

Only Glorify Jesus

DARRELL DELANEY

If we are honest, we prefer some people and things over others. The comparison game is out there, and we play whether we know it or not. In this episode of *Groundwork*, we are going to see this comparison problem creep up in the church in Corinth, and see how Paul deals with it, and what this means for us when we find ourselves in similar situations. 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, in the previous episode, we talked about how God sees wisdom differently than the world. He also sees power and weakness, and that is encouraging to me personally for a variety of reasons.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and one of the things we said, Darrell, in this 1 Corinthian series is that Paul is responding...we were very sure he is responding to a letter he got *from* the Corinthian church with a very long list of questions and controversies; and so, we dealt with...right...some of the initial ones in the first program, in Chapters 1 and 2, particularly where Paul points out that, right, God's wisdom looks like foolishness to the world, but it saves us. The gospel message seems backward. You would think it couldn't possibly work, but it does, and that fits us, as we said; but now in this program, Darrell, as you already kind of previewed in the opener, there was kind of a comparison game...some sort of team or almost partisan spirit going on in Corinth, and that is what we want to look at now.

DARRELL DELANEY

Scott, I have been a basketball fan for quite some time...an NBA fan...I still am; and when I was a kid in the 1980s and 1990s it was all about the Detroit Pistons in this area. So, it was either you were an Isaiah Thomas fan or you were a Michael Jordan and a Bulls fan; and those two never got along. There was never anything that they could agree on. So, what I see in this passage...and we are going to get into the scripture here...but I see people saying team Apollos, team Paul, and they are trying to divide the church based on personalities and people, and Paul is saying: No, we are weak vessels; we have a weak message; but God gets the glory, and you need to make sure that you understand appropriately how to view us as your leaders.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and again, we don't have...and never have in the history of the Church...we don't have the letter Paul got from the Corinthians...

DARRELL DELANEY

I wish we did.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; so, we just have to kind of guess or intuit what they asked. Sometimes it was very obvious; and in this case, it is a little less obvious, but I think you are right. They were, you know, your Isaiah Thomas/Michael Jordan example is right. They must have said something to Paul like: Hey, whose church is this, anyway? I mean, who do we follow?

DARRELL DELANEY

Who is the head honcho?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because a lot of us think that, Paul, you're our guy; and then, some of us think your associate, Apollos, is our guy. So, which is it? Whose church is this, Paul's or Apollos'? Clear this up for us so that we know what team we should be on. Paul basically says: You are asking the wrong question.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, let me look at the scripture, and let's read that, and then we will talk about where that context comes from. ¹ Cor. 3:1 Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. ³You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? ⁴For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings?

SCOTT HOEZEE

⁵What, after all, is Apollos? What is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. ⁷So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. So, there it is. You are paying too much attention to the human leaders, Paul is saying, and that has taken your eye off of God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, Scott; so basically, you make sure that you don't put the messenger on a pedestal, because it really is about the message. It doesn't matter who brings the message; if it's Paul, if it's Apollos, if it is one of you. So, there is a saying that, you know, you are not indispensable in God's kingdom. God could literally use the chair you are sitting in to evangelize and save the world, but he chooses to use broken vessels like yourself; and so, the message is more important than the messenger.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly. We might read this and say: Well, boy, that was kind of silly of the Corinthians, you know; I mean, team Paul, team Apollos...I mean, obviously it is about God; but if we think about it, the personality of the preacher, the way a church identifies with its preacher...we still do this today. I mean...

DARRELL DELANEY

Unfortunately.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; many, many...not all...but many, many of the mega churches that are out there are very much built on the personality and the prestige and the fame of the preacher; and you know, I go to this person's church. They don't say Jesus' church. They don't say: I go to God's church. I go to Reverend Smith's church...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, famous Reverend Smith. We still do this today.

DARRELL DELANEY

And the bad news is, it concerns me when there is a transition or a generational or a succession, because if it is personality driven, it would definitely fall flat because that personality isn't there to keep it going anymore; and we do this with recording artists, we do this with celebrities, we do this with even preachers, like you said, Scott; and the bad news is, we forget that God gave them the ability to do these things.

