The Problem with Grace
by Bill Aumack

Now, we just finished our Daniel series, and I hope you enjoyed that series. I know I did. Sometimes when we look at Daniel, we get so wrapped up in the prophecies and the numbers and the dates that we miss the other messages. And the numbers and the dates, that's good stuff. We need to do that. But it's good to look at the other messages that are there, too. So I really enjoyed that. I hope you got something out of that.

And next week, we start the Book of Job. I'm going to be honest with you, I don't like the book of Job. Are we allowed to say that? Yeah? Man, it's a tough book. It's a tough book. And sometimes as Christians, we look at Job and we say, oh man, it's amazing how faithful he was and how that just, you know, it builds our faith and that's good. You know what my non-Christian friends say? God's a jerk. Look what he did to Job. Why do I wanna worship a God like that? And so that's some real struggle there. So we're gonna be looking at some of that stuff and I just hope that you will come out for that and that you join a small group. If you haven't signed up, there's sign up sheets out there. We certainly encourage you to do that. And we look forward to getting started with that. And maybe I'll like Job a little more at the end of this. I don't know if it's gonna be the top of the list. Matthew's a hard book to knock. Matthew's the best for me. But, so hard to knock that one off, but we'll see how that goes.

Today we're gonna talk about the problem with grace. And if I asked everyone today, how are we saved? What would you say? By grace, right? Some of them might say by faith, it's our faith in Jesus. Kind of the same thing, God's grace and we believe it. It's kind of two sides of the same coin. And we know that, we know we didn't earn it, it's given to us and that's good. But there's a problem with that. We're gonna get to that in a minute, but we gotta take a tour before we get to that, okay? So I just wanna let you know.

Before we get to that, have you ever noticed? That humans can be selfish... Anybody come across this? Am I the only one? No. We can be really selfish sometimes, right? Couple quick examples. Sometimes if you're at work and you have the choice to make a decision of what's good for work and the

company or what's good for you. This might be tempted to pick [the what's good for you hand]. This is why we don't trust big companies and big pharma. Because we think they're making decisions that are good for them and not good for us. This is why we don't trust politicians. Because they're making decisions that are good for them, but not good for us. Because we're selfish.

In relationships sometimes, we don't pick what's best for the relationship with our siblings, with our family members, with our spouse. This is why most marriages end, is because one or two of the people involved in the marriage are very selfish, and they make decisions based on what's best for them, not what's best for the both of us. And you may have heard people say things like, can you please move? You are in my way. A very polite way of being selfish. You're in MY way. When people pull out in front of you on the road, we get upset, why? Because you're slowing me down. I'm in a hurry, I'm important. Don't you know that? Right? And so just a lot of ways that our selfishness shows up.

And sometimes it even shows up at church. Not here, other churches. But have you ever heard somebody say something like, oh, I don't get fed there. Really? That's an impressive level of selfishness. You mean to tell me that whole church exists and the worship team came together and the pastor did his thing and all the people that prayed and let out and children's story and the Sabbath schools and we built this building so that you… could get fed. That's impressive. That's impressive. Why? [Excuse me. Sinuses this week and the allergies, so pray for me. Hopefully my voice will hold out the whole time.] But why do we come to worship? To worship God, not to feed me or feed you. Mature Christians are self-feeding. Sabbath school is a good time to get some feeding, but this is a time to worship God. And certainly we preach a sermon where we talk about things that try and help us grow. We try to lift each other up. We try to encourage each other. We try to build each other, but this is not the time for feeding. We say things like that.

The other one that I've heard through the years in various ways, and this one you could maybe argue I'm taking a little bit out of context, but I've heard people say, I need to work on me, you know, on my salvation, make sure I'm saved, and make sure I've got everything together. What about your kids?

What about your spouse? What about your neighbors? What about your parents? You know, what about all these other people? Now, in fairness, when I've heard those conversations or those comments, we're usually not talking about being selfish or not. But that's how selfishness works. It can be very subtle sometimes. And even when you're not thinking about being selfish, you say things that are selfish. I need to work on me.

