

Salvation Through Jesus Christ Alone

DARRELL DELANEY

Imagine receiving a treasured family recipe passed down through generations. Now, picture discovering that somewhere along the way an ingredient was altered, suddenly changing the dish's essence. Today on *Groundwork*, we delve into a similar scenario, not with recipes, but with the core of our faith. Join us as we unravel the importance of an unaltering gospel, much like preserving the authenticity of a beloved family recipe. It is a journey into the heart of our faith, examining the ingredients that made Christianity transformative. Stay tuned for insights on guarding the gospel, relying on Christ's revelation, and the power of an unadulterated message, next on *Groundwork*.

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 are beginning a brand new series of four parts on the book of Galatians; and for those of you who do not know, the book of Galatians is a book written by the Apostle Paul to a region of churches in Galatia, around 49-55 AD; and this is when he was in his missionary journeys in the book of Acts Chapters 13 and 14, where he visited the region, and now he is going back to that and is sending a letter to address some of the issues that they are going through.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Galatia was a region in Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey today. Galatians, Darrell, is generally regarded as one of Paul's earliest epistles...one of his earliest letters. I was always taught that probably 1 Thessalonians was the very first letter Paul wrote, but Galatians was right in there, very, very early. The last ones written were the pastoral epistles to Timothy and Titus; and then in between comes Colossians, Ephesians, Corinthians, and so forth. Galatians is a pretty early letter; and the central theme revolves around, really, the core of the gospel—the core of the Christian faith—and especially the nature of salvation and the relationship between faith and works.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, during this time when Paul wrote this, there were these people who were religiously intense named Judaizers—we have come to call them Judaizers; and these people were very passionate about the law of Moses, and circumcision and things that they did in Judaism; and they would go around after Paul and Peter, or these New Testament people who carried the message...they would go after them after they had planted the church, and they would talk to these people and say: Oh, you are not saved yet; you actually have to do these extra requirements. You have to get circumcised; you have to follow these laws of Moses. In essence, they were trying to get them to become Jewish in culture along with the salvation of the gospel, and that was a problem for Paul.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; but Paul left the region. There were some people just kind of lying in wait. They were waiting for Paul to leave, and as soon as he did, they rushed in and said: You know, Paul preached to you about how you are saved by grace alone, and by Jesus' death. He is right; he is right; but he didn't tell you the whole story. There are other things you have to do, observe rituals...ceremonies; you have to keep kosher; you have to eat

the right... So, you cannot be saved until you do those other things; and of course, for Paul, that meant they are not saved through Jesus alone...it is Jesus *and*. And Paul never allowed for the word *and* to come after grace or after Jesus' death. It was an exclamation. You are saved through Jesus! You are saved by grace! Nothing else after it. These false teachers put something else after it; and that, for Paul, made it sound like the Galatians thought they could save themselves; or at least contribute in a big way to their salvation.

DARRELL DELANEY

And we know, Scott, that according to our Reformed tradition, saved by grace through faith alone is actually a bedrock of the tenet of the faith that we believe. That actually came from these passages in this scripture, and what we need to understand, and what Paul was trying to teach was you don't need to add to the gospel; you don't need any extra things. It is Christ's finishing work. He is the only one who can actually fulfill the law in the first place, and we will get to why that is a problem later on in this segment.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Let's just look at the opening of this letter. I think, Darrell, sometimes Paul opens his letters very similarly in all thirteen of the epistles that he wrote, and sometimes I think we just kind of jump over it. It is like, okay, yeah, yeah, yeah...that is just like, you know...front matter. Now, let's get to the good stuff. There is good stuff in here, and it is important.

So, here is Galatians 1:1:

Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—²and all the brothers and sisters with me. To the churches in Galatia: ³Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

DARRELL DELANEY

What is really important, Scott, is that we understand from his greeting that his authority that he has to speak on anything that is going to come after what this greeting is, it comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn't come from people or any favoritism or any finagling of his own. It comes from the divine authority of the Lord Jesus himself.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and that is important. In fact, Paul is pretty emphatic here. I mean, kind of, you know, here he is telling them: Paul, an apostle, sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father; and Paul is therefore, Darrell, contrasting himself with these false teachers. Who sent them? On whose authority did these Judaizers...they were not sent by God. Nobody sent them. He was sent by Jesus and by God the Father directly. So, Paul has thrown his credentials down on the table and saying: Look, guys; I was sent by Jesus, so you have to listen to me. Those other guys, they cannot say that.

