

Transformed Living

SCOTT HOEZEE

In the Steven Spielberg movie, *Saving Private Ryan*, we see the story of a squadron of soldiers whose mission in World War II becomes to find and send home to his mother, Private James Francis Ryan. Ryan had four brothers, but all four of them were killed on D-Day. So, the army is sending him home before his mother loses all of her sons to the war. Well, eventually the squadron does find Ryan, but at great cost. Several men lose their lives looking for Private Ryan, and as the film draws to a close, the leader of the squadron, Captain Miller, is dying after being shot. He looks Ryan full in the face and says: Earn this. In other words, now that you have been saved, live a life worthy of the sacrifice of others. Well, Christians face this, too. Jesus died for us. Now what? Now, we live like we understand what we have been given. We earn this by transformed living; and since we can never actually earn our salvation, today on *Groundwork*, we will dig into chapters near the end of Romans to better understand what this means for our daily lives. 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, we are now in program number five of six; so, the second to the last program of our six-part series on Paul's letter to the Romans. Romans has kind of three sections, and people who are familiar with the *Heidelberg Catechism* know that the Catechism kind of mirrored Romans. It has sin, salvation, service; or misery, deliverance, gratitude. Chapters 1 through 7 were the sin part, where Paul makes clear because of our sins, humans cannot save themselves. Then, Romans 8 to 11, we turn to the salvation God gives us by grace; and now, we are coming to Romans 12, Darrell, and we are going to go into that third section.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; the section is gratitude and how we live in light of the gospel change in our lives; and Romans 12 begins with that word that you talked about before, *therefore*; and what I have always been taught is that if you see the word *therefore*, you need to go back and see what it is there for.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we are glad to see that there are implications that the gospel has on our practical, everyday lives, and Romans 12 sets us right into place of that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Therefore is usually, indeed, a sign that we are turning a corner and building on what came before. Romans 8 opened with *therefore*, and here is Romans 12:1: Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, I love this verse. This is one of my favorite verses, Scott, because the idea is, we live differently in view of God's mercy. The mercy that we have been talking about this whole time, how he gave us salvation by grace through justifying our sins in faith. That now gives us a new way to live, which is different from the pattern of this world.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We have to become, Paul says, a living sacrifice for God; and you know, Darrell, that phrase is what we call an *oxymoron*. An oxymoron is when you put two words together that are almost the opposite of each other. It would be like talking about bright darkness, or something you do with difficult ease...

DARRELL DELANEY

The same difference.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; because sacrifices usually end up dead. I mean, certainly the biblical tradition where the life of an animal or a bird was sacrificed as a sin offering. So, a living sacrifice is kind of paradoxical.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is; and in this case, our old life and the way we used to do things is what is dying. So, the sinful life that we had that neither glorified God or sought to please him, is the life that is dying. Just like in Romans 6, we are called to a new life, this is what Paul is going to explain, and it starts in our minds.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Jesus was sacrificed, and yet, he is alive. So, in a way, Jesus is a living sacrifice, too. So, we need to live sacrificially; and yes, exactly; it begins in our minds, Paul says. We have to be renewed on the inside, and the main thing we have to do now...now that we have understood this salvation that we just covered in Romans 8 through 11...now we need to test things. Darrell, we bump into things and we encounter things in society, in the world, all the time; and Paul says what your job is all the time is keep figuring out what is the right thing to do.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we need to actually evaluate what our life is to be like. We need to be very careful in scrutinizing. John Calvin says that the scriptures are the spectacles that we see the world through. So, if we allow the Lord to teach us through his Word what discernment looks like and what we should or shouldn't do, then that actually will help us to navigate this world in the way that Jesus did.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Sometimes we face obvious enough choices, but sometimes they aren't as obvious, you know. I mean, so we can look around us. We know what the world thinks about practicing sexuality or, you know, wink, wink, you can cheat on your taxes a little or, you know, you can steal from your employer a little. So, we know the world tries to get away with what it can, but we have to weigh all of that, as you said, Darrell. We want a different pattern of life than the pattern of the world. So, we have to test things. We ponder; we weigh; we cannot do this on our own. I mean, it is only the Holy Spirit living in us that gives us even a chance to have our minds renewed so that we can think God's thoughts after him.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we have been given a responsibility. Romans 6, like I just said, gives us the opportunity to live a new life based on our dying and rising with Christ; and Paul also goes into this in Colossians 3, when he says: Set your minds on things above, where Christ is, and when he appears, your life will appear as well.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Paul is just getting warmed up here in those first few verses we just read from Romans 12. As we go on, it ends up like drinking from the proverbial firehose. Paul is going to fire off one imperative command after the next. I think there is a list of about eighteen things that he says they must do or they must not do. Take us through that, Darrell.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, it says: ³...Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment. ⁹...Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹Never be lacking in zeal... ¹²Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud... Do not be conceited. ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹Do not take revenge...

