

Engage360 | Episode 44: New Testament Scholarship

- Introduction: Welcome to Engage360 Denver Seminary's podcast. Join us as we explore the redemptive power of the Gospel and the life-changing truth of Scripture at work than our culture today.
- Dr. Don Payne: Hi friends, this is Engage360 from Denver Seminary and I'm Don Payne joined today by our Provost and Dean as a co-host, Dr. Lynn Cohick. Welcome Lynn.
- Dr. Lynn Cohick: Hi Don. It's great to be with you talking to our guest today.
- Dr. Don Payne: Yeah, it is. Our guest this week is Dr. Joey Dodson and Joey joined the Denver Seminary faculty in July of 2019 after serving at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkansas, I think since 2008. Is that correct? Joey?
- Dr. Joey Dodson: That's correct. Yes.
- Dr. Don Payne: Yeah. Well welcome. Glad to have you on the podcast.
- Dr. Joey Dodson: Thank you. I'm excited to be here.
- Dr. Don Payne: Joey is one of the more recent additions to the Denver Seminary faculty, not the most recent, but one of the more recent and has already made quite an impact on lots of students. He is serving here as associate professor of New Testament. And one of the reasons that we wanted to have Lynn as co-host this time is that as many of you would know, Lynn is an internationally known New Testament scholar in her own, right. And I thought it would be a lot easier to have Lynn and Joey do a sort of New Testament nerd fest. And I'll kind of sit here and nod as if I know what they're talking about, and you just have to know that unless you've seen New Testament scholars, nerd out, you really don't know what fun is.
- Dr. Lynn Cohick: That's true. Thank you for confirming what I knew to be true anyway.
- Dr. Don Payne: Let me tell you a little bit about Joey Dodson. Because we want you to get to know him, and learn from him and enjoy him as we do. Maybe the most important thing to know about Joey Dodson apart from his degrees and his writings is that he is my office next door neighbor. We're doing this on zoom. So of course you can't see us, but what I'm looking at behind Joey's back is actually the wall that he and I share. And it is so gratifying to have somebody else on the faculty who regularly wears boots. And that helps me so much. So first of all, Joey, just thanks for that. And we can kind of quit the conversation now.
- Dr. Lynn Cohick: But there's nothing there's nothing really to say is there, you know, there's just, as I'm not right down the hall from you, but nevertheless, I can hear the clump clump, clump and know you're coming.
- Dr. Joey Dodson: So these boots are made for walking.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: Exactly.

Dr. Don Payne: Yeah. Joey finished his PhD from the University of Aberdeen. And let me tell you a little bit about his writing. His most recent books are called *A Little Book for New Testament Scholars* that he co-authored with Randolph Richards in 2017. And then he's, co-edited a couple of volumes with David Briones. Is that how you say his name? Briones?

Dr. Joey Dodson: Sure, he is such a nice guy, even if you said it incorrectly, he wouldn't correct you.

Dr. Don Payne: Okay. Well, don't tell him if I mispronounced this, but with David Briones Joey edited two volumes. One is entitled *Paul and Seneca in Dialogue*, 2017 and the other one is *Paul and the Giants of Philosophy* in 2019. And currently I think you're working on two commentaries. Is that correct? One on Romans and one on Colossians Philemon?

Dr. Joey Dodson: Correct.

Dr. Don Payne: I guess, first of all, Joey, tell us a little bit about how you found your way into the vocation of scholarship in general and into New Testament scholarship in particular and Lynn, may have some more specific questions about that.

Dr. Joey Dodson: Sure. Yeah. When I was 16 going on 17, my girlfriend at the time, who's now my wife of 25 years, led me to the Lord and he has been forgiven much, loves much, and so I had a lot of zeal, but a little bit of knowledge. And so the Lord called me to actually wash up at Aberdeen University as a student. And I went there and at that time, all I knew really was the gospel. I thought I could either be a Pastor or an evangelist. And I really liked doing the traveling evangelist thing. And so that was my plan, was to be just the itinerary evangelist. But my sophomore year I took a Greek class with my mentor at that time Scott Devall. And at the end of that, he approached me and said, Joey, you have a lot of noise, which I think is a way of saying you're really loud and obnoxious, and being next to me, you know, you have to be next to me to know that that's still the case. But he says you have a lot of noise, but I think if you continued on with Greek, it would give you some volume. And so he invited me to take his intensive course, translating through Ephesians that summer, and started going through that and never encountered the word of God like that. And it just began to just mark me. It's almost like Ephesians came off the page and became incarnate, as I was struggling through the grammar and the vocabulary. I found myself almost memorizing Ephesians, but not just that but just, it just percolating in my life. And at that intensive course, I thought, this is what I want to do for the rest of my life. I want to try to recreate this for future pastors, evangelists, missionaries, pastors, and teachers. And so at that point I knew that I wanted to be a New Testament professor.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: And how do you feel then Joey, when I was looking at what you worked on with your dissertation, you looked at the book of wisdom and Romans. It was published, I think, with the title Powers of Personification. How do you get from a zealous youth to the book of Wisdom and Romans?

