

## Take 2 - Notes from Schindler's List

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The movie Schindler's List is a portrait of the fall of man and the potential for redemption that lies within all of us. It is a picture of man's unwillingness to come to grips with the sin nature, with evil in us and around us, to accept the ultimate outcome of the work of sin (death), an unwillingness to believe that it is real and that the consequences of sin in man unredeemed are real. It illustrates the state of denial that most of us live in, and the possibility of breaking out of that denial to make a difference. Using the Holocaust, the movie captures the ultimate dilemma we face on this earth, that of the sin nature we are born with, its ability to blind us to evil, its power to kill and destroy, our tendency to go along with it, our unwillingness to see it for what it is and go against it, and the difference we can make if we will. However, Schindler's List falls short in its depiction of the Holocaust in one key area. It fails to capture and portray the fact that the majority of Germans that perpetrated the Holocaust were normal decent people like you and me. The movie demonizes them, making them seem like monsters that we cannot recognize with, portraying them as womanizing drunks, when in reality most were not this way at all. The true horror of the Holocaust is that normal people perpetrated it, that normal people, with nothing wrong with them stood idly by and watched it happen, helped it happen, caused it to happen. Normal people went along with the systematic rounding up of the Jews and their mass murder. And not just stood by and watched, but actually profited from it. This is Oscar Schindler in the first part of the movie. He alone captures this aspect of the Holocaust in the movie. All of the other Germans are portrayed more as demons than men. They are portrayed as madmen. And while there were some who indeed were madmen, most Germans were normal people. They were just like you and me before the war and the Nazi movement overtook them. One of the greatest lessons and scariest aspects of the Holocaust is that it was created and perpetrated by normal people just like you and me.

This brings us to the great delusion of the Holocaust - the fact that an entire nation was able to fall under the influence of the Nazi delusion and perform these atrocities. It shows the ultimate expression of the fall of man and sin. While there are many ways sin works in man, it ultimately drives us to kill, steal and destroy. The Nazi moment in history is a moment when an entire nation allowed the sin nature to take over and run/ruin their country. Pride, arrogance and the evil way dominated men's behavior, a nation's behavior. The sin nature was unrestrained, and we see it unleashed on the world and on the Jewish people. I suppose the movie portrays this by the way it shows the Nazis to be crazy drunks either busy drinking and carousing or busy killing Jews. It shows no in between, no normal moments of life in the day of a Nazi, except Schindler. And again, the scariest part of the story is that it is normal Janes and Joes, normal Heinrichs and Helgas committing the heinous barbarism of the Holocaust and of WW2. The German people are under a satanic delusion. Their minds are fogged. The power of sin has taken over and they have become Cain incarnate. They are asleep at the wheel of their spiritual life, of their ethical life. Sin is having its way in the life of an entire nation.

The girl in the red coat is symbolic of Schindler waking up and coming out of this delusion that nothing is wrong with what is going on. Everyone else is oblivious to the

plight of the Jews, including Schindler. They have bought in to the Nazi lie. Then in that moment when he looks down from the hill and sees what is going on, sees the little girl in the red coat, at that moment he is given eyes to see, and realizes something is amiss, that something horrible is occurring. He has empathy for her. He changes in that instant, and is no longer fully under the delusion that nothing is wrong, that this is normal. He steps outside of the Nazi fog and sees clearly the Holocaust occurring around him.

The second time we see the Girl in the red coat, we first see Oscar standing in the street with ashes raining down on him. This leads to her second sighting, and is key in that it shows that the affects of the sin of the Holocaust is raining down on him, affecting him right where he stands in the street. There is no escaping the ravages of sin. If left unchecked, the outworking of sin eventually affects everyone in the vicinity. This is a picture of this truth. Then we later see the little girl in the red coat, dead on the cart being hauled away to be burned. The bonfire of corpses is the source of the ash. Schindler is again moved. This moment in the movie is symbolic of the final death of his innocence. He cannot take it anymore. As he looks on with horror at the bonfire of bodies and the girl in the red coat being carted away to join them, he removes the handkerchief that he has been using to cover his mouth and nose. This first act of removing the handkerchief from his face and breathing in the full horror of the smell of sin at work, the smell of the dead corpses being burned in a huge pile is the beginning of his rebirth as a man, as a difference maker. Removing his handkerchief is symbolic of him no longer hiding from the truth of what is going on around him. It is the ostrich taking its head out of the sand. He fully sees what is going on and realizes he has to act now or lose what is left of his humanity. The girl in the red coat causes Schindler to be born again, to awaken from the Nazi delusion, the fog lifts from his brain and he can finally see what is going on. It is his 'aha' moment. He fully sees for the first time what is going on, and realizes the horror. He feels compassion not just for the girl in the red coat but for all of the Jews and their plight. Something must be done.

