

The Complete Sufficiency of the Cross

SCOTT HOEZEE

Once in a while in our lives, someone does something so special for us that we cannot think of enough ways to express our thanks; but sometimes, after we have done any number of nice things for the person to whom we feel a debt of gratitude, the person will say: Look, you've done enough now to say thanks to me; in fact, you've done more than enough. More than enough. That phrase describes the work of Jesus on the cross, too; and today on *Groundwork*, we will look at the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. 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 program five in our seven-part series for the season of Lent, in which we have been meditating on the cross of Christ; and so far, we have looked at the big question of why Jesus had to die on a cross. We looked at the curse of the cross; the shame of the cross; the paradox of the cross in bringing life from death; and now today, the sufficiency of the cross.

DARRELL DELANEY

We really want to look into today why it is important to understand that Jesus paid for everything that we have done, past, present, and future, and I think it is going to be exciting to talk about today, Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And it does remind me of an old song many of us may know. The chorus goes like this: Jesus paid it all; all to him I owe; sin had left a crimson stain; he washed it white as snow. And that is really what we want to talk about. We can think of another song, too. The Keith Getty song that is one of the most popular new hymns in the world: *In Christ Alone*; and that *alone* part is the key.

DARRELL DELANEY

Alone. The fact that it is Christ's work that completely takes care of all of these things is really what blesses me, Scott. It is important for us to know that it is not about me dotting my Is or crossing my Ts...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is not about me getting it perfect or getting it right, but because of what Christ did, that actually brings us through and helps us to have a healthy relationship with God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And one more hymn while we are doing a kind of greatest Lent song hits here: *When I survey the Wondrous Cross*, there is that line: I pour contempt on all my pride.

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In other words, I could never save myself. I cannot even help myself get saved. Forget it. That would be a prideful way to think; so, I pour contempt on all my pride. I've got nothing to be proud of, because indeed, Jesus did it all.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is beautifully humbling, isn't it?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

It reminds us of our place. We actually needed rescuing; like, we needed that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And there is not anything that I can do in order to improve that situation; and it is really humbling for us to remember, but it also sets us free from a little bit of self-righteousness. I won't be prideful; I won't be arrogant; I won't think I am better than that other person if I remember where my help comes from.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; Isaiah 53...we have looked at parts of this in other parts of this series and other shows on *Groundwork*; a well-known passage: ⁶All we, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; (and now this part:) and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Again, Jesus paid it all.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, not just the ones who were nice on one day, and not just half of the people, but every single person: the iniquity of us all; and that is what we need to make sure we understand. Everybody is included in that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And you would think we wouldn't forget that, right? I mean, that is just kind of straight-up Christian orthodoxy, and it has been for a couple thousand years now, that Jesus paid the full debt to forgive our every sin. We know that. You would think we would never forget it; but, Darrell, I think sometimes on a practical, day-to-day basis, sometimes we kind of do forget.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think the Christian living section has made a living off of this, because there are a lot of how-to books there...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And self-improvement, spiritually speaking...self-improvement books; and we like to go to that section, grab a book and say: This is how I am going to do it. This is how I am going to do it. I just need to follow these steps; and I am helping out the whole salvation situation. I know we don't always think that way, but

sometimes it can get subconsciously put in my mind that I am helping God out somehow.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

That I am actually improving my situation, and I am actually helping to pay some of the debt of sin that I owed, but that is not actually possible, is it?

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, you are right, Darrell; it is kind of deep in our cultural DNA. We love rags-to-riches stories, and self-improvement, as you were just saying...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We are self-made individuals, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Self-made.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I earn what I get in life; and it is hard to switch that off, even when we turn back to theology, but it has been a problem all along. In fact, it goes almost all the way back to the beginning, because Paul had to confront something like this in the churches in Galatia.

DARRELL DELANEY

He is helping them to understand...this is where we get the justification by faith principle...where he understands and helps us to get the idea that we are saved by grace alone, and by through faith. It is interesting how the Galatians...not just them, but many people have always thought that there was some sort of secret knowledge that they had to have... Okay, saved by grace, and what else? There must be something underneath that; and so, we are going to try to figure that out; but Paul was trying to help them understand that, no, it is truly the sufficiency of Christ paying for that; and that we afford that salvation by the gift of faith is the reason why we have a relationship with God in the first place.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Which is what Paul told the Galatians, but then, we think that after he left, some other teachers came in and kind of said: Well, Paul told you some of the story, but not quite the whole story; because really, if you want to get saved, you know, maybe keep the law. Eat certain foods, if you are a male get circumcised, because those things that you do will finish the work of Jesus.

