

Your Questions about Discipleship, the Holy Spirit, and Death

DARRELL DELANEY

As we learn and grow in our faith, it is natural to develop questions about the Bible or the life of faith as we encounter our life experiences from the perspective of faith. On this episode of *Groundwork*, we are going to dig deep into scripture and spend time talking about your questions regarding our relationship with God, the Holy Spirit, and what happens after death. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Darrell, this is the second of two listener question programs; and I think if people listen to *Groundwork* regularly, and particularly if you listen to the very end of each episode, you know that we always say we have a website, groundworkonline.com. Send us your questions...e-mail questions...send a physical letter, and you do; and so, we have collected several of those. We answered, I think, three or four questions on the previous program, and we have three questions here, although our producer assures us that the three questions we are going to answer here are questions similar to which a lot of other people have asked questions as well. So, that is what we are going to do in this program.

DARRELL DELANEY

Looking forward to being able to just kind of dig in and help people to understand the questions that their faith kind of gets stuck on; and it is good that we can help people to know what is going on so they can continue in their walk with Jesus.

SCOTT HOEZEE

One question that someone sent in says that as a believer, what more do I need to do or learn to become closer to the Lord, and figure out what God's true calling is for me? I am stuck in a bad situation, and I am trying to have faith that the Lord will guide me through. So, Darrell, it is basically a question like: How do I know what God wants me to do? Not sure, maybe, what I am supposed to do for a job, for a career; what I am supposed to do, maybe, in my church? What am I good at? How is God calling me, and how do I figure that out; and how can I be confident that I am following the lead of the Lord? I think that is the upshot of the question.

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, man! You know, as a pastor I really wish I would get this question more often, this direct and this clear. So, I hope that we can demystify what it means to walk with Jesus and understand what calling is. I mean, that word *calling* in itself, Scott, is really something that Christian circles have made really enigmatic; and I think if we think about there are things we can talk about as far as passions, as far as giftings, as far as goals; and I think that it is important for us to lay out some things to help people in their spiritual disciplines,

because that is part of this, too.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; the English word *vocation* comes from the Latin *voca*, which means to call or to be called. So, a vocation is your calling; and I think one thing that I just want to mention right away, and that is that a lot of people have the sense that, well, pastors get calls, but the rest of us just have to kind of muddle through and figure it out; but I always want to say...yes, you know...and I don't know, Darrell, when you were a seminarian, or maybe when you were interviewed by a church or something, how often did you get the question: Tell us about your call to the ministry, Darrell. Tell us about your call to the ministry, Scott. Then we would tell our call story; but everybody should have a call story. If you are a lawyer, a teacher, an auto mechanic, a tutor...you know, whatever...if you are in business, everybody, I think, should sense that God has called them, and the question is: How do we *all* discern what that call is; and in what context, I think, Darrell, do we do it? You just mentioned prayer, mediation, scripture reading...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

These are all ways by which God speaks to us very clearly.

DARRELL DELANEY

I also think that he speaks through other people. So, it is important for us to know that. In my own testimony of what this call is, I had a mentor walking with me, helping me to discern it. We see that all over scripture. We see Samuel with Eli when he is getting a call from the Lord. He doesn't even know the voice of the Lord, and Eli says: Oh, wait; I need to guide you here. Paul does it with Timothy. Jesus does it with his disciples. There is always someone in community who can help you do discern what are your gifts? What are your passions? What do you feel called to? They have spiritual assessments as well. You can take the spiritual gifts to understand what gifts I have, where they could be used; and there are a variety of different ways to do that, but I think it happens in relationship. It doesn't have to happen on your own or by yourself.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You mentioned the Samuel story; and indeed, that is a wonderful story, where we are told that the word of the Lord was rare. There were not many visions. So, it wasn't a spiritually robust time in Israel's history. So, when God calls Samuel, you know, he goes to his mentor, Eli, the priest; and the first two times Eli just says: You know, you are dreaming. Go back to bed, kid; don't bother me. But then, the third time is like: Oh, wait a minute...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Maybe this really is God calling you. So, go back and say: Speak, Lord; your servant hears; and Samuel does that. So, he needed that help. I think we have all needed that help. I think there is another popular misconception. So, if one misconception is that only pastors get calls...that is not true; we all get a call...the other one is that you discern your call, just you and Jesus...just you and the Spirit...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You have to wait for God to speak from above, or put handwriting on the wall; but as you just said, Darrell, we discern our calling best in community, right? Accountability groups, Bible study groups, whatever it