Similarly we go thru life with the horror of sin working in our life and in the lives of those around us. We may not be party to a full scale national Holocaust, but that is only because there is not one around currently. History is full of them, most recently the plight of the Native Americans, Cambodia's killing fields, Rwanda, Bosnia and Croatia, the Arab hatred of Jews and America, etc. If there was a Holocaust going on, most of us would join in just as the German people did. It is because of the sin nature that is inside us. We are born with the capacity for great evil because of the fall of man. And there is only one way to overcome this sin nature. We must be born again. Schindler is a picture of this realization that something terrible is wrong with humanity and that we must be born again to step out of the delusion of sin in our lives. We must be delivered from it by a huge power. Only God has the power to cut us loose from the depravity we are born with. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to guide us through this life in a Godly way. Only the born again Christian sees through the haze of a Holocaust in action when you are a member of the people group perpetrating the Holocaust. Violence and murder are the ultimate expressions of the fall of man. We see this when Cain kills Abel. We see this concept embodied in the entire history of man. Our history is violent and deadly because the sin nature in us is violent and evil. The Holocaust serves as a wakeup call to all of humanity, that if left alone and allowed to drive our life, the sin nature leads to

death and destruction. The movie is a cry to be born again by the Spirit of God, and to put on the new man, to live a life led by the Holy Spirit rather than being led by the sin nature we are born with. Taking off the handkerchief is symbolic of us acknowledging our sin and our need for a savior. The movie illustrates the importance of living a life based on Romans chapter 8, being led by the spirit instead of giving in to the flesh. The movie is also a warning that if we are not born again, we will be swept away by this sin nature and live our own holocaust. Apart from Christ we are all Nazis, but most of us just don't get the opportunity to fully show it. There is no neutral territory. Switzerland is a lie – they wouldn't let Jews trying to escape the Nazis into their country – there is no middle ground. They are just as guilty as the German people because they stood by and did nothing to stop the evil.

The scene at the end of the movie is also of great interest in that it represents the cry of eternity in our lives. Each of us will stand before God one day and will feel the pain of the resources we wasted on ourselves that could have been used to help others. Whether feeding the hungry, sending the gospel to unreached people, meeting the needs of the poor, the human need and suffering present on the planet at any given moment is staggering, and we must be careful to always use as much of our resources to meet this need rather than to lavish it on ourselves. This is especially true if we end up with a lot of resources and wealth. Be wary of buying boats and planes and second homes and taking lavish vacations - it is very likely you will have great regret when you stand before Christ at the end of your life if you live this way, just as Schindler did on the train tracks at the end of the movie. We see him in agony when he realizes that he could have saved a few more. He could have done more. His car could have saved two lives. His lapel pin one. Suddenly the weight of the atrocity bears down on him fully, and he realizes the story. He realizes the difference he made and the bigger difference he could have made. This scene beckons us to live our lives in such a way that when we stand before God we will not have this same regret. We must do all that we can to further the gospel, help the poor, deliver the oppressed, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give water to those who are thirsty, etc. This is the call of Schindler's List to our lives. It is the call to be a difference maker for good. It is a call to stand against evil in all of its forms. It is a call to save those around us. To be a life-giving spirit. To make a difference for the people that we can.

There is a great story about a young man and the starfish that begins to embody the message of Schindler's List:

"Once upon a time there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work. One day he was walking along the shore. As he looked down the beach, he saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself to think of someone who would dance to the day. So he began to walk faster to catch up. As he got closer, he saw that it was a young man and the young man wasn't dancing, but instead he was reaching down to the shore, picking up something and very gently throwing it into the ocean. As he got closer he called out, "Good morning! What are you doing?"

The young man paused, looked up and replied, "Throwing starfish in the ocean."

"I guess I should have asked, why are you throwing starfish in the ocean?"

"The sun is up, and the tide is going out. And if I don't throw them in they'll die."

"But, young man, don't you realize that there are miles and miles of beach, and starfish all along it. You can't possibly make a difference!"

The young man listened politely. Then bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it into the sea, past the breaking waves and said, "It made a difference for that one."

'There is something very special in each and every one of us. We have all been gifted with the ability to make a difference. And if we can become aware of that gift, we gain through the strength of our visions the power to shape the future. We must each find our starfish. And if we "throw our starfish" wisely and well, the world will be blessed.'

As Oscar agonizes over the Jews he did not save, he is reminded by Yitzak Stern of the Jews that he did save, the people he was able to safely bring through the Holocaust. He was reminded that he made a difference for them. And that is enough. So we have two key messages from the movie:

We must deal with the sin in us, be born again by the Spirit of God and live a life led by the Holy Spirit. We must not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind, just as Oscar was transformed by his vision of the girl in the red coat. If we do this we will have eyes to see and ears to hear. We will not be deluded by the spirit of the next Holocaust but will oppose it, making a difference for good. And we will not create our own mini-holocaust of a life filled with damage to and destruction of the lives around us. God will use us and our life to deliver the people around us safely through their own mini-holocaust, whether we are talking about our children, our spouse, our friends and co-workers. Whoever is in our life. Conversely, if we fail to deal with the sin in our life and be born again, sin will ultimately ruin our life, just as it led Nazi Germany to its ruin. It will lead us to do terrible things that we will ultimately regret. Its only aim is to steal, kill, and destroy, both us and everyone around us. There is no middle ground. Choose you this day whom you will serve. Choose to serve God. Take the handkerchief from your face and acknowledge your sin, recognize your need for God and the urgency to take action and be born again.

And secondly, be a difference maker. You cannot be used by God to help everyone, but you can let Him use you to help some of the people around you. In the absence of a nationally sponsored Holocaust, there is still the mini-holocaust of satanic delusion always going on around us. It is the outworking of sin in the lives of those around us. And sin is trying to destroy their life and the lives of their family. It is always going on, dragging men, women, and children away to the bonfire of a Christless eternity. Our call is to be an Oscar Schindler and make a difference in the lives of the people around us. To rescue them from the sin that is going to ultimately kill them. Just as the Jews were resistant at the beginning to Schindler's offer to help, so will most people be resistant at first to the offer of Christ. And just as most of the Jews were oblivious to their ultimate fate in Nazi Germany, so most people are oblivious to their fate apart from Christ. Our call is to be a blessing to those around us, to be a difference maker, to be an Oscar Schindler by using what God has given us to help others.