

**The Cure for Our Sin!**

**2 Cor. 5:21**

**God's Glory in the ordinary series**

**Nov. 5, 2017**

**Plague...** undoubtedly a word that will never have anything but a horrific meaning...

**1347-** One of the earliest recorded instances of biological warfare began what would be known as the bubonic plague. In 1347, a Mongol army besieging the Genoese trading post of Caffa in the Crimea, modern day Ukraine, by catapulting the bodies of the bubonic plague victims over the walls and into the town. The defending villagers then fled to Italy taking the dreaded disease with them. Over the next three years the plague would spread throughout Europe resulting in a mass epidemic known as the Black Death. Before it would run its course, approx. twenty million people would die, about a third of Europe's population. This disease, with a 66% fatality rate, would actually be slinking around well into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century until the coming of antibiotics.

**1918-** Although the Black Death is likely the most infamous epidemic in history, it's certainly not the only one... The Spanosh influenza epidemic that emerged just after WW1, 1918-1919 killed an estimated 30-50 million worldwide. Of course there have been other as well: malaria has been a killer for centuries and continues to be the worst! Yellow fever, hemorrhagic fevers like Ebola and of course AIDS continue to threaten populations around the world.

But there is ONE plague, that puritan writer Ralph Venning called the "*plague of all plagues.*" It affects **all** of humanity and is 100% fatal. And not only does this plague affect someone physically, but brings spiritual and 'eternal' death as well. **It's the plague of sin.** All humans are infected. **Romans 5:12-21** described the beginning and spread of this plague. "*Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death came to all men, because all in sinned* (in Adam)." This study is also called 'federal headship.'

The good news of the gospel, is the cure. That's why we call it **good** news, actually the best news. A cure for the Black Death, that's good news! A cure for polio, leprosy, smallpox, tuberculosis, tetanus, meningitis, SARS and more! Good news! A cure for cancer, goods news!

But the best news... is this: God, in his mercy and love provided a remedy for sin, through the sacrifice of his Son, our Saviour. This is our verse for today... just one verse from **2 Corinthians, Chapter 5:21**. "God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him."

**1. God initiates, 5:21a** "*God made him.*" God appointed him, He designed this, and ordained this... provided this. Nothing unwilling of course on Jesus part. This is all of divine origin, and Jesus as much a designer as any member of the Trinity. Jesus didn't go to the cross because of the Romans or some unruly mob or the constant petitioning of the Jewish religious leaders and their plotting. Jesus went to the cross as the outworking of God's plan to reconcile lost sinners, lost humanity to himself. Peter would preach and declare that "Jesus was delivered over to death by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23 plus no less than another 6 verses in Matt., Luke, John and Hebrews).

"*For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son.*" This absolutely sets Christianity apart from all other 'religious forms' on the planet! Other religious deities are depicted as: cruel, angry, hostile... to be feared and appeased. Of course, in Christianity, there is no **appeasing** God. Indeed, he cannot be **appeased** ever by any human activity. Without being too cavalier and pushy, churches routinely look to inspire people to consider this. In Woodstock ON, a pastor friend described their church involvement with a local town fair booth. 1000 received walking sticks as they were willing to listen to a gospel presentation which asked the question; "If you were to die and find yourself standing before the Lord, what might you reply when asked why you should be allowed to enter heaven. Would you be inclined to offer some manner of appeasement? God provided his **own** appeasement for justice and the means for lost people to become sons and daughters, beloved children welcomed into his forever family. This is all through the sacrifice of Jesus.

Reconciliation implies of course that something *is amiss*, something's not at all right and needs to be made right.

**2. Our Substitute, 5:21b.** “Who know no sin to be sin.” There is only **one** cure for sin. People may think there are different options. But no. God says there is only **one**. No others qualify. No others are of any effect. (No home remedies here...) Jesus **never** sinned. The *impeccability* of Jesus is universally affirmed in the Bible. Even Jesus’ opponents could find no accusations that (in the end) would stick. Pilate said it well in **Luke 23** “*I find no guilt in this man.*” Even a Roman centurion, a soldier who was part of the crucifixion detail admitted afterwards “*certainly this man was innocent.*” Unblemished, spotless, guiltless, committed no sin, holy, undefiled, tempted yet without sin. Jesus was/is the absolutely holy substitute without sin.