N. T. Wright, a great New Testament scholar, just wrote a commentary on Galatians. He has some new ideas as to why the Galatians may have started to adopt some of those Jewish practices. He thinks maybe some people were trying to avoid persecution; because the Jews kind of got a pass in the Roman Empire. So, if the Christians in Galatia could look more like Jews, maybe they wouldn't get persecuted. N. T. Wright may be correct about that; but whatever their motivation was, we all know, Darrell: as soon as we start paying more attention to what we do, eventually we think that we are getting rewarded for it or we are chipping something in—we are helping God out; and maybe we are helping get ourselves saved.

DARRELL DELANEY

And so, we cannot add to the practices of salvation to think that they are going to actually improve our status with God. I think that in our opportunities that we have to live for God—in our expectations—these guardrails we put around the faith...these attitudes and these traditions we put around the faith...we see it in

the book of Genesis. You know, Eve says: We shouldn't eat of it, we shouldn't *touch* it, or we are going to die. God didn't actually say that, but she added an extra safeguard; and sometimes we put in extra safeguards, which is what these Jewish people were doing...these Judaizers were doing. They were trying to actually help make people become Jews in order to be saved, and you know that is not actually needed to do that; and so, this is the actual challenge that I see in traditions; sometimes, it could be a bad thing.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Paul just kind of pulled his hair out when he heard about this, because, well, you can tell. Here is Galatians 3. He directly assails them: You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes, Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. (Now) ²I would like to learn just one thing from you? Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? ³Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?

Paul says: I showed you Jesus on a cross. You cannot do that; I cannot do that; only Jesus could do that. Stick with what I told you in the first place, because when you believed that, that was when you were saved and received the Spirit. So, don't start clogging up the works here by thinking you are contributing to your salvation by doing all these extra things.

DARRELL DELANEY

And Paul was pretty upset in this one. This is the only epistle I see that he doesn't give a greeting: Hey, grace and peace to you. He gets right to the point...

SCOTT HOEZEE

He skips it. Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

Because he wants them to understand that Christ had to go through a death on the cross for us to afford this salvation; and there is no way we could achieve it in the flesh. We want to think more about what that means and how that happens in the next segment. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

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

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, as we have been saying, it is clear as day, Darrell, in the Bible that the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross took care of our sin, one hundred percent—one hundred fifty percent—two hundred percent! What is less clear is that we always keep that straight in our hearts and minds.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, that is true; and because there is the part where we believe what has happened and we receive it by faith; but then we have this life to live.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

We have to figure out: what do we do from day to day, each step of actually living in the faith; and that is where it gets a little murky for us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, I think, Darrell, this is a common human tendency. I don't...you know, it is inevitable maybe. We tend to pay more attention to what we can see than what we cannot see. I cannot really see God's grace, but I can see my good deeds. When I am kind to somebody or I give money to the church or whatever I do, I can see that. Other people can see that. So, we tend to focus on what we can see...our work...and not on what we cannot see...God's grace.

DARRELL DELANEY

And interestingly, Paul tells us in Corinthians to focus on the things unseen...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

Because the things unseen are eternal and the things that are seen are temporary; but also, I think it could be a misunderstanding of what James teaches about faith and deeds, because he says faith without deeds is dead, but those deeds are not salvific deeds. Those deeds come after the salvation. In Romans, out of gratitude, we get to live into the faith in a way that honors the sacrifice that God has done that we believe by faith.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; but again, we tend to do this, and it comes out in different ways, Darrell; but I think one of the ways we detect this in ourselves is if we compare ourselves to non-Christians or to neighbors in our neighborhood who don't go to church...don't believe. So, we look at us and we look at them and we say: What is the difference? Well, the difference is, I go to church, they don't; they sleep in on Sundays. The difference is, you know, I don't throw wild parties with lots of drugs and alcohol; they do. So, I am a better person! God surely must grade on the curve, right? So, I come out ahead, and that is why I am saved and they are not; and again, that is just not quite the right way to look at it.

DARRELL DELANEY

The bad news with that is that it is a human comparison, and humanity has never been our standard for how we should live or what we should do; but when we do that, it puffs up us. It makes us prideful; it gives us a little bit of self-righteousness. Like the parable Jesus told about the guy who stood in there and he said: Have mercy on me, a sinner; and the other guy is like: I am so glad I am not like this sinner over here!

