

Because of Grace

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[0 : 00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweep from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. And as always, if you'd like to learn a little more about us as a church, you can go to FCCGreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, today I'm excited to get into the Word of God, but most of all, let the Word get into us and transform these hearts. Now, we are in the third week of our series over the book of Philippians called Rejoice.

If you want to turn to Philippians chapter 2 today, that would be wonderful. And the title of the message today is Because of Grace. Now, there was a New Yorker and his family who had always lived in the big city, and they did the hustle and bustle for decades.

And yet, as he's approaching 60, still in great health, he had been very successful. He had all the money and assets to retire, live extremely comfortable. We're talking multimillionaire.

So one day, he and his wife made a big decision. They said, we're done. We are done with the hectic lifestyle of New York City. We don't have to do this anymore, and we're not.

[1 : 12] So they went out west and found a ranch to buy, and they built this beautiful place, complete with all the barns, all the outbuildings that they'd ever need.

Well, one day, a good friend from New York came to visit. This was maybe within that first year. And he was getting the grand tour when he asked about the ranch's name.

He said, you know, every good ranch has to have a name. What's your name? And that's when the owner said, well, I wanted it to be Bar J. Bar J, Susie Q, Flying W, Lazy Y Ranch.

And that's when the friend said, but if this is a ranch, where are all the cattle at? And he said, well, unfortunately, they didn't survive the branding.

See, whether you thought that was a good joke or not, maybe it wasn't. Can I just suggest that a lot of churches don't survive for the same reason? In one sense, we can go around branding each other with our own opinions and preferences instead of keeping the main thing the main thing.

[2 : 23] You know, our vision statement here, Jesus first. And listen, church hurt, you know this, it's a real thing. And I bet many of you, including all of your pastors, have experienced this in some painful ways.

In fact, the most conservative polls show that at least 3,000 to 5,000 pastors leave ministry every year. And about half of them leave because of church hurt, because of disunity.

And if that many pastors walk away, can you imagine the amount of church members who do the same? Absolutely heartbreaking. And yet one of the most loved theologians in history, A.W. Tozer, he put it like this.

He said, has it ever occurred to you that 100 pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow.

And that's a great analogy that points us to our standard found in Jesus Christ and his word. And I wouldn't be surprised if Tozer was studying Philippians 2 when he wrote those words, realizing how important unity is to living a life of joy.

[3 : 39] So welcome back to this series over this letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Philippi that he absolutely loved, that he helped to start years earlier.

And if you're not in the book of Philippians, it is so important that we learn how to navigate through our Bibles. So go ahead and start to get there, whether on your phone or if you have a paper copy of your Bible.

And if you're not familiar yet with the Bible, you've got to start somewhere. So you should have a table of contents right there in the front that can help you get towards the back of your Bible in the

New Testament to Philippians chapter 2.

And we're going to keep looking at what it means to be Christians who know how to rejoice in God's grace, how to walk in joy despite circumstances that may feel exhausting or difficult or just downright frustrating.

And let me just make something abundantly clear today. The staff and elders, and that includes me being both, we are not perfect examples of this. But just like you, we are striving every day to stay connected to the vine, to Jesus, and therefore walk in his joy more and more.

[4 : 49] So if you feel like you need help in this area, welcome to the club because it is a lifelong journey. And that's why we come today to worship him.

That's why we come, and one way we do that is by bowing our hearts to his word, growing deeper in our faith walk. Because Jesus is the perfect example of joy.

So let's start here in Philippians chapter 2, verse 1. And through the power of the Holy Spirit, here's what Paul says, therefore. And by the way, if you want to know what therefore means, it means find out what it is therefore.

So it usually points us back to a reality that we've already said in this book. So in this case, when it says therefore, it's pointing us back to Philippians 1.27 that says, whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

So Paul is saying, because I want to conduct myself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, he says, therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the spirit, if any tenderness and compassion.

[6 : 06] Now, each week, if you visit with us on a Sunday morning, we have an outline that we put in the bulletin that you can always follow along with. For you listening through the radio here, you can always go to the YouVersion, Y-O-U version Bible app.

It's a free download. You can get that. Go to the menu. Go to events. Go to First Christian Church of Greensburg. And you can see the outline that way. But here's the first thing I want you to see today.

And I just want to give you one sentence to kind of chew on and let God drive into our hearts. And it's this. Here's the first part of that sentence. Because of grace.

Because of grace. Now, isn't that a cool motto to live by? And when others ask, well, why don't you go get wasted or high to cope with and escape from the craziness and the stress of life?

You can answer, hey, because of grace. Well, why do you love, respect, and submit to your spouse instead of complaining about them like everybody else at work?

