

America—How Did We Get Here?

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
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Let me begin by saying that, unless you've been on another planet the past week, you all know that at approximately 11:40 AM this past Tuesday, May 24th, a lone gunman walked into Robb Elementary School in Uvalde Texas and started shooting students and teachers.

When a BORTAC agent (Border Patrol Tactical Unit) finally shot and killed the 18-year-old suspect (whose name was Salvador Ramos) almost an hour later—19 children ages 7 to 9 and two teachers lay dead.

It was very reminiscent of another school shooting that took place almost ten years ago on Friday December 14, 2012.

The school was Sandy Hook Elementary School, and the shooter was 20-year-old Adam Lanza.

Lanza started the day by shooting and killing his mother in their home in Newtown, Conn., then went to nearby Sandy Hook Elementary School (where she worked), shot out a window, and entered the building opening fire with two 9mm handguns.

When it was all over, eighteen children and six adults were found dead at the school and two more children died later at the hospital for a total of 27 people including the gunman who was also found dead at the scene from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Of course, the first school massacre that most of us remember that seemed to begin the rash of school shootings we're all currently living thru was the Columbine High School shooting in April of 1999. The shooters were 2 twelfth-grade students named Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold who murdered 12 students and one teacher while injuring 23 others before killing themselves.

I think all of us still remember the shooting that took place 4 years ago in Parkland, Florida at Douglas High School where 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz killed 17 people and wounded 17 others.

The AP reports that from Columbine High School to Robb Elementary School—school shootings in the US have accounted for 169 deaths and many others that were wounded.

And that doesn't even take into consideration the other mass shootings in our country that weren't school related.

Like the worst mass shooting in American history which occurred on October 1, 2017.

On that date, a lone gunman named Stephen Paddock, a 64-year-old man from Mesquite, Nevada, opened fire from his 32nd floor room of the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas.

One reporter said—

“Paddock unleashed a rapid-fire barrage of bullets down on the crowd attending the Route 91 Harvest music festival on the Las Vegas Strip sending a crowd of about 22,000 terrified concertgoers running for their lives.”

By the time it was over Paddock had killed 60 while injuring more than 500 others—before killing himself.

Of course, just two weeks ago on May 14th a teenager opened fire at shoppers going into and coming out of the Tops Supermarket in Buffalo, NY shooting and killing 10 and wounding 3—all of them African Americans.

Because of all of these shootings, I felt led by the Lord to do a special message entitled—**“America, How Did We Get Here?”**

Some scream, *“The problem is guns! There are too many guns in our country! We have to make getting guns a lot harder—or we need to abolish the Second Amendment altogether!”* (So says Michael Moore)

That is a simplistic solution to a complicated problem.

First of all, the answer to bringing down gun violence in America isn't to take away guns from good and law-abiding people—because, as someone has said—*“The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy (or gal) with a gun.”*

Secondly, a study was recently done by the General Social Survey (GSS) and by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) that found that since the late 1970s, the percentage of homes with a gun has fallen from approximately 50 percent to 32 percent.

One reporter with the Associated Press said, *“The number of Americans who live in a household with at least one gun is lower than it's ever been.”*

Yet, while the number of homes that contain a firearm has *decreased* since the 1970's—the number of mass shootings has dramatically *increased*.

The inescapable conclusion is that there isn't a direct correlation between the number of firearms that American's own and the number mass murders that are committed. In other words, the answer to gun violence isn't to take away all the guns from law abiding Americans simply because some abuse them and use them to hurt others.

I mean, think about this—every year in America knives are used to kill more people than guns—so does that mean the government should confiscate all the knives in America because they are abused and irresponsibly used by some to harm others?

The idea being pushed by liberals including President Biden that AR-15's should be outlawed because of all the people killed by them every year is ridiculous.

According to the FBI's own homicide data—more people are killed by knives and hammers in our country every year than are killed by rifles of all kinds—7-times more!

Others would say, *“Well, the problem is an increase in mental illness—this is what’s causing all of the gun violence in our country.”*

I’m sure there is some truth to that—although, I believe that this also is a somewhat simplistic solution to a complicated problem.

