

Episode 3 - Repentance and Baptism

Pastor Matt: [00:00:06] Hello, welcome to the Free Grace Church membership podcast, this is Episode 3. In this episode we're going to be talking about our faith in Jesus and what that means and specifically we're going to be talking about repentance and baptism. Now if you have the booklet that comes along with our membership class, on the version that I have - that may change in the future - it's on page 4, but it's the part that says "statement of faith" and by this we don't mean our doctrine, but statement of our personal faith in Jesus and I'm just going to read, there's four or five bullets there and I'm going to read that to you and then we'll take a little time to unpack it. So for a person to be a member at Free Grace Church, they are going to have to express that they have faith in Jesus and that that faith is working out in their life.

Pastor Matt: [00:00:53] So here's from the actual church covenant. "I am a Christian, saved from the eternal wrath of God by faith in Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior through his death and resurrection by which I am assured of eternal life". There's some scriptures there and I would encourage you to read those as you have time.

Pastor Matt: [00:01:13] The second bullet, "I believe Jesus Christ is exactly who he claimed to be, the Divine Son of God".

Pastor Matt: [00:01:29] Bullet number three, "I have repented of my sins and have been made a new creation in Christ."

Pastor Matt: [00:01:37] And finally "In obedience to scripture, I have been baptized to personally identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and to publicly demonstrate my commitment as a disciple of Jesus."

Pastor Matt: [00:01:50] So there's a lot in there. We've already talked about the gospel in a previous episode. And so one of the things we want to know is, "Do you really believe the gospel? Do you really believe Jesus?" And then the two things that come out of that that we're going to spend most of our time on in this episode, are baptism and repentance and we'll start with repentance first because that usually comes first.

Pastor Matt: [00:02:09] These two things - baptism and repentance - are really the beginning signs of a real faith and a real desire to follow Jesus. The first is, "Repentance". Repentance is not the gospel by the way - it's not if we do a good enough job repenting that God will accept us - but repentance is very important. Repentance is our response to hearing the Gospel. We believe the gospel and then because we believe we turn - from our sins, we turn from all the other things that we trust, all the other masters that we serve - back to Jesus. Now this is Biblical and I want to point out several things to you. The Gospel of Matthew chapter 3 verses 1 and 2 say this, "In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." That was John's first message and then in Matthew chapter 4 we read that, Jesus "from that time began to preach saying, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." So the message of repentance was the first message that Jesus began to preach and repentance - literally the word means - to change your mind. And practically that means we change the way we think and therefore we change the way we live. We see repentance in many other places. For instance in the Book of Acts chapter 17. The Apostle Paul is preaching to the Greeks at the Areopagus.

Pastor Matt: [00:03:51] And he says in verse 30, "The times of ignorance God overlooked but now he commands all people everywhere to repent." There's no one that is excepted from the need to repent. It is for Jews it is for gentiles. It is for everyone who is going to follow Jesus. Everyone needs to repent because everyone is a sinner.

Pastor Matt: [00:04:15] Also, we see in the Book of Acts chapter 3 Verse 19, the preaching of the Apostles. It says this, "Repent therefore and turn back that your sins may be blotted out." There's a connection between repentance and turning back in that verse. In fact when we look at all of what scripture says about repentance, the word "turning" is a really good illustration. "Turn back". The essence of repentance is to turn from something to something. Biblically, it means we turn from our sins and we turn back, we turn and we return to God. So turning from our sins is a key part of repentance and that means that there is some degree of sorrow. We are grieved by the bad things that we have said and done and by the things that we have failed to do that were the right things. We confess our sins to God and often to one another we admit that the things that we did are wrong.

Pastor Matt: [00:05:19] We don't make excuses for them. We don't blame them on our parents or on our psychology or anything else we say, "Lord I'm a sinner and I did that." And we confess our intent not to continue in that. We don't want to keep going back. Though it's true we may struggle - and Christians do struggle throughout our life - it is not our intent, our intent is to turn away from those bad patterns. Turning from sin is not enough. Repentance in scripture is more than just making a resolution. You know for instance, if you if you eat too much, you might say, "Well I'm going to stop doing that, I'm not going to I'm not gonna eat so many Twinkies, I'm not going to be a glutton." Well that's good. But if you stop there that's not Biblical repentance. Biblical repentance means we turn from our sins back to God, we return to Jesus and we see this in Acts chapter 20 verse 21.

