

Good Friday—2021

“COVID And The Cross”

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

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Find this years’ the Good Friday audio and video messages [HERE](#).

Welcome to our Good Friday service—the day we commemorate the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary’s Cross to pay for our sins. Tonight, I have an interesting title for our Good Friday message—I’m calling it *“COVID and the Cross”*.

Now before you think it irreverent to put **‘COVID’** in the same title with the **‘Cross’** and tune me out—please hear me out!

Of course, when COVID-19 was first diagnosed, virologists and infectious disease doctors didn’t know how deadly it was—in other words, they didn’t know what we were up against. For all they knew at that time it could be like the Bubonic (Black) plague or Ebola or some other horrendous disease that could have wiped out millions.

I remember at the beginning before we knew what this virus was capable of, whenever I went to the store to shop for food and other supplies, I would wear an N95 mask and surgical gloves. When I brought these things home, Cyndi immediately wiped all the plastic bags down with Clorox wipes to kill any COVID that had attached itself to our supplies at the contaminated grocery store—while I wiped down everything I had touched in my car on the way home.

As time went on, infectious disease doctors determined that COVID wasn’t the killer they thought it might be.

In fact, virologists determined that from age 1 to 65—the cure rate for COVID-19 was about 99.7%.

However, this didn’t stop the mass hysteria that had taken hold of many people who refused to believe this pandemic wasn’t as bad or as dangerous as they were initially led to believe.

➔ Talk about the family at the airport who were each wearing 2 masks and full face shields!

There has definitely been a lot of hype, hysteria and misinformation surrounding this disease stoked by politicians, by the reckless and feckless news media and big business who have a political and/or financial stake in keeping people living in fear of this disease. Yet with a mortality rate of .03% or in other words with 99.7% of the people infected with COVID making a full recovery—it seems like most of the fear and hysteria has been blown way out of proportion.

Please, I’m not minimizing the tragedy and pain that families are suffering who have lost loved ones to COVID—I’m just saying that with such a low overall death rate COVID-19 isn’t the Black Death it was (and still is) being hyped to be.

(It’s hard to know exactly how many actually died from COVID-19 because the numbers are being inflated...)

But listen, even if COVID had a kill rate of 50% like Ebola and Bubonic Plague—it would still pale by comparison with another pandemic that has been unleashed on the human race. This pandemic has a 100% kill rate—in other words, everyone infected by this disease dies—every single person without exception!

The bad news is—every person born into the human race
is born infected with this disease—every single person.

And there is only one cure—without which no one will survive.

Oh, and there's more bad news—if a person dies from this pandemic—they won't just die physically—they will die spiritually and eternally.

Of course, the disease I'm referring to is SIN!

Sin was 'injected' into the bloodstream of the human race back in the Garden of Eden when Adam infected himself with this deadly disease when he disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And once Adam was infected, he passed this disease down to all of his descendants—a terminal blood disease that if left untreated will wind up killing every single one of Adam's children—*"in Adam all die"* (1 Corinthians 15:22).

By killing the, I mean killing them spiritually in hell for all eternity—without exception.

Now you would think that *this* disease would be feared and taken far more seriously than COVID-19.

The problem is that people tend to only fear what they can see and/or feel—and often people can't see or feel the effects of the disease of sin in their lives.

Let's put it this way—say you have a very serious disease that, if left untreated, will kill you—and yet you didn't realize you were infected with this disease. Let's say I recognized the symptoms you have because—I too was once infected with that same disease.

So, I came to you and told you that I had a cure for the disease you were infected with—a miracle cure, the only one in the world that could save your life—you would probably say to me, *"Get lost, I don't have a disease, I feel fine."*

As long as you were convinced that you were healthy you wouldn't appreciate the cure I was offering to you because—in your mind, you wouldn't see your need for it.

But now let's imagine that I began to tell you the symptoms of this disease—and as I did you began to realize that you *did* have those symptoms.

If I could eventually convince you that you were, in fact, infected with this deadly disease—then how do you think you'd appreciate the cure I was offering?

You'd probably line up for hours or days or do whatever it took to get this miracle cure!

And yet when it comes to a cure for the disease of sin—a terminal and eternally deadly disease—most people in our culture are ambivalent at best when you try to tell them they are infected with the disease of sin and the only cure is the blood of Jesus Christ applied through faith.

Again, the problem is that most people don't *feel* 'sick'—they don't *feel* like they have a problem.

And why is that— because they'll tell you, *"I'm a good person. I do (fill in the blank) good things—sinful (sick) people don't do that! Besides, look at how my life is being blessed. God doesn't bless sinners like I'm being blessed!"*

Listen, just like a doctor can only help those who *realize* they're sick and seek help—so too, Jesus, the Great Physician, can only help those who *know* they're sinners and therefore in *need* of a Savior.

Look, 20 years ago I suffered a heart attack. I was blessed by God for the simple reason that many people don't survive their *first* heart attack.

