
The Cross of Jesus is the Only Way

SCOTT HOEZEE

Most of us are familiar with the phrase that talks about how no one should ever air their dirty linen in public. It is a way of saying that we should be cautious about speaking in front of others about sad, difficult, or even scandalous things in our lives; particularly, perhaps, things that tie in with the relationships we have with other people. Well, the Apostle Paul seems not to have heard this idea because, as we will see today on *Groundwork*, Paul was very up front with the Christians in Galatia about some serious conflicts he had with his fellow apostles. Stay tuned as we dig into Galatians 2.

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 second program of a short, four-part series that we are doing on Paul's letter, or his epistle, to the Galatians. We looked at Galatians 1 in the first program, and we saw that Galatians stands out from Paul's other twelve New Testament letters, in that Paul dispenses with the usual epistolary niceties, like giving thanks for the people who are receiving the letter; and instead, he immediately launches into a somewhat angry, full-throated rebuking and chastising of the Galatians; and soon enough, we discover the reason: Some other false teachers had convinced the Galatians that Jesus had not, in fact, done it all in terms of achieving salvation. The Galatians had to finish that saving work in their own lives by keeping rules and observing ceremonies like circumcision. It reminds me of a terrible, heretical tee-shirt I once saw; a picture of Jesus on the cross: Jesus did his best; you do the rest. That is heresy.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, it is heresy, and it is an error because if you are a Gentile...just imagine this...if you are a Gentile, a Gentile is anyone who is not a Jew...of Jewish descent. If you are a Gentile and you have heard the freedom and the truth and the blessing of what it means to be saved by grace through faith, and you repented and you received Jesus in your life, and then someone comes after that and says: Oh, you are not done yet. You have to add this, this, this, this... And you have to be circumcised... So, now you are being encumbered by all of these extra rules and extra regulations that the gospel used to be a free gift, and then it became this burden, and it confuses you. That is what the Gentiles were feeling when they received that information. They were struggling with: Is this enough? Is Christ enough or not? And Paul is upset. He said: We gotta get rid of this; we gotta nip this in the bud now so it doesn't turn into something that is out of control.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The gospel is supposed to be good news, but I will tell you what. You tell me that actually a lot of my salvation is up to me? That is not good news, because, you know, I know I am a sinful person. So, that was Galatians 1. He is going to continue, then now; it flows right into Galatians 2; and here is how it goes in Galatians 2:

Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. ²I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain. ³Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he

was a Greek. ⁴This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. ⁵We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. ⁶As for those who were held in high esteem—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism—they added nothing to my message.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, Paul is laying out that he preached the gospel that he had been preaching everywhere that he had been, and it had nothing to do with the regulations of Jewish law or Mosaic law or circumcision; and even Titus was encouraged by that and did not feel he needed to be circumcised; but Paul is trying to do things in decency and in order. He goes to the esteemed leaders and it is unfortunate that those leaders did not catch what the Judaizers were doing; and I think Paul has a point of contention with them because of that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, he keeps referring to these esteemed leaders, and you know, the pillars of the early Church; and it is almost like he is putting scare quotes around that, because Paul is saying: Look; these other apostles...most of them had actually been disciples of Jesus. They were with Jesus for four or five years. Paul couldn't say that, right? These other apostles had street creds, but Paul says: I don't care. If they don't have the message right, if they don't have the gospel right, I don't care if they spent time with Jesus, they are wrong; but he is saying they did receive what he said. A little quasi political intrigue here, that apparently some false teachers had infiltrated their ranks to spy on the freedom we have, Paul says. These are people who thought Paul, because of all his emphasis on grace and grace alone, that Paul was getting loose-goosy with the rules. So, they kind of spied on him in the hope that maybe they could undo Paul's message; but Paul says: We didn't give in for a moment.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, it is really interesting that they thought Paul was probably watering down the real message, and saying: Well, don't worry about the law; don't do that at all. We are in grace now. I have seen people who have left churches over the misunderstanding of these things. Paul is not dismissing it; he actually teaches that Christ fulfilled the law perfectly in a way that we couldn't; but the Judaizers were saying: No; you need to add to it and do what you do in addition to what Paul is saying. So yes, Paul; you are teaching it, and add this to it; and that is a problem because that is not the gospel at all. That is what Paul says.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Paul is saying to the Galatians: Look, I have been fighting tooth and nail to preserve the pure gospel...the very gospel he had preached to the Galatians; and so, yes; as we said in the first program, Paul was hopping mad to discover the Galatians had let that get watered down...had let that get undercut. The finished work of Jesus wasn't enough. It is interesting, Darrell, in Galatians 2:5, how Paul really makes it personal to the Galatians. He says: I fought these battles with even my fellow apostles so that the truth of the gospel could be preserved for you...for you. Paul had been through way too much to let everything fall apart now on account of the false teachings of those false teachers.

