

Stand Firm in the Reality of Christ's Resurrection

SCOTT HOEZEE

In Martin Gardner's novel *The Flight of Peter Fromm*, we witness a scene in which an earnest seminarian named Peter is trying to talk about the resurrection with his very liberal father-in-law, who is also a pastor; but this man does not believe in a bodily resurrection. "When Jesus rose again," Peter says, "did his new body cast a shadow? Did his feet make noise in the gravel?" "Sure," the liberal pastor says, "in a spiritual way." Well, that answer wasn't good enough for Peter Fromm, and the ideas about Christ's resurrection that were circulating in the Corinthian congregation were not good enough for the Apostle Paul either. Today on *Groundwork*, we look at Paul's landmark words on the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of us all. Stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome 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 Darrell, this is now the final and seventh episode of our fairly good-sized series on the letter of 1 Corinthians, which we have said all along is clearly a reply that Paul wrote in response to a rather long letter that he got from the Corinthians that was full of questions, reports on controversies in Corinth, issues they were dealing with. Paul's response to what was clearly some direct quotes that he heard that people were saying that he disagreed with in Corinth; and now, we are coming down to the end of it here in Chapter 15.

1 Corinthians actually ends in the 16th Chapter, which is almost all kind of like housekeeping details. So, this is the last substantive chapter, and Paul is going to tackle maybe one of the biggest controversies of them all.

DARRELL DELANEY

The biggest controversy in this whole section would happen to be the one on the resurrection of the dead. Even though there are more issues and this isn't the last you will hear of him talking to the Corinthian church, at the end of this chapter, the resurrection of the dead is going to be the issue that he wants to address; and actually, let's read the verses in 1 Corinthians Chapter 15, that say this:

¹²But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵More than that, we are found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, let's begin with the logical question: Why would anyone in Corinth be questioning whether there is any such thing as the resurrection of the dead? That seems like kind of a big thing in terms of the Christian faith. Well, why would anyone be saying that? Let's remember where Corinth was. It was in the Greek world. It was part of Greece, and in most Greek religion and philosophy at that time, our physical bodies were seen as unwanted in the long run. The soul is immortal, that is what Socrates taught and Plato taught, and for now,

our *immortal* soul is imprisoned...

DARRELL DELANEY

Trapped.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is like it is in jail—trapped inside this—*blech*—gross body, so when you die, your soul is set free, and that is a great thing, and so, don't mess with that. That was sort of what the Greeks were thinking.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, this teaching that you are talking about is called Gnosticism, and in the early Church, this was an actual threat to the very message, because the message has to do with Jesus raising from the dead. That is the message. So, if he raised in bodily form, that could be a controversy to those who were confused about that. Now, Paul made it clear when he came to Corinth, but he had to readdress it in this letter because they were getting confused about it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

This was deep in Greek culture. Gnosticism is probably the oldest heresy in the Church, as you said, Darrell, because it disparages the worthwhileness of the physical creation, and in this case, our physical bodies.

DARRELL DELANEY

Paul actually was able to address this when he went to the Areopagus; and it is shown in Acts Chapter 17, when he talks to these Greek scholars. Everybody is kind of doing: Okay, what is the flavor of the month? What is the thought of the day? What are we going to talk about? And when he talks about the gospel, everybody is with him; but then, when he talks about the bodily resurrection of Christ, they are looking at him like Oh, man, this is a joke. We are going to hear you later on this. They don't want to hear any more about it because they could not conceptualize. It was illogical for them to think: Why would anybody want to come back to the body that they escaped that death was setting them free from?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; that was a great conversation. This was in Athens, right? This was the heart of the... Everybody wants to out-philosophize everybody else, right? My philosophy is better than your philosophy. So, they were really interested in the gospel and Jesus, and then, as you just said, Darrell, in verse 31 of Acts 17, where Paul says: God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed (that is Jesus). He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him [Jesus] from the dead.³² When the Greeks heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject."³³ At that, Paul left the Council.

So, talk to you later, Paul. You just said one of the dumbest things we have ever heard...that a resurrected body is a *good* thing? No; that sounds like the worst thing in the world. So, that was the sticking point, and apparently, that had seeped into the Corinthian congregation, that they were starting to say: Well, maybe Jesus...just sort of like that liberal pastor we talked about at the head of this program...maybe it was just kind of a spiritual resurrection or maybe Jesus kind of lived on in the memories of the disciples. He is alive as long as we remember him; and so, they started to backpedal on the actual physicality of our receiving a new resurrection body.