[7 : 12] Because of grace. How do you stay strong, walking in joy, even though your life has been incredibly hard? Because of grace. How can you forgive that person who hurt you so severely?

Because of grace. Why don't you care about having the best house and the cars and the vacations and clothes, etc.? But instead, you are generous to tithe back to your church and give offerings to all these different Christian causes.

And your answer is just the same. Because of grace. See, there's an old story of when Alexander the Great was conquering much of the known world. They had just been victorious in battle when some high-ranking officers came dragging this regular soldier, dragging him, throwing him down at Alexander's feet.

And they said, sir, this man cowered in fear and he abandoned us in the heat of battle. The man was trembling in fear because he knew they didn't play around with this kind of stuff and they might put him to death.

And so the great and fearless general, who had never ran from a fight in his life, looked this guy in the eye and he said, is this true? And the man is like, yes, sir.

[8 : 30] I'm sorry. And he said, well, tell me your name, soldier. And he said, Alexander, sir. And he said, excuse me, my name is also Alexander.

And shocked that they shared the same name, the great leader then responded to him and said, either change your name or change your behavior. See, Paul starts off this passage with four, what we're calling if statements that we just read.

Okay. And if you understand the boring grammatical structure of this sentence, and listen, I had to study this stuff for three years in Bible college and it's still Greek to me. But Paul uses what's called here as a first class conditional clause.

Say what? Yeah, exactly. But here's what that means. If this condition is true, and then there's the rhetorical part of, and it is then dot, dot, dot.

Now we're going to get to the then dot, dot, dot here in the next verse, but let's focus on this. Okay, if this condition is true with the assumption that it is, because he's writing to followers of Jesus, whose lives have been changed.

[9 : 42] So four statements here in verse one. The first one says, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ. So Paul is saying, if you're a child of the King who has been redeemed by the blood of Christ through your repentance and baptism into him through faith, if you've been forgiven of every sin, if you've been filled with the Holy Spirit, experiencing his saving grace, if you are his and he is yours and you are, he reminds them, rejoice.

Grace. And then Paul goes on from saving grace that he just talked about. If you are saved and you can rejoice in that fact to now talking about sustaining grace.

He says, if you have any comfort from his love. Now, I don't know about you, but I think life can be incredibly hard sometimes. Understatement of the month, right? And there are times whether it's my own pride that gets me in trouble or even something in my life that I had no control over.

There are times where I need the Lord to comfort me in his love. Minister to my heart. Meet me in my struggles. I need Jehovah Rohi, the Lord who is my shepherd.

I need Jehovah Rapha, the Lord who heals and restores. I need Jehovah Shalom, who is my peace when life is so chaotic. And Paul says, you have his love in your life comforting you.

[11 : 14] And it's evident. And then 30 says, if any common sharing in the spirit. Now, we've talked about this a lot in the last couple of weeks, so I won't dwell here for long.

But it's this idea of koinonia, again, that means partnership or fellowship. That by the power of the Holy Spirit, God living inside of you, you are in partnership with other believers.

You have a support system that all of us need in this life. And then fourth, if any tenderness and compassion. These are both fruits that God wants to bring into our lives.

And this church is bearing the fruit of their salvation. They truly care about one another in the church. And even outside of it, approaching them with tenderness and compassion because those things have been shown to us.

So because of grace. So what he's saying is, hey, that's your story. That's my story. And if it's not yet, let's talk about that.

[12 : 20] Please give me a call. I'd love to have that gospel conversation with you. Because of grace. That's our motivation. And then in 2 Corinthians 5.17, it says it better than I ever could.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation, that's what we are in Jesus, the new creation has come. The old has gone and the new is here.

So if you're walking in Christ's saving grace and his sustaining grace in partnership with his church, the way he designed you to, and experiencing the fruit of that salvation, then dot, dot, dot, let's look at the next part of that sentence.

So because of grace, I can walk in unity. Now let's read verse 1 again and then we'll let it flow into verse 2. Here's what Paul says.

Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, now look at verse 2, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in Spirit and of one mind.

[13 : 34] So Paul shows his cards a little bit here and that's okay. There's obviously some kind of unity issue in the Philippian church where Satan has weaseled his way in through people who love Jesus.

His purpose, Satan, is to steal, kill, and destroy the things of God and that is in full effect as he wants the church to fail. He wants us to focus on us and our preferences.

He wants us to make church all about me instead of the mission-driven living body of Christ that we are called to be. You can see our biblical vision all throughout our building, right?

All throughout our buildings at every entrance, you have our biblical vision, mission, and values right by the doors. That's what drives every decision that we make here.

And imagine even today what Satan's doing in so many churches that are constantly fighting and backbiting with very little biblical submission to leadership that God has put in place.