Dr. Joey Dodson: Yeah. Great question. So I had to toss up, I love the Old Testament, just as much as I love the New Testament and my son, who's 10 years old, he's on the autism spectrum. And the other day I came home and he was watching the Bible project for Exodus. And I said, Oh, I love the Bible Project, especially what they do in the Old Testament. And he looked at me and said, Old Testament? I think you mean "Gold Testament" because it's just full of treasure. And I found that I love the Old and the New Testament. I love Greek and I loved Hebrew, but by doing New Testament, I could work in both. But what I began to realize is I dove into the New Testament is that these New Testament authors, they weren't looking directly at the Old Testament, but they were looking at the Old Testament through the lenses of the Apocrypha, through second temple literature. And so I really wanted to understand the New Testament, that I needed to understand the Old Testament and if I needed to understand New Testament. I need to understand how second temple Judaism and the literature of that time was interpreting the Old Testament. And so that's kind of what led me into it. I love Romans that's my bread and butter.

I even named one of my sons, his middle name is Roman and I'm after the letter. And I knew I wanted to do something that Romans most scholars believe that when Paul writes Romans the wisdom of Solomon is on the desk, whether it's center or whether it's off to the side. And so I wanted to do something where Paul was interacting with one of those second temple literature works and their interpretation of the Old Testament. And so John Barclay was at a conference and he told me, he says, you know, there's still a lot of work to be done with Romans and the wisdom of Solomon. And I think the world of John Barclay, I'm quite the band boy of his. And so that it was almost like it came down from heaven.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: You know, as you, as I've looked at the titles that you've worked on, and you're talking about reading Paul's letter to the Romans in the context of second temple Judaism, that is from about what would you say? 300 BC to, well to the Early Rabbinic Period. So the time of Paul first and second century. It sounds to me like you like to have the New Testament texts in conversation. So you, in your dissertation, you were in conversation with another Jewish author and its text, but then you started to also have Paul in conversation with Seneca or with philosophy of the day. And I have to say that while it makes, it can make more sense. I think to people that you're having Paul converse with other Jews around that time, why are you now getting into looking at Paul and the philosophers of the day, like Seneca, who would have lived about the same time as Paul?

Dr. Joey Dodson: Good. So earlier I said, if I really want to understand the New Testament, I had to understand the Old Testament I've really wanted to read the Old Testament. I had to understand the second temple literature. And if I really want to

understand the second simple literature, then I need to understand Greco-Roman philosophy that was surrounding it because it had been influenced by that. And so I put Paul in conversation with this Jewish author, but I realized that the Jewish author have been greatly influenced by Greco-Roman philosophy. And I do know, so has Paul. And so basically I keep one foot in Paul and I'll pivot back to a Jewish author and conversation right now, I'm working with Paul and [inaudible], and then I'll shift over to a Greco-Roman philosopher, usually a Roman stoic to see them in dialogue. So what part of it, if Paul and the author wisdom Solomon were having coffee Ethiopian coffee, I would hope at a coffee shop, what would their conversations look like? And see those similarities and how those similarities make Paul's Gospel poignant that looking at the point of differences so that we can understand the power of the Gospel in a way that we haven't before. And so by putting, putting them in conversation, I see both coherence. So where Paul is in a sense adopting or using Greco-Roman philosophy and what he's inherited from his Jewish brothers and sisters. And then how he's, how the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is using that in order to form and make disciples of the church.

Dr. Don Payne: Give us some examples of where and how Paul draws on some of the Roman philosophers, particularly Seneca.

