

Introduction to Spectacular Sins

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 January 2015

Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] This morning we are going to begin a new Sunday School series based on this book by John Pyre. Spectacular sins and their global purpose in the glory of Christ.

! So let me give you some synonyms for spectacular. Amazing, stunning, astonishing, breathtaking, dramatic, striking.

Amazing, astonishing sins and their global purpose in the glory of Christ. Some sins are ordinary and common, and some are remarkable.

And that's the ones that we're going to be talking about in this series. We're going to be looking at six spectacular sins. Six sins that changed everything. The fall of Satan, Adam's fatal disobedience, the Tower of Babel, the sale of Joseph, Israel's rejection of God as their king, and then finally Judas Iscariot and the murder of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And those are certainly spectacular, astonishing sins. But in each one we're going to look at and see how God used them. God used them for his purpose.

[1:30] And in John Piper's words, there was a global purpose. A purpose that reached to all the nations. And in time it reached us. Here, God had a purpose in those sins for us.

And so what was God's purpose? Well, the glory of Christ is what John Piper is saying.

All things were made by him and for him. So everything exists for Christ and for the display of his glory.

So this whole drama that we see played out in these six sins, this whole drama of creation and fall and redemption, is from one view a love gift from the Father to his Son to make everyone see how good and glorious and holy and majestic his Son is.

And so as the story unfolds, the Son of God's glory is seen and it's felt and it's experienced in new ways.

[2:50] But as the glory of Christ is seen and felt, we see the glory of God the Father. Remember Hebrews 1.3, speaking of the Son, he is the radiance of God's glory, the exact imprint, the exact representation of his being.

And so when we see the glory of Christ and how great and majestic and holy and amazing he is, our attention is turned to the Father and we see how glorious.

We begin to understand who the Father is. So in the face of the Son, we see the glory of the Father. And so on one hand, all this drama of creation, fall, redemption is a gift from the Father to the Son to show how amazing the Son is.

But it's also ultimately that we would rejoice in all three persons of the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. So history is God-centered.

It has a purpose, and that purpose coalesces in God and his glory. And instead of looking at history in its broadest and sovereignty in general, the point of this series is to see that it is through the most horrific sins that God is bringing this about.

[4:13] Not despite those sins. That's true in a certain way. But it is through these sins that God does this.

That we might see the glory of God. So God doesn't just allow sin. He uses it to further his glory. So the very thing that itself is anti-God, these terrible sins that are raging against God, that are man and Satan's upraised fists to God, God uses for his glory.

He uses those things in his wisdom and his power to promote his glory, his honor. And so today, that's the series in general.

What we're going to look at is how God is going to use these things to further our understanding of his glory. Now, the question I want to answer today is why?

Why the study? Why look at things like this? Why look at these spectacular sins? And it might seem that it's a purely intellectual affair.

[5:29] And I suppose in one way it could be. We could, as we look at this, we do see a reason for evil. That's a question that many people have. If God is good, why is there evil?

This study would, in part, answer that. But that's not the purpose of this study. If we're thinking it's just a purely intellectual affair, we couldn't be more wrong.

We don't need this study to answer all those kinds of questions. But we do need this study in order to expand and fill our minds and our hearts in order that we would be able to make it to the end.

So, in one sense, our preservation and our perseverance is at stake. Because perseverance is going to have to endure many hard things.

And if we don't have a way of understanding those really hard things, those really and even really horrible sins, then our faith is not going to last.

[6:39] And so we need to get our minds wrapped around how God works. It's the only way that we will not bail out when terrible things happen, when terrible sins happen to us and to the people that we love.

It's the only way that we will keep loving each other when terrible times come upon us. Because I think if we're not equipped, if we're not prepared, if we're not understanding how God uses these things, then when they happen to us or when we see them happen, the natural thing to do would be to fall into self-pity, to self-despair.

And those things are, by their very nature, bent in on ourselves. And so we're not going to love each other in those circumstances if we're just wondering and confused and afraid and in despair.

So, why this study? Just have several things. And they're all sort of interconnected. They're all sort of related. They're sort of like looking at something from different perspectives.

And there's a lot of overlap here. And you'll see that as we go along. So, why this study? First, times are changing. Times are changing. You are changing.

[8:07] You're getting older. Every one of you. Getting older. And you are dying.

For most of you, you have reached your peak. Your peak physical condition for you is probably in the past. And I hate to say that. Come on.

I know it's in my past. And I hate to point out this to you, but many of you can remember the 60s. 1965 was 50 years ago.