[14:40] And when people come into the church and are there long enough to get a glimpse behind the curtain or behind the scenes, they're like, No, thank you, man. I don't want anything to do with that. I got all this chaos in my life at home.

Why would I want the church to be like that, that is supposed to be set apart, that is supposed to be different from the world? And you know what? They're exactly right. We should be different.

That unity should be there. And if you look at Philippians 4, 2 and 3, so we're jumping a little later into the book, to chapter 4, I think we discover the main issue that Paul is addressing, but the bigger issue is that it has to be true of everyone in the church.

He says this. He says, I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, Help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Ladies, could you imagine knowing that your name is in the Bible because you were bickering with another woman in the church? And yet Paul is so good at speaking truth and love, remembering how faithful these women have been as partners in the gospel.

[16:02] They're not wicked, evil ladies. He is celebrating that their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. And yet he's also saying, as my dad would say to me as a kid, Knock it off!

Because you know what? The unity of the church is that important to our mission to help people belong to, believe in, become like Jesus. See, at FCC, we are officially a non-denominational Christian church.

And what that means is that we are self-autonomous. No one outside of our own leadership that all live right here, no one tells us how to guide this body of believers.

We don't send money to some denominational headquarters. We don't have to support certain missions. We follow the Holy Spirit's leading according to our leadership right here at the church. However, we are a part of a movement of churches that is called a brotherhood that started in the early 1800s. Just like-minded congregations with similar doctrine that are all about going back to the Word of God to guide everything we do.

[17:13] And one of the founding statements of our movement says this, In matters of essentials, unity. So there are some things that the Bible makes abundantly clear that we're going to stand on and we will not budge.

We're going to have to unify or someone's going to have to move along. Okay? In matters of essentials, unity. In matters of opinion, liberty. So there are some biblical doctrines that wonderful Bible-believing people may see a little differently.

They're non-salvation issues. And in those things, we're going to show some liberty. But in all things, love. And isn't this what Paul is saying in verse 2?

He says, Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Unity matters as we are united on biblical teachings.

Not that you have to be a doormat that everybody can step on. Not that we should ever be a church that sweeps things under the rug and just lets unhealth fester and eventually explode.

[18:16] In fact, our elders are committed to the model of discipline we see in Matthew chapter 18, where we love the body of Christ enough to gently handle attitudes and behaviors that hurt our unity.

And we see a process that when grace has been shown, when repentance has been called for, if it doesn't happen and that behavior continues, then the last step is to remove that person.

And while that may sound really harsh that someone could be removed from fellowship or partnership in the church, wisdom prevails. And we realize it's because Jesus loves his church so much that he will call her to unity, protecting his precious bride.

And therefore, his church will be healthy. And what do healthy things do? What do healthy things do? Anything that's healthy. It grows, right? In spiritual maturity, in influence, in outreach, in joy. And we, as imperfect as we are, we are committed to being a biblically healthy church. And let's finish this sentence, okay? So, because of grace, I can walk in unity.

[19:28] Here's the last part. Trading my pride for humility. If I could boil it all down to one thing that causes all kinds of destruction among people.

If I could list one word that gets you and me both in trouble more than we'd like to admit. Five letters that have caused us to rebel against God, sinning against him, sinning against others, in need of a

savior, Jesus.

It is this. It is pride. And I really like how C.J. Mahaney, in his book, *All About Humility*, he said, Throughout our time on this earth and in every arena of our lives, you and I share a common greatest enemy.

Pride. Why does God hate pride so passionately? Here's why. Pride is when sinful human beings aspire to the status and position of God and refuse to acknowledge their dependence on him. Now, look at how the Lord says this through Paul back in Philippians 2, 3, and 4. He says, Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

[20 : 34] Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves. Not looking to your own interest, but each of you to the interest of others. So what's the larger category that selfishness and vain conceit fall under?

Exactly what we just said. Pride. This idea that it's all about me. And yet in Christ, we can trade that pride that comes so easily for you and me both.

And listen, every one of us struggle with this, okay? Let's just be real. But we can trade that in for a Christ-like humility when the Holy Spirit is living within us.

And if I can tie this in with what we've already talked about the last two weeks, if we are still creating that recipe of joy, a heart of rejoicing in Christ, no matter our circumstances, then here's some of the essential ingredients we've already talked about.

Thankfulness. Partnership with fellow believers. Discipleship. All that means is growth daily in Christ. Love that's tender, compassionate, and grounded in God's truth.

[21 : 40] And then today, we're going to throw in some more stuff into the mix. We're going to add in unity and Christ-like humility. Now, let me give you a good example of this from history.