Dr. Joey Dodson: Sure. Yeah. So in Philippians 4, when Paul says I've learned to be content, I've learned a secret of contentment when he goes on and Philippians, and I hesitate saying Philippians in front of Lynn, cause this is one of her areas of expertise, but when he goes on and gives us lists, you know, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, think upon these things. This terminology is very stoic and their vocabulary that Paul doesn't use elsewhere. Now, I'm not sure that Paul directly draws from Seneca. Paul grew up in Tarsus was just kind of like a modern Ivy League town. They had one of the top gymnasiums kind of like the Harvard or the Oxford of their days. And so he probably was familiar with some of the stoicism, maybe it was kind of in the air, maybe it was in the graffiti of the day. So there would be some similarities, but Seneca wrote in Latin. We're not quite sure how much time Paul spent in the Latin, but we know that Seneca as brother was Gallia, who was the governor and Corinth. Who adjudicated on behalf of Paul and Christianity there in Acts Chapter 18. And so Paul actually had a interaction with Gallia. If we look at Luke's Gospel, Luke's second letter is a book of Acts. We see that in the end, Paul ends up in Rome, he's appealed to Caesar. And actually when he appeals to Caesar that dating, he actually probably wouldn't get going up before Nero, but Seneca who was Nero's right hand man at the time. Seneca was kind of a young buck chasing everything under the sun rather than virtue at the time. And so yeah. And so again, it's not looking at how Paul drew directly from these, but putting them in conversation and dialogue. And so what is it in Seneca that maybe like C.S. Lewis says, that gives us kind of the candle, the lights of the gospel that led the, the Greeks and the Romans to the point where we have the sunrise of the Gospel Jesus Christ.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: Yeah. And I was going to add one of the things that, you're much more versed in Seneca than I am, but I did some work with Seneca's letters to his friend

Lucullus and I particularly looked at how Seneca talked about torture and actually trying to avoid torture and the humiliation that came with that, and the idea of endurance being, not a virtue, but rather something that indicated that people had power over you. And then looking at Romans, Romans 8, and how Paul really encourages Christians, not just the Romans, everywhere to endure and how the Christians took sometimes took an idea or a perspective from the Stoics and turned it upside down. Like in this case endurance, endurance is something good, not something that only slaves would have. Did you find something in Seneca or perhaps Epictetus or another of the philosophers where their idea as you pondered it more opened your eyes to the radicalness of the gospel?

Dr. Joey Dodson:

Yeah. Oh, that's a great question. Thank you for setting me up with that. Seneca actually talks about himself being crucified, similar using that metaphor. So like what we see Paul saying in Galatians, I've been crucified with Christ. I no longer live, not I, but Christ that lives within me. This would have been quite radical, scandalous for a Roman citizen to refer to him or herself as being crucified, but even more so for Seneca who was on the Senate to say this. And he says that he has been crucified. Both of them are doing it in the face of their opponents, they're haters, these agitators. And both of them actually refer to the cross as representing sin, simple passions, and desires. And just like Paul says, I've been crucified with Christ. Seneca says I've been crucified with the great philosophers, Plato, Socrates, and Kato. And so you have these great similarities and Seneca says, the problem is that I'm on my cross and I'm trying to get off of it. I'm on because of my simple passions, but while I'm trying to get off of it, there's these people who love to lay on, not just one cross, but as many crosses they can get on and spit at me and heckle me, and vilify me while I'm trying to get off. And so you have those great similarity, same context and Seneca and Paul were writing about the same time. Seneca was born probably about the same time that Jesus was born, spent some time in Egypt -

But anyway, they're writing from in the same context, and they're both using the cross as a metaphor for sin, but of course, as you and our listeners know, for Paul sin is not, the cross is not the place where sin dwells, the cross is the place where sin goes to die. For Paul, now we are led by the spirit of God, so that we have been set free. Through freedom, God has set us free. And so, because we belong to Christ, we have crucified our sins and our passions. We've been crucified to the world and the world has been crucified to us. And so despite their great similarity, same context, same metaphor, same even almost vocabulary, even though it's Greek and Latin, the point of distance is that now Paul has a swagger that one can actually live free from their simple desires if they're led by the spirit. And so following those similarities lead to that great divide. And as far as I know, and Lynn, you can correct me or, and Don if, you know, as well I don't know if anyone else in the ancient world that would use the cross as a metaphor for sin before Paul or during Paul, besides Seneca?

Dr. Don Payne:

Well, that's kind of a perfect setup for the fairly common question about Romans 6 and 7, the whole dead the sin, and then how Paul follows on that in

Roman 7, you know, whether that's referring to the contemporary Christian life or the current Christian experience or some of the kinds of experience. So how does that set you up to answer that question? If it does?

Dr. Joey Dodson: Did one of my students put you up to that question?

Dr. Don Payne: No, no they didn't.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: Yeah. We might have a couple of different views here so would be fun for our listeners.