He was ‘*made sin*’ not by **becoming** a sinner (no one thinks that), but by being **charged** with sin, taking on the punishment for sin, with God the father treating him **as if** he were a sinner. All the sins that he bore punishment for, means that it were as if he personally committed them. He experienced the wrath of God for them all. That was reflected in that moment we read about during the crucifixion in **Matthew 27:46** “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” Separation from God is the purest form of hell and punishment. Jesus was made sin for me...

-**Isaiah 53:4-6** describes this

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for **our** transgressions,  
he was crushed for **our** iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on **him**,  
and by **his** wounds **we** are healed.

<sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the LORD has *laid on him*  
the iniquity of us all.

The Greek translation of the OT that was available in Jesus day (the Septuagint), in **this** passage used the word for sin 5 times, in reference to the Saviour who would come: surely he has born our pain or grief, crushed for our iniquities, laid on him the iniquity of us all, he shall bear their iniquities, he bore the sins of many (vv. 11 and 12). Therefore... predictive, prophetic fulfillment.

**3. In my place, 5:21c.** *“For us.”* For those who believe... this is the cure. For those who are reconciled. This is a person by person decision. Are you reconciled? Next week we’ll be backing up to verse **2:17** that you may have noticed we skipped over... Are you a new creation in Christ? That’s a neat way to put it. Like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon? Of course the substitutionary reality is so obvious. He didn’t die for **himself**, he died for **you**. So that you wouldn’t be required to pay the price yourself. What’s the price? Sin brings death. That’s the result of the plague. And because you’re not sinless you would be required to pay it yourself (separation from God).

**4. Incredible Benefits, 5:21d.** *“So that we might become the righteousness of God in him.”* The benefit of God’s imputing believer’s sins to Christ and his righteousness to them is so that they can become righteous before Him. There are some big words in there, but they are **so** important, and why this verse starts to stand out. Let me explain a bit...

-**Three imputations** in the Bible. Means to “To apply to your credit.” To put into your account.” ----Credit card illustration. With credit we can think of a card or cash. I can give you a card with a \$30 k limit... or I can e-transfer (credit) \$30 k into your bank account. What’s better? To impute means to effectively transfer to and make yours. So, the three are: Adam’s sin to **me** (sorry, it’s true), then My sin to **Jesus**, then Jesus righteousness to **me**. That’s a really good deal. That’s the best news ever.

This verse has been described by many as the most concise sentence, and most profound description of the wonder of **the gospel in the Bible**.

**The cure...** The gospel, the good news, can be said in **4 words**. -“Reconciliation based on imputation,” or “Jesus in my place.” I mentioned \$30 k because we can get our heads around

that and appreciate that. But now consider owing an **incredible** debt. You're found guilty of a crime and sued in a civil lawsuit for \$5 million. You can never repay. It gets worse. Pay the money or spend forever/eternity in an awful, hellish prison. Options? This analogy starts to approximate the debt we owe and that Christ offers to pay... pending reconciliation.

How do/can I stand before a righteous/Holy God? Imputed Righteousness... (and yes, you will stand before him). When repentant, sorrowful, contrite (and ready to turn) people confess to the Lord their need and desire, he **credits** righteousness to their account. My sinful life, past, present and future was all legally **charged**/applied to Jesus on the cross. Justification (to declare someone righteous) by imputation is the **high point** of the gospel (and this was THE core issue of the Reformation). No work, merit or sacraments involved, just by faith, in the grace of God.

The possibility of disease and plague still has some of the world in its grip. The plague of sin has not burned out either. The cure is still the same: and it is effective (to live a new life), permanent, lifelong (no booster req'd!) and offers complete, absolute eternal immunity from the ultimate power of sin and death.

Takeaways today... **Imputed righteousness!** Sounds daunting perhaps, but "becoming righteousness" is designed to be real, fruitful and noticeable! We can and must grow in our sanctification/progressive holiness! Let your light shine!