

(Christmas in the) Psalms – The Problem



Intro

Resonated - problem
- promise
- provision

I want to tell you a story. It's exciting! You will want to celebrate this. You will be glad I told you of this man who was a hero.

There was a man who carried 75 dead people to the edge of a cliff, and lowered all of the bodies down by rope, one at a time. That's it.

Who cares? Why does that matter? Why should we celebrate?

The context of this story is what makes it significant. Let me give you the context:

While serving with the Medical Detachment, 307th Infantry Regiment, 77th Infantry Division, in action at Urasoe Mura, Okinawa, unarmed Private First Class Desmond Doss was a company aid man when the 1st Battalion assaulted a jagged escarpment 400 feet high. As the troops gained the summit, a heavy concentration of artillery, mortar and machine gun fire crashed into them, inflicting approximately 75 casualties and driving the others back. Private First Class Doss refused to seek cover and remained in the fire-swept area with the many stricken, carrying all 75 casualties one-by-one to the edge of the escarpment and there lowering them on a rope-supported litter down the face of a cliff to friendly hands.

This is only part of the reason that Desmond Doss – the protagonist in the film Hacksaw Ridge – was awarded the Medal of Honor. It is one demonstration of his great bravery and concern for fellow soldiers. But clearly, the marvel of the story and the reason for the heroic recognition is found in the details of the story; he performed his deed in the line of fire, while he was unarmed, risking his very life for his fellow soldiers. Why Desmond Doss matters, the reason his story should be celebrated, is only made clear when the context of his experiences is understood.

Let me tell you another story. It's exciting! You will be glad I told you this.

There was a baby born in a stable 2000 years ago.

Who cares? Why does that matter? Why should we celebrate?

Why does Christmas matter? Just like the first story I told, this story is only spectacular when we here of some of the details of the story. In fact it is the environment of this story, just like the previous one, that makes the birth of a baby such great news, that makes the birth something to celebrate. The hostile environment this baby was born into was not dangerous because of some external enemy, but rather because of an internal enemy that threatens the very existence of the human race. An internal enemy that explains the very reason why this child was born, and why we should celebrate in his birth.

Psalm 36:1-4 ESV

To the choirmaster. Of David, the servant of the LORD.

- [1] Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes.*
- [2] For he flatters himself in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated.*
- [3] The words of his mouth are trouble and deceit; he has ceased to act wisely and do good.*
- [4] He plots trouble while on his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; he does not reject evil.*

The depth of sin

Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart;

Define sin: Failing to do what God commands and/or doing what God prohibits;
Sin, iniquity, transgression,

Descriptors of sin (Paul): Disobedience, unrighteousness, godlessness, uncleanness, unfaithfulness, vanity, ignorance, error, lawlessness, unbelief, stumbling, futility, doing what is evil, deeds of darkness, disobeying the gospel

The location of sin: Theologian Paul R. House notes, "Sin starts internally and works outward. ... sin is internal before it is external. ... Sin is not simply on the surface of personal events. Sin comes from the heart, from the inner recesses of people's beings."

Application:

God alone both knows the heart and can heal the heart. **Acts 15:8-9 ESV** [8] And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, [9] and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. Go to God to heal your heart from sin.

JOHN PIPER

What is sin?
It is the glory of God not honored.
The holiness of God not revered.
The greatness of God not admired.
The power of God not praised.
The truth of God not sought.
The wisdom of God not esteemed.
The beauty of God not treasured.
The goodness of God not savored.
The faithfulness of God not trusted.
The commandments of God not obeyed.
The justice of God not respected.
The wrath of God not feared.
The grace of God not cherished.
The presence of God not prized.
The person of God not loved.
That is sin.

↓
This is the purpose for which Christ came!
↓
GOSPEL

The seriousness of sin

there is no fear of God before his eyes.

Psalm 51:1-4 ESV

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

- [1] Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
- [2] Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!
- [3] For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
- [4] Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.

