannot hear a thing. So, I think Paul is being a little cheeky here a little bit by sort of saying: That would be ridiculous. If you were just a foot, how would you eat? You wouldn’t have a hand! So, he has a little fun with that. But there are two extremes that he covers here, Darrell. One extreme would be to say: Because I am not the pastor...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I just bake pies and bring food to our homebound members...because I am not the pastor, I don’t really matter much. I hardly even belong. No; don’t discount how important you are.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The other extreme, though, is one that maybe we are even more prone to: Because I am the pastor, I am way more important than the people who bake pies.

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I mean, come on; I am the preacher; I went to seminary; I am more important than the people who serve the funeral meals, or who quietly send cards in the mail to encourage the discouraged. Nope, don’t do that either, Paul says; don’t discount yourself and don’t over inflate yourself.

DARRELL DELANEY

That usually happens when we take our eye off the picture; remember the puzzle pieces?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DARRELL DELANEY

The picture is the great commission that must be fulfilled, that we are all ministers of the gospel of reconciliation to Christ; and so, I heard a message the other day, Scott, and it said: Who is the minister here? And everybody would point to the pastor. He says: Oh, no, no, no. Every single one of us is the minister because we are all ministers of reconciliation, and we all have been given the gift that God willed for us to be able to fulfill that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and again, to go back to the bodily analogy, I mean, granted, there are lots of parts inside our bodies: Spleens and kidneys and, you know, whatnot that we don't think about a lot; but if something goes wrong with that part, you are laid up...

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, you are in trouble.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are in trouble. It is like, man, I need that spleen. I don't think about it all the time, but if it is not in there doing its job, I can get really, really, really sick. Or, you know, I mean, I have sometimes had some problems with my feet, and if your foot is sore, there is not much you can do. I mean, you are going to hobble around...you know, you are not going to be able to shop at the store because it just hurts too much to walk. Every part is important, and if something goes wrong with any part, it affects everything and everybody, and that is another point Paul makes here.

DARRELL DELANEY

Paul is saying that we are one body organized into these very important parts, and there is no need for comparison because each part is needed. Whatever gift you have, it is his will for you to have; and the love is made known when we work together in those gifts, not thinking that our gift is either better than or worse than someone else, and we display that love; even if we think our gift is inferior, it is not.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And this is one thing we have talked about before, that the fruit of the Spirit...we are all supposed to have all the fruit...but the gifts of the Spirit are different for each person, and that is what makes the body work; and we need every single gift, and we need to love... I like how Paul say, you know, when one body part does well, all the other parts rejoice, because that is what we do in love; and speaking of love, that leads us to the next chapter, 1 Corinthians 13; so, stay tuned.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and we have been, Scott, digging into this episode with these truths that the Apostle Paul has been teaching us from Chapters 11 and 12, and we are going to look here now at Chapter 13. There are a lot of people who, at their weddings or at their chapels or at their renewing of their vows, they use these verses, and it seems that they replace their vows with these, and they want to make sure that everyone knows this is what we want our love to be about; but Paul wants us to know there is so much more going on in this chapter than just, you know, us taking a part out and using it for whatever our purposes are.

SCOTT HOEZEE

1 Corinthians 13 is one of those parts of the Bible that we have carved out of its original context, and we kind of act like it just kind of hangs out there on its own. Now, it is a beautiful chapter...beautifully written, sure, but it has a context, right? I have often said to people who choose this for their wedding, I say: You know, this wasn't meant to be a wedding text. I say: This is a text that Paul is addressing to some people in Corinth who were kind of arguing and kind of trying to tear each other's eyes out; so, it is not a wedding text, but it might be a marriage text after all, you know, once the honeymoon is over. This maybe fits marriage after all; but let's listen to these to many of us again familiar words from Chapter 13:

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but I do not have love, I gain nothing. ⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor [others], it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

DARRELL DELANEY

⁸Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease, where there are tongues, they will be stilled, where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹²For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. ¹³And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