That struck me because 1965 doesn't seem that long ago. And as the years go on, you're going to experience more and more of the effects of sin.

Romans 8 talks about all nature groaning under the power of sin. The slavery to this curse. And those groans are going to become more pronounced. More noticeable.

[9:14] More evident. And the youthful optimism that reigns supreme in every heart. Is going to give way to the realities that sin and its effects are far worse than we ever thought they were going to be.

Or we ever imagined them to be. So you are changing. But it's not just you that's changing. The world is changing. Our world.

Our western world. Our western culture is changing. And just our world in general is shrinking. Just shrinking. It's amazing. When we went to Ethiopia, it was amazing.

13 hours on an airplane. That seems like a long time. But 13 hours and that's it. I'm on the other side of the earth. It took me less. It took me half a day. To go clear on the other side of the globe.

The world is shrinking. And people who don't like Christians are all around us. And they're closer and closer and closer to us. September 11th brought that reality to light.

[10:24] There are people that genuinely hate us. That genuinely hate Christians. Out there. And that's just. We'll say the Middle East. But is that hatred just coming out of the Middle East?

No. There are people right here. People who not only don't care about religion. They're not. They're not. Ambivalent about it.

Not even that. It's not that they don't just want to not be bothered with Christ. But they positively hate. Christianity and Christians. And things are different.

Than they have been. At least in our past. Where Christianity had a genuine. General respect. It was seen as a generally good thing. And now.

I would have to say. It's seen as generally a bad thing. For many. We are the enemy. I was thinking of. Remember when Michael Amati came.

[11:22] And he presented. He presented. He showed that newspaper. That little newspaper ad. In Ireland. That said religion. Is the problem. That's just not Ireland.

That's here. And so. We're the reason. There's so many troubles. In the world. We are the disease. And they repeat to themselves. Over and over again. If we could just get rid of them.

Then all of our problems. Would go away. Everything would be better. I find it very enlightening. To read the comments. On the internet.

Under some story. And it's amazing. How quickly. People. Go around every hedge. And through every ditch. In order to just say. This is. Christian's fault. This is.

Religion's fault. And it's not. So it's not just. Intellectuals. Who hate Christianity. It's normal people. It's people that you work with. Who genuinely think. That. You.

[12:18] And what you believe. And your intolerance. Is the problem. And isn't it amazing. How many people are getting religion. Crammed down their throat.

As if. There's just people out there. Forcing people to sit. And listen to evangelistic sermons.

Doesn't happen. But. That's how they feel. And so. The hatred.

Is coming out. Into the open. Christianity. Has lost. Its respectability. The hatred. Is out of the closet. And. So. It's only a matter of time.

Before the realities. That so many of our brothers. And sisters face. Around the world. Are going to come. To our doorstep. To our houses. To our church. And.

And if. That wasn't enough. Christ calls us. To go. To them. To love them. To serve them. To evangelize them.

[13:19] To sacrifice for them. To bring the gospel to them. And. I'll say that. That's not any easier for me. Than it is for you. To think.

They hate me. They don't like me. They don't want me. They don't. They don't agree with me. And now. I have to go and talk to them. Listen to what. John Piper. Writes. The coddled.

Western world. Will sooner or later. Give way to great affliction. And when it does. Whose vision of God. Will hold. Where are Christians.

Being prepared. For great global sorrows. Where's the Christian mind. And soul. Being prepared. For the horrors. To come. Christians. Christians. In the West.

Are weakened. By wimpy. World views. And wimpy. World views. Make wimpy. Christians. God. Is weightless. In our lives.

[14:16] Now. There's a place. I think. For learning. How. There's definitely. A place. For meeting. Those practical. Felt needs. That we all have. For how to.

How to live. In a Christian marriage. How to raise children. How to. How to live. A more godly life. Just. Practical disciplines. All those. Practical things.

That we find. Very helpful. There is definitely. A place for those. But this Sunday school lesson. In the Sunday school series. Do you see. It has. It has. A deeper.

Further purpose. Than that. It's to say. We need to learn. How to think. God's thoughts. After him. Because dangerous. Times. Are coming. For us. We need to learn.

To think. God's thoughts. After him. And for many. The bible. Is missing. In their lives. For many. Christians. The bible.

[15:09] Is missing. They don't read it. Like their lives. Depend on it. Too many. Christians. And maybe. Some of you. Hardly. Read it. Hardly. Understand it. At all.