• lust
• adultery - Bathsheba
• lying - Nathan
• murder - Uriah

D. A. Carson: "What makes sin sin, in the deepest sense, is that it is against God...What makes sin really vile, intrinsically heinous—what makes them worthy of punishment by God himself—is that they are first, foremost, and most deeply sins against the living God, who has made us for himself and to whom we must one day give account."

The seriousness of sin

Measuring sin:

John W. Mahony: "A series of measurements will help us see sin's perversity."

1. Measure sin against the perfect, infinite holiness of the one we sin against.
2. Measure sin against the height of righteousness and relationship with God that we have fallen from.
3. Measure sin by the length to which God went to redeem us.
4. Measure sin against the end for which we were created; to glorify God by bearing his image.
5. Measure sin by considering the destination to which we are headed.
6. Measure sin by considering the unfinished task God's people have been called to accomplish; the world is a dark, evil place.

Application:

Measure your sin – [fighting temptation: how does this measure up against joy, delight, and rest in Christ?]

Measure sin by contrasting it with the glories, and beauty, and grace of Christ.

The deception of sin

For he flatters himself in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated.

Literally: "He deals smoothly with himself" – the sinner deceives himself

Owen: "[Deceit] consists in presenting unto the soul, or mind, things otherwise than they are, either in their nature, causes, effects, or present respect unto the soul. This is the general nature of deceit and it prevails many ways. It hides what ought to be seen and considered, conceals circumstances and consequences, presents what is not, or things as they are not."

Sin causes us to believe things otherwise than they are; namely, that our sin is not sin. If we don't see sin as sin, we certainly aren't going to hate it!

The commutation suggested

ONE PARTICULAR OUTWORKING OF SIN'S DECEITFULNESS ...

Spurgeon: Ways sin deceives in sermon #2130 - THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN

Sin is deceitful, ~~next~~ in the names it wears. It is very apt to change its title. It seldom cares for its own true description. Fine words are often used to cover foul deeds. ... Almost every sin, nowadays, has a pretty name to be called by on Sundays, and silver slippers to wear in fine society. The paintbrush and the powder box are much used upon the wrinkled countenance of sin to make it look fair and beautiful! ... Alas, how sadly prone are men to call things by false names! Even those who profess to be godly men; when they are indulging sin will speak of it as though it were no raven, black as night, but a dove, with its wings covered with silver... Today, "worldliness" is "being abreast of the age." False doctrine is described as "advanced thought." Indifference to the truth of God is liberality; heresy is breadth of view. Yet names do not alter things! Call garlic perfume, and it remains a rank odor. Style the fiend an angel of light, and he is none the less a devil. Sin—call it by what names you may—is still evil, only evil and that continually."

Application:

Call sin what it is

The results of sin

→ Actions:

The words of his mouth are trouble and deceit

Words are trouble and deceit = evil and deception that produces harm to others

he has ceased to act wisely and do good.

This line implies that his actions are also hurtful and malicious

Fitting conduct that is in line with godly wisdom and that benefits himself and others has ceased

*Sin with heart
affect the*

Thinking:

He plots trouble while on his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; he does not reject evil.

His policies and procedures within his belief system, a position which he chooses, is one that amounts to harm for others and an offense and affront to God

Application:

Adopt a realistic perspective (by realistic I mean biblical) of sin so that you might more fully appreciate the glory and beauty and wonder of Christmas. See sin in all its ugliness, meanness, and vileness so that you can celebrate Jesus in all his sweetness, lovingkindness, and holiness. See the problem of sin so that you can see the incredible grace of the incarnation of the Son of God.

⇓
Society's rejection of Christmas
↳ maybe not because they're offended
↳ maybe because we've made it irrelevant
↳ gospel of self-fulfillment
↳ be all you can be
↳ your best life now
↳ we haven't communicated why Jesus came!
• Challenge - share with someone ⇒ Why Christmas matters?
↳ speak of yourself