DARRELL DELANEY

And he is not coming alone, Scott. It says with *all the brothers and sisters with me*. So, he is not going on his own accord like some of these Judaizer people are doing...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

They are doing their own thing; they are going on their own accord; but he is saying all the brothers and sisters who have been called by God are with me, and we are actually greeting you; and so, he brings them grace and peace. When you think about grace and peace, it is the reason why we pass the peace in church. When we say: The peace of Christ be with you, and also with you. He is doing that in the letter, because he is not able to be there with them physically.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And of course, it is going to be important, because he...very shortly, as we will see in the next part of this program...he is going to really get to that grace part. But right; grace and peace. I mean, you know, we often hear that in church. The pastor, you know, in the opening greeting, or the benediction at the end of the service, we have grace, which leads to peace; and peace, not just in the sense of a lack of conflict, but in almost a sense of shalom, that through the grace we have received through Jesus, all our relationships are mended; we are starting to get in right relationship with God, with each other, with the whole creation. So, that really is a great, great summary of the gospel; and that is why, to this day, you know, in churches we often say that we are passing the peace to one another; maybe during the mutual greeting. A lot of churches do that now, because that is what we have; we have peace with God and peace with one another; and passing the peace reminds us of that every week when we are in worship.

DARRELL DELANEY

And so, Paul usually gives a greeting like this. It gives the gospel in a nutshell; and it reminds them...whoever he is writing to...it reminds them that this is who God is; this is what God has done; and everything after will be how we live into that truth, because that is the real reality; not the evil of this age; not the things that we are going through right now, even though those are tangibly real; the real deal is...and the bottom line is...Christ has come; he has paid the price; and he has given us a new reality. How do we live into that? Paul always unpacks it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, that is right. Interesting that he doesn't always say this part in every letter, that he gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age. He doesn't always include that *rescue from the present evil age* part, but here he does, and it is a good reminder that, indeed, Paul's favorite prepositional phrase is: In Christ. That we now dwell in Christ. When we get baptized, we have a new identity, we have a new spiritual location. It is like *in Christ* is our zip code.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That is where we live, and that takes us out of this present evil age, already now. We still live in the kingdoms of this world, but we are already a citizen of the kingdom of heaven.

But in just a minute, there is quite a bit more in the first chapter of Galatians, so we will get to that in a moment. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and we are in the first episode of a four-part series on Paul's epistle or letter to the Galatians. We are in the first chapter, of course, in this first program. So, let's jump right in to the next section, where Paul is going to begin to develop his argument.

DARRELL DELANEY

It says: ⁶I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! ⁹As we have already said, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted,

let them be under God's curse! ¹⁰Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, I have often said, Darrell, that it is probably a good thing the Galatians didn't have access to all of Paul's other letters, because, you know, after the standard grace and peace that we saw a minute ago, Paul always has this section where he says: I am so thankful for you... I give praise to God for you... I am grateful for your partnership in the gospel... Your faith is being reported all over the world. Not in Galatians.

DARRELL DELANEY

No.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Paul, sent not by man but by Jesus Christ to the people of Galatia. You idiots! I am astounded... It is like, if I were in Galatia I would raise my hand and say: Paul, where is our warm, fuzzy section?

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Why did you skip the warm, fuzzy section? Everybody else got one. Huh-uh. Paul is upset...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, he's upset.

SCOTT HOEZEE

He is hot under the collar; and so, he doesn't include a thanksgiving section, but just gets right up in their faces immediately. Twice he says: Those people who are preaching a different gospel than the one I preached to you, let them be under God's curse. Let them be under God's curse. Whoa!

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; Paul is serious about this, and these people who are coming in preaching a different gospel, those are the Judaizers that we were referring to earlier, saying that there is a standard of being under Moses' law and circumcision and all these other things. You have to eat a certain way. It is really interesting how they wanted these requirements to be added to what salvation is; and we know the book of Acts shows that that was not a requirement. The Holy Spirit fell on unbelievers because they repented and they believed in Jesus; and so, Peter found that out in Acts Chapter 10, that they did not need to follow all these laws. The Holy Spirit fell on them just the same, like he did in Cornelius's house; and John and Peter all understood that same thing.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; I mean, Jesus had said to them, you know, John 10: I have sheep that are not of this pen, right? Jesus had basically told the disciples it wasn't going to be a for-Jews-only salvation; and even the great commission, you know: You start in Jerusalem—you start in Judea, sure; but then, you go into all the world, and you don't require people to become Jewish before they are allowed to become Christian; and as you just said, and we are going to look at this more in the second program, too, because this figures very prominently in Galatians Chapter 2, Peter knew better. Peter knew this...everybody knew this; but these other people came in and said: Paul didn't quite tell you the whole story, people. Jesus got the salvation ball rolling, but you have to finish it with your own behavior. It is not just a slightly different version of the gospel he preached, it is a different gospel, which is no gospel.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think it is very interesting that they tried to get these people to become Jews before they could become Christian, as if that was a prerequisite or some requirement; and that is a problem, because you are asking