That is a lot.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Obviously, Darrell, this living sacrifice thing...this renewing of our minds...it is going to touch the whole sweep of our lives. Again, yes, as you just read it there, Darrell, it is just one command after the next. They pile up like cordwood; but is there a common theme here, Darrell? I think it is. I think the common theme is love.

DARRELL DELANEY

Love. We will say more about this in the next episode, but it is clear that love is the backdrop behind all the behaviors. It is actually the essence of what it means to live a new life that does not conform to the pattern of this world. It not only changes us, but it changes the people who we serve.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; don't get such a highfalutin opinion of yourself in pride and arrogance, Paul says. Think more about other people than you think about yourself. Extend yourself lovingly into the lives of others so you can rejoice with them when they are happy and you can cry with them when they are sad; and oh, yes; tearing a page out of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount playbook, Paul makes it clear: You know what? This is especially important to do with really unpleasant people. Love them above all, and don't repay evil with more evil.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, when he tells us to overcome evil with good, he is literally actually telling us to model what Jesus taught, and model what Jesus lived.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, if we don't take revenge, we actually have the opportunity to follow in Jesus' footsteps.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That is a tall order. There is no way we could do it on our own. Paul makes it abundantly clear in the letter to the Romans, it is only the Holy Spirit in us that is the source for this inner transformation he is talking about. So, that is a lot, but we are going to move into Romans 13, and Paul has some more interesting things to say about grateful living. So, stay tuned.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

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

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we just saw, Darrell, in Romans 12, a flurry of ideas that Paul has for living a transformed, sacrificial life. What does it look like? Well, it looks like a whole lot of things that Paul talked about. Now in Romans 13, he has another interesting thing to say, and it may have been something that the Christians living specifically in Rome had a hard time hearing.

DARRELL DELANEY

It says; Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ²Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Commentators have pointed out something interesting over the centuries about the letter to the Romans. It has a very curious feature. Paul never mentions the Caesar...not directly. Later he will mention those who live in Caesar's household, but he never takes on the Caesar; and as we know, Darrell, the Caesar fancied himself in Latin as "*dominus et deus*." He was the god and the lord of the empire. This was almost a pagan cult of worshipping the Caesar like a god, and the Caesar didn't mind. He thought he was a god. And what is more, the Roman Empire was harsh, right? Crucifixions were common. What happened to Jesus was not unusual. It was Rome's public advertisement...it was like a billboard saying: Behave or else. You behave, you do what the Caesar says, or you are going to end up on a cross just like these guys. So, it was a pagan cult; it was a brutal regime; and it brutally opposed Christians eventually, and the whole Church; and yet, Paul says be subject to them?! That is what he says.

DARRELL DELANEY

It actually really exemplifies the loving your enemies and loving those who persecute you, because Rome could physically persecute you, and physically kill you, and physically give you a hard time in your life; and so, Paul actually is taking another note from Jesus here, because there was a time when Jesus was asked: Do we pay taxes to Caesar? And Jesus says: Once you open that fish's mouth, whose face is on there? Okay, that is Caesar. Okay, well, give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's. So, Jesus didn't come to overthrow, and even though the Jews thought he was going to be the new Messiah that was going to take over like some sort of king or judge...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

Like a new David or something, he did not come in that way. His kingdom was a spiritual one.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; give to Rome what Rome wants and don't worry about it. Verse 4 says something interesting: For the one in authority is God's *servant* for your good. Now, the word translated *servant* there is the Greek word *diakonos*, or *deacon* literally; but servant. Now look, if you behave, Paul says, you don't have to worry about the people in authority. Only those who break the law need to worry. If you don't break the law, then you don't have to worry. So, just behave, right? Now, you know, Darrell, today a lot of us...not all of us Christians in the world, let's be clear...there is such a thing as the persecuted Church in different lands, right? But a lot of us...we read these words from Romans 13 in free societies where we vote for the people who become president or prime minister or senators; but of course, that wasn't the case in Rome with the various