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

And the bad news is, if we compare with other humans, then we might come out ahead and we might get a little puffed up about it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And the other part of the bad news of that, Darrell, is that if we really think that our deeds...our work...our not being like that other person is the main thing, that is a two-edged sword, because when we do mess up, that means we might get blamed for that. If Jesus doesn't take it all away... If it is up to me, I would say the chances of my being saved are iffy.

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

There is no sense, you know, trumpeting our good deeds because if they count to our credit, then our bad deeds count to our debit, and that is not good news...that is not the gospel.

DARRELL DELANEY

I always end up short-changed in that; and Paul talks about that in Galatians Chapter 2. He says: ²⁰I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I know live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that last line, if you let it sink in, Christ died for nothing! That is devastating if that were true. So, Paul is saying: Look, if there were any other way for humans to get saved or to save themselves, or even to meet God halfway, then the Son of God would not have had to go to hell for us and died that horrible death. He died for nothing if there was an alternative. There was no alternative. This was the only way; so, don't make Christ die for nothing, Paul is saying to the Galatians and to us, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because every time you think you are chipping in something valuable, you are sort of making Christ die for nothing, because God said that was the only way.

DARRELL DELANEY

We don't want to nullify his sacrifice for us; and I think Paul also picks it up again here in Romans 5, in verse 9 it says: Since we now have been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, we have nothing to brag about, Paul is saying. We cannot go around boasting what good people we are, as though *that* is what gets us saved, or *that* is what made God love us in the first place. I mean, Paul says right there: Look, he loved you when you were as bad as you could be. It wasn't your goodness that attracted God to you; you know, count yourself fortunate that your badness didn't repel God utterly from you. Or as Paul says a little earlier in Romans, in Chapter 3:27...he asks kind of a rhetorical question: Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded.

It's like: Any questions? We've got nothing to brag about.

DARRELL DELANEY

It sets us free, because having to be on all the time...having to dot every I and cross every T all the time...that can become tyrannical...that can become oppressive...that can become obsessive...I could obsess about that. It would actually make me obsess about what is going on in my neighbor's yard as well. Like, oh, what are they not doing? What is he not doing?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

What is she not doing? Well, they are not doing what I am doing. It just becomes a comparison game, and you've got to get off of that because that will actually drive you crazy. So, being able to understand that

salvation comes by faith through God, and that paid for everything sets us free from having to run through all the things...the rat race, if you will, to try to be righteous on our own. It never works.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It never works. We could never do enough; exactly true. One quick question, though, that we can address briefly before we leave this segment, because a lot of people say: Well, okay, then; the Old Testament, the law was a big deal; and Paul knew the law was a big deal when he was Saul the Pharisee. He did everything he could to keep the law; so, why did God give us the law? Well, Paul also addresses this in Galatians. We are in Galatians a lot in this episode, and that is fine. Galatians 3:24, he says:

So, the law was our guardian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵Now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. ²⁶So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have [now] clothed yourselves with Christ.

So, the word *guardian* there, Darrell... In a sermon I did a while back I said that is sort of like a babysitter, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The law was our babysitter when we were young and immature, and it kept us safe; it kept us on the side of God, but eventually, you don't need a babysitter anymore; and in terms of faith, we don't need the law to babysit us anymore, because Jesus has done it all for us.

DARRELL DELANEY

There are other translations of this very verse, Scott, where the word *guardian* is also translated as *schoolmaster*. So, we wouldn't even know what sin was if it wasn't for the law teaching us what it was; and so, the idea that we don't need a babysitter anymore because Christ has come in and done the perfect work is something that is relieving to me. As we conclude today, we are going to turn to a couple of last questions, and it helps us to understand what we need to do in our Christian behavior today, and how we can remind ourselves of grace every day. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and the emphasis of this program...it is called the sufficiency of Christ, Darrell, but it just basically means Jesus paid it all. We cannot save ourselves, we know that, but where we sometimes go into error is when we think we can add to our salvation, or what we do contributes to our salvation, but as we have seen from multiple passages, especially from Paul in Galatians in this episode, no, it is all Jesus, period.

