



Spectacular Sins: And Their Global Purpose in the Glory of Christ

John Piper

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John Piper delivers powerful biblical reassurances to bolster readers' trust in the sovereignty of God and the supremacy of Christ when evil and tragedy come.

If God governs the sinful acts of men, then does the devastation caused by those terrorists, dictators, murderers, cheats, and abusers discredit Jesus' words: "All authority in heaven and earth belongs to me"? When heart-rending news comes of the latest accident, illness, or natural disaster, can we really believe that in Jesus, "all things hold together"?

Though God has not answered all of our questions about sin and suffering, there are things he wants us to know, things he declares in his Word-such as what's at stake in the "spectacular" sins of others and the horrible tragedies of this life; their global purpose, both historically and today; and what these events say to us personally.

As John Piper works through these biblical truths, this book will bolster readers' trust in the utter sovereignty of God such that they'll be less timid in their witness and less afraid of whatever may come. It is also a joy-infused declaration that because everything occurs through Christ and for Christ and his glory, they are forever secure in him.

Spectacular Sins: And Their Global Purpose in the Glory of Christ Details

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From Reader Review Spectacular Sins: And Their Global Purpose in the Glory of Christ for online ebook

DeVante Neal says

Spectacular Sins and Their Global Purpose in the Glory of Christ is a title that nails down the theme of this work. Here, Piper deals with questions regarding how we are to deal with sin in the world. He observes the fall of Satan, the fall of man, the pride of Babel, Joseph's unjust suffering, Israel's rejection of God as King, and Judas' betrayal of Jesus.

It is important to note that the chief aim of this book is not to just answer a variety of theological and philosophical questions about specific sins in the Bible; if that were the aim, the book would have to be far longer than 112 pages. Instead, Piper wants readers to observe the sins listed in this book, and understand these sins were used and ordained by God to glorify his Son.

The specific sins listed here are more for illustration than for examination, and once one gets this idea, then the book will open up to them.

We must remember that God's chief aim is the glorification of himself. If we humans make it about anything else, then our Christian worldview will collapse on itself when seemingly senseless sins such as these and the ones we see on the news occur over and over again without any God to stop them. However, if we understand that God is on a mission to glorify himself and that he is ultimately in control over everything—including evil—then we can look at God with wonder and awe all the more so. Why? Because James 1:17 tells us both that all good gifts come from above AND that God only gives good gifts. Therefore, this must mean that when God allows evil to happen, he has a reason.

I highly recommend this book. Though it is not long, it causes the attentive reader to wrestle with important questions that go far deeper than "why did God allow this or that specific sin." I leave you with Genesis 50:21; a verse that encompasses both the theme of this book and God's power over sin in our lives "You planned evil against me; God planned it for good..."

Kara Larson says

Read for a Christian Education (CE) class at Redeemer. Mind blowing...

"The apex of evil was the apex of grace."

"You meant, God meant." God doesn't react to what man meant. God is acting in what man is doing.

"He does all things for his glory and names sake."

"God's plan to save us through grace was not a response to human decisions to sin. Saving grace was the plan that made sin necessary."

"The aim of this book has been to show that over and over in the history of the world, the epoch-making sins that changed the course of history never nullified but only fulfilled the global purposes of God to glorify his Son and save his people."

"If God were not the main actor in the death of Christ [by his hand and plan], then the death of Christ could not save us from our sins... The reason the death of Christ is the heart of the gospel—the heart of the good news—is that God was doing it."

"When you are tempted to forsake God because of the greatest of evil and misery in this world, may you remember that that Bible has prepared us for this temptation. It has shown us over and over that sin and sickness and disaster never escape the good governance of the infinitely wise God."

Examples of Spectacular Sin include: Satan's fall, Adam's disobedience, the pride of Babel, the sale of Joseph, the sinful origin of the son of David, Judas' betrayal of Christ.

Nat says

This is one of Piper's easier books to read. Adapted from a series of messages, it's also short as well. I read it in less than four hours.

Why does God allow sin? Why does God allow Satan to get away with what he does? Why not destroy sin when it first appeared in Satan and/or man?