Caesars. So, to be a Christian living in Rome, under the very shadow of the Caesar, right under his nose, and then to be told to view that Caesar, or someone like Pontius Pilate, as God's own deacon or servant, well, I can only imagine some of those Roman Christians swallowed a little hard when this was first read to them.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; because, I mean, he was the epitome of evil. He was the opposition. He was the "bad guy". What we need to understand, and I think this is the thing that they had to understand, is that the person that is in office is not our moral standard. That person is an instrument; and God can use anything as an instrument. God has used a donkey as an instrument before. He can use anyone and anything as a tool to get his will across, and if it is authority, it is from the Lord. Now, if this person misuses it, they are going to be held accountable by God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That's right.

DARRELL DELANEY

But they are an instrument to execute his divine authority over the earth.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that is definitely an all things being equal thing, because Paul would certainly say: Oh, but if the Caesar tells you to discount Jesus; to recant your faith; no. That is a line you do not cross, and Paul didn't either.

When the day came, if Paul had a choice, he stayed with Jesus, they lopped off his head. So, there is a line in the sand. Or if the government coerces you to do something that would kill another person—something clearly immoral; of course, then you don't say: Well, Paul said to submit, so I gotta kill you. No, no, no; but short of that, yes; the governing authorities are there for the society's larger good.

Paul goes on in verse 5:

Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. ⁶This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. ⁷Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Again, a tall order when the government levying the taxes is Rome, but you gotta do it, Paul says.

DARRELL DELANEY

And we know that if they call you to do something that is non-negotiable, like denounce your faith or denounce Jesus Christ, that is not going to happen; and even Martin Luther King, in the civil rights movement, said that an unjust law is no law at all...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And he chose morally to not follow those things that were breaking the law and breaking the human dignity of people. And yet, still, in situations where that is not the case, submitting to the authorities is the exact same as submitting to God; and so, that is what we do.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I think Paul is also saying we can relax a little bit. We do see the higher authority of Jesus. We do know who really is God and Lord...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is not Caesar. So, rest secure. Have confidence in Christ Jesus, the Lord. And Darrell, you know, it just seems to me that that is something we need to hear today all around the world, but particularly in the United States, where you and I live. You know, things have gotten really sickeningly conflictual, where all things political, and especially where all things partisan is involved. There is so much fighting; and unfortunately, we know that fighting has not just stayed outside of the Church. Political fights have entered the church sanctuary; and it could make you weep to see how some congregations have been tearing themselves apart over partisan and political matters; and so, you just have to say, you know, if Paul could tell the Roman Christians to be reverential and respectful of leaders, and not to twist themselves into pretzels over political and partisan matters, then certainly he can speak that word to us today.

You know, Romans 12 began, as we saw in the previous segment: Don't conform to the patterns of this world, Paul says; and we can apply that here. Don't conform to the *political* patterns of this world in the Church either.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; I remember when I was a pastor, I had to walk people through the different elections. There were some people who were excited and some people who were grieving; and yet, we had to bring them back to the non-negotiable truth is that even though no matter what partisan, no matter what side you voted for, we as believers believe: 1) That Christ is on the throne, and: 2) We are still united in his blood; and therefore, we can work through these differences together. And so, being able to not conform to the pattern of this world was very important for us in that time, and it is going to be important in this time. As we conclude this episode, we are going to talk about some more implications in Romans Chapter 13. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening 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.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Darrell, let's dig right back into scripture and hear the concluding verses of Romans Chapter 13. This is where we are in this fifth of six episodes on Paul's letter to the Romans. Paul writes in verse 8: Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves [others] has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

DARRELL DELANEY

Paul knows in this one, Scott, that he is calling believers to live contrary to this world, just like in Chapter 12, and this is the practical application of what it means to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. When you are renewed by Christ's love, then you want to display that love to everyone around you.

SCOTT HOEZEE

When I was a kid, I used to hear this phrase. I used to think people were saying it's a doggy-dog world; and like, what is a doggy-dog world? No; it's a dog-eat-dog world is what people were saying. It is a dog-eat-dog world of competition, anger, fear; and in that world, Paul says, we are called to love one another and to love our neighbors; and Paul knows, and we know when we read this here that Jesus made it pretty clear: Who is your neighbor? Everybody. Sorry...you know, the one man who set off the parable of the good Samaritan, right? He was trying to limit the list of neighbors, and Jesus made it clear you cannot do that. A neighbor is not just somebody who is close to you or looks like you or who thinks like you. A neighbor is anybody you

run across...it is everybody: Love them.