them to completely forsake whoever God has made them to be, and then, you are asking them to do something that you personally couldn't do yourself. Every Jew knows they could not keep the law. That doesn't mean that they don't try, but the point is, there is no way that no one can earn their salvation by keeping the law, and they have broken it so many times. It is like you putting an unrealistic expectation on the Gentiles, making it even harder for them to be able to come into the family of God. That is a problem.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is a problem; and it was such a big problem that in Acts 15 we have the Jerusalem council. It is sort of like, this is the Church's first meeting of synod...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Or the first general assembly of the Church; and they came together to say: Okay, we gotta figure this thing out. Do Gentiles have to become Jewish before they can become in Christ? And they decided no. James seems to have led this assembly. The other apostles were a part of it; and in Acts 15:19, James, I think, is speaking. Here it is:

"It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Yes, they are going to go tell them there are some things, you know, you still have to refrain from, including, you know, food sacrificed to idols, and so forth, and sexual immorality, yes; but they wrote a letter to, particularly the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia; and here is what it says now, in Acts 15:24: Greetings: ²⁴We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. ²⁵So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— ²⁶men who have risked their lives for the name of [our Lord] Jesus Christ. ²⁷Therefore, we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. ²⁸It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: (and again) ²⁹You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, (etc). You will do well to avoid those things. Farewell.

So, in other words, we are in agreement. You do not have to become an observant Jew before you are allowed to be baptized and be fully considered a Christian. That was a big deal.

DARRELL DELANEY

It was a big deal, and actually, when they came to this understanding, they were able to grow the Church; they were able to grow in a healthy way; and I think it is a really good principle when people have differences, whether on an individual level or whether on a systemic level with a wider group of people, it might be good to follow this model to be able to sit down and talk about how do we work this out? How do we work together? And this the way they did it decently and in order, and there were no arguments, no fights, no church splits and no crazy drama. I am really glad that they were able to come to this consensus this way. Unfortunately, the Judaizers didn't get it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

No; and they probably continued to preach the false message, but the apostles were clear what the real gospel is; and that, of course, is what Paul is writing to the Galatians about because they had been taken in by these people, too. You know, it is still a temptation for us today. So, the Gentiles were other, right? The Jews had been raised their whole life...the Gentiles...the Greeks...they are other...they are other. We want them to become like us first; and we still do that in the Church today, you know. We see people who are very different from us; maybe they have different culture, different language, different skin color. Well, they are not like us, so first they have to become like us before Jesus can possibly love them; and this passage from Acts 15, and the whole letter to the Galatians says we have to be very, very careful and pay attention. I love the line in Acts 15:28: it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with extra requirements. It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...and you know, that is something we need to stay alert to in our lives, too.

DARRELL DELANEY

Basically, the question is, have we done a heart check to see if the things we hold dear could be a stumbling block for those who are coming in? That is something I invite people to pray about and to look into. But as we continue and we conclude this chapter, we want to name some practical applications. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this first episode of a four-part series on the letter to the Galatians; and we have been in Chapter 1 here, Darrell, but there is more to talk about in Galatians 1, including some further defense from Paul about his apostolic ministry and his call.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I think the reason why Paul goes into this is because, Scott, there were people who were continuing to question his status as an apostle...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

Even though this is one of his earliest books, and even though the disciples—the eleven who were still with us—I mean, there were twelve, but then eleven—they ended up picking another one named Matthias, coming later. They were kind of afraid of Paul officially because of how much opposed to the gospel he was. So, he literally goes into this passage to lay out his testimony and explain why he is qualified to be an apostle.

SCOTT HOEZEE

He harks back in part here to the Damascus Road conversion of Saul, who became Paul. We read about that in Acts 9, but here is how he reports it in Galatians 1, starting at verse 11:

I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. ¹²I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

Now, there he is referring to how he met Jesus on the Damascus Road.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

¹³For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. ¹⁷I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.