These are some of the questions that Piper attempts to answer using "spectacular sins" in the Bible (the fall, tower of Babel, Joseph being sold into slavery, Israel's demand for a king, and the betrayal of Judas Iscariot). I believe that the author does a good job showing why God permitted these to happen and was able to use them for His glory.

His key text begins in Colossians 1:15-16 and expands from there. If anything, this book really got me to think about why things happen. It also leads one to have a different outlook on life in regards to sin and calamity.

Jake Weihrauch says

If you find yourself asking the question, "Why does God allow wicked sin?" I recommend you pickup this book and read it. Scholars and babes in Christ will benefit from reminders and new truths.

Jon Pentecost says

Helpful, brief consideration of how God is sovereign even over the greatest tragic sins in the world, and how he works all things for his glory and our good.

Side benefit is as Piper examines different 'spectacular sins' that primarily occur in the OT, he helps show how the arc of scripture is building toward Christ himself.

Highly recommend as devotional and encouraging book.

Ryan Hawkins says

I loved this book way more than I expected I would. I knew the premise—that Piper was showing that God

allows and uses sins for his sovereign purposes—but I didn't expect it to be so interesting and convincing. As a result, it wasn't just a book about that, but it was a book which showed that God truly does have his major purpose as exalting Christ, and that God truly is sovereign over all things. He ordains and permits, not just foresees.

To this end, I would heartily recommend this book. Piper shows so convincingly from the Bible the massive, sovereignty of God. A sovereignty which has always been in control and purposeful in all events, from the fall of Satan to the fall of Adam to the death of Christ, and more. God isn't surprised, he isn't taken off guard, and he doesn't just know the future, but he permits and ordains it. (If this is difficult to grasp with the goodness of God, Piper addresses it well in the book). And all of this is explicitly biblical, with texts and phrases which lead one having to agree. We just don't talk about it much in our modern evangelicalism.

As a result, being just over 100 pages I actually think it is a great book to introduce how big God really is. How in control he is over all things, all events, even and especially sin. It doesn't take away from human responsibility, but he truly is over and above it all, and always has been. It gets one into the mind of God just a bit, and for that I was extremely thankful. I loved it.

Robert Varner says

This book is about how great sin exists for the purpose of making Christ famous. He picks the greatest sins in human history to accomplish this thesis: The fall of satan, the fall of Adam, The Tower of Babel, Judas' betrayal of Jesus, etc. Each one serves a purpose in showing how great sin is not just a part of God's ultimate plan in creation, but is used for the glory and fame of Christ.

Andrea says

Wow. This book is a life- and heart-changer. In a little over 100 pages, Piper walks us through Scripture explaining how God's purpose is behind the most "spectacular sins," not as an afterthought or a plan to make do, but from the overflow of his wisdom and holiness. The author shows how God has planned for every sin (like Babel, the selling of Joseph into slavery, the Israelite's insistence on having a human king, Adam's fall, etc.) to play a God-glorifying role in Christ's redemptive work on the cross, often bringing about the exact opposite intent of the sinner(s) - even to save the very people who meant it for evil. If you've ever struggled with why God allows sin in the world, or what his role in it actually is, this book will help you understand what the Bible says about sin and suffering and God's ultimate plan for his glory (from which we benefit by His grace).

There were so many good lessons from this book. The author breaks down many of what we might consider to be the worst sins recorded in the Bible. He writes, for example, of Jesus's betrayal and murder, "At the all-important pivot of human history, the worst sin ever committed served to show the greatest glory of Christ and obtain the sin-conquering gift of God's grace. God did not just overcome evil at the cross. He made evil serve the overcoming of evil. He made evil commit suicide in doing its worst evil."

He later writes, "My aim is to show that sin and evil, no matter how spectacular, never nullify the decisive, Christ-exalting purposes of God. No, my aim is more than that. These spectacular sins do not just *fail* to nullify God's purpose to glorify Christ, they *succeed*, by God's unfathomable providence, in making his

gracious purpose come to pass. This truth is the steel God offers to put in the spine of his people as they face the worst calamities."

There is an excellent discussion of Colossians 1:9-20 in which Piper demonstrates how all things were created by, through and for Christ. He writes, "All that came into being exists for Christ -that is, everything exists to display the greatness of Christ. Nothing - nothing!- in the universe exists for its own sake.