DARRELL DELANEY

And it went well to a degree, but then Paul starts, in Chapter 2:7, he says: On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. ⁸For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. ⁹James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.

So, it sounds like they are getting along. They found an understanding, Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, it took the apostles a while to get used to the idea that, astonishingly, they didn't know ahead of time, and that was that God was going to call the Gentiles into the kingdom, and was not requiring them to become observant Jews first. God-in-Christ was kind of leapfrogging over all the old ceremonies and traditions that had long defined being Jews, and God was now creating a whole new family...a whole new Israel...in which everyone gets saved the same way: Through the blood of Jesus shed once for all on the cross. It is rather astonishing they didn't seem to know this. You know, Jesus had said things like: I have other sheep who are not from this pen...

DARRELL DELANEY

John 10.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, the great commission: Sure, you start in Jerusalem and Judea, but then you gotta go through all the world; but I guess they thought that when they went through all the world, they had to call these people to become Jews first; and Paul is saying no, that is not how this is going to go.

DARRELL DELANEY

And that actually is not a new thought. It was the thought in the Old Testament as well. God has said he wanted to be a light to all the nations, that salvation would reach the ends of the earth; and there is more that we want to talk about in this chapter. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee; along with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and we are in Galatians Chapter 2 in this program; and Darrell, let's get right back into it, where Paul, with utter candor and honesty, relates a very uncomfortable encounter he had with the Apostle Peter. Now, you remember, Peter's real name was Simon, and then eventually Jesus renamed him Peter, which in Greek means rocky...Peter the rock...and sometimes he is referred to by the Aramaic version of that Greek name, and that is Cephas. So, here is what Paul writes in Galatians 2:11:

When Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹²For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. ¹³The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. ¹⁴When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas (Peter) in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, ouch. Paul is hopping mad about this situation because not only is Peter changing his position, but he is actually confusing those that he has been with; and being a stumbling block to those who are not Jews. So, he was scared and influenced by these people who came from James, who happened to be the Judaizers we referred to in the first episode. The Judaizers were extreme people who felt like following the law of Moses and being circumcised were the prerequisites for being a Christian; and these people came in after and began to influence Peter; and because of that, Peter goes back to the kosher. He moved away from it because he realized there was freedom in the gospel; and this is a problem, especially.... particularly to Peter, because of what he saw God do in his own ministry.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Essentially, Peter caved in to peer pressure, and began to do what he knew was wrong; and fully to appreciate why Peter knew better, we have to go back to that vision Peter had in Joppa one day when that sheet was lowered from heaven and God told him: It is okay to eat non-kosher food; and that was a symbol of saying: I

am going to be bringing in non-kosher people; and they don't have to become kosher before they can become my children through baptism; and Peter was still wondering about that vision when he was whisked away to the house of a non-Jewish man named Cornelius; and in Acts 10:34, we read this:

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. ³⁶You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all." (Then, a little on:) ⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷"Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; so, Peter got the revelation at that moment that the Holy Spirit doesn't need all these other requirements in order to save people. That the message and the power of Jesus Christ happens. And then he did what he didn't think he would ever do, which is sit down and have pork steaks, pork chop sandwiches; and go in and have this food that actually didn't taste so bad; but then, he knew that...okay, now we have fellowship with these people because we have the same Spirit, but then he started to switch over and go back on what he had been doing. That is a problem.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; Acts 10 is a wonderful story; it has a happy ending, but wait; there is more, as they say. Now, what Paul is reporting in Galatians 2 is that Peter, when he was in front of fellow Jews who didn't accept that idea, that Gentiles didn't have to become Jews first...they didn't accept that idea, and when they came, Peter choked. He got afraid. He back-pedaled. He parroted the message of others, that maybe Gentiles were kind of second-class people who couldn't be candidates for salvation in Christ Jesus until and unless they kept all the Jewish laws and ceremonies first. And as reported in Galatians 2...and again, it is a remarkable passage, Darrell...Paul let Peter have it. I mean, in front of other people, he got right up into Peter's face and accused him of rank hypocrisy and cowardice. You know, Peter had been known in the gospels to have feet of clay, you know. He said he would never deny Jesus, and he did. Well, after Pentecost, and the Holy Spirit came on Peter, he became a much braver proclaimer of the gospel; but old habits die hard, and here feet-of-clay Peter caves again.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; unfortunately, the reason why I think Paul opposed him publicly is because of what Peter did was a public confusion that needed to be addressed and nipped in the bud immediately. The fact that he showed this hypocrisy, that he showed two faces, if you will: Okay, I am going to be this way with the Gentiles and I am going to be this way with the Judaizers. I think that, as believers, we need to make sure that we don't fall into the temptation of what that means in our own lives; that we can stay true to the gospel, we can be accepting of people with differences, but when we see that there are people who come from a background that we come from that are saying something different, let's hope we are not influenced by the negativity of that and the division of that. I think Peter needed the correction; and he actually understood it, and he came to his senses later...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

But right now, he has a problem.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and you know, it is kind of amazing that, even for the apostles, even after the Holy Spirit came on them, they didn't instantly have crystal clarity on absolutely everything; and you know, for all of us in the Church today, and even for whole denominations who sometimes spend years trying to figure out what God wants us to believe about a certain issue in the church, there is something vaguely comforting about seeing that this is how it went, even with the apostles. Peter had to be confronted. Jesus, near the end of John's gospel, told the disciples the Holy Spirit would be engaged in an ongoing process of continually leading them into all truth. It is a process. Truth doesn't always come in one fell swoop; and we see that here; but as you just said, Darrell, we know from Acts 15, to go back to that; Peter accepted Paul's rebuke and then he got it right. We can read about that in Acts 15.

DARRELL DELANEY

Starting at verse 7, it says: After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: (He is talking to the people in the Jerusalem council that you mentioned earlier; he is saying): "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. ⁸God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? ¹¹No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, Peter got it. This is sort of, in Galatians 2, Paul airing some really dirty linen in public here. That was an unhappy encounter between these two giants of the early Church—Peter and Paul; but thanks be to God, the rebuke took. Peter got it, and that confrontation, it yielded a lot of good fruit. It was painful, right? We know what it is like to get confronted like Peter got confronted by Paul. We don't like it when people have to get up in our faces; but thanks be to God, it bore good fruit.

But before Galatians 2 ends, Paul is going to lyrically sum up the good news of the gospel, and we are going to dig into that as we close out the program, so stay tuned.

Segment 3

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 indeed, Darrell, we here on *Groundwork* dig into scripture to lay that foundation for ourselves. So, let's do that again now with these words that round out Galatians Chapter 2:15: We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles ¹⁶know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified. ¹⁷But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker. ¹⁹For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. ²⁰I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now 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!

DARRELL DELANEY

So, Paul is actually talking about the law here, and he is talking about how we are not saved through the law. Even though it looks like he is throwing the law away, he is not, because he is a Jew and he grew up under this law. He understands that Christ paid the atoning price because the law...no one can actually achieve their

righteousness by following the law; and the law actually shows us that we are lawbreakers. That is why we need a savior. So, the law can be good when it shows us that; but then, we also need the grace to know that we no longer need to live under that law and the regulations. That would make us try to get our own righteousness.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; the law is good stuff, Paul says. On *Groundwork*, we have sometimes said the law is sort of like the owner's manual for creation, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It shows us the right way to live. Here is what works; here is what doesn't work; and if you are wise, you will do what works because then you will lead to flourishing delight, which is what God wants. The law keeps us from needlessly harming ourselves or others—good stuff; but nobody comes remotely close to keeping it all the time. If getting into the kingdom of God is all about achieving a morally pristine scorecard, or report card, we are doomed. Salvation will never happen if perfection is the bar we need to clear; and so, Paul is saying here in the part of Galatians 2 we read in the second part of this program, even the Jews couldn't do it. So, why would you ask the Gentiles to do it? You couldn't do it. They are not going to be able to do it; and anyway, salvation doesn't work like that in the first place.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is an unrealistic expectation for the Jews to put that same law they couldn't keep on the Gentiles, making it even more difficult for them; but we realize, too, that salvation doesn't work that way. We get saved because the crucified work...the atoning work...we actually join with him; and Paul is saying that in this verse: I have been crucified with Christ. That means that the life that we now live that Paul is talking about is not our life, but it is his. So, we live it that way that he wants us to live it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. This is the passage that was my ordination exam for my sermon when I was getting ordained; and it is a famous passage; and Paul is basically saying the truth of our baptism: If we die with Christ, we rise with Christ. If we are with Christ on Good Friday, we are with Christ on Easter. So, we get crucified...our sinful self gets crucified...our previous way of life gets crucified...it gets wiped out. Baptism shows us: We drown...our old self drowns in the waters of baptism, but if we die with Christ, we rise with Christ on Easter morning, too. That means, Paul says: I basically don't have an independent life of my own anymore. I am not independent; I am totally dependent; and that is just a gift of grace.