might be, other people are also the voice of God in our lives; and I will say with my own call story to the ministry, during my first year at Calvin College, I didn't know what I was going to do. I thought maybe I would go into journalism, but halfway through the second semester I felt God calling me to go to seminary. I resisted it for a long time, but finally I kind of started praying about it. Then I talked to my mentor, who was a good mentor, my pastor whom I had known for a long time, and he was very wise; and he said: Just take a few steps in that direction; which took the pressure off me, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Just be tentative. Just head that way and see if there is confirmation. So, I did; I kind of relaxed about it. So, I just, you know, started telling people about it, and all of a sudden, all these other people came around me and said: We have been thinking that about you for a while; although they had never said it before; but you know, my best friend's parents were: Well, we have been thinking that you should be a minister for a while. It was like, what?! Other people confirmed that...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I think that is true of anybody with gifts for the law, for business, for teaching, for being a really good engineer or an auto mechanic. Other people will confirm your gifts and your calling.

DARRELL DELANEY

It reminds me of the book that Os Guinness wrote called *The Call*, and there are two different ones. There is an external call and an internal call. The internal call, you have your own personal convictions of what you think it might be, and you are testing out like that, what you have said, Scott; but then, the external is when the people come around you and that know you and begin to affirm and confirm what it is that they see in you. So, then you have this dual confirmation, in stereo sound, if you will. So, I feel this, I sense this, I am trying these things out, and I don't know for sure, but then, there are other people who can confirm that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we should say, just in all honesty, it is a bit of a process, and it doesn't always go quickly. Some people do experience false starts. They try something and it doesn't go well, and they kind of have to fall back and regroup. So, you know, the clarion voices of confirmation don't always come right away. This can take a while, but don't be discouraged, right? God is with you. Continue to pray, continue to ask for God to speak to you through others or through something or another; and I think eventually we have good hope that that will come. You know, we have talked to people who sometimes didn't find their true calling until they were 40 years old, but they did find it.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; others at eighty.

SCOTT HOEZEE

There you go; never too late. So, I think that is the great thing here, Darrell, to discern your call and where the Lord is guiding you in community. Listen to the other people around you, for they often are also the voice of God.

We have a somewhat similar question in the next part of the program, a question about the Holy Spirit and our relationship with God. So, stay tuned for that.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

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

SCOTT HOEZEE

And today, Darrell, we are looking at listener questions. We just had one about discerning one's calling in life; but here is another question that came in: How do I receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and how do I get into deep presence with God?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yeah, baptism of the Holy Spirit, what a pregnant term. So, it depends on what denomination you come from how deep they go with their theology on this. There are Pentecostal circles...their whole theology is built on being baptized in the Holy Spirit, and they say that the evidence is speaking in tongues and other things that manifest in the life of the believer; but I believe that it is important for us to remember in the Reformed tradition that we serve a triune God, and that triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—have a relationship with the believer; and so, this is a step that we need to understand, at salvation they come together. When they come with you and have a relationship with you. That is an initial place to start in this conversation.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I think it is important for our sisters and brothers in other church traditions who do think there is a second baptism...a baptism specifically of the Spirit. You know, I respect that, and I think something with the Spirit does happen like that. In the Reformed tradition we would call that sort of an uncovering of their gifts...

DARRELL DELANEY

Sure.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, a manifestation of different gifts for different people; but what you just said was important. When Jesus gave the great commission in Matthew 28, he said to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; and that triune baptism brings us into the fullness of God; but that is not to say, however, that there aren't examples in the New Testament, and particularly in the book of Acts, where some of this gets a little mixed up. I mean, one of them is from Acts Chapter 10. Peter goes to some Italian, non-Jewish, non-Israelite people: Cornelius and his family in Italy; and Peter kind of preaches to them in Cornelius's house, and then in Acts 10:44:

While 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." ⁴⁸So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

So, there is an example, Darrell, where the Holy Spirit comes first, and then they say: Well, we have to baptize them now. The Spirit is on them; and keep in mind, they weren't so sure they could baptize non-Jews at this point...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But here they sort of realize: Well, God is working, and so we recognize that and baptize them accordingly; but even then, it wasn't a second baptism; they gave the full baptism because the Spirit was clearly already working in these people's lives.