Dr. Joey Dodson: I sure hope so Lynn. I sure hope you're on my side. Cause I grew up just hearing the, that Paul is talking about himself things I want to do. I do not do the things I don't want to do. Ah, that's what I find myself doing. Oh what a wretch, I'm sold as a slave. This is just the normal Christian life. This is what we'd expect. If Paul can overcome sin and how could we ever overcome sin? And it wasn't until Seminary that I was so excited. I got this commentary by finally someone that wasn't a white man and it was an Asian name, Moo. And I was like, wow, finally, I'm reading something in Seminary that's not by a white guy, but Lynn is laughing because Doug Moo is like one of the whitest guys that you'll ever meet, but he just has a different last name. But I read through his commentary, the NIC NT the New International Commentary of the New Testament on Romans. And for the very first time in my 20 something years had I heard that there actually was another option, that this may not be Paul referring to his own post-Christian life, but possibly something else, either Paul might be referring to himself before he was a Christian possibly Paul was using this speech and act, just kind of impersonation. And if I were to say to you, Don, I like your shoes. Those look like wonderful shoes. I remember my first pair of shoes. My mama said they were magic shoes. Mama said, they'd take me anywhere. I never said who this person is, but all of us know because of the context clues that I'm talking about: Forest Gump. And so this was actually the most dominant way to interpret this in the early church fathers. It wasn't until Augustan that this idea of this, of Paul talking about the normative Christian life became that. And I am convinced, wholly convinced, very passionate about it, and so my students it's almost like welcome to the bonfire scarecrow when anyone brings this passage up. Because if you look at Romans 7 in light of Romans 6, in light of Romans 8, if you look at Romans 7 in light of what Paul says elsewhere in the New Testament. If you look at what Romans 7 says in light of everything else, with respect to a moral progression and freedom from sin, it would be the outlier.

And so my hope for my students is to let them really know that when it comes to overcoming the flesh, when it comes to walking by the spirit, Romans 7 is because it's so highly debated. It's probably shouldn't be the place that we should start. We should go to those that are less debated. And work from there on, and if you see, like I mentioned earlier, Galatians 5:16, Paul says, walk by the power of the spirit and you will not ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, or as we would say in Texas City, Arkansas grew up, you ain't never, the double negative, going to fulfill the desires of the sinful nature. Anyone who belongs to Christ who's led

by the spirit is crucified their flesh and their passions. And so what we see in Romans 6 is Paul making it clear sin is no longer the boss of me. And so Romans 7 is not about the Christian life instead. It's about the exonerated of law. What's up with this Old Testament law in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I can go on and on, but I'll stop right there and see if Lynn wants to throw anything or fire me now.

Dr. Lynn Cohick:

No, I'm another scarecrow like you, yeah. I think that Romans 6 makes it very clear. We are no longer slaves to sin anymore, but we're slaves to God. So Romans 7 is not saying that we'll never have sinful thoughts and that we won't ever succumb to temptation anymore. But I think what it, for me, as I read it, I think that Paul, throughout Romans it has two people groups in mind, the Jew and the Gentile that are just part of his culture and reality and the reality of his churches. And there for a Jew, I think a Jew in Paul's time could say that I desire to do God's law. In my inmost heart, I desire that. And I think what sometimes happens in later exegesis is they forget about the Jew-Gentile and they are just using the category believe-unbeliever. And when you use those two categories, then it gets a little bit harder to interpret 7. But I think if you can recognize that Paul knows people who desire God's, to follow God's law because they're Jews then it makes it easier to see that he's actually reflecting on, like you say, the role of the law, which is a huge concern throughout the book of Romans and it's place, because it is God's self revelation. So how are we to now as a group that is made up of Jew and Gentile trusting in Christ.

How do we live into God's self revelation, now made most apparent through life in the spirit? Which is chapter 8. Yeah. So, that's where I would say a seven is also when I have taught on this, sometimes students get real worried about it because they feel like they have to then be perfect. And that's not at all the conclusion that should come from what you and I are talking about in terms of the exegesis of chapter 7. Chapter 7 is, should be just really encouraging that that it's not about us. It's also not about the law. The law's not doing heavy lifting. We don't have to do heavy lifting. There is no condemnation now for those who are in Christ, right? That's where we get to chapter 8. So I think people shouldn't worry about this about our interpretation in as much as we're not saying people should be perfect, just that we are forgiven and we are no longer slaves to sin. We can say no to sin.

Dr. Joey Dodson:

No, I agree with you.