Now, certainly there are times when we can all say, I need to work on me. I got some issues, right? But that should not be our primary thing. And I know that Philippians 2.12 says something. Let's turn there. Keep your Bibles open. We are going to be flipping around today, whether you're digital or paper. We don't discriminate here. Both are welcome. Philippians 2.12. kind of the last part of that says, continue to work out your what? Salvation with fear and trembling. We should work out our salvation. It's important. Make sure you are saved. Amen. Can you get anybody else saved? No. You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink, right? We can point, we can push, we can encourage, we can hold up signs, go this way, but you can't make them, right? So you have to work out your salvation, and that's good. But sometimes we take that out of context. We say, I gotta work out my salvation. But if you read this whole chapter, it's talking about having humility and serving one another. Look up a couple of verses to verses three and four, same chapter, verse three, it says, do nothing out of what? Selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather in humility, value others above yourself. Do not look to your own interest, but each of you to the interest of others. But see, we're so selfish, we skip all that and get down to the good part. I gotta work out my salvation. The rest of you, good luck. Right? It's not where I wanna be. That's not where I wanna be. Right? The implication here is that we should be helping others to work out their salvation too. Right? Not only be concerned about your salvation, but be concerned about others' salvation. We're helping others work out their salvation too. Because the Bible talks a lot more about us caring for other people than it talks about taking care of yourself. Right? We know this theme.

But that brings up a good point. If I'm supposed to work out my salvation, how do I get saved? We talked about it, it's grace. But let's look to Acts chapter two. This is Peter who is quoting the prophet Joel right here, Acts 2:21. He tells us exactly how to get saved. Acts 2:21, you there? Let's kind of read it together. I

know we all have different versions. That's okay. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How do you get saved? Calling on the name of the Lord, right? Simple enough. What's the best example of this we have in the Bible? Who did this? Peter says this right here, but who did this? Who calls on the name of the Lord to get saved? David. What about the thief on the cross, right? The thief on the cross, you know the story, right? Jesus is being crucified, he's got two thieves on either side of him. Now, let's talk about this for a second. Now the Romans didn't just crucify anybody. You had to work for this, okay? They didn't just walk around and go, hey you, on the cross, right? So this was a bad dude. Right? This was a bad dude. I don't know what he did. Armed robbery at Jerusalem Bank. Maybe he killed somebody in a robbery. Maybe he's a repeat offender and this was his 37th time he'd been caught. He's a lousy thief. I don't know. But he's on the cross. And the one thief starts to join in the crowd making fun of Jesus and the other thief says, hey man, this guy's innocent. We deserve this, but he's innocent. And he says, Jesus, remember me. And what does Jesus say? I tell you today, you will be with me in paradise.

Now let's think about that for a minute. And I wanna use a story that is not true, it's an illustration. That's not true, this is not how it works. But we see this all the time in our cartoons, right? There's the angel at the pearly gates, checking to make sure everybody can get in, right? Imagine the day that the thief on the cross shows up. So the angel stand there, the thief shows up. Angel says, what's your name? Thief gives him his name, he starts looking through the book. You're not in here. Thief goes, yeah, I believe that. And he goes, okay, well, what are you doing here? He said, well, they said I could come. Said you could come. Well, you know, like what church or temple did you go to? No, I didn't really do any of that. Well, um. What good deeds did you do? No, don't have much of that. And the angel says, well, this is, but they said you could come. Yeah, yeah, they said I could come. He goes, wait a minute, I got to go get my supervisor. So he scurries off, comes back with the supervisor angel. It repeats itself. Give me your name, not in the book. And he says, well, let's talk about this a little bit. They said, they said you could come. They said, I could come. And he says, well, do you know anything about justification? No, never heard of that. What about sanctification? You know about

sanctification? No, no, can't say I do. Well. Good grief, man, what are you doing here? And the thief says, well, the guy on the middle cross said, I could come. That's it! The guy on the middle cross said, I could come.

Call on the name of Jesus. That's it. It's that simple. Do you know that there's gonna be people in heaven that you look at and you're going, what are you doing here? because they called on the name of Jesus, right? Call on Jesus and be saved. It's that simple. Now we make it a lot more difficult, right?

And this story is repeated several times, famously in Acts 16, when Paul and Silas are in the prison, they've been beaten, they're in the stockades, the earthquake comes, the chains fall off all the prisoners, but nobody leaves. But the jailer doesn't know that he's gonna kill himself. And Paul said, don't kill yourself, we're all here. And he says, what must I do to be saved? And what does he say? Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. Same thing, same thing. It's repeated.

Turn with me to Ephesians chapter two, verses eight and nine. We're going through these kind of quickly, I know. I tried to put them in your notes so you could look them up later. Ephesians 2 verses 8 and 9. Give me an amen when you get there. For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it's a gift of God, not by works, so that none can boast. Right, we know this, we're saved by grace. Anybody here surprised by that? No.