He goes on to say: Years later I got acquainted with Peter and some of the others; but he is basically saying: Look, my life turned around on a dime. I persecuted the Church; I tried to stamp out the name of Jesus out from the face of the earth, and Jesus came to me directly and turned me around. He gave me a new name and a completely new mission.

DARRELL DELANEY

And Paul is actually going to great length to show his qualifications to preach this gospel, and he keeps going on about how it wasn't a man who got it to me. I didn't consult any man. It was revealed to me by God himself—by Jesus Christ himself. He is doing that, not just so he can say I am better than these people, or he wants to puff his chest out in pride. No; he is saying it because everything he has to say after this is going to

be absolutely important; and he needs not to be questioned, Scott. He wants to make sure that the message, the letter, everything in the epistle, is going to be something they hold as the truth; and that is the problem that he is fighting against to make sure that they know that. So, he is laying it all...getting all this stuff out of the way so they can know he is saying the truth.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; Paul faces... We did a series on 2 Corinthians a while back here on *Groundwork*, Darrell. Paul was often very defensive in 2 Corinthians because there, too, the Corinthians had been told: Aah, Paul's a fake; no, no, no, no; you cannot trust Paul. So, Paul really had to defend himself there, and he is defending himself here to say: Those false teachers who came in after I left town, they got nothing. They didn't meet Jesus directly; I did; and he sent me here to tell you the truth.

So, as we round out this program, Darrell, what are some of the take-aways we can get from Galatians 1; and I think one is the importance of the purity and the authenticity of the gospel message as we receive it, as we proclaim it, as we live it out. Jesus did it all. We don't have to add onto his work. We don't need something in addition to his work. We don't need to finish it ourselves. Jesus did it all. That is the pure gospel.

DARRELL DELANEY

And that pure gospel needs to be guarded and preserved. The fact that we are saved by grace through faith. Like Ephesians 2:8, 9: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.

And that truth should be guarded; not adding anything to it; not saying that human work is going to assist it in any way; we receive that as a gift, and that is the truth that must be protected at all cost.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We have to rely on the revelation that Paul got on the Damascus Road and that we get through Paul's work now and through the other apostles in the New Testament; and we need to stay focused on that, and avoid distractions; avoid corruptions of the gospel message. The central message is: God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself; and we receive all of Christ's benefits as a sheer gift. It just comes from out of a clear blue sky; and we just want to always focus on that and not be distracted by other messages that some other people might try to foist on us.

DARRELL DELANEY

Now, because I have been walking with Jesus since I was a young boy, I have heard many different verses and many different preachers and many different messages; and the Holy Spirit has given me a gut check in my discernment to say maybe I cannot say amen to that truth or that thing; and if that is not everybody's testimony, some people don't have that strong gift of discernment that you can ask God for. You can actually search the scriptures. There were some people in Acts Chapter 17 from Berea that Paul commended because they actually searched the scriptures to see if what he was saying was in there; and when I preach, I often tell people to say the word *prove it* out loud and that *prove it* means I am going to give you a Bible passage to show you where I got this idea from so that you don't walk away with what I thought; you would walk away with the Word; and later on, you can actually check and see if what I was saying is in the Word. Fact-check, so to speak, so that you can know that, yes, I am following the truth here, and the distractions won't get me.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; another takeaway here: We have to appreciate the transformative power of God in our lives. We maybe don't all have as dramatic a conversion story as Paul does, right? I mean, a complete 180-degree turnaround in Paul's life from being an enemy of Jesus to being a proponent of Jesus; but really, we all get that. You know, our stories may not be as dramatic as Paul, but we all get transformed, and we have to give great thanks that we wouldn't be able to believe the gospel either if we hadn't been given the gift of faith. Faith is the first gift of God into which God then pours his grace. It is like the container; and then we are changed; we are changed radically and in every way.

DARRELL DELANEY

God has allowed this truth to pass, not only to the church in Galatia, but to us today, who pick up these scriptures. We are encouraged to stand firm in our faith, even when there is opposition; even when there are challenges; and when we apply these lessons, we can cultivate a steadfast commitment to the pure message of Christianity and the Bible, which God has given us; and the faith that we have can stay rooted and grounded in the truth of Christ. Thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we continue our study of the Galatians, going into Chapter 2. Connect with us now at our website, groundworkonline.com. You can 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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