Dr. Don Payne:

Yeah. To the point you raised a moment ago, Joey. When Paul says, if you walk in the spirit, you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh or the desires of the flesh. That is in a sense, a real binary, though he's not speaking about some kind of consistent all or nothing and mode of life, a perfectionistic mode of life, but he is positing. I mean, tell me if you see this differently, he is positing a sort of binary equation where if you are walking in the spirit, you will not do this. Now that of course can admit that there will be times when I'm not walking in the spirit, which in which cases, you know, I may sin, I will sin, but when I'm walking

in the spirit, I won't do this. And vice versa. Is that a fair way? Or is that overly simplistic?

Dr. Joey Dodson:

No, I think that's definitely the case. Paul is a realist. He goes on to say, now I realize that the flesh goes against spirit, and the Spirit goes against flesh so that you do have to do, what do you want to do? If this was the easy case, then Paul would have to be writing this letter to the Galatians in the first place. And I do think that Paul would say that yes, to borrow from Peter, if I can use borrow Peter from Paul, we have to wage we have to abstain from the simple desires that wage war against our soul. Paul understands temptation. He understands those desires. And because he goes on to Galatians 6 and say, if anyone is caught in a specific trespass, then those of you who are spiritual should restore this person and watching out that you don't fall in that temptation yourself. So I think Roman 7, I think Paul would definitely admit we are attack. We struggle Polycarp even translates that Galatians five passages the spirit wars against the flesh. And so we know that war, but what we see in Romans 7 is no mention of the Holy Spirit. What we see in Romans 7 is an utter defeat by this. And so I think I agree with you, Lynn. I think Paul is talking about a Jew underneath the law in Roman 7, but not a converted Jew, and Paul that's been set free.

Lynn brought up Romans 8:1. Therefore there is now no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set "blank" free from the law of sin and death has set. It could be "you" free. Maybe you translate it at that. If there's a textual variant there, if it's you, it's not like Don, you and I come from Texas. It's not a y'all, which is what Paul usually uses. It's not has said y'all you Christians free. It's set a singular has set you individuals. So if this is the case, and then Paul is talking back to the I in Romans 7 and saying, now you have been set free. Another translation, and I think maybe the King James that says, has set me free from the law of sin and death. And if that's the case, then if it is Paul talking about himself, it would be preconversion in Roman 7, but now I've been set free. And Lynn brought up Roman 6. I think we also go to Romans 8, where Paul goes on to talk about don't walk according to the flesh anymore. Now you walk according to the spirit and you are no longer obligated to fulfill the desires of the sinful nature. And so yes, we sin. Yes, we have this temptation, but we're no longer in bondage. We're no longer impotent before sin because we have the spirit of God and to borrow from Jesus rather than from Peter this time a greater is he that's in us than he that's in the world. And no temptation has seized us, except what is common. And God's going to provide a way play out when we take it.

Dr. Lynn Cohick:

Can I pick up on some language that we all have been using the language of slavery because Paul uses that and he uses it in a metaphorical sense in chapter 6. But he also knew real slaves. There were members in his congregations that were slaves. And Don mentioned at the beginning of our podcast that you're working on a commentary that includes Colossians and Philemon, where there we have real slavery mentioned. And in this particular moment in our country's history where we are convulsing over the terrible events that have happened that are racially charged, what are some of the words of grace that you think

can come from Romans or Colossians and Philemon, especially Colossians and Philemon who have been those texts have been used to validate the institution of slavery, how instead should be seeing those?

Dr. Joey Dodson:

Yeah. And can I bring in Ephesians as well since Ephesians and Colossians are kind of a twin letter, but yeah, I really think that and let me just kind of say this, I am a white male. And so when we talk about the racism that's out there and all the things that are happening with Floyd and Arbery and so on and so forth, I need to be listening more than I am speaking to borrow from James. I need to be quick to listen and slow to speak. I realize that I am trying to grasp this and understand, but I think that the biggest blame of what's happening in Minneapolis, the biggest blame of what's happening in Seattle, the biggest blame what's happening in Atlanta doesn't fall on the President. It doesn't fall on the governments. Instead it falls on the church. I think if we want to ask, why is this happening? We need to look in our own reflection because if we understand Ephesians, if we understand Colossians, we would understand that the Gospel is not just about God's saving individuals from hell. It's not just God for giving us our sins, but the full world Gospel is tearing down the walls of racism, insert Ephesians chapter 2, the baptismal formula to bring in Galatians and Colossians.