And we become. Experts. At all sorts. Of things. Experts. On fitness. Experts. On finance. Experts. Experts. On decorating. And cooking.

Experts. On conservative. Talking points. And experts. On the newest. Telephone. Or the newest. Cell phones. And the newest. Video games. And the newest. Computers. And the latest. Movies. Experts. On that 24 hour.

News cycle. That just keeps. Going and going. We're experts. On what's. Current events. And yet. Too many. Christians. Are not. Experts. On God. And his. Ways.

And. My question. Is what will. And the question. I ask myself. Is what will. All that. Fitness. And finance. And house. Decorating. And cooking. And all that.

[16:06] And Rush Limbaugh. And all the stuff. What will any of that. Do us. What good will any of that. Do us. When we're thrown into prison. For our Christianity. Those are civilian pursuits.

And pretty soon. Open war. Will be upon us. So how will. How will those things. Help you stay to the end. When tragedies happen to you.

When persecution comes. When our church building. Is burnt to the ground. When your house gets surrounded. What good will any of that. Do you. And I don't say that.

To be dramatic. I don't like being dramatic. And I don't say that. To hurt anyone's feelings. But without a mind. And a heart. Stocked with God. In his ways. Without a big God.

And an understanding. Of how that big God. Works. At least in some way. Then how are we ever. Going to stand. In front of the judges. And say. Well it's better for me.

[17:03] To obey God. Than to obey you. Or to be with Paul. And Silas. Singing. In a prison. Or. The disciples.

They were flogged. And they left. And they rejoiced. That they were counted. Worthy. Of suffering. For his name. Suffering. Disgrace. For the name. See.

People who are not. Weighed down. With a big God. Will run. And only people. With a big God. Who. Whose ways.

And whose understanding. Can work. Through. Even the worst sins. Will. Have their hearts. Captured. To stay put. To stay where they are.

To go on believing. To go on trusting. Will stay strong. And will. Who will die. For his name. And that's what the Sunday school series is about. It's about stocking your mind with God and his ways.

[17:58] It's about getting. You to see that God doesn't just allow these things to happen. He uses the sins of men. To accomplish his purposes. That when terrible things happen.

When terrible sins happen. To ourselves. And to the people that we love. God hasn't gone AWOL. He hasn't left the job. He is at work. And when it looks like he is most.

When it looks most like he's losing. He is winning. Amen. I think we spend.

We need to spend more time at the cross. Because the cross teaches us to see things. How God sees things. And to look at how God uses and works in situations. The cross teaches us to look for glory.

In a very strange place. Doesn't it? In human weakness. In death. The cross teaches us to look for power. In strange places.

[18:56] Where did God show the full extent of his power? It was at the cross. In overcoming all of his enemies. The cross teaches us to look for wisdom.

In strange places. When it looked like Jesus. And all of his plans had failed. And his wisdom had failed. When God's wisdom had failed. When it's the preaching of that cross.

That is the power of God. And the wisdom of God unto salvation. The cross teaches us to start to look at things. Not the way the world looks at them. But the way that God looks at them. When he sees human weakness.

He sees. A place for power. When he sees human humiliation. He sees a place for glory. Not only for himself.

But for those who are participating in it. And so why this study? Because we need to learn to think God's thoughts after him. We need to see things the way God sees them.

[19:51] And we need to understand it in some small way. How he works. So why this study? I don't know what number we're on.

Number two or three. Because catastrophes are coming. Catastrophes are coming. And I don't say that as some sort of prophet. I have no idea any more than you do.

What the next day holds. And I'm not looking at the way things are going in America. To say that. I'm not saying that as a cultural prophet. I'm saying that because the word of God says.

These things will happen. Acts 14.22. Acts 14.22. We must go. We must go through many hardships.

To enter the kingdom of God. If you don't have hardships brought on by your Christianity. Then you're not on the right road. If your Christianity.

[20:49] Just brings you ease. And pleasure. And joy. And no problems. No problems anywhere. Then you're not on the straight and narrow. In Pilgrim's Progress.

I don't remember the two characters. But Christians walking with formality. And someone else. And they come to a road. And there's these three ways. And one way looks pretty good.

And the other way looks pretty good. But Christians road. Let's straight up the mountain. A hill of difficulty. And those two. Two other people.

Professing Christians. But not really Christians. They went on their easier way. And they fell into hard things. And they were never seen again. And Christian had to go up. That hill of difficulty.

So we must go through many hardships. To enter the kingdom of God. John 15. 20. If they persecuted me. They will persecute you also. 1 Thessalonians 3.