You're probably looking at me like, Bill, we know this, why are you going through this? Because there's more to it than just grace. You can't just have the grace and that's it. Now there's a few people that happens to maybe, people like the thief on the cross, but I'd say they're the exception rather than the rule. Right? Let's look at Matthew 19, turn to Matthew 19, verses 16 to 22. This is the story of the rich young ruler, right? We've probably heard this story. Jesus talking to the people in the rich young ruler rules. And I imagine that he's got like the coolest chariot, right? It's lowered, 21 inch rims. a pair of Mustangs out front. Doesn't just have one Mustang, he's got two Mustangs. Right? He's got on the latest Air Jordan sandals, right? And he rolls up to Jesus and he says, what do I gotta do to be saved? And Jesus says, keep the commandments. And he says, doing that, what else do I gotta do? What does

Jesus tell him? Let's look at verse 21. If you want to be perfect, go sell your possessions and give to the poor. and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me." And when the young man heard this, he went away sad because he had great wealth.

Now, why did he need to sell everything? And is this a command to us that we all need to sell everything? Is Jesus saying, hey, if you want to be Christian, better live in the poor house. I don't think so. But how come this guy has to? because there was something he needed to do. And this should have been on your notes, but I'm gonna blame it on the cold medicine, okay? So right there next to that, write the word repent. He needed to repent because the wealth was more important than God. and he needed to repent of that. Of course, Matthew 3:2 records John the Baptist as saying, "'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.'" Matthew 4 tells us that after John the Baptist is put in prison, Jesus begins to preach, "'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'" Now, if Jesus is telling us we need to repent, You need to repent, right? And this is not my idea. Jesus says this, right?

Okay, let's turn to James. James is right after Hebrews, and it's before all those little books, right before Revelation. James chapter two. We're gonna read a section here. Verse 14 to 28. I like James because James is just so down to earth and practical. Just lays it out the way it should be. Verse 14, what good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, go in peace, keep warm and well-fed, but does nothing to help their physical needs, well, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself If it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But some of you will say, you have faith, I have deeds. Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe there is one God, good. Even demons believe that and shudder. You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did? When he offered his son Isaac on the altar, you see that his faith and his actions were working together and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness and he was called God's friend. You see that a person that is considered righteous by

what they do and not by faith alone. In the same way was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction. As a body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

You can't just say, I believe and continue on in your life. You've got to have some obedience, right? Most of us will remember a time in our lives when our parents told us to do some chores around the house. Most famously, wash the dishes. Who here likes washing dishes? Anybody? You are invited to my house anytime you want to come. Most of us don't like it, but we do it, right? Mom says.... but I don't want to wash the dishes, the stupid dishes, washing the dishes. Why don't we buy paper plates? I hate dishes. But we wash the dishes. Why? Because obedience matters. Obedience matters. I got news for you. Sometimes Jesus is gonna ask you to do something you don't want to do? It is not going to be fulfilling. It is not going to be grand and glorious. It's not going to be beautiful. It's going to be stick your hands in the dirty dishwasher, dishwater, slop all that stuff off the plates. No glory in it. And obedience matters.

Real quick survey through the Bible. Did Moses want to face Pharaoh? Did Noah want to spend 120 years building a boat? Did Abraham want to kill his son? Does David want to live in caves and run from the king? Does Daniel want to live 70 years in captivity serving other kings? We could go on and on and on. But obedience matters. Obedience matters. We have to do this. See, here in the West, we like to sprinkle Jesus glitter on everything. Say, oh, Jesus called me to it. It's gonna be great. It's not always gonna be great. It's not always going to be. Sometimes you got to clean the toilets. It's not always great. Right? That's what you've got to do.

And so that kind of brings us full circle, right? We believe in Jesus. We call on His name. We repent and turn away from the things of this world that we're supposed to. We start being obedient and doing good deeds. And then we'll hear somebody say something like, Well, God will accept me the way I am. God loves me just the way I am. If God didn't want me to be this way, He wouldn't have made me this way. Ever heard that? I've got news for you. God didn't make you that way. God made us perfect. Sin made you that way. Don't

ever let anybody tell you, God made me this way. No, he did not. God made us to be perfect, and we screwed it up. And sin has made us the way we are. God, even if you could say God made us that way, God wants you to be better, right? God wants you to improve. I look at my kids. I don't want my kids to be like me. I want my kids to be better than me. Right? Same thing with God. He wants them to be better than me. But when you look at these statements of God accepts me the way I am or God made me this way, these are the statements of a selfish person who doesn't wanna change.