Paul's going to repeat this in Colossians 3. Is in Christ there's no longer a slave nor free, Greek nor Jew, black nor white. And Christ came to tear down those walls of racism to take those far and near that were hostile to one another's who have been conformed to the pattern of the world and the racism and the hatred and the hostility, and to bring them together in the one person Jesus Christ. And because I think we, as a church have only preached the half of the Gospel, to borrow from 1 Theologian. We we've kind of inoculated America with a diet version of the gospel with the half Gospel. So that then now they're immune to this full Gospel. And so if we, as a church, can't tear down those walls of racism with the power of the Holy Spirit, by the blood of Jesus Christ with the great Holy scriptures that we have, how do we expect our nation ever to do so? And so I think that Paul is very subversive in Colossians, especially we take in, we look at his habits and in his heart, I think for Paul he doesn't have a file yet on how to eradicate slavery that's as you know, and you've written on this much more than I have. But he does understand that the power of the Gospel and working towards the Perusia of Jesus Christ.

And so and believe me, I think you see Paul very, very subversive. I think he's saying, Hey, let him go, let him go, let him go. I'm your daddy. I, you know, I brought you into this world. I'll take you out as what my father used to say. And so when Paul is talking about, and this to Philemon, he is not just saying this to Philemon, but he's saying it to the whole church so they can ease drop. And so I think Paul is putting some pressure on Philemon to do that. But I think if we understand that if we read Ephesians and Colossians, Paul talks about how the fullness of God dwells in Jesus Christ, the fullness of the deity dwells in Jesus Christ. And guess what the fullness of Jesus Christ dwells within the church. And that is this polychromatic, it's not just individuals, not just white people. It's not

just black people. It's not just Asians or Hispanics, instead, it's this beautiful mosaic that God then takes from the church and he puts it in front of the face of the cosmological demonic powers and says, boo-yah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, Hey goodbye. And so as long as in America, we have white people worshipping white people, Asians to Asians, blacks with blacks, Hispanics with Hispanics, we're testifying to the world that the color of our skin unites us more than the blood of Jesus Christ. And so I think, I don't know the answers to the laws that we need to pass and how, how to do this, but I do know that for the church we have to get back to Paul's gospel that is to tear down these walls of racism and the hate and the backbiting that is connected.

Dr. Don Payne: I'm really glad you used that word subversive. That that word was kind of floating around in my mind already. And that's such an important word right now, because if we pick up on something else, you just said, Joey, if Christians, if the church thinks that our only recourse is wholesale overthrow of the problem, wholesale scrape and rebuild of what's wrong, we're going to end up with a lot of hopelessness. But Paul had lots of hope because, well, to your point, he may not have known how to fix that whole problem all at once, but he was constantly subversive. And I wonder whether we underestimate the power of Gospel subversion, which is living out the Gospel in all kinds of big and little ways, whatever ways we can, but, you know, by definition, subversive is a sort of under the waterline work that goes sometimes unnoticed, but very powerful, nonetheless.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: And I think it's going to cost something to those who have not felt uncomfortable so far. And if I can pull on Romans a bit, you know, we charge ahead enrollments and it's starts to get pretty heavy. Then we're in chapter 7 and then chapter 8 and, Oh, my word, then we hit 9 through 11 and it just exhausted. So by the time we get to chapter 12, where we are called to be living sacrifices, we're exhausted. And we don't really pay that much attention to chapter 13, well, maybe you know, about government and stuff, but then 14, there's so much meat in that about how we are to relate to each other. I know you're planning to write a commentary on Romans. Talk to us a little bit about the importance of chapter 14 in the book of Romans.

Dr. Joey Dodson: Very good. Well, let me start where you started with the Romans 12. Often we get past Romans 9 through 11. We get to end the Romans 11 and Paul has this litany of these great scriptures. And what is that litany about? It's about God bringing together reconciling Jews and Gentiles. And so, because we have chapters, we miss that when Paul says that, therefore, as we teach our students, we look and see what is there for. It sounds cheesy, but it helps our students to look back in view of God's mercy. What does that mercy? It's God bringing together Jews and Gentiles who had so much hostility and hatred animosity between them. And he says, therefore, in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies plural as a living sacrifice, singular. This is your spiritual act of worship. And so when Paul says your body, he's saying Jews and Gentiles bodies as believers coming together as one living sacrifice. And if I can paraphrase the Greek, Paul says, God says that, ah, that smalls most good to him when these

who far, when these racial divisions are brought together, and this is what that spiritual act of worship looks like. This is one thing that Christ was doing to bring that on. And so one of our friends that Lynn and I have in common is Scott McKnight and he has a book, a reading Romans backwards, fantastic book.