DARRELL DELANEY

Now, this really drove Paul up the wall, because he is trying to help them understand that what he got, he received as the message: Jesus resurrected in bodily form and came back. He says that, if we look at the beginning of the 15th Chapter of 1 Corinthians, where he says: ³For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas and to the Twelve. ⁶After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, even though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸and

last of all, he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Paul is nailing the fact that Jesus' bodily form in resurrection, that is something he continues to emphasize. Now, you cannot have the message without it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; it reminds me of a line from Garrison Keillor from *Prairie Home Companion*. One of his favorite little jokes or lines is: A pastor asked a man: Do you believe in infant baptism? The man says: Believe in it; I've seen it done. And so, Paul is here saying: Do we believe in the resurrection? Believe in it; a lot of us saw him alive. Five hundred people saw Jesus alive and in the body. It wasn't a ghost; it wasn't a hallucination. He had a new body, and we saw him. The apostles saw him. They watched him eat a piece of fish, right? He said: Go ahead, touch me. It was a different kind of body. We are going to talk about that in the next segment. But Paul says: Look, we saw it. I even saw it, even though it was, you know, later than the other apostles. So, Paul preached that clearly enough to the Corinthians. They heard it, but again, after he left maybe they started to be embarrassed about this in front of some of their fellow Greeks, and so they started to let slide a little bit the centrality of the resurrection; but Paul was adamant: If you give up this teaching, you are giving up the whole ship.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is the most important thing, and we are going to talk more about what Paul means about that in the next segment, so stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this seventh and final episode on a landmark letter in the New Testament, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians; and we are now in the second to the last chapter of that letter, Darrell, Chapter 15. Paul is taking on the idea that some of the Corinthian Christians, due to the influence of their Greek culture, which despised the very concept of getting our bodies back ever in a resurrection...they had started to say there is no such thing as a resurrection. They were embarrassed in front of their fellow Greek citizens; and Paul says: Well, you can say that, but that means Jesus is dead, too, and if that is true, then what are we doing?

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

What are we doing? We've got nothing to talk about...we've got no gospel.

DARRELL DELANEY

1 Corinthians 15:16-19 says: For if the dead are not raised, then Christ is not raised either. ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people the most to be pitied.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, this isn't a modest set of claims here. Paul isn't just sort of saying: Well, you can kind of make up your own... No; you cannot make up your own mind on this; this is the ballgame. Our faith is futile if Jesus isn't raised, and Jesus cannot be raised if there is no such thing as a resurrection, so the Greeks are wrong; there is such a thing as the resurrection. There is Jesus' resurrection; and that means that the people we have lost that we hope we see again, well, if they are not raised back in bodily form someday, you will not see Aunt Louise again; you won't see Grandma again; and what's more, Paul says, you know, we are just kind of pathetic because, you know, we are sacrificing a lot for the gospel, we are living under the scorn of a lot of other people because we are Christians. Well, if we are taking all of those brickbats, and all those insults and criticisms for a fantasy...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because there is no living Jesus at the right hand of God, then what are we doing? It is pathetic—we are pitiful, Paul says.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, you see, you are naming this kind of logical argument that Paul is using to build on one another because he is talking to these Greek people who philosophize all the time. So, basically what I hear in these verses is that Christ wrote a check when he lived his life here and he died, but the check cleared when he resurrected...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, the power of the resurrection makes everything worthwhile. Then you will see your people again. The message does matter. Everything is connected to the resurrection. A lot of people like Advent because Jesus was born, but actually, the resurrection is even more powerful because he came back, and that made everything worthwhile.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because then death is defeated. Verse 25 of 1 Corinthians 15: For he (Jesus) must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

That is the great enemy—the great equalizer—the great leveler—but death will be destroyed so that we can have eternal life. Okay, so Paul, as you say, both, you know, logically, but also just sort of, you know, in terms of common sense he kind of makes the argument here, but he knows he is writing to Greeks, and like we just said, Greeks like to philosophize...they like to ask questions. So, Paul either got wind of a question that people were actually asking in Corinth at the time, or he anticipates the next question: Okay, Paul, so, you know, we are all going get raised back again someday; well, what is that going to look like? Am I still going to have this mole on my cheek, right? Is my one leg still going to be shorter than the other? Come on! So, then Paul says:

But someone will ask...this is verse 35...But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” ³⁶How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ³⁸But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. ⁴²So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, but it is raised imperishable; ⁴³it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