So, when my kids come home with good grades, and they are puffing their chest out: Dad, look; we got good grades, and they are ready to show me. They are not ready to show me when they are Cs or Ds...they are ready to show me when they are As; and so, I say yes, that is good. Now, who made you smart? So, they remember: Oh, yes; it is God who gave us the ability to learn, to retain knowledge. So, the credit needs to go back to God for these abilities, instead of personalities that these people think originate in themselves.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Paul has a nice...we are going to see in the next segment, Paul is going to talk about foundations and buildings, and he does mention it here; but mostly he has a horticultural gardening image here about planting seeds, watering seeds. Sure, Paul planted the seed. He said: I founded the congregation in Corinth. I got you going. Apollos kept you going, so he watered the seed; but we are just here when the wheel goes around. God gives the growth, right? God gave you the brain, as you say to your kids, Darrell. God gives the growth. It is God's church. It is not Paul's church, it is not Apollos' church, it is not Scott's church, it is not Darrell's church, it is God's church; and Paul knows that if we take our eye off of that, then probably all kinds of bad things could result.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think Paul is trying to make sure that we keep the main thing the main thing, because this really is about the God who is giving the increase. Who plants and who waters are interchangeable things...interchangeable people.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

You could plant, Scott; I could water. So, the point is that God is the one who makes growth happen, spiritually speaking, and we need to make sure that we keep God central to the message.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that is just part of...we did a series on discipleship and growth in discipleship on *Groundwork*, and we talked about spiritual milk versus spiritual meat, which comes up in this passage as well; and Paul is basically saying: You know, if you still are thinking that, you know, you have to figure out whether you follow Paul or Apollos, you are worldly...you are little kids...you are little infants yet. You are still just sucking on milk. It is time to move on to the meat of the gospel, which is to remember it is all God. The main thing is the main thing, as you said. It is all God; it is all Jesus; don't get distracted by servants like Apollos and me.

DARRELL DELANEY

Scott, that is so good; and in the next minute, we are going to dig deeper into the chapter and talk about the body, and how that is the temple of the Holy Spirit, so stay tuned.

Segment 2

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 in this first segment, Scott, we talked about how Paul is actually trying to get rid of this team Apollos/team Paul mentality and help them understand that God is the one who is the main character in this whole gospel message, and the method in which it gets done.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, we were just noting, too, that he used a gardening image in 1 Corinthians 3; initially, if we are planting a seed and watering it; but now, he is going to move on here in this third chapter, beginning at verse 10, and he is going to give a little bit of a different image, where he writes: By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. ¹⁴If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames. ¹⁶Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? ¹⁷If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

DARRELL DELANEY

Man, Scott, there is so much good stuff in here. I really wish we had time to unpack it all, but I just want to give a couple of things that I saw that stuck out to me. The first thing is that it has been the grace of God that has been given to Paul and Apollos to even bring the message at all. So, they are not relying on their accolades, they are not relying on their strength. They are relying on the fact that God is the employer that called these co-laborers into the work of sharing the good news.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and it is all about laying a good foundation, although Paul says we actually don't lay the foundation, the foundation is already laid. It is Christ; and that is what we build on. If we build on anything else...you know, you kind of think of Jesus' parable about building on the rock versus building on the sand...

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

From the end of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7. Paul is saying here, basically, the foundation is Christ. Foundations are key for any building, and that is the one you have to build on, because nothing else is going to work.

DARRELL DELANEY

On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly. When I was a kid...I still remember this...it is one of my favorite cartoons. I think it might have been a *New Yorker* cartoon, but I was at the township offices in Ada, Michigan, where I grew up. On the door of the building inspector, there was a little cartoon, and it was the construction site of the tower of Pisa. Now, we now know that today as the leaning tower of Pisa, but this was the construction site, and it is standing up straight; and in the cartoon, the construction foreman is whispering to the architect, and he said: I saved a

little on the foundations, but don't worry; nobody will ever know.

DARRELL DELANEY

And it is leaning...

SCOTT HOEZEE

And now it's leaning, right. The foundations are everything.

DARRELL DELANEY

If Christ is that foundation, then God himself is the blueprint drawer...he has been drawing blueprints of how to get his gospel message to everyone since the beginning of creation; and he is the one who orchestrates the encounters that people have. He is the one who gave Paul and Apollos the message that they have; and that is actually key when it comes to understanding how we have the opportunity to be brought into this message as well.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and just another thing on the importance of foundations, Darrell. I mean, after the terrible terrorist attacks on 9/11 in New York City that brought down the World Trade Center—the twin towers—and now, of course, there is a memorial on that site, and a museum; and if you have been to that museum, then you know you go down a very, very, very long escalator. What you are doing is, you are going down into the foundation of those twin towers, and what you see is that there were just tons and tons and tons underneath those tall buildings...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

To make them stand. Way down into the bedrock of Manhattan Island with tiebacks holding back the river, and if you don't get the foundation right, nothing else is going to be right, which is why I don't build things, because they fall down because I am no good at it; but Jesus Christ is that all important foundation.