Everything - from the bottom of the oceans to the top of the mountains, from the smallest particle to the biggest star, from the most boring school subject to the most fascinating science, from the ugliest cockroach to the most beautiful human, from the greatest saint to the most wicked genocidal dictator - everything that exists, exists to make the greatness of Christ more fully known - including *you*, and the person you have the hardest time liking."

Evil does not exist outside of God's power and sovereignty. They are subjected to his purposes. "Satan's fall and ongoing existence are for the glory of Christ. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, will be more highly honored and more deeply appreciated and loved in the end because he defeats Satan not the moment after Satan fell, but through millennia of long-suffering, patience, humility, servanthood, suffering, and decisively through his own death. A single, sudden, and infinitely holy display of power to destroy Satan immediately after his fall would have been a glorious display of power and righteousness. But it would not have been the fullest possible display of all the glories in the Son and the Father. God chose an infinitely wise way of displaying the full array of divine glories in letting Satan fall and do his work for millennia."

He goes on to say, "Whatever God permits, he permits for a reason. And his reasons are always infinitely wise and purposeful. He did not have to let the Fall of Satan or of Adam happen. He could have stopped it. The fact that he did not stop it means he has a reason, a purpose for it. And he doesn't make up his plans as he goes along. What he knows to be wise, he has always known to be wise - eternally."

Piper argues from 2 Tim. 1:9 that, "Saving grace was given to us before the ages began. That is, it was given to us before there was any human sin to save us from. Therefore, grace was planned before human sin was there to need it. This means that God's plan to save us through grace was not a response to human decisions to sin. Saving grace was the plan that made sin necessary. God did not find sin in the world and then make a plan to remedy it. He had the plan before the ages, and that plan was for the glory of sin-conquering grace through the death of Jesus Christ."

There's a great chapter about the sin in the building of the Tower of Babel. He writes, "We often think that the diversity of languages and cultures and peoples and political states is a hinderance to world evangelism - the spread of Christ's glory. That's not the way God sees it. God is more concerned about the dangers of human uniformity than he is about human diversity. We humans are far too evil to be allowed to unite in one language or one government. The gospel of the glory of Christ spreads better and flourishes more *because* of 6,500 languages, not in spite of them." In these, and many other portions of the book, Piper carefully explains from Scripture how the things that may cause us to despair or to doubt, are things that God is sovereignly working out for his glory. I can't do it justice in this summary, but each chapter was a challenge and a blessing to me.

Most importantly, I came away from this book with a renewed and deeper awe of God. Piper writes that one of the main points of what we learn from God's purposes in sin is that he is faithful to his name and "how amazingly grace for sinners like us flows from God's supreme allegiance to his own name in the midst of sin." He continues, "God's allegiance to his own name is the foundation of his faithfulness to us. If God ever forsook his supreme allegiance to himself, there would be no grace for us. If he based his kindness to us on our worth, there would be no kindness to us. We are stiff-necked, rebellious, and ungrateful. Free, unmerited

grace is our only hope to be otherwise. And the basis of that grace is not the worth of our name, but the infinite worth of God's name."

I would have liked to see a little more personal application because there is so much here to apply to our hearts and lives as we struggle with the implications of our own sin and the fallenness of the world around us. However, I think Piper has taken some of the most severe examples of sin and evil and suffering and explained how God's purposes are behind them so that we can look at our own lives and do the same.

He gives a lot of scriptural support for what he writes and doesn't attempt to force verses to fit. I really appreciate his desire to take each verse at face value, in the context of the whole Bible, and rest in the fact that some of these difficult issues will be a mystery to us, while emphasizing that God does give us truth to know and understand.

The one thing I am still trying to sort out is Piper's claim that "everything that exists - including evil - is ordained by an infinitely holy and all-wise God to make the glory of Christ shine more brightly." Much is said in the book about the ultimate glorification of Christ (and there are several verses to support this), but I am still trying to understand this in light of the glory of the Father. Christ, himself, submits to the Father (Phil. 2:6) and is exalted "to the glory of the Father." (Phil. 2:11). At the same time, Christ's glory is God's glory. This book gave me a lot to consider about this topic.