DARRELL DELANEY

A wonderful teaching tool that we have used in our Reformed tradition, the *Heidelberg Catechism* question and answer number one: What is your only comfort in life and in death? I am not my own; I belong body and soul in life and death to my faithful savior Jesus Christ. Paul gets into this in his other epistles, that we have a life that is not our own. We are bought with a price; therefore, we cannot do whatever we want to do with this life. We must do what pleases and honors God, because literally our lives belong to him; and so, how do we live into that as a people who are grateful for that work? Realizing that whatever rights we thought we had, we surrendered to Jesus on the cross; and we actually have a new life to live in him thanks to his grace.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and you mentioned the *Heidelberg Catechism*. Some people know that the third part of that Catechism, after the sin or misery part, then we get the deliverance by grace part; and then the third part is the gratitude part; and that is where the law comes in. That is where the Catechism looks at the Ten Commandments because this is how we live to say thank you...thank you. Not to get saved, but we live this

way because we have been saved; and our lives become like a big thank-you card to God. But then Paul gets to the real theological kicker here near the end of Galatians 2. Basically, Paul is saying: Look, if there were another road that led to salvation, any road at all, then Jesus died for nothing. That is a striking claim. You know, the death of God's only Son, Darrell, I think was the worst thing that ever happened on planet earth...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Worse even than the original sin of Adam and Eve. I mean, God came down in full righteousness and holiness. He came brimming with what the Apostle John says in John 1: Fullness of grace and truth. Jesus exuded goodness and kindness and freely offered it to all; and how did the world react? We murdered him! We killed him! We executed him on a Roman cross; and there is nothing more terrible that you can imagine than what happened on Good Friday.

DARRELL DELANEY

The cross in and of itself had to be the only way; and if there were another way, then what would be the point? What we would be able to find our own way or we would be able to do something different; but because that is the absolute way, Jesus said he is the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me; but this is the actual...the atonement that the only one who can cleanse the conscience of the believer...the only one who could bring us to the place where we are in right standing fellowship with God: that ugly way of the cross. Unfortunately, there is no Easter Sunday without Good Friday.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; exactly; and that is the gospel truth that needs to fill our lives as believers every day, Darrell; and it is a message we want to embody so fully that we make others want to get in on that, too. We never want to talk in such a way that makes it look like we are drawing the circle of salvation smaller instead of larger, right? We never want others to think they have to jump through some moral hoops that the rest of us don't need to jump through if they are really going to be saved by Christ's death on the cross; and you know, the Church does do that sometimes, and God forgive us when we do.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and I pray that we make sure that we live in such a way that we are winsome; that people want to be drawn. The Bible says that if we lift him up, he will draw all people to himself; and it was God's original plan to be a light to all nations that his salvation would reach the ends of the earth; and how does it reach? It reaches through his ambassadors, through people who say yes to Jesus. These are the people who he wants to use.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It took time and effort, and even an awkward confrontation by Paul to Peter to get all of this on track, but thanks be to God it was; and now, Peter came around to the truth. By God's grace, this happens to all of us; and for that, we give God our thanks.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Darrell Delaney with Scott Hoezee, and we hope you join us again next time as we continue our study of Galatians with Chapters 3 and 4.

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

SCOTT HOEZEE

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

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/the-cross-of-jesus-is-the-only-way>

Printed on February 12, 2025

©  ReFrame Ministries