DARRELL DELANEY

I love this analogy of the seed, because if you just think about seeds, they have a component of what is important for it to grow inside of it, but you cannot fully see that when you are looking at the seeds; but when you put the seed in the ground, it turns into something else. So, the seed is the body. If it is going to go in the ground, then it is going to come up as something else. The short answer is, we don't really know how...what kind of body, what is it going to look like, or if we are going to have this mole or not; but we do know that it is going to change into something more powerful, and it will be different than it is now.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; some years ago, it was in the news that in a tomb in Japan...it was the tomb of an emperor...I don't know whose tomb it was...but they went into this tomb and they found a jar of seeds; and so, you know, the

scientists were looking at it and the experts were looking at it: Oh, look at these seeds; what kind of seeds are these? I wonder what these seeds are? Finally, one bright person came along and said: Why don't you plant one? So, they planted it, and it actually still germinated after all these centuries, and it grew up into this gorgeous eight-petalled white magnolia. Well, just looking at the seed, you couldn't see that that flower was going to come out of it...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But you had to plant it to get to the magnolia, and that is what Paul was saying: Look, we don't know exactly what our bodies will be like. In fact, he uses what is technically an oxymoron here. He says it is going to be a spiritual body—a *pneumatikon soma*—those two words don't go together. They are usually opposites. It would be like talking about the bright darkness...

DARRELL DELANEY

Same difference...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; so, he is using an oxymoron, but he does it to point to a mystery.

DARRELL DELANEY

You know what is interesting, is that he is harkening back to what Jesus taught, because Jesus says about himself...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DARRELL DELANEY

Unless a seed falls to the ground and dies it will not produce many seeds; and so, this whole seed and sower mentality is from the teaching of Jesus about himself; and Paul is bringing that very teaching...just like you said: what I received, I give to you...and now he is bringing this teaching of seeds and sowing and what it will reap later, and he is bringing that back to the Corinthians so they can remember that they will have hope because the resurrection makes this seed fruitful.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Paul likes to use that analogy of the first Adam and the second Adam. So, Adam in the Garden of Eden...Adam and Eve...we get our current physical bodies and our makeup from that first Adam in creation. That is the body we have now, which can get sick...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Which you can cut, you can bruise, and it dies. But from the second Adam, who is Jesus, the head of the new creation, the new Genesis, right; think of John 1: In the beginning... John is saying we are starting over. This second Adam will give us that new body, which cannot die or get diseased or be cut and bleed. That is what we are going to get through Christ.

DARRELL DELANEY

And this is kind of a bookend, because he started out this book talking about the gospel and Christ crucified, and how they thought that was foolishness, and he bookends this at the end of 1 Corinthians talking about the importance of the incorruptible body that we will have because of Christ's resurrection; and that is a

powerful thing because that second Adam you are talking about, he lived that perfect life that we couldn't live, and we get some hope and encouragement from that very place.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, in the end, early in 1 Corinthians 15 is about a lot more than just Paul's correcting theology that had run off the rails a little bit; but as we close out this program and this *Groundwork* series, let's think about how all this applies to our lives right now; so, stay tuned.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome 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 Darrell, I would imagine that most of the people listening to this program have experienced death in one way or another, at least in terms of adults, right? You rarely bump into somebody who has never ever been to a funeral. We have all been to funerals; and if you go to enough funerals, then you know...or in our case as pastors and you conduct enough funerals...you know that a part of 1 Corinthians 15 is often read at those services.

DARRELL DELANEY

And this is the passage, picking up in verse 51 of Chapter 15: Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—⁵²in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Amen. Again, ringing words at funerals, Darrell, that we have attended and conducted, but also ringing words in Handel's oratorio, *Messiah*. There is that great part in the Easter part of the program: The trumpet shall sound. A friend of mine who is a really, really good trumpeter had to play the trumpet, and there is this glorious...if you have ever heard Handel's *Messiah*, even once you probably won't forget it...this glorious trumpet solo, that the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised...(notes being sung)...and so, she probably only played this once a year, but she spent most of the year worrying about the next time she would have to play it, because she didn't want to mess up that solo, because that is where the clarion call of gospel hope sounds forth as the trumpet sounds, because indeed, that is our hope, that we will be raised...we will be changed, and death will have no victory or sting anymore.