[21 : 46] 2 and 3. We sent Timothy. Who is our brother. And God's fellow worker. In spreading the gospel of Christ. To strengthen and encourage you. In your faith. Well why do they need strengthened.

And encouraged in their faith. So that no one would be unsettled. By these trials. You know quite well. That we were destined for them. 2 Timothy 3.

12. In fact. Everyone who wants to live a godly life. In Christ Jesus. Will be persecuted. While evil men. And imposters. Will go from bad to worse.

Deceiving. And being deceived. Romans 8. 17. We are fellow heirs with Christ. Provided we suffer with him. Suffering.

And sonship. They go together. They go together. None of God's sons. Escaped suffering. And so. Paul wrote to the Philippians.

[22 : 42] I want to know Christ. And the power of his resurrection. And the fellowship of sharing. In his sufferings. Becoming like him in his death. And so somehow. To attain to the resurrection.

From the dead. So the suffering. Death. Resurrection. Is the pattern of Jesus Christ's life. And it will be. The pattern.

Of every Christian's life. If you're going to live with Christ. Join to Christ. Then in some way. Your life is going to take on. Sort of a reflection of his life.

And so that's what we face. And sooner or later. All of this will come full force to us. Or to our children. Certainly to all of us. In some way or another.

But. Full force. And then. The shepherds will go. To prison first. And they will strike the shepherds.

[23 : 40] And the sheep. Will scatter. So brothers and sisters. We need to hear what the Bible says. To make our marriages better. And to help us raise our children.

And all of that. Which is all good. But we also need to hear what the Bible says. When it says. The devil may kill you. But that's okay. Jesus will give you the crown of life.

So why this study? Here's another reason. Because the beast will win for a season. The beast will win for a season.

How's that for a point? Turn in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 11. Revelation chapter 11.

Revelation. Revelation. Revelation. Revelation 11, we have a picture of the temple, but then we also have a picture of these two witnesses.

[24 : 50] And it's a picture of the church as a witness to the world. You know that there had to be two or three witnesses in order to make a testimony valid, and so that's why you have these two witnesses.

And they're sort of like prophets, sort of like Elijah, sort of like Moses. But these two witnesses witnessing to the world.

And so let's see what it says in verses 3 through 10. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days clothed in sackcloth.

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. So they give light to the earth, but they stand for the Lord of the earth.

If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes out from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. And so for this time, they're invincible.

[25 : 57] This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time that they are prophesying. And they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

So you have this powerful witnessing ministry. Verse 7. It's the ultimate sign of scorn and hatred.

To refuse them burial. And the inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. Now in verse 7, you have them ending, them concluding their testimony. And I think what that means is referring to what Jesus said, that every nation will be witness to, and then the end will come.

So their testimony has reached the ends of the earth. And then it says, The beast that comes up from the abyss will attack them and overpower them. Now this beast from the abyss, I don't have time to explain how...

[27 : 35] It's a symbol, it's a picture of anti-God government. You remember in Daniel, he had those pictures of the beasts. And they oppose God.

And so this is a beast like one of those. And it opposes God. And it's satanically dominated. And it's anti-God. And so it hates God. And it hates his people.

It hates what they have to say. And so it attacks the church and overpowers them and kills them. And then over in...

You can see... Look at Revelation 13, 7. And he has given power to make war.

He was given power to make war against the saints. And to conquer them. He was given authority over every tribe and people, language and nation. And all the inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast.

[28 : 35] So this is all... The whole... Every nation is involved in this great rebellion and attacking the church. And it will overthrow the church. And then John sees a second beast.

Comes out of the land. And this beast is different from the first. But it has the same mission. It wants everyone to worship the first beast. And in verse 15 of Revelation 13, it says, He that is the second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast.

So that it could speak and cause all who refuse to worship the image to be killed. So again, you have pictures of Daniel where Nebuchadnezzar's statue.

And if you don't worship it, you die. And at the end, there's this final climactic confrontation. And the church will all but be overthrown. It will, by all appearances, look like it's done for.

In Revelation 17... You don't have to turn there. Well, you can if you want. But Revelation 17, it talks about this woman.

[29 : 44] This great Babylonian prostitute whore riding upon the beast. So it's this world political and economic system.

And it says it will be drunk with the blood of the saints. The blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Now, the first people in Revelation would have seen that in Rome.

They would have recognized that's what Rome is doing to us. But you see it again and again and again in history. Until there's this great climax at the end where they will be drunk on the blood of the saints.