Too many people with heart disease never know they have a problem until it's too late.

Heart disease is a silent killer, there are often no warning signs and therefore no reason to see a doctor until the attack happens.

It's the symptoms that let you know you're sick and in need of medical attention—without the symptoms a person can have advanced heart disease and be completely unaware of it until it takes their life.

Look, it's not that people wouldn't see a doctor if they knew there was a problem—often times they just don't know that there is a problem until it's too late.

So, let me say it again—there is another disease that has infected the human race—sin. It's also deadly—only it doesn't just kill the body but also the soul—forever.

The whole human race has been infected by it and it is one hundred percent 'eternally fatal'.

The problem is that most people today don't realize they have this deadly disease or if they do acknowledge they have it they really don't think it's a serious thing (*"I know I'm not perfect, but I still think I'm good enough to get into heaven"*)—so they ignore the warning signs and don't seek help from Jesus, the Great Physician.

Now with all that in mind, in Matthew 9:9-13, Jesus presents Himself as the 'Great Physician' whose whole purpose for coming to the earth was to heal the human race from the greatest pandemic in human history—the disease of sin.

Matthew 9:9-13 (NKJV)

⁹ As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him. ¹⁰ Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, *that* behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

¹² When Jesus heard *that*, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ But go and learn what *this* means: '*I desire mercy and not sacrifice.*' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

In that culture when you ate with someone you were being one with them. (Explain)

I'm sure the Pharisees were only there observing and not eating—they would never have thought to eat with people such as these.

All they were interested in was finding something they could condemn Jesus for at Matthew's celebration—and sure enough they did! They found the perfect justification for their condemnation of Jesus and His disciples when Jesus ate with sinners.

The crux of the passage is the statement by Jesus—**“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick...I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”**

The analogy is simple—just as a physician isn't needed among the well and so spends his or her time among the sick—so to the Savior isn't needed among those who *think* they're spiritually well and therefore goes to those who *recognize* they're sinners and in need of the Savior.

Jesus can only save sinners, people who know they are sinners—people who know they are infected with the disease of sin and on their way to hell.

He can't save people who think that they are basically good and therefore deserving of heaven!

That is why John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter and Paul all began their preaching of the gospel with the word—**REPENT!**

Repentance involves the recognition and confession of sin—which is essential before a person will come to Jesus to save (heal) them from their sin.

No one will see their need for the Savior who doesn't first see themselves as a sinner—

1 Timothy 1:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners [not decent or good people], of whom I am chief.

As one evangelist said, *“We've got to get them lost before we can get them saved.”*

Repentance from sin is the first step before a person can believe the gospel for salvation.

The word “gospel” means *‘good news’*—but as we have said many times before—the announcement of good news implies the presence of something bad (bad news)—

In this case it's the presence of sin and the judgment that it leads to.

What Is Sin?

The word in the Greek literally means to **“miss the mark”**—it was an archery term for hitting the bull's eye on a target. The Bible in Romans 3:23 says that **“all have sinned”**—or in other words, *“all have missed the mark”*.

- Of course, the next question is **“what does the mark or the bull's eye represent?”**

Paul gives us the answer in Romans 3:23—

Romans 3:23 (NKJV)

²³ ...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

➤ ***So what is the glory of God?***—the glory of God is His sinless perfection!

In that regard, every person has who ever lived has fallen short of sinless perfection. Or to put it another way, the sinless perfection that Paul is referring to in Romans 3:23 is—perfectly keeping the law of God.

In the Old Testament, God's law contained 613 commandments—to break anyone of them was to miss the mark and to be guilty of sin.

But let's not deal with all 613, let's just limit ourselves to the ten we are most familiar with—the Ten Commandments (not the 10 suggestions).

These commandments are like the wooden boards that make up the hull of a ship (the 'ship' being your life 'sailing to heaven')—it doesn't matter if most of them are there—if only one is missing or broken that ship is going under!

The same is true for the person who chooses to get to heaven by the law (by keeping the commandments of God) it doesn't matter if they keep most of them—if *any* commandment is broken even once that person is sunk (condemned).

James 2:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of [breaking] all.

This is why Paul calls the law a curse—it's because it makes salvation dependent upon a person keeping *all* of it without fail to get into heaven.

In other words, the law demands moral perfection from a person to gain access into heaven—and remember Jesus said it isn't just the outward actions of your life that God looks at, it's also the inward thoughts of your heart. Yet when I ask people, ***"If you were to die tonight would God let you into heaven?"***—they will almost always tell me, ***"yes"***.

When I ask them to explain why, they respond, *"Because I'm a good person. I know I'm not perfect, morally speaking, but I still think I'm good enough to get into heaven"*.

Listen to what God's Word is saying—If you're not morally perfect you're not good enough to get into heaven!

It's all or nothing—perfect or guilty—there is no *"I'm good enough"* or *"I'm better than most so I deserve heaven..."*

It's either sinless perfection or eternal rejection (hell).