I came across an article that was written a few years ago by psychiatrist Dr. Dale Archer.

“According to the 2010 FBI crime data, since 1980, single victim killings have dropped by more than 40 percent. While that’s very good news, there’s a new sobering trend: Mass murders are on the rise. This New York Times article researched the frequency of mass murders. It found during the 20th century there were about one to two mass murders per decade—until 1980. Then for no apparent reason they spiked, with 9 during the 1980s and 11 in the 1990s. Since the year 2000 there have been at least 26, including the massacre in Aurora, Colorado (now the number stands at roughly 45 mass-shootings since 2000).

The number one predictor of violence by far is alcohol and/or drug abuse. Severe mental illness in and of itself was not a predictor. A 1988 study in the Archives of General Psychiatry found that patients discharged from psychiatric facilities who did not abuse alcohol or illegal drugs had a rate of violence no different than that of their neighbors in the community.

As for gun control, the studies are all over the map. From anecdotal reports to definitive studies, from the NRA to the Brady Campaign, each side uses mass murder to further their cause. I won’t bother to give examples of the numerous reports, studies and opinions. However, the gun laws are relatively unchanged over the last few decades. Over this time period, some states have stricter gun laws while others have become more relaxed. Regardless of how you feel about gun control in general, there is no correlation between gun control strictness and mass murder.

So, what is fueling this spike in mass murder? What is different today versus 50 years ago that can explain 26 mass murders from 2000 to 2012 (now 45 from 2000 to 2022), as opposed to one or two per decade from 1900 to 1980?...”

Well, Dr. Archer goes on to say he really doesn’t know why the increase in mass murder—he suggests it could have something to do with all the violence on T.V., in the movies, in video games and in the music of the younger generation—but he really doesn’t know what’s going on.

One of the things he does point out is that there really isn’t a direct correlation between mass murders and mental illness.

Let me say this, I believe that demonic possession or at very least demonic oppression—is being misdiagnosed much if not most of the time as mental illness in our nation.

The shooter in the Uvalde Texas massacre was sent for a psych-eval and was examined and released—because he wasn’t mentally ill. I believe he was demonically controlled or possessed! Look, mental illness has been around in our country from its inception—as have guns. Yet mass murders are a relatively recent phenomenon—so what’s going on?

I believe it’s all linked to the gradual drifting away from God and His Word that we have seen in our society over the last 60 or 70 years.

Do you realize that Christian pollster George Barna has noted that today we have the lowest church attendance by young people in our nation's history? Make no mistake about it—American Christianity is on the decline—while violence of all kinds is on the rise—but why?

One TV commentator I think summed it up pretty well—

“Firearm laws were weak before the 1970’s and only in recent decades have young men entered schools and supermarkets for the purpose of killing the innocent. What’s changed is the culture. The nuclear family is collapsing before our eyes. Church attendance is at an all-time low. Kid’s brains are being warped by social media. And we forced our kids into lockdowns, isolating them from socializing with each other and pushing them deeper into video games and wicked internet sites. Sports aren’t mandatory anymore. Drugs are everywhere. The media and entertainment industry fosters a sick thirst for fame and notoriety—and there’s just a general lack of respect for human life. We’re missing all the ingredients for a healthy country. If we want to stop the next mass shooter, we need to approach this problem completely differently...”

I agree, but before we can do that—we have to properly diagnose the problem itself.

**I believe that there is a direct correlation
between us as a nation having turned our backs on God
and the light of His Word—and the darkness that is now upon us.**

As we have embraced spiritual and moral darkness—we have opened the door and invited into our country demonic forces that were previously kept at bay by our love for and obedience to God and His Word.

The result is we have become a dark culture that can't seem to get enough evil and violence and sexual perversion in our entertainment. Because of it something wicked has taken captive the minds of our people—especially our young people. It's an evil darkness that has settled over our country like a shroud and is transforming it into something we are not going to be able to recognize soon.