We use it as a textbook here, and he says often we need to start with Romans 14 through 16, because this is where Paul is leading. And so we go to Romans, we're looking at Paul, the theologian, cause there's so much great theology there. We go to Romans and we see Paul as the missionary, he's writing this cause he wants God to send him to Spain. He wants the Romans to send him to Spain. We look at Paul as, you know, the salvation history, trying to work out the problems of the Jews or the apologists, but it's kind of nice. Well actually, Paul's a pastor here. Paul's writing these things. He does Romans 1 through 11 because there's racial division inside of the church. And for Paul, it's not just enrollments. We can go back to Galatians. If you remember, Paul has such a swagger in Galatians 1, man, the Gospel note, I didn't get the Gospel for anybody, but Jesus Christ and him alone. This is my gospel. God's going to judge the entire world by my Gospel. And then he says, but then I went to James and Peter and I, I submitted my Gospel to them unless I run my race in vain. And Lynn, you may have a different interpretation of this, but that running that race in vain.

I think for Paul, even though his Gospel is divine and had been revealed to him by Jesus Christ, if his Gospel didn't lead to the unity of the Jews and the Gentile believers, then he felt like he was running his race in vain. And so same thing with Romans, no matter how great his gospel is, no matter how he deals with Romans 7 and these great, the grades that way to live a Christian life. It doesn't not, if it leads to division and the Roman churches among racial lines and he has run his race in vain. And so yeah, I think I agree with Scott McKnight that if we truly want to understand where Paul's, if we want to begin with the end in mind, that helps us see Romans in a whole new life. And again, in my background where we didn't think about other cultures, unless we were going to overseas, we didn't really concern ourselves with them, but, and they would just be meeting and here I'm using us and them to see that's terrible pronouns. But my brothers and sisters from other cultures, they weren't involved our church because it was about saving souls rather than bringing all the peoples of Christ together, every tongue, every tribe, every nation and worship them like we see in revelation.

Dr. Don Payne:

This is such, this is an example, Joey of how scholarship preaches the Gospel, which is what it ought to be. I love listening to you and your passion for all of this. And you know, how many times I'll ask this rhetorically, how many times do people listen to scholarly lectures and want to either get on their knees or stand up and praise the Lord? And this is, this is scholarship that will do that. So good on your brother. What do you think are some of the big issues that the hot issues, the most important issues going on right now in New Testament studies overall?

Dr. Joey Dodson:

And, you know, it's funny, I'm speaking because Lynn is she's so much more ahead of me in these areas. And so I feel bad. I'm like, are you sure you want to hear from me? You should be listening to my boss, but for me and Lynn, please feel free to correct or add to this or whatever. But one of the greatest things about my life is that I was born in the time where it was one of the most significant Paul line watershed events in the history of interpretation since probably Luther. And that was EP Sanders wrote Paul and Palestinian Judaism. And that kind of gave birth to the new perspective on Paul. And that's kind of been the King of the Hill for a long time. But John Barclay that I mentioned this the third time, I think he wrote a book this past I guess three, about five years ago now that basically says we had misunderstood the word grace. And we, it's almost like in the princess bride, we have foster kids in our home right now, and I introduced them to the princess bride last night. I feel like that's a win as a foster parent, but, you know, we keep using that word. It doesn't mean what we think it means. And so, whereas EP Sanders comes and says, Hey, in contrast what Luther says that Luther comes and says, the Judaism was a legalistic. It was about the law, but Christianity was about grace. And he goes back and looks at all that second simple literature that Lynn and I was talking about. And it says there's grace everywhere. And John Barclay. And that's kind of been, again, what's been the MO of New Testament scholarship since then, but John Barclay comes and says true, true, true, true. Yeah. Yeah. There is grace all over Judaism, but they're defining grace, Cara's gift, in a different way than Paul is defining it. And what's interesting according to Barclay and I'm holy on board, is that the way that the Jews quote unquote, that the Jewish literature was defining grace and Paul was defining grace is radically different than the way we are defining grace that

Dr. Don Payne:

You're talking about his book, Paul and the Gift?