DARRELL DELANEY

And that is the Reformed tradition's understanding; that if you come to a place of knowledge and salvation, it has to be because the Spirit has already been working...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And so, when you hear in these different circles...some of the circles that I have been experienced with, when they start talking about being baptized in the Spirit, they are talking about being filled in order for something to happen. There is evidence in scripture where you see that Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit before he preaches a word, or Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit before he heals someone or he does some sort of miracle that Jesus has taught him to do; and so, we see that there is a filling that happens before an actual act or service in the book of Acts; that Peter was filled with the Spirit before he preached at Pentecost...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And so, we see that there are a variety of different ways that these things happen, but it is all coming from a relationship with the triune God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

Now, there is another verse right here in Acts Chapter 19, where Apollos is in Corinth, and it says:

¹While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ²and he asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism." ⁴Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. ⁷There were about twelve men in all.

So, you see how they had a baptism already...they had a baptism with John...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

But then, Jesus came to bring the Gospel and the fulfilment of the Gospel, then the Holy Spirit comes on them. So, the triune God is still involved. The salvation comes first, and then the baptism, which is actually a sign and seal that is taught by our Reformed tradition.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and this Acts 19 passage is one some believers...some traditions...use as evidence that there is such a thing as a second baptism of the Spirit, but it is important to realize that these people had not been baptized in the name of Jesus, and the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. They hadn't even heard of the Holy Spirit, so you for sure know they weren't baptized in the name of the Spirit...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because they hadn't even heard of it. They only knew John the Baptist; and this isn't the only time when the disciples...or the apostles...bumped into people who only knew about John the Baptist, and maybe even thought John the Baptist was the Messiah...that he was the Messiah. So, they had to correct that. So, this isn't really a second baptism, in which they received the Spirit, this is their first baptism...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because John's baptism was just a forerunner to Jesus. Now, all of that said, though, Darrell, this is not to say that we shouldn't earnestly desire for the Spirit to fill us in our lives and to renew us and to unleash some gifts that we maybe don't even know we have.

You know, in Galatians 5, after giving a list of the fruit of the Spirit, Paul says to the Galatians: (verse 25b paraphrased) Now, keep step with the Spirit. You get that a lot. It is sort of like, you know, it is all the Spirit's work, but we can cooperate with that and pray for that, and pray for a greater filling of the Holy Spirit—that I completely believe is legitimate.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think it is important, Scott, to remember that the Spirit's mission and job is to conform us to the image of the Son, each and every day. So, he convicts us when we are wrong; he loves us into a position where we are able to make better decisions and change our ways; he gives us the power to live there; and I think the second part of the question that was asked was how do I get into the deep presence with God? I think it is what you are saying here, to keep in step with the Spirit; allow him to convict you when you are wrong; humbly admit your sins; have accountability from other people who are Spirit filled who believe in Jesus. As long as we don't make this a salvation issue, we are not going to run into hot water; but I think that this is an ongoing relationship with the Holy Spirit that helps you to live in humility and learn from him each day.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; the Holy Spirit's job is to be our living connection to Jesus, who is at the right hand of the Father. The Spirit connects us to Jesus, and all of Jesus' power flows into us through the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12, Paul is talking about this matter of gifts, but also this idea of being in deeper relationship with God. 1 Corinthians 12:27:

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

So, we don't all show the Spirit in the same way, Paul is saying, but ask the Spirit to show up in your life somehow so that your particular *charism*...your particular gift...can be unleashed in service to God.

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, in just a moment, we are going to turn our attention to a question about Christian teaching, and what happens after death. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

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

And Darrell, we have a third question that we are going to take up in this program of listener questions. We are responding to questions that you, our listeners, have sent in to us for the last year; and here is one that comes up often: What happens after death? So many people think we go straight to heaven, but the Bible clearly states this earthly system will end and then the dead will be raised and the earth is restored to its former glory; or is that heaven? So, why isn't this the logical outcome at the front of Christian teaching? So, what happens after we die, but before Christ comes again?

DARRELL DELANEY

You know, it is important, I think, for us to remember the fact that we are going into uncharted waters here, Scott. I mean, there are some people who have seen or heard testimonies about people who went over to the "other side," and came back and they can tell you what is going on there; but the scripture is not very detailed on what exactly happens; and in our finite state, we just need to be humble and say: We might not be sure about all the things that...every single detail is not made clear to us, but we do have a few things that we could learn from that might give us a perspective that actually points to hope in the relationship that we have with Christ, and not on the hour, minute, or second of what is going to happen immediately after we close our eyes on this side of glory.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and by the way, those people who came back and said they saw a bright light or... I mean, we call those near-death experiences for a reason: they didn't die.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