DARRELL DELANEY

And that is our second point, Scott, that he is the foundation, and Paul is actually warning them not to add any other thing or lay any other message down than the one that talks about Christ being crucified; and so, when I was in chemistry class, actually, in high school, we had this experiment...I would love when they would mix these chemicals together...and hydrochloric acid was one of those. It is very dangerous to the touch, but he would dilute it so we wouldn't hurt ourselves. The bad news about when you add another foundation to what Paul is speaking, you are diluting the gospel in a very harmful way; and Paul is saying that message needs to remain pure...that message needs to stay primary.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; but then, finally, in this part of Chapter 3 of 1 Corinthians, Darrell, Paul moves this building metaphor toward the temple, rather strikingly; and he will bring this up a little bit later in this letter when he talks about sexual morality, and why we should be sexually pure, but he basically says to the Corinthians: Oh, by the way, this building I am talking about? It is you. You are the temple.

DARRELL DELANEY

To me, that is the punchline of this whole thing, because there is a whole motif of scripture that talks about God's presence being in and among the people. You could name the tabernacle, you could name the tent of meeting, you could name the temples that were built, you could name the ark of the covenant, you could even name Jesus walking around on earth; but in this age after Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is using human vessels as his temple, and the fact that they are sacred because they are God's temple is something I don't think they really paid attention to, Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

No; I mean, it is quite something to wrap your mind around, even to this day, right? I think you are right. This is the climax, sort of, here. We did a series on *Groundwork* some while ago on biblical images for the Church, and *temple* was a key one; and yes, you can trace that temple theme throughout the entire Bible. Scholars think that in Genesis 1, what we really are seeing is God constructing a temple in the creation...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Where he could live with Adam and Eve, and live with humanity. Then, of course, that all got busted up by sin; but you know, right; you trace it all the way to the end of the book of Revelation, where we are told that in the new creation, there will not be a temple because once again the whole creation will be the temple because Jesus will dwell with us; and now Paul is saying: On the way to that, you...each of you, but also all of you collectively...are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, which connects you straight to Jesus.

DARRELL DELANEY

I don't know if many people do this, Scott, but you might want to look in the mirror and say: God says I am sacred because the Holy Spirit dwells within me; and because he put a precious gift inside of me, that means that I am valuable to him. That could actually make my day if I think about that. Because I can get caught up in the rat race of all the things that I think I need to do and all the performance things, but if I remember I belong to God, that would be powerful.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and you are right, Darrell, this is something...in fact, we will see later in this series that Paul likes to say to the Corinthians...but he does it in some of his other letters, too...do you not know...do you not know who you are? Right? I mean, Paul is always calling people back to baptism; always calling people...his favorite two-word phrase is: in Christ.

DARRELL DELANEY

In Christ.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You dwell in Christ. He uses it all over the place, and he basically says: You know what? You just need to be reminded of that every day. Look in that mirror and say: I dwell in Christ. I am a temple of the Holy Spirit. That is pretty amazing; but practically speaking, we want to talk a little bit about this in our lives today, and we will do that as we close out the program in just a moment.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

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

SCOTT HOEZEE

And this is the second program of a seven-part series on Paul's first letter to the Corinthians; and Darrell, so far, we have seen how Paul wants the focus to always be on God and on Christ. It is God's Church, it is Jesus' Church...it is not Paul's church, it is not the minister's church today. It is God's Church. We build on the foundation of Christ, and if we do that, all will be well; and in fact, we just saw what ends up happening is that we are ourselves...individually, but also collectively as the Church...the very dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. We are living, breathing, walking temples.

DARRELL DELANEY

And it is interesting that Paul brings up the fact that God is the master builder in those temples, and he is using the gospel message, laid on the true foundation that is Jesus Christ, to get that point across. So, now we are going to turn our attention to the conclusion of this chapter, where Paul makes it clear that these comparisons don't value God or the people who God sent to do his work, and how that connection needs to be explained in greater detail by Paul.