David Kupelian in *“The Marketing of Evil—Why today’s youth culture resembles Sodom and Gomorrah”*—

“History is full of times and places when something – call it a spirit if you wish – sweeps over a particular society. This something is drawn, as into a vacuum, into societies that have lost their way, and have harkened to the voice of deceitful leaders and philosophies.

During the mid-20th century, a malevolent spirit swept over Germany, leading to unspeakable crimes being perpetrated against millions of Jews and other "undesirables" in the name of progress.

In the late '70s, the demonic spirit of Marxist "cleansing" swept through Cambodia like a raging wildfire, resulting in the brutal deaths of perhaps 2 million.

And today, we see the worldwide spread of a maniacal jihad suicide cult that is attracting literally millions of Muslims.

Well now, is it just my imagination, or is there something about today's celebratory piercing and tattooing of the body, and the free sex that permeates this culture, that literally evokes the spirit of Sodom and Gomorrah?

It's as though the rebellious spirit of reprobate, pagan civilizations of the past were being tapped into (dare I say "channeled"?) by today's pop culture.”

In past eras, if parents were very imperfect or even corrupt, their children still had a reasonable chance of

"growing up straight," since the rest of society still more or less reflected Judeo-Christian values.

The youngster could bond to a teacher, minister, mentor or organization that could provide some healthy direction and stability.

But today, because of the near-ubiquitous corruption "out there," if parents fail to properly guide and protect their children, the kids get swallowed whole by the child-molesting monster we call culture."

Psalm 11:3 (NKJV)

³ If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?

In an article from the '80's entitled, *"Is the Great American Dream Turning into a Nightmare?"* the author had this to say about our heritage as a nation:

"God has showered upon America 200 years of blessing. As she acknowledged and obeyed her Creator, God elevated her from infancy to a place of world leadership. He has allowed her to enjoy unprecedented wealth, freedom, and influence. America has led the world in medical and technological advancement. The nation has pioneered in space, pushed back the frontiers of science, and given its citizens the world's highest standard of living...With grateful and humble hearts, Americans once honored the God who granted her blessings and freedoms. But slowly—almost imperceptible—she began to attribute her blessings not so much to God, but to man.

Forgetting to acknowledge 'the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation,' her citizens began to congratulate themselves on their own achievements—to celebrate man, while relegating God to the back seat and as a result—the god of secular humanism began to infiltrate all of her institutions.

Wallowing in materialism, self-centeredness and pride, many Americans decided that they really did not need God after all. Some began to tamper with God's absolute standards, and to tolerate what they would never have allowed before in their own lives or in society around them.

*That which God says is **never** right could be **sometimes** right, depending on the situation. Courts that had once legislated against immorality began to grant freedom to every man to 'do that which was right in his own eyes' (Judges 17:6 & 21:5). Lines of right and wrong blurred.*

In time, all sorts of ungodly behavior became acceptable—even admired. Americans no longer were shocked. Eyes grew 'accustomed to the dark.' Few citizens rose up in outrage.

When God fades from a nation's conscience, one can justify almost anything."

The author then goes on to talk about how Americans have tried to camouflage what God calls sin with new terminology to soothe our conscience and justify our actions:

God said, *"Thou shalt not kill."* But Americans gave murder a new name, *"a woman's right to choose"* and indifferently abort a million and a half babies a year, 50 million since Roe v. Wade.

God calls it *"drunkenness."* We call it *"alcoholism—a social disease."*

God calls it *"sodomy."* We call it *"homosexuality—an alternative lifestyle."*

God calls it *"perversion."* We call it *"pornography—adult entertainment."*

God calls it *"immorality."* We call it the *"new morality."*

He then concludes by saying,

"America once legislated against those things that God said to be wrong. But gradually we began to tolerate, then accept, then condone openly, and even promote, that which was once unthinkable. The perversion and

degradation that once made us blush are now flaunted before the eyes of a nation that was conceived in the fear of God. It has happened, little by little, right before our eyes—not because someone forced it on us, but seemingly because we did not care. We just didn't care.”