DARRELL DELANEY

And when we look at funerals, and when we stand in front of the grave, we remember that our hope is that this is not the end, that we will see this person again if their hope is in Christ. Because he is the resurrection, because he is the life, these are the words that we comfort each other with, and we remember that. Then we have words like the Apostles' Creed that says we believe in the resurrection of the body. We say that all the time, and if we remember those things during those difficult times, I believe they can give us some hope.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, it is one thing to say the Apostles' Creed and that ultimate line: I believe in the resurrection of the body...it is one thing to say that behind stained glass in a church sanctuary on a nice, sunny, Sunday morning, but when we recite the Creed graveside, we are standing in front of a hole in which our loved one's

body is going to go in a few minutes. That takes a lot of faith, a lot of pluck, a lot of courage to say: I believe this body is coming back in some form someday. Not when I am sitting in a nice church pew in air conditioning, but when I am standing next to this grave slit into the earth like a wound...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That is where it really counts. In fact, Annie Dillard, who is a really good writer, had a short story, and one scene took place at a graveside committal service. This family there is sad, their loved one has died, they are about to put the casket into the ground, and the minister reads that line: Where, O death, is thy victory?

Where, O death, is your sting? And one person in the family hears those words and says: Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? He looks around the cemetery and he says: Why, it is just about everywhere, seeing that you asked. I mean, death is everywhere in this world. It is true...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But we don't believe it has the last word.

DARRELL DELANEY

I like what you said, Scott, about how it takes tremendous faith in the middle of the trials, and in the middle of the circumstances, to recite the fact that you believe in the resurrection of the body, that you believe in the life after death, that death is not the final victor. We actually, as believers, need to make sure that we have our hope in Christ, because when we have our hope in Christ, we can actually speak to things that seem to be final...that seem to be tragic...that seem to be horrible...not denying that they happened, but also that God has the final say about them.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We said that, indeed, we wanted to get practical. Well, how practical is that? I mean, we all have to say good-bye to loved ones, parents, grandparents, tragically, some have to say good-bye to a child, which is the worst, right? But do we have hope as we lay this one to rest...this loved one? I heard an interview by Dr. Francis Collins, who is the head of the National Institutes of Health, and a devout Christian, although he wasn't always. He grew up basically with very little if any faith. He went to graduate school; he was a scientist—he believed in science. He didn't have any Christian faith, he thought it was irrational to be a Christian; and then one day, when he was getting ready to go to medical school, somebody just up and asked him a question he had never been asked before: What do you believe? What do you believe in? He didn't have an answer. So, he kind of looked at Jesus anew, and he said: You know, in this world of death, you have to believe in something, and I believe in Jesus, he now can say; and we believe in Jesus, and we believe that he was raised from the dead as what Paul calls the first fruits...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

He went first; we will follow.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is so powerful because, you know, Paul is talking to these Greek people who have this philosophy, and they are always thinking about intellectual things, and he brings it to the earthy, he brings it to the practical, he brings it right to their lives, because he uses his analogy of how Christ beat death by dying, and then he, in

bodily form, will come back; which means everybody you had hope in, you will see them again. So, they need that because there was a lot of persecution and a lot of bad things were happening in the Corinthian area at that time, and Paul wants to make sure that they have the strength and encouragement to keep going; and not just answering the questions like a Q and A in the letter...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

But living this faith out in a way that is a witness.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and so, as we come to the end of our look at 1 Corinthians, Paul has kind of brought things full circle, Darrell. In our first program, we looked at how Paul looked at what he called the foolishness of the cross...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

How could anything good come from the head of a movement dying? That doesn't look like a very good way to get things done, but Paul said: No; the death of Jesus on the cross was actually not foolish, it was the wisdom of God; and now he rounds out the letter in the final substantive chapter on the other side of the cross: the resurrection, which was like God's stamp of approval on everything Jesus said and did. God raised him back up to say: Everything my Son said and did was right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And so, we conclude this program and series the way Paul concluded what we call the 15th Chapter of 1 Corinthians: ⁵⁸Therefore, my brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. Thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Thanks be to God, indeed. Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Darrell Delaney. Join us again next time as we continue to dig deeply into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives.

Connect with us at groundworkonline.com, and there you can share what *Groundwork* means to you, and make suggestions for what you would like to hear talked about next on *Groundwork*.

DARRELL DELANEY

Groundwork is a listener supported program produced by ReFrame Ministries. Visit reframeministries.org for more information.

***Correction:** In the audio of this episode, host Scott Hoezee misspeaks and says "it is going to be a spiritual body—a *psychikon soma*," when he meant to say "it is going to be a spiritual body—a *pneumatikon soma*." *Psychikon soma* is the Greek phrase for physical body and *pneumatikon soma* is the Greek phrase for spiritual body and is the phrase the Apostle Paul uses here in 1 Corinthians.

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