Pastor Matt: [00:06:16] Also Paul here the Apostle is talking and he's actually talking to a bunch of elders at the church of Ephesus and in verse 20 he says, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you in public and from house to house testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Pastor Matt: [00:06:44] We see a couple of things there. The first is that repentance is profitable it's actually good for us it's good for Christians to hear about this and to practice this. Also that repentance is tied to our faith. Faith and repentance go together. True repentance happens when we believe, it is the expression that we believe in God to turn away from everything that would take us away from Him. And it's connected toward our faith so really important points in Acts Chapter 20 versus 20 and 21.

Pastor Matt: [00:07:14] Repentance means we leave our sin behind and we pursue and follow Jesus and new ways of living. Now I already said this - doesn't mean we do it perfectly - but it means that our desire is to submit to Christ in everything. And this is really difficult. In fact this is so difficult that we can't do it on our own. We need the grace of God to give us strength to repent. Biblical repentance and the kind that we're talking about and the kind that we want to express in church membership says, "We submit our whole lives to Jesus" and so that means our sexuality, our finances - what we do with our money - whether we're greedy, whether we're materialistic person, our relationships, our calendar and how we spend our time, our jobs. Really everything comes under the lordship of Christ when it comes to repentance. That means that there's no areas where

we say, "I'm going to do whatever I want no matter what Jesus says" and repentance involves our actions.

Pastor Matt: [00:08:23] When we do bad things we turn away from those and we begin to follow Jesus and replace those with patterns of obedience. Also, repentance involves our words and the things that we say and our thoughts and the more mature you get as a Christian, very often you find yourself really spending a lot of time repenting of your thoughts; of the ungrateful things, the unloving things, the bitterness, the resentment, the unbelief that is in our hearts. And so repentance involves all of those things. Now repentance is not something we do once. Certainly there is a moment, a single moment in becoming a Christian when we repent. But it's not something we do once. It is the whole life of a Christian and so one of the things I want to talk about with the people in our church - and people who want to become our church - is this, "what does repentance look like for you? How are you walking out a life of repentance?"

Pastor Matt: [00:09:19] The second thing on this podcast is baptism.

Pastor Matt: [00:09:22] Now baptism is one way and a very important way that Jesus has commanded us to follow him and to publicly profess our faith and we see this in the book of Matthew Chapter 28 verses 18 through 30. This passage is called The Great Commission. It says, "Jesus came and said to the apostles, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations," - that that term disciple there is a synonym for Christian - "make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold I am with you always to the end of the age".

Pastor Matt: [00:10:12] So baptism is something that is commanded by Jesus and it's associated with becoming a follower or a disciple of his. And it's connected to repentance, which is when we begin to observe the things that he has commanded us, so that's all a part of what Jesus commands us and it is throughout all of scripture. There's a great many passages we can look at but another one is a passage that we looked at in a previous episode and that's Acts Chapter 2 Verse 41.

Pastor Matt: [00:10:42] So "Those who received his word"- the people that believed what the apostle Peter said about the death and resurrection of Jesus, that was what he was preaching - "Those who received his word were baptized."

Pastor Matt: [00:10:54] They went down into the water with the disciples they were put through this ceremonial rite of being baptized, of going down into the water and coming back up. "And there were added that day about three thousand souls." Now "baptism" is a word that means "to immerse" and it was a form of washing. It is symbolically something that communicates to us what God is doing to us, that God has washed our sins away and when we get baptized, we're confessing that we are dirty and sinful.

Pastor Matt: [00:11:29] And also we're confessing that we believe the grace of God cleanses us, that what God does through Jesus is enough to clean us and to cleanse us. The other thing that we're not going to take time to do is spoken of in the covenant document and that is that baptism is a way that we associate with the death and resurrection of Jesus. And so in baptism we symbolically die with Christ and then we are raised to a new life. And that new life is a life of repentance and walking with Jesus in faith.

Pastor Matt: [00:12:02] If you'd like to join Free Grace Church, one of the things we're going to talk about, is baptism. Have you been baptized? We would love to hear the story of your baptism if you are already a believer and have been baptized, and if you are not, we would love to talk to you about how you can follow Jesus in baptism. Thank you for listening. Please write down any questions that you might have about repentance and baptism. We would love to talk about these with you, thanks.