SCOTT HOEZEE

This is from 1 Corinthians 3. If you listened to the first program in this series, you know a little of this comes up in Chapters 1 and 2, as well; but Paul says, beginning at verse 18: Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become "fools" so that you may become wise. ¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; ²⁰and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile." ²¹So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, ²²whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Scott, Paul is making the point that the world's wisdom is actually foolishness in God's sight, and if you hold onto and grab onto whatever the world considers to be powerful...to be wise...to be effective in power, then that actually is wrong; and you don't need that when it comes to this, and that is part of the immature and milk-drinking baby thinking that actually needs to be brought into maturity.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; I like his line there in verse 18 that you ought to become fools so that you can become wise, right? In other words, fools in the world's sight, but that makes you wise in God's sight. Wisdom, of course, is a pretty important theme in the scriptures. In Chapter 1, Paul calls Jesus the wisdom of God. We took a look at the book of Proverbs and the whole wisdom tradition. We often think of Jesus as the Word of God because of John 1: The Word made flesh...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But Jesus is also the wisdom of God, which means he doesn't look like much by worldly standards. He didn't look like much when he was here. He was less impressive than John the Baptist. People were way more taken with John the Baptist. In fact, late into the 1st Century, the apostles were still bumping into people who thought John the Baptist was the Messiah, and they were baptizing people in the John's name, and not Jesus' name because Jesus just wasn't much to look at; but he is, Paul says, the wisdom of God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Actually, another point that comes up in this passage is the fact that it is actually not appropriate to put the people who bring the message up on a pedestal and act like they are the superstars in this whole thing; and Paul is actually throwing that away, and letting them know that it really is about the God who sent us to give the message, and not just us as messengers. Please don't worship us...please don't exalt us. Exalt Christ because he is the one who actually did the work, and we are reporting to you what the message really is. So, you need to get away from that because that is actually the world's tactic. If I am doing all the cooking and cleaning in the kitchen, so to speak, that means I am the superstar; but that is the world's thinking, and we need to throw that away.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We mentioned this earlier in this program, Darrell, that we do have that human tendency to latch onto the person, whether it is the basketball player or the celebrity or the politician. We latch onto the person and start

investing our hope in them, and we do it in the church as well. We all like to be recognized. We all like to get, you know, some “atta-boys” or some “atta-girls”. We like the good comments at the church door; and the fact of the matter is, when you are a pastor, like Paul was or like Apollos was...or he mentioned Cephas in that passage we just read...that is Peter...you are front and center, right? You’re the one in the pulpit, you’re the one with the microphone, you’re the one who gets to talk to them for 25...30...40 minutes on a Sunday morning in the sermon; and it is easy for you to think: Well, obviously I am the most important part of... I mean, the people, you know, the volunteers...the women who bake the pies for funeral luncheons...they are nice and all, but they are not me, right? So, that is very beguiling and tempting for leaders.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, power and authority is always going to be intoxicating to us as long as we have an ego and we have red blood in our veins. I would say that this passage actually hits me between the eyes because it reminds me not to think of myself higher than I ought to; that I am actually not the main event, I am actually just opening for the main event, which would happen to be Jesus Christ and God himself...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we are actually reporting the work that God has done, and if I remember that, it will bring me into humility; and it brings me back to that example I gave earlier. God has shown me that I am not irreplaceable in his kingdom. The only MVP is Jesus, but he chooses by his grace to allow me to be a part of those plans, and allow us all to be a part of those plans; and that is encouraging because we really are disqualified from that whole thing if it isn’t for his grace.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; well, and this is in 2 Corinthians...this is a series on 1 Corinthians...but I think you used this image earlier in the program, Darrell, that image from 2 Corinthians of earthen vessels. We have this treasure in earthen vessels...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We have this in jars of clay, in broken vessels, whatever you want to call it. Jesus took a tremendous risk after he ascended into heaven by entrusting the keys of the kingdom to the disciples who had proven themselves over and over to be pretty faulty folks...frail human vessels, but somebody has to do that work; but the main thing is to go back to the basics, to go back to Christ crucified again and again, to go back to God’s wisdom, which is foolishness to the world. If we do that, then we are going to keep our eyes in the Church where they need to be.

DARRELL DELANEY

And you said it, Scott, to keep the main thing the main thing, and that is Christ crucified...Jesus Christ being the power and the wisdom of God. If that can remain the central part of the message, all these other things that we think we need will be able to fall to the wayside; and that actually brings us great confidence in the God who called Paul and Apollos, who is no respecter of persons and does no favoritism. He actually called us to share the good news with our friend, our co-worker, on Facebook or wherever on social media. We have the opportunity to share that same good news.

SCOTT HOEZEE

To God be the glory. Thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we dig deeper into the book of 1 Corinthians and look at the issues Paul addresses in Chapters 5 and 6. Be sure not to miss the next episode of *Groundwork*.

Connect with us at our website, groundworkonline.com, where you can tell us what *Groundwork* means to you, or even make suggestions for future programs.

DARRELL DELANEY

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