Dr. Joey Dodson:

Paul and the Gift. Right, exactly. Yeah. And he says that grace, whereas we kind of preach it as unconditional. There's no strings attached that that's kind of a, that's been birthed in the enlightenment [inaudible]. But if we actually go back to the first century when Paul is writing with these Jews and he even mentioned Seneca that Paul is not going to say that grace is unconditional, but that it's unconditioned. You radically can't do anything to accept grace, but once you accept grace, there are these expectations that are tied. And so there are strings attached. And so that's been a huge boom that's been dropped in New Testament studies. And so that would be one and a similar to this is what we, now that we're trying to figure out what grace means, what does spade mean? What does pistis mean? And so we kind of take it as belief or maybe it's trust. And my friend EJ Gupta has a book out Paul and the Language of Faith and says, man, there's this entire spectrum that we have to understand what faith means and Scabbin McKnight and Matthew Bates have also kind of dropped this idea of it being allegiance rather than just trust. And so for any of our listeners that are involved in Twitter and especially the theological Twitters sphere, there's been quite the Rawkus of those and like the Gospel coalition over against McKnight and Bates who are going to say, Hey, we need to redefine what we mean by

[inaudible] because faith may not mean what we think it means once again, to borrow from the Princess Bride.

Dr. Lynn Cohick:

I think both of those books that you and those authors that you mentioned are opening our eyes to the reality of community that you've already talked about, Joey, with the idea that our salvation is not only is this, but it's not only that we personally have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and our personal sins are forgiven, but that we are now members of Christ's body like both happen at the same time. And so I think with Barclay's comments about Paul and the gift and how the condition, if you will, is relationship with God, that the gift in the ancient world was to bring people together, two people together, and that the obligation was not seen as a negative or didn't need to be seen as a negative, but rather was an opportunity that you got to know someone you were connected with someone, there was someone you could rely on. And I think that that allows for us to think about the corporate dimension of our of what Christ has done in a way that's consistent with how the ancients would have thought about it. And I think then with that, there also is within the New Testament an interest, a growing interest, I think in how these same questions can live out in the problems of our world. So we are seeing more about creation care, New Testament scholars are looking at, you know, how do we take the conversations in these letters or in the Gospels, in the book of acts and think about our world now, so that it's, whereas I think boy, even a generation or two ago, really the lens really were w what are the finer points of soteriology? How do we know we're saved? Now I think there's a sense in which this is a collection of letters. This is a book, the New Testament that going to actually help us with our politics, help us with our doing of our everyday life.

Dr. Don Payne:

A far deeper wealth than we might've even imagined. Hey, we're about out of time. But what are some of your top reflections on your first year at Denver Seminary? I mean, disregard the fact that the provost is listening and is the co-host here, but you've been here. It always is kind of interesting and helpful to see those of us who've been around for awhile to see ourselves and see our community from the eyes of someone who is relatively newer to it.

Dr. Joey Dodson:

Well, I mentioned earlier having learning the secret of contentment is when I came here and that has to do with even my office mate, next door my colleagues, my students. Yeah. And so it really, and I mentioned that, but it really genuine them that the people here are seeing just that great balance that they have between faith and scholarship. I think there are some places that you could go and get a lot of faith, but a little bit of scholarship. And there may be places you go get a lot of scholarship, a little bit of faith, but I think we're getting there. If we're not, we have the best balance of both of those, of any other Seminary that I know of. And so I'm happy to try to keep that balance where we're doing that scholarship that you talked about earlier that is preaching the Gospel, that when people see our scholarship they just want to end in the doxology that where similar, like Paul in Romans 16, where if your theology doesn't lead you to worship, then there's something wrong with it. And we want our students to think the hard questions. We don't want to just tell them what

to think, but to teach them how to think so they can process. And as they go on and to build the kingdom of God and the churches. So, yeah, I'm very happy to be here. So I'm just hoping Lynn keeps me around for a long time.

Dr. Don Payne: Yeah. You're a great next door neighbor.

Dr. Lynn Cohick: You don't have anything to worry about jelly. I'm not sure about the other person on this podcast.

Dr. Don Payne: No, I'm getting too old to care. So, yeah. Hey, we've been interacting with our good friend and our New Testament professor Dr. Joey Dodson. Joey, we're so glad you've been able to spend time with us and look forward to what the Lord is going to do through your faith and your preaching and your teaching and your writing in all aspects of your ministry in the years to come just a privilege to be along for the ride. So this is Engage360 again. I mean, you know that this is a Denver Seminary, and we're always honored that you would take a little bit of time out of your week to be with us on this podcast, and hope you'll let us know if something you hear has been a benefit to you and how so. You can email us podcast@denverseminary.edu is our email address and on behalf of our entire production team and Dr. Lynn Cohick we want to thank you and hope that you'll join us again next week for another conversation. Take care.