DARRELL DELANEY

If we do add our works in, Scott; if we do try to contribute and earn a little bit of that grace, then we actually water down the gospel, and we actually...Paul says Christ died for nothing if we add one of those things, and we don't want Christ's death to mean nothing. This is the only way that we could be saved, and we need to actually understand it in the right perspective; and it comes, not with us comparing what we did; it doesn't come in to us being more righteous than our fellow brother or sister; but exactly what Christ has done should be central.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Paul emphasized that. As far back as the earliest days of the Church, Darrell, some people heard that and said: Oh, so, what we do means zero. So, fine; who cares how we live, then. Let's live it up. God will forgive our sin, you know; and Paul addresses this in Romans 6. He says:

¹What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ²By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized

into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Now, in our final program in this series, Darrell, we are going to look at little bit about that in more of an Easter theme of rising with Christ; but here, Paul's main point is: You are right; of course, our deeds don't contribute to our salvation, but that doesn't mean they are not important. We are supposed to live like new people. Baptism...we often focus on the fact that the water washes away our sin. We forget the other part. We also drown...our sinful self is supposed to drown so that a new self comes to life. So, we are supposed to do good deeds. We are supposed to do good works. This is expected of baptized people.

DARRELL DELANEY

Baptized people have a different lifestyle than those who don't. We have a new life that has been given to us. So, why go on doing the things that we did before when we didn't know Christ? When we actually 1) know better; 2) Christ has paid for those things. We don't want to continue to "re-crucify" him with these things...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

We need to live into the new life, and if we have gratitude for what Christ has done, we don't want to go back to that stuff; we don't want to go back to the things we did, the things we used to say. We want to live that life and enjoy the newness that comes in that life. It is not easy, but it is definitely worth it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The Holy Spirit sets up shop in our hearts. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, Paul says elsewhere, and we can see that also in John's gospel, that we are living temples now. The Holy Spirit lives in us; that has got to show up. Paul talks about this again in Galatians, now the very last chapter of Galatians, Chapter 6:14: [So] may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. ¹⁵Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything: what counts is the new creation.

So, as you just said, Darrell, baptized people are new people and they act like it...

DARRELL DELANEY

They act like it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But, that leads to the question: How do we keep the right focus on what our good deeds mean? If we want to value them as the acts of baptized people, but we don't want to over-value them to the point of thinking they are getting us saved and making God love us. How do we keep balance?

DARRELL DELANEY

I think the first thing, Scott, is to have an attitude of gratitude; and thank God through prayer. So, prayer. Being able to say: God, thank you for waking me up. Thank you for saving my soul. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to do something for someone...to be of service...to live like you lived. Thank you for your power to do that. Thank you for the ability to get that done. If we thank God a lot, actually it will keep us in our right perspective on things.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes...exactly; so, that is the first idea: Prayer and prayers that are saturated, dripping with gratitude to God for his grace; that will keep that in front of us. The second idea: We talked earlier, Darrell, about kind of what we could call downward comparisons. We compare ourselves to our unbelieving neighbors; and we think that the only difference between us and them is we live better; and we forget that the only difference between us and them is grace. So, if we want to compare ourselves, let's stop comparing ourselves to our neighbors

down the street or our coworkers. Let's compare ourselves to Jesus. Do an upward comparison once: Am I as good as Jesus? Am I that holy? No. So, don't compare yourself to take a superior attitude to your neighbors. Compare yourself to Jesus, not to get an inferiority complex, but to realize that is the one I am dependent on, because I am not like him; not yet.

DARRELL DELANEY

That is true. I was always taught that we are one prayer and one confession away from being like the person in the circumstances that we are judging...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

You know, there is a song...the gospel song by Kirk Franklin that says: It could have been me, with no clothes, no shoes, no food to eat, or whatever it is; it could have been me, but by God's grace it isn't; and so, that means that we can keep the right perspective; and I think that, you know, it is important for us to remember to continue to ask God for his grace and his mercy each and every day; because if we think about how much we need, then we will be humble.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And there is that Jesus prayer we have talked about in other *Groundwork* episodes; an easy, memorable, short prayer...easy to repeat multiple times a day: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God; have mercy on me, a sinner. Very simple prayer. Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God; have mercy on me, a sinner. If we can repeat that to ourselves often enough every day...again, we remember we are forgiven sinners, and we are only forgiven because one hundred...one hundred fifty percent...two hundred percent because of the grace of God that radiates from the cross of Jesus.

DARRELL DELANEY

And so, we actually end where we began when we had this affirmation...this song: Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe; sin had left a crimson stain; and he washed it white as snow. That is our thanks, and we give thanks to God for that. Amen.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Amen. Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Darrell Delaney, and we hope you will join us again next time as we reflect on the cross of Jesus by studying the four stories of his crucifixion found in the gospels.

Connect with us at our website, groundworkonline.com. Share what *Groundwork* means to you and make suggestions for future *Groundwork* programs.

DARRELL DELANEY

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