When people *really* die, they don't come back to tell us about it. Only one has done that so far, and that is Jesus; and he had a few things to say about it, but right; we don't want to get too hung up on not knowing all the specifics. I think we are going to talk about some options here for a minute, but at the end of the day, we trust that it is going to be good. You know, we are in the hands of the Lord, and that should be enough for us one way or the other. That said, we get this question, Darrell...we are pastors. You have done funerals, you have walked with people, as have I, in the hour of death, and it is not at all unusual for people to say: Where is Mom now; or: My husband died, where is he? You know, is he still conscious? Is he happy? Is he...you know... In our Reformed tradition, we have never really nailed down a single answer. You can read confessions of the Reformed tradition and the theology, and there is no definitive answer; but there have been traditionally three options that I will just run through real quickly: One, which my grandma Hoezee believed in, was *soul sleep*, and that is that when your body dies, your soul just takes a really long nap, and you are not aware, but you wake up at the last day when then Jesus restores your body to you at the last judgment and the resurrection at the last day—soul sleep. A version of this is extinctionism. When we die, we die: Body, soul, everything. You are just gone; you do not exist at all anywhere. Your soul isn't asleep, it is dead; but God brings all of you back at the last day, body and soul together; and then there is the one which is probably more common in the Reformed tradition, that is called the *intermediate state*, where our soul is separated from our body, but we are aware; we are happy; we are in the presence of the Lord; and we are awaiting the return of our bodies at the last day. So, here we are, aware, waiting for the last day, but we are in a good place, even though, somewhat unnaturally, we are without a body.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, this intermediate state that you are talking about now is a place where we are fully conscious of what is happening, but we are separated from our earthly temple; and 1 Corinthians 15 tells us about how we are going to get our new, glorified body that we will be able to be reunited with...I mean, especially in situations

where there is a cremation, or even body decay in the natural state. Whatever happens with that we have an idea of what happens: Are we aware of this? Does this happen? Are we sure about it? And you know, there are two ways to look at it: There is the scientific, physical way and then there is the pastoral way to talk about people who really cared about Mom and Dad. You have to be careful when you are communicating with them, so that they could get a little bit clearer picture on something that is kind of dim for us on this side of heaven.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And in favor of that view that there is sort of a conscious time, if we can even use the word time. There is a famous passage in Philippians 1, where Paul, you know, says: ²¹For me to live is Christ, to die is gain. ²²If I am to go on living in the body, that will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet, what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³I am torn [between the two]: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

So, here Paul is saying: If I die, I am going to go be with Christ. He doesn't get any more specific than that, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But he is not talking about the last judgment day. He is saying: When I die, I will be with Jesus; and then, of course, the other famous one, Luke 23; the thief on the cross: ⁴²"Remember me when you come into your kingdom." ⁴³ "I tell you, (Jesus says) today you will be with me in paradise."

So again, the idea that something happens right after we die, but well short of the end of all history and the final resurrection, where we are with God.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think that in our finiteness we get caught up in the *chronos* time...the ticks, the tocks, the seconds, the minutes; and so, this question cannot be specifically answered in our finiteness; and on this side of glory, we cannot say: Okay, we've got this many seconds; because we often say at funerals that they went from time into eternity...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

Eternity means there is no time, there is no measurable seconds to it; so, we cannot use these clocks on our walls to measure what that it; and so, that is why we cannot have a clear perspective on when it happens, where it happens, how long is it happening? Those things will not be very helpful for us; but the fact that we are with Jesus and we are with the Father, we are with the Spirit; that should be the place where our comfort comes from, because we serve a God who is the resurrection and the life.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and of course, this can get over sentimentalized, or sometimes, you know, even preachers at funerals or other people talking to the bereaved go a little far and say: Well, I am sure he is on that great golf course in the sky. I am sure he is having great golf in heaven, or whatever the person liked to do, we say: well, he is still doing that. We don't know anything like that. What we do know is what you just said: We believe in a God of resurrection. We believe in a God of new life and of eternal life; and so, whatever it means, wherever it is, if you can even speak in such terms, we will be with the Lord, and that is what Paul said in Philippians 1; and at the end of the day, you know, sometimes people want us pastors to get more specific; they don't want us to say: Well, I don't really know; but, we don't really know; but what we do know is it will be good because, as Paul said, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. Nothing can separate us from the love of God—Romans 8—not even death; and that, thanks be to God, is our hope.

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 continue to dig deeply into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives.

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

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