A big part of the problem is that the Church (the moral conscience of society) has become infested with false shepherds who are too busy entertaining the goats instead of feeding the sheep!

George Barna has recently said that only 50% of pastors of evangelical churches hold a biblical worldview—and very few if any of these false shepherds teach the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith—like the reality of hell.

In today's church—very few pastors preach on hell anymore.

This is mostly due to the fact that, in an attempt to fill seats in the sanctuary by keeping things *positive*, pastors today have almost exclusively focused on the love of God while neglecting the righteousness, holiness, and justice of God.

One author said—

“The result is that almost everyone today views God as a benevolent, grey haired, grandfatherly old gentleman who is too kind and loving to ever send anyone to such a horrible place like hell.”

Consequently, we now live in a society where there is no fear of God and the result is lawlessness—a blatant disrespect and disregard for the Law of God.

In an article that was written by William Murray, the son of the late Madeline Murray O'Hair, the famous atheist that helped get prayer thrown out of public schools back in the early 60's.

In that article which William Murray wrote just after the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre—he said that a large part of the blame for violence in society needs to be laid at the doorstep of the church in America—he said:

“If an individual is not afraid of the wrath of God, it is impossible to cause him to fear the justice of the state. The killing of young children at their school will be linked by many pundits to the availability of guns. Still others will blame the violent act on some pathology or childhood trauma. Some may even blame the Hollywood culture with its disregard for humanity, in which human bodies are seen being dissected nightly on network TV. Virtually no one will call what occurred in Newtown, Conn. an act of evil. (Adam Lanza was a devil worshipper)

Probably not a single sermon will be preached in which the perpetrator is predicted to have begun his eternal punishment for his crime after judgment by a just and angry God.

A splintered American church driven by a pew-hungry, feel-good message will offer assurances that eternal peace awaits all those who died, including the shooter. The words “hell” and “sin” will very likely not be used in any sermons associated with the massacre.

Yes, there is societal blame: Ridiculous privacy rules that allow the mentally ill to conceal their condition from schools, employers and gun-shop owners is just one. The constant self-esteem building in public schools teaching even low-functioning kids with anger problems to judge themselves equal to the valedictorian is yet another.

But the greatest villain is a church that has accepted the world's view that hell does not await evildoers. With a weak message from a weak church, there is no restraint or lessening of the violence. The shooting at Newtown was immediately followed by a shooting at a Birmingham, Ala., hospital and a Las Vegas hotel. Across the country, there are more than 16,000 murders each year. Of those, two-thirds are committed with (hand) guns. One in three murders is a very personal, vile act of evil using a knife, a blunt instrument or bare hands.

And the response of the church to this violence is “God loves you. Have a nice day.”

A large advertising sign near my home reads, “A church for those who don’t like church.” Translation: “No condemnation of sin here – we have coffee latte and great music.”

How about this politically incorrect sermon subject: “An angry God condemns the carnal sin of Adam Lanza, the Newton school shooter who killed 26, and he will rot in eternal torment in hell, as do all those who turn their backs on God and his goodness and continue their wicked and sinful ways”—No way, no how in America today!

No number of gun-control laws can contain the evil that has been let loose in America. Not even black clad police with masks and automatic weapons can maintain social order in our out-of-control society. The nation needs a religious revival to steer it away from certain moral destruction. That revival will not come from feel-good, coffeehouse sermons that do not call sin what it is.

What are preachers today offering to “save” people from, if sin is never mentioned? What punishment are they being “saved” from, if hell is never mentioned?

The fear of an angry and vengeful God was far more likely to have stopped the shootings in Newtown than the warm voice of a psychologist or the soothing feeling of drugs—eternity in hell is a very long time.

One of the greatest revival sermons of all times was that of Jonathon Edwards – “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” Can you imagine even this one portion being repeated in a church in America today? In that sermon Edwards said:

“There is no want of power in God to cast wicked men into hell at any moment. Men’s hands cannot be strong when God rises up. The strongest have no power to resist Him, nor can any deliver out of His hands. He is not only able to cast wicked men into hell, but He can most easily do it.”

