

## Episode 2 - The Gospel

**Pastor Matt:** [00:00:07] Welcome to the Free Grace membership podcast, this is Episode 2 and we are talking about the Gospel and the word "gospel" actually means "good news" and when people ask me what our church is about - and I had this conversation a lot as a pastor, and especially in the early days when we were planting the church, people would ask me that - and I usually answer at a very basic level that our church is about the Gospel Community and Mission, and we'll be talking about each of those things in later episodes of this podcast. But right now we're going to talk about the Gospel and if you are connected at all with the Bible or with the church in any way - and you're serious about it - you're going to have some definitions some explanation of what "the gospel" is. The gospel is the message that tells us what we are saved from, what saves us, and what we are saved to; what our life looks like after we come to Christ.

**Pastor Matt:** [00:01:08] I'd like to read from First Corinthians chapter 15 verses 1 through 4 and I'd like you to open that if you need to pause this while you open your Bible, that's just fine. First Corinthians chapter 15 verses 1 through 4. "Now I would remind you brothers of the gospel I preached to you which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved. If you hold fast to the word I preached to you unless you believed in vain for I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures."

[00:01:57] And this is a passage that's very important and one that I would love every person in our church to be very familiar with. And the reason why is it's one of the best summaries of the gospel in the New Testament. There are a great many ways to explain "the gospel" and this is just one of them and it's a very good one and it's very easy to understand, and I'm going to point out several things about this before we actually look at the content of what the gospel is. I think it's significant that Paul here says that "the gospel is a message". He talks about first of all so you know in verse one he says "I would remind you brothers of the gospel that I preached to you". That's what this section is about. It's about the gospel and he says that the gospel is the word - that's in verse 2 - the word that he preached to them. So it is a message in words. And that's very

important. Also this gospel is something that "is of first importance" according to verse 3. I think the whole Bible is important.

**Pastor Matt:** [00:02:57] I think a lot of things that we talk about that have importance to various parts of our life but they're all not equally important. The most important thing of all, in all of scripture, is the gospel. This is what Paul says "it's of first importance". And so we want to reflect that in our church and in the way we believe. The Gospel focuses around what Jesus did, he died for our sins, and he rose from the dead. He did this to save us from our sins and that's a very important part of the Gospel. We were dirty. We were corrupt. We are sinful and our sin has consequences with God, and Jesus died to deal with that to take the punishment for our sins, to remove our guilt, to purchase forgiveness and there's a whole bunch more. It is for our sins that Jesus died and the Gospel is something that addresses our sin problem. And that's very important. The death and resurrection of Jesus is actually part of a big story which includes his whole life and the whole story of scripture. Sometimes, when I'm explaining the gospel to people I like to put it this way, "the whole story of scripture and of the Gospel is like a play with four different acts; The first act was creation in which God made everything good. The second is the fall which deals with our moral failure, our sinning and rebelling and wandering away from God. The third is redemption, which is how we get put back together. Our salvation and then restoration is what it's going to look like when it's all said and done. Jesus's death and resurrection fits in to that big story and it's important to note that Free Grace Church, as with almost all Christians throughout history, we believe this story is true; that Jesus's death and resurrection and all that it means that it was historical. It's not just a myth. It's not just a great inspiring story. It actually happened and God was at work doing this for our salvation. Now this is very important because - especially in the American church - but really throughout history there are temptations to have all these other things come in and take the place of the Biblical Gospel. And we don't want anything to get in the way of that. Now one of the most common things that gets in the way of the gospel is the idea of "works" and what we might call "religion". And I mean that in the bad sense sometimes the word "religion" is just a fine word that talks about our faith. I don't mean in that sense I mean, "religion" in the sense of our work to try to satisfy and please God, sort of a self salvation project, that's very common. It's very common in America, it's very common in the way that we think.