Romans 3:23 (NKJV)

...for all have sinned (missed the mark) and fall short of the glory of God (sinless perfection).

Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

...the wages of sin is death [in hell forever]...

➤ You might be thinking to yourself—***"No one can live a life of sinless perfection!"***

➤ That's not true—**One Man did—His name is Jesus!**

The Bible teaches that if we put our faith in Him—He will put His righteousness to our account so that we can go to heaven through Him. You see, all this has been the bad news, which has then prepared us to receive the good news—

Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Today, as Jesus' disciples, we are the spiritual physicians of the great commission—*"Go to all the people of the world and preach the good news of salvation to them"*.

We are to faithfully tell people that they have a terminal disease that if left untreated will kill them eternally—and the only cure is the blood of Christ which is applied through faith.

But again, the problem is that most people don't feel 'sick'—they don't feel like there's a problem (like my heart disease)—everything seems fine and so they really don't see their need for a Savior because they don't see themselves as sinners.

Proverbs 20:6 (NKJV)

⁶ Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, But who can find a faithful man?

Jesus can only help those who know they're sinners and in need of a Savior—and that's why He told us to go and tell the people of this world the bad news first (sin and judgment) —and *then* the good news (salvation through Jesus)!

Understand, the Gospel isn't 'happy talk'—it's like a tornado warning siren that tells people to run to shelter for safety because something bad is coming. (Elaborate)

If they argue that they don't *feel* sick with the disease of sin and therefore aren't *infected* with it—tell them the symptoms. Paul listed some of these symptoms in Galatians 5 referring to them as—*"lusts of the flesh"* (the 'flesh' being a reference to our fallen nature we inherited from our father Adam—i.e. the terminal disease he passed down to us as his descendants):

Galatians 5:19-21 (NLT)

¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these...

Once again, these are all the symptoms of the terminal disease that has infected the human race.

In Ephesians 2, after giving us the symptoms of our condition, Paul the apostle then gives us the prognosis (consequences)—*"and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others (doomed to be judged and sent to hell forever)"*. (verse 3)

That is the hopeless condition the human race (apart from Christ) finds itself in—it's *hopeless* because man is *helpless* to change his condition—

Jeremiah 13:23 (NIV)

²³ Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.

To put it another way—man has a bad heart—it's been infected by sin, and as such it is untreatable—it has been corrupted beyond repair (Jeremiah 17:9)—which means that fallen man will die eternally in hell (lake of fire—the second death).

The cure? Man needs a new heart...

The problem is that man can't change his own heart—only God can do that.

David cried in Psalm 51, *"Create in me a clean heart—O God!"*

Ezekiel 36:26 (NKJV)

²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

How does God do this?

➤ **He does it when you put your trust in His Son, Jesus Christ.**

Without putting your faith in Jesus there is no hope of ever having eternal life in heaven—and you will die in your sins and spend eternity in hell.

The New Testament tells us that we can never earn our salvation—it is a gift that God is offering to us by His *grace*, received by us thru our *faith*.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Look, many people who have a serious disease like cancer, often have it months if not years before the first symptom shows up.

By that time the disease has often progressed to the point where it is now terminal, and death is inevitable—that's why early detection is critical!

The same is true with sin (most people get saved early in life—most in their teens and twenties). A person can go a long time before the symptoms start to catch up with them—and by that time irreparable damage has been done.

Done to them **physically** (siroccos of the liver, lung disease, HIV), **mentally** (plagued by guilt and depression) and **outwardly** (one or more broken marriages, the inability to maintain a job or friendships etc.)

The Bible says that *“the way of the transgressor is hard”*; and *“woe to him/her who wrestles against their Maker”*.

Sin will beat you up, wear you out and eat you away—like a cancer.

How much better to repent and receive God’s cure by accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior—getting that new heart and the new life that comes with it?

The Great Physician is ready to perform a spiritual heart transplant on you today—if you’re willing!

COVID or cancer or something else may kill the body (we’re all going to die from something)—but the blood of Jesus Christ shed on Calvary’s Cross will save and cure the soul for all eternity.

For those of us who have put our faith in Jesus Christ, we have a glorious future ahead of us—

Revelation 21:4 (NKJV)

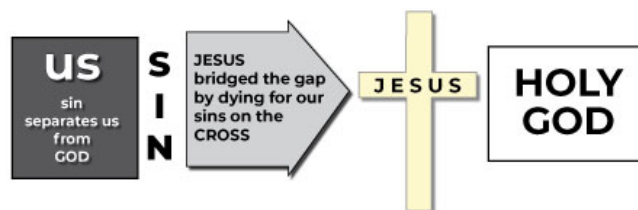
⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

Want to know more? Click [here](#).

THE ONLY WAY TO GOD



“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

THE WRONG WAY TO GOD



“I AM the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to The Father except through Me.” John 14:6