Someone had said,

“God is not in the business of saving evil nations from themselves, but He is in the business of offering salvation to individuals. A nation is saved from ruin when enough of its people turn from their wicked ways and follow His righteous commands. The challenge to every church, of every denomination is to preach the true Word of God, the nature of sin and the consequences of perpetrating evil. This alone can turn the society from its violent and destructive path.”

True, but as Paul the apostle stated—

Romans 10:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

Where are the John the Baptist’s and Jonathan Edwards today?

Where are the no nonsense fire and brimstone preachers (and yes someone can be a fire and brimstone preacher and do it with love and compassion like Jesus) that operate as the moral conscience of a nation while acting as prophets calling a wayward people back to God?

Someone has said—*“I don’t think we should frighten people into heaven”—*would you rather comfort them into hell?!

In the 1830’s the noted French sociologist and political theorist Alexis de Tocqueville came to America to discover the secret of our greatness.

He noted in his journal—

“The Americans combine the notion of Christianity and of liberty so intimately in their minds that it is impossible to make them conceive the one without the other. I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her

commodious harbors and ample rivers but it was not there. In her fertile fields and boundless prairies and it was not there. In her rich mines and her vast world commerce and it was not there. Not until I went to the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her greatness and power.”

Returning to France, he summarized his findings: *“America is great because America is good; and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”*

On Thursday, May 27, 1999, Darrell Scott, the father of Rachel Scott, a victim of the Columbine High School shootings in Littleton, Colorado, was invited to address the House Judiciary Committee’s sub-committee. The following is a portion of the transcript:

“Since the dawn of creation there has been both good and evil in the hearts of men and women. We all contain the seeds of kindness or the seeds of violence.

The death of my wonderful daughter, Rachel Joy Scott, and the deaths of the heroic teacher and the other eleven children who died must not be in vain. Their blood cries out for answers.

The first recorded act of violence was when Cain slew his brother Abel out in the field. The villain was not the club he used. Neither was it the NCA, the National Club Association. The true killer was Cain, and the reason for the murder could only be found in Cain’s heart.

In the days that followed the Columbine tragedy, I was amazed at how quickly fingers began to be pointed at groups such as the NRA. I am not a member of the NRA. I am not a hunter. I do not even own a gun. I am not here to represent or defend the NRA—because I don’t believe that they are responsible for my daughter’s death. Therefore, I do not believe they need to be defended. If I believed they had anything to do with Rachel’s murder, I would be their strongest opponent.

I am here today to declare that Columbine was not just a tragedy—it was a spiritual event that should be forcing us to look at where the real blame lies! Much of the blame lies here in this room. Much of the blame lies behind the pointing fingers of the accusers themselves.

I wrote a poem just four nights ago that expresses my feelings best. This was written before I knew I would be speaking here today:

*‘Your laws ignore our deepest needs; your words are empty air,
You’ve stripped away our heritage, you’ve outlawed simple prayer.
Now gunshots fill our classrooms, and precious children die.
You seek for answers everywhere and ask the question “Why,”
You regulate restrictive laws through legislative creed,
And yet you fail to understand that God is what we need.’*

Spiritual influences were present within our educational systems for most of our nation’s history. Many of our major colleges began as theological seminaries...What has happened to us as a nation? We have refused to honor God, and in so doing, we open the doors to hatred and violence....

We do not need more restrictive laws. Eric and Dylan would not have been stopped by metal detectors. No amount of gun laws can stop someone who spends months planning this type of massacre.

The real villain lies within our own hearts. Political posturing and restrictive legislation are not the answers...We...need a change of heart and a humble acknowledgment that this nation was founded on the principle of simple trust in God!”

Psalm 11:3 (NKJV)

³ If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?

Well, I don’t know if we’ll ever see the foundation of our nation restored—but I know where we need to start—

Joel 2:12-14 (NKJV)

¹² "Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." ¹³ So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He *is* gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm. ¹⁴ Who knows *if* He will turn and relent, And leave a blessing behind Him...?

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

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