Somewhere between 1890 and 1900, the well-known missionary Hudson Taylor was scheduled to speak at a large church in Melbourne, Australia.

The moderator of the service introduced him in eloquent and glowing terms. He told the large congregation all that Taylor had accomplished in China and then presented him as our illustrious guest.

Hudson Taylor, while appreciating the man's kind words, yet feeling really awkward, he just stood quietly for a moment. And then he opened his message this way.

He said, Dear friends, I am the little servant of an illustrious master. Samuel Bringle put it like this when he was experiencing a similar introduction.

He said, The axe cannot boast of the trees that it has cut down. It could do nothing but for the woodsman. He made it. He sharpened it. And he used it. Can I share a little secret with you about humility?

[22 : 54] God isn't looking for the most attractive, the silver-tongued speakers, the most intellectually astute, the natural-born leaders, or those with the least amount of baggage.

He is looking to use those humble enough to realize they are simply a lump of clay in the potter's hand. And without him, we surely fail.

Those who grasp, just like the prophet Isaiah did, that he was a man of unclean lips. And he lived among a people of unclean lips that were all sinners in need of a Savior.

And yet, when God's grace came upon him in Isaiah 6, verse 8, here's what the prophet said. Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send?

Who will go for us? And I said, Here am I. Send me. See, being used by God has nothing to do with your natural talent or abilities.

[23 : 53] In fact, it all comes from him anyways. So we can't take credit for it. And rejoicing in Christ has nothing to do with your countenance or the personality that you've been given.

It all comes from a heart of humility because of grace. It's all because of grace. So let me throw some faithful or some words out that are linked with a life of humility.

I already said faithfulness. How about surrender, love, compassion, forgiveness, selflessness? Or as Paul tells us in verse 4, a life not focused on my interests, but rather on lifting up and serving others for the glory of God.

But can we just be honest? Because God already knows. This is probably the hardest thing we will ever do. Trading our pride. Trading our selfishness.

Not selflessness, but selfishness that comes so easily. Trading them in for Christ-like humility. And maybe, listen, maybe you got this figured out.

[24 : 58] But I'm here to tell you, I don't. My mom would often say that I always had to get the last word in. I had to be right. And then you couple that with a competitive spirit and a heart that's always been on justice.

And yeah, my pride has gotten me in trouble more times than I'd like to admit. Anybody else just want to be honest? That's you too? See, probably one of the best and yet most simple definitions of humility came from C.S. Lewis, the great theologian.

He said, humility isn't thinking less of yourself, but it's thinking of yourself less. It's not this self-deprecating pity party that is just insecurity at its core and selfishness pretending to be humble. See, biblical humility comes with great confidence. Just not in yourself. Confidence in the power and the care of our risen Christ in our life.

Uptmost assurance rooted in Jesus' death on the cross to pay the price for my sins. And even his resurrection that defeated death offering us life everlasting.

[26 : 03] So, as we kind of come to the end of this message here today, I want to show you the last four verses in our passage that show the perfect example of humility.

And not only do we have his example, but we walk in communion with him every day as believers filled with the Holy Spirit. So, look at Philippians 2, starting in verse 5.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who being in the very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather, he, Jesus, made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, by being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

So, today the word challenges us to be filled with a grateful heart because of grace. And listen, because of grace, I can walk in unity, trading my pride for humility.

[27 : 13] I want you to say that phrase with me. Wherever you are, in your car, if you are at home, at work, wherever you are, I want you to say that phrase with me.

Let me say it again, then we'll say it together. Because of grace, I can walk in unity, trading my pride for humility. Are you ready? Because of grace, I can walk in unity, trading my pride for humility.

And church, unity and humility that are founded in the grace of God, those are the next two ingredients that allow us the ability to rejoice regardless of our circumstances.

Amen? All right, pray with me. Heavenly Father, we are so very grateful for the word of God that changes our lives. I just pray right now that you'll stir every word that was said today, that all came right from your word, that you will take your word and do exactly what you say, that it will not return void, but it will accomplish the purposes that you sent it out for.

And I thank you that that is true. And I pray it's true in every person listening to my voice right now, that you will do a great work in them. Father, teach us how to truly walk in your ways.

[28 : 31] Take our hearts. Make us more like Jesus, we pray. In his name, amen. Hey, real quick, simple invitation. If you have any questions about us as a church, about your faith walk, maybe you have some questions about what it means to follow Jesus, here's how you can reach us because we want to walk alongside you, okay?

Here it is. Once again, we are First Christian Church. My name is Ray Sweet. I'm the lead pastor at the church. You can call us at 812-663-8488.

That's 663-8488. Or you can email me at ray at FCCgreensburg.com. Hey, God bless you. Pray that you have an incredible week.