And those things will happen. Terrible things. Terrible sins. And so, why the study?

Because it's our job. It's my job to prepare you. It's in God's word. And all of God's word is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

[30 : 49] So that the man of God might be thoroughly equipped for every good deed. And so, Paul, after he says that, he says, So we're called to preach. To correct.

To rebuke. To encourage with great patience and careful instruction. That's why this series. Grace. God has told us that terrible things are going to happen.

And so, the question is, will we be ready for those things? Now, in one sense, I know that we can't be completely ready. I mean, grace, I'm very confident that grace is not given ahead of time.

So much of the time. Right? When you come to a situation, that's when grace is given to you. And so, can we be completely ready? No. But grace doesn't come apart from our minds and our hearts. Grace doesn't come apart from what we've stored up and what we've learned and what we've begun to put into practice. That's why grace can be strengthened with practice and with use and with understanding.

[31 : 58] It prepares you for something else that's coming down the way. And so, the question is, are we being prepared as a church, as the church universal, to meet this final and great last challenge?

So, listen to what John Piper, again, writes. Coddled people will not be good listeners when their world collapses.

Now, you know this. When someone is all in a tizzy, right? They're not good at listening, are they? It takes a lot to get them calmed down and to speak truth in their lives.

That's what he's saying. In other words, the moment you're in, the moment of danger, the moment of tragedy, it's too late to stop and to think. It's hard to listen when you're in agony.

He goes on. They will be numb with confusion and rage at the God who wasn't supposed to allow this. If this is the way God is, why didn't you tell us? So, the aim of this book is not to meet our felt needs, but to awaken needs that soon will be felt.

[33 : 09] And to save your faith and strengthen your courage when evil prevails. These are big, deep, weighty, strong truths. Truths for pestilence and war and personal calamity.

These truths are made of steel. And I know a tire iron cannot caress a bruised heart. But if your car is rolling over on you and you are about to crash, and about to crash on you, a cold steel perpendicular tire iron might save your life.

And then later at home, as you tell the story, tears will flow and Jesus will hold you as you sob for joy. Anyway, so why the study? It's to strengthen your faith.

To strengthen your confidence in who God is and what he's doing. That God does not just allow sin. Sin never nullifies God's purpose to glorify Christ.

It's more than just allowing, and it's more than just saying it doesn't nullify it. That these spectacular sins don't hide the glory of Christ. They put it on display. God so uses them to honor his own son.

[34 : 26] They make it shine all the brighter. They bring it about. So these spectacular sins do not just fail to nullify God's purpose to glorify Christ. They make that purpose come about. God takes the power and the wisdom and the hatred and the anger and the fierce war of men, and he, like a great master judo artist, turns it all upon them, and he causes his glory to come out of it.

And so when this truth is poured like cement into our hearts, that's what we need. When that truth is driven down deep into the bedrock of your mind, when these truths become a part of your mental and spiritual landscape.

So they're the lens through which you look at the world, and you begin to understand the world, and there's things there, there's facts, and there's truths about how God has used sin in the past. When those things are there, and they have weight in your mind, you're able to go forward and suffer through these things.

That's what the idea is. And you'll be able to love. You'll be able to love when all else fails. And you'll be able to love when you're in pain, and you will endure, but more than that, you will love. You'll keep reaching out, and you'll go on believing, and you'll go on hoping, and you'll go on worshiping, and you'll go on putting your confidence in the Lord. Because without a way of seeing the greatness and the supremacy, the first place of Christ over the evil of sin, we will collapse into self-pity, into rage.

[35 : 55] We will collapse in on ourselves. And we will feel sorry for ourselves. And that sorrow and that pity for ourselves will begin to dominate us and control us.

And then we will not be able to persevere, and then we will not be able to go unloving. And so that's where we need these truths to come in and to rescue us from ourselves.

And God will be faithful, and he will do it. He will be faithful, and he will do it. And so in love, we need to see how God works. So we want to build these things into our way of thinking.

We want to give you an operating system that is able to handle this data, this information that has a place for it, to keep you witnessing, to keep you loving, to keep you believing all the way to the end. And when the last martyr is dead, and their number, God knows. When the last martyr is dead, and the last tear is cried, Jesus himself will come and will stand before him and not have to be ashamed.

[37 : 04] And then we'll hear those words, Well done, good and faithful servant. Come and enter the joy of your master. And I hope I will see all of you there.

We're dismissed. Thank you.