DARRELL DELANEY

And we are called to not just talk love, we are called to demonstrate love; and these are ways that Paul has been listing how you practically live out the love for the neighbor, even if the neighbor doesn't like you; even if the neighbor doesn't return to you the good that you are giving to them, you still leave hot coals on their head when you serve God this way, and they still see the light and witness of Christ.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is interesting, and we get this in Jesus, too, and a little bit earlier in Romans 2, but basically Paul says: The law is love—the law is summed up in love...love of neighbor. So, you know, basically he lists several of the Ten Commandments here about adultery, murder, stealing, coveting, theft, you know, all of it; and Paul is basically saying even if you can tick the list...tick every box...no, I haven't murdered, I haven't committed adultery, I haven't done that; but if Jesus or Paul or anybody comes to you and says: But are you loving? If you have to say: Well, no; I don't really love people very much. Then it is like, it doesn't matter—your moral checklist doesn't matter. All of that is irrelevant if you don't love; and you know, we probably have all met people who are pretty buttoned down morally, but they are not very loving, and they are not very pleasant to be around. None of the exterior behavior matters if there is not love in your heart.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, and unfortunately, that can degenerate into holding grudges or getting revenge and paying people back; not just getting mad but getting even. We have seen this. If we are honest, there are family members we have that way; there are co-workers we have that way. I can be honest and say I have had these issues where I have held grudges in my heart, and God has had to deal with me and show me that that is not his way. That is the pattern of this world, and I need to surrender to him so that he can show me how to live in a way that is forgiveness and mercy to those who don't deserve it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Which of course, as the Bible makes abundantly clear, that is what God did for us. While we were yet sinners...while we were yet unlovely...while we were yet unlovable to a holy God, God loved us...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And sent Jesus. Then...then...that is when he sent him...not after we cleaned up our act and got nicer, and you know, more attractive. No; when we were about as unattractive morally as we could be, God swung in and loved us anyway; and if God can do that for us, we have to at least try to do it for those around us who are sometimes unlovely.

Paul has another reason why love has to be our number one characteristic.

DARRELL DELANEY

And he says this: ¹¹And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, it is possible Paul is thinking about the second coming of Christ here, that the hour has come, the night is nearly over; but it is also possible that just all throughout time, we just have to keep leaning into the gospel; we have to keep living in the ways that Paul is recommending here. I mean, wake up, Paul is saying;

wake up. We live in the light now, you know; we don't live under the cover of darkness, where nobody is going to see your greasy sins and bad behavior; you can hide in the shadows. No; there are no shadows. If you live in Christ, you are in the light. So, now is the time for singing, not brawling; it is the time to praise God for salvation by grace alone; not the time to engage in fits of jealousy, much less to be getting drunk or live in other riotous ways, you know; because...and here you mentioned Colossians 3 earlier in a different connection...set your mind on things above. Similar in Colossians: Clothe yourselves with Jesus, Paul says. Put Jesus on the way you put a sweater on.

DARRELL DELANEY

And so, we have bigger fish to fry. We have to think about that the end of times is now here, and I am not trying to scare anyone, but the idea is that we need to actually be focused on living the way Christ has called us to live, by the power of his Holy Spirit. We don't have time to go back into the old ways; we don't have time to go back into the old life; we don't have time to repay evil with evil. We are called to live as children of light and put on the deeds of light so that we can represent Jesus as his representative, as his ambassador; and that is what we need to do, and we put Jesus on like we put on, like our clothes every day, so that we can actually represent him well.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And you know, sometimes we wear a pair of Levi jeans...the Levi's is there, or a Tommy Hilfiger shirt or the Nike swoosh on your shoes. It is like you become a walking advertisement for these people...free advertising because you are wearing their products. Do that with Jesus, Paul says. Put on Jesus, so that when people look at you and they see what you are wearing, you look like the loving face of Jesus in all that you do. Look, you cannot get saved by your deeds; but once you are saved, your deeds get pretty important, too. So, we are not saved by our deeds up front, in that sense of that is what earns God's favor, but out back, we show that we have truly been saved. We none of us do this perfectly, right? But every day we enter into that rhythm of dying and rising with Christ; and in that way, we glorify our great God.

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 will join us again next time as we wrap up our study of Romans with the concluding chapters, 14 through 16.

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

SCOTT HOEZEE

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