I providentially read this book after reading Invited by Lysa Terkeurst and Piper's book is such a surprising antidote to Invited that I was overwhelmed with the refreshing truth, depth and commitment to proper handling of scripture. On the surface, the two have very little in common in terms of content (and I only "randomly" picked up Spectacular Sins because I had borrowed it from someone quite a while back and wanted to return it), but throughout Piper's book I kept thinking, "Yes! This is what I was looking for." There are even specific scripture passages/stories used in both books that are infinitely improved upon by Piper's teaching. I can't believe how helpful it was not only as a biblical answer to the book I had just read, but as a wonderful guide in understanding how the sin in this world will ultimately result in the glory of God.

I really loved this short book. I think it lays a great foundation about things that seem to trouble a lot of people and it constantly redirects the reader to God's incommunicable attributes and his worthiness of all praise and glory.

SECOND READING: I read this again for a book club. Again, so good. I am beginning to anticipate the arguments and can tell that the worthiness of God and his sovereignty and wise purposes are taking hold of my heart even if it's a slow process. I can't hear too much that God is in control and that his glory not only prevails from before time but showers us with the riches of Christ as it goes.

Michael Schmid says

In this short book, John Piper shows God's sovereignty even over the worst of sins that are committed and how ultimately even those sins do not diminish God's glory, but actually contribute to His glory. A difficult subject to handle, but an important one for Christians to understand.

Ted Tyler says

A MUST-READ! Short book, less than 120 pages, and it only takes about 2.5-3 hours to read through at a slow, thorough pace. The BEST book that I have read in 2017!

I was drawn to this book by the provocative title. How can sin be anything but spectacular? John Piper makes the compelling case that throughout Scripture, God is using man's rebellion and failures to set the stage and to foreshadow the coming of the Messiah. He looks at Adam, Babel, Joseph, the kings of Israel, and Judas as examples to prove this point. I won't spoil the book for you, but be sure to read this!

Brantley Rutz says

Short and sweet. Piper does a fantastic job of expounding on the Biblical truth that God's hand is at work in this world and not just in the "good" events. God is sovereign over all; even the evil events. This is shown most perfectly in the death of His Son Jesus; the greatest act of sin ever.

Piper's purpose in writing is to strengthen "wimpy Christians." The truth of the matter is that this world is full of trials and tragedies and we need a strong sense of God's sovereignty in the midst of it all. Here is a quote from Pastor John on his purpose in writing this book:

"My prayer is that these great historical vistas of God's sovereignty over sin take their place in your mind, they would have a profoundly practical effect in making you strong in the face of breath-stopping sorrows and making you bold for Christ in the face of dangerous opposition—Christ-exalting strength in calamity and Christ-exalting courage in conflict. I pray the Lord will weave cords of steel and silk into the fabric of your soul."

I can tell you, I've experienced breath-stopping sorrows and it is the truths in this book that Piper pulls from Scripture that have given me a backbone of steel which has allowed me to stand when I wanted to fall.

Margaret Wolfinbarger says

This may be the most important book I have ever read. Or maybe it was just really helpful for a difficult time in our lives. After the murder of a friend, and other difficulties, I sought to understand why God allows these things. The answer was found in these pages. For His glory. I found incredible comfort in John Piper's very clear prose. Every sin has a purpose. Even my own.

Anne says

Piper summarizes this book best in saying, "the aim of this book has been to show that over and over in the history of the world, the epoch-making sins that changed the course of history never nullified but only fulfilled the global purposes of God to glorify his Son and save his people.

Herman Douma says

John Piper laat in dit boek prachtig zien, hoe God soeverein is over het kwaad en de ellende in de wereld. Hoe het alles dient ter meerdere eer en glorie van Zijn Zoon. Hoe God het kwaad en de ellende, tot het goede keert. Altijd weer. Prachtig hoe Piper dit alleen fundeert vanuit Gods Woord. Een mooie pastorale handreiking bij moeiten met kwaad en ellende. Een aanrader, een boek dat je geloof versterkt en de ballast in je boot van het leven verzwaard.

Tony Huy says

Great book!!!