And that brings us to the problem with grace. We are the problem with grace. We are, because we try and take advantage of it. We try and twist it to suit us. We know that we're messed up, and our life is living in the mud and the muck. But you know what? This is my mud and I kinda like it here. I'm comfortable here. I don't wanna change. That's the statements of a selfish person.

But there's good news and there's an easy way out. Okay? We always have to have good news, amen? Amen. Right? Do what Jesus says. Call on His name and be saved, and then follow His advice in Matthew 22. We're not gonna read it right now, but that's where He says, the greatest two commandments are Love God and love your neighbors yourself. I got to tell you something here. I don't know why this works. I cannot explain to you why this works, and that drives me mad. But when you start spending time worrying about somebody other than numero uno, Life gets better. I don't know why. But when I start listening to somebody else and sympathizing with somebody else and praying for somebody else and worried about somebody else, my life is better. My problems don't go away, they're still there, but all of a sudden, they're not mountains, they're molehills. Right? And when you spend the time to think about others, to worry about others, to be concerned about other people's salvation, you know what happens? Your life gets better. It's almost like God knows what he's doing when he tells us to do that. You imagine that? God knows what he's doing. And it's hard for us to imagine that because nothing in our society tells us to do this. Everything in our society says, look out for you, buddy. Make sure you're taking care of you, buddy. Make sure you're doing everything for you, right? Make sure you're taking care of your retirement. Make sure you're earning enough money so you can buy a toy hauler so you can go to the beach on the weekends and make sure you've got this and make

sure you've got that. Nothing in our society says, hey man, make sure your brother's doing okay. Make sure your neighbor with that stupid dog that barks all night is doing okay. That guy lives in my neighborhood too. Right? God's way is better. The solution is to be obedient and love other people. When you're obedient and you do it, even when you don't feel like it, when it's like washing dishes, you're like, oh, I don't wanna do this.

I saw a great cartoon with Snoopy the other day. And this was clearly not from Charles Schultz. Somebody has misused Snoopy, but you know, it is what it is. And Snoopy's standing there and he's like, can't go out there today. It's too peopley. Right? And there's days like that, right? It's too peoply out there. I'm just staying home. It'll be safer here. On days when it's too peopley out there, be obedient and love other people.

Have you guys seen the YouTube channel called Dad, How Do I? Anybody? This is your homework. I'm actually telling you to go on YouTube and check out this guy's, Dad, How Do I? It's a Christian man. Started out a couple of years ago. His kids had kind of grown up, moved out of the house. I don't know, he's in his 50s, maybe early 60s. And he said, I still have things I could teach people, but I don't know little kids at home anymore. So we started a YouTube channel, he does stuff like, how do you tie a tie? How do you shave? How do you start the barbecue without blowing yourself up? How do you change a tire? How do you put up shelves? Just stuff. And it's the one channel on YouTube that you can read the comments because they don't get nasty and mean. People love this guy. He has 5 million followers. He's like the internet's dad. Tells a stupid little dad joke and then starts doing his stuff. Now he's starting to share Bible verses with five million people. all because he was obedient and cared about other people. Some kid that didn't have a dad, didn't know how to tie a tie. Or some kid that did have a dad, but dad didn't teach him how to tie a tie. Okay? Be obedient. Maybe it'll blow up and you'll be viral, but probably it won't. But that's okay because you're being obedient. And it's better that way.

So a reflection this week. Where in my life am I being selfish? With my money, my time, with my prayers? Do my prayers all focus on me? Lord I need this,

Lord my knee hurts, Lord my back hurts, Lord this. What do I pray for other people? Think about where in your life are you being selfish.

Then our challenge is pick just one of those ways and ask God to help you to be less selfish. Pray about it, work on it, be obedient. Life will be better that way.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father. Due to our mess up and allowing sin in the world, we have become incredibly selfish. You didn't make us this way. We ended up this way. And that's the problem with grace, Lord, is we try and take your grace and abuse it and say, oh, it's okay, God will save me anyway. God loves me anyway. I don't have to do anything anyway. Lord, we want to be the people that follow the whole Bible. When it says to have good deeds, we wanna be obedient to that and be kind and be loving to other people around us. Lord, give us the courage and the strength to do that this week. Sometimes it's hard, because we're worried about what people will say about us, but just help us take a small step in doing it and encourage us. We can take a bigger step and a bigger step, Lord, that people may see a reflection of you through us. Be with us this coming week, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.