SCOTT HOEZEE

All you need is love; and in a much bigger way than John Lennon and the Beatles meant it, because...and again, this is so important, because Paul has just come off of, you know, what? Three or four different chapters where he is talking about people using their Christian freedom to abuse weaker members of the faith. He is talking about people who, you know, abuse their position in society to ruin the Lord's Supper. He is talking about people who are elevating their gifts in the church above others; and in every single setting, Paul says some version of: You gotta love; you gotta love. This stuff with the Lord's Supper, this stuff with arguing about whose gift is the most important, or whether speaking in tongues is the most important, or whether your freedom is more important; all of that will go away if you just love each other; and so now, Chapter 13 is sort of like the exclamation mark...

DARRELL DELANEY

Exactly.

SCOTT HOEZEE

On Chapters 9 through 13, with this ode to Christ-like love.

DARRELL DELANEY

And you know, it is interesting that love is the atmosphere in which all these things happen, and it is the motive by which you do all these things that Paul has been saying. I was thinking about the difference between a thermostat and a thermometer. A thermometer actually reads the temperature and that is it, but a thermostat actually sets the temperature. Now, Paul is telling us, Scott, that the Corinthians need to set the temperature to love and just leave it there. You know how you have the one that you program and it stays the way it is? Well, you want to actually set that to love, because if you love, you will serve well; if you love, you won't be taking your neighbor to court; if you love well, you will be able to forgive; if you love well, you will wait for the love feast to come together in unity under Christ's body. It is just an atmosphere in which all Christians should be living. There is a song about it: *They Will Know We Are Christians By Our*

Love.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And unfortunately, they question our faith when they see us not loving each other...

DARRELL DELANEY

Exactly.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we talked about that a little bit in the previous episode, too. If when my personal sense of freedom makes me kind of, you know, run roughshod and bulldoze over the top of you, the world sees that, too; and it sure doesn't look like what we think Jesus looks like...that picture of Christ that we talked about in the previous segment...in terms of gifts; and it is interesting. I mean, Paul runs through a pretty impressive list of things that you could do incredibly well: Preaching and prophesying and discerning mysteries. You have to have faith that moves mountains, even, Paul says; and if you aren't loving, God says and I say, who cares? So, what?

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, what? Don't show me your resumé. Don't show me your list of accomplishments...

DARRELL DELANEY

Curriculum Vitae.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; show me your love, that is what it is all about; and you know, I think we have known, and I bet we have experienced leaders...pastors, preachers, elders, deacons, anybody in the church...they maybe do a lot of things, but if when you get to know them, they are kind of mean, then it is sort of like, I cannot even listen to that preaching anymore. He writes really good sermons, but when you get to know him, he is just mean and arrogant, and I cannot hear him anymore because he is not acting like Jesus anymore, and that is love.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, speaking of love, Scott, I think we could get a little bit practical here and think about how...you know, I was talking about the thermostat and how it is set to love, like how do we set the tone of love in our actions, in our thoughts, in our motives; and how do we allow that to permeate in the places we spend our time: in our homes, our schools, our jobs, our community? I think that Paul was trying to get the Corinthians to understand this is a church thing, but it doesn't need to stay in the church to happen. It needs to permeate everywhere they go. So, I think that I am challenged to look inside and see what it is I can do practically to let my love shine so Christ can be glorified.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I recently came in for some criticism for something I wrote, and somebody was a little bit mean toward me, and a friend of mine who kind of defended me in a private email to me said: The reason the person said that and wrote that is because he forgot the basic advice of my grandmother: Before you open your mouth, ask yourself: Is it true, is it helpful, is it kind? If it is no to any of those, then keep your mouth shut, because we want to set that thermostat at love, and when we do, it will modulate what we say and what we do, thanks be to God.

Well, thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we wrap up our series and study the concluding chapters of 1 Corinthians. Be sure not to miss the next episode of *Groundwork*.

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

DARRELL DELANEY

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