**Pastor Matt:** [00:05:57] And Tim Keller has done a good job of explaining the Gospel and the difference between the Gospel versus works salvation. Work salvation or religion says "I obey, therefore I am accepted." Christianity and the gospel says, "I am accepted with God because of what Christ has done and therefore I obey", the order is very very important. And the gospel says God has done everything for us to be forgiven and adopted and accepted through the work of Jesus and we trust Him and by grace we are saved. And then our lives change because of that. Now there are all kinds of false modern ideas of the Gospel and they're pretty tricky. Some of them when you listen to them they sound very attractive and you'll hear this in Christian radio when people are playing sermons or in various churches or even in the songs that are sometimes sung and they're not the same as the Biblical gospel. So for instance "self-help". The gospel is not a self-help project in which God helps you. He kind of coaches you to overcome the difficult problems of your life so that you can be successful. The gospel is not primarily about psychological health or learning to love yourself. Though, like with many of these things there are little implications of all that; God does renew our minds but the gospel is not about that in the first place. One of the things that is a substitute gospel a false gospel, is the "prosperity gospel" and that is the idea that God wants you to be healthy and rich and have good relationships and that if you just have enough faith and you give enough money that all of that will happen. That's not the gospel. The gospel is not about political change or cultural change, although the gospel has cultural implications to be sure. It's not about the health of our social relationships in the first place. All of those are "effects" all of those are things that work out in our lives slowly over time. But the gospel itself is not any of those things. It's not a moral code for good living. The Ten Commandments are amazing. They are wonderful. They help us to understand right and wrong. But the Gospel is not, that if we keep the Ten Commandments well enough, that if we love our neighbors and if we love God that He will bless us. We have a very moralistic view in America of Christianity that does not reflect the cross. If Jesus was just a good moral teacher, there's no need for the cross. The cross is because we cannot keep the rules. That's our problem. We know the rules and we don't keep them. We know we're supposed to love our neighbor and we don't.

**Pastor Matt:** [00:08:49] And so thank God, hallelujah!, that He loved us anyway and He demonstrated that love at the cross with Jesus dying for us. So sometimes I'll talk to people and if I don't know them I'll ask them if they're a believer, if they're a Christian. Other people have used this illustration and I think it's very profound. When I ask

someone if they're a Christian, and if the answer to that is "I'm trying". It shows that they don't know the gospel, because the gospel is not "your bad, try harder". Then we're in trouble. The gospel is that we are accepted because of what Jesus has done on our behalf and now we live as sons and daughters.

[00:09:37] Well, for each of these episodes I'd like to say "so what?". So here's a couple little things that help to answer why this is important. First, faith in the Gospel faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus for our sins, is a prerequisite. It is of first importance for being a Christian and also for becoming a member at Free Grace Church. We want to make sure that every single person actually understands what the gospel is and believes that and knows that their acceptance with God is based on the work of Jesus. And that's significant because becoming a church member is not a way to win favor with God.

**Pastor Matt:** [00:10:15] Anybody who wants to get baptized or become a church member because they think that God will forgive them or accept them because of that, is mistaken. The work has already been done in Jesus. Also, the gospel is not just the ABCs of Christianity. Sometimes when we say "gospel" what we mean is a basic presentation of the death of Jesus that we would tell an unbeliever so that they could become a Christian. Now, we certainly should be sharing the gospel but the Gospel is much more than just the Christianity 101 class. It's actually the entire story of scripture and we don't move past it and just to really explain this from this passage, we never are finished talking about the gospel. We talk about it in different ways. We talk about it in ways that are not just basic ways that are more advanced, but we never stop talking about it. We see this because Paul says "I need to remind you of this Gospel", and we need to be reminded of it constantly. He also says the gospel, the same Gospel that we received, is the gospel in which we stand. So our day to day life in Christ is based on clinging to the Gospel. In fact, he uses this very interesting phrase, he says the gospel is "that message by which you are being saved".

**Pastor Matt:** [00:11:33] So if you believe in Jesus, you've been saved, but there's this ongoing work of redemption and growth and sanctification in our life. And it happens by believing the gospel. He also says that we are supposed to "hold fast the gospel" we don't let it go. We're like a dog with a bone. We will not let it go.

**Pastor Matt:** [00:11:54] That's how important the Gospel is and that's why at Free Grace Church, we constantly focus on this. My hope and our practice is every single Sunday when we open God's word to explain it, in some way we're going to come back to the gospel. And we take the Lord's Supper every Sunday because it is the ultimate expression of the Gospel. And this is basically one of the things that's not just an act of obedience for us but it's actually very helpful because the areas in which we struggle are answered by the Gospel and I'll just give you one example from my own life. I struggle with being anxious and sometimes my anxiety comes from the fact that I'm not trusting that God is gracious or that he's going to take care of me. When I do that, I am forgetting the gospel, I'm forgetting what God has already done. I'm forgetting what he has promised to do in Jesus. It is the message of His grace and His goodness that sustains me. And so in every way we believe that the Gospel not only saves us in the beginning but it continues to help us grow.

**Pastor Matt:** [00:13:02] I look forward to talking to you about the gospel and about what it means. Thanks for listening!