
The Tragedy Of Being Lost In Sin

Charles Itseghosimhe

INTRODUCTION

When we practice sin – we are said to be dead in sin, which suggests that we are abiding in sin and are powerless to take real action against our condition of sin. We lose the direction which God provides us. Jeremiah stated that *the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23)*. The Psalmist confirmed that *the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and God delights in his way (Psalm 37:23)*.

So, if we lose the direction of God – we become lost. We become dead spiritually. The most devastating effects of sin are spiritual and eternal. Perhaps the worst aspect of spiritual death is that it cannot be seen. Remember the message to the church in Sardis - *"I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead (Revelation 3:1)*.

Often, when something is physically wrong with someone, he and others know there is a problem because of the way he looks. In contrast, a person can be spiritually dead and look very much alive. He may be in good health physically, prospering financially, and doing well socially, but still be dead—dead in sin!

In such state we become deprived of true life in God. We will find ourselves in the condition of living for sin, that is, we will be living in a state where there is no spiritual connection with God. This is tragic for any child of God.

However, no one forces us to sin. We cannot blame another for what we have done. We sin of our own free will. If we are in tragedy because of sin, we alone are to blame. There is every need for us to understand the tragedy which is sin brings into our lives – whenever we practice it and we become lost in it.

THE TRAGEDIES WE RECEIVE FOR BEING LOST IN SIN

1. ***We become empty outside of God*** - Getting sin out of our lives is never enough. We need to get rid of sin and fill the vacuum which sin has left, with righteousness.

Most of us make fresh resolves all through our lives to quit some sin or failure that haunts us. The smoker may quit smoking several times every year yet finds it difficult to stay that way. The person who is hooked on gambling quits every year yet finds it difficult to stay that way. The person caught up in pornography makes fresh resolves to stop this way of life often, but he returns to the filth all over again. The individual, who is involved in sexual immorality, if he has an interest in being moral at all, will decide to quit many times; but somehow find it difficult to stay that way. The person who cannot control his temper decides to change after each loss of control. It works until something sets him off the next time. The person who keeps malice and accommodates bitterness decides to change after accomplishing his goal but comes back to it as soon as an offence is caused.

Jesus said, *"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'²⁵ And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order.²⁶ Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first"* **(Luke 11:24)**.

This means that our sinful habits have a hold on us. We quit the habits all right but when we do nothing to fill that vacuum, they always come back to see if we will take

them back again. As long as we have not replaced the evil with positive action, thought, and work for good and fill our lives with God or His Spirit – they will return with greater force. When evil habits are resumed, it becomes harder each time to get rid of them. In **Luke 11:26**, when the unclean spirit returned, he brought with him seven demons more wicked than himself. The last state was worse than the first.

We must not allow ourselves to be found empty when Satan comes to tempt us. Sin is never satisfied to be static. ***Sin is always moving with the worldly trends.*** Satan is always looking for a way to lead us down the road of sin that leads away from God and into the ruin of an everlasting hell.

The answer is to being lost in sin and to avoid the tragedy is to fill our lives with God. Paul pleaded with Christians to be filled with the Spirit (***Ephesians 5:18 - And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.***). Paul knew that to be filled with alcohol was contrary to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul knows that to be filled with the Holy Spirit every time was the only option and it remains the only option to avoid any thing that defiles a man, makes man miserable and brings man into tragedy - this also includes alcoholic drinking.

For those who are not Christians, you need to recognize that your life needs the Saviour. You need to have a real relationship with the Saviour. You need to surrender your lives to the Creator – to God. You need to believe in Christ (***John 8:24***), repent of your sins (***Luke 13:3***), confess your faith in Christ as the Son of God (***Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:10***), and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (***Acts 2:38***). *God will add you to the church of His Son.*

- 2. Ruined lives and society** - In addition to its spiritual and eternal consequences, sin can have terrible effects in this life. The negative effects of sin are all around us and are obvious. Human society is marred by the effects of sin. War (*Terrorism, Powerful Nations Oppressing Weaker Nations*), violence (*cults and tribal conflicts*), murder (*ritualism, assassination*), kidnapping, fraud, and robbery are some of the results of sin.

Sexual immorality can ruin marriages and destroy lives. Those who put themselves in situation of being a sexually seducing agent by way of dressing and actions have led many to lusts. Consider gay and lesbian practices and its effects on many nations. Alcoholic drinking, drunkenness and drug addiction produce misery. Gambling creates problems both for those who gamble and for society. Violent crime hurts both the victim and the criminal. People who steal may be caught and punished, and those who lie experience negative consequences because of their falsehoods. Those who are guilty of laziness or sloth are likely to experience poverty.

In addition to the obvious effects of sin, it can devastate individuals in other ways. Most people feel guilty when they sin. That feeling of guilt, if it remains unresolved, can result in inner conflicts, sleepless nights, anxiety, depression, and even mental and physical illness. In Psalm 32 David drew a vivid picture of one who suffered mentally and physically because of his guilt: ³*When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long.* ⁴*For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah.*

- 3. Inability To Make Peace With Ourselves** – When we get lost in sin, we lose the peace which Christ has made between God and us. ***Colossians 1:19-20 ...²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.***

Even when we have genuine efforts to be reconciled back to God and have peace with Him, After making peace with God and with others (in cases of offences to others), sometimes, we find it difficult to make peace with ourselves. We find it difficult to

forgive ourselves, to get rid of debilitating guilt. This inability to forgive ourselves and make peace with ourselves manifest because before we got lost in sin, we saw ourselves as super-Christians who cannot sin and when we finally sin, we become psychologically damaged. When we can't forgive ourselves, we become stricter with ourselves than God is. We become miserable Christians.

4. Identifying God and His family As Our Source of Unhappiness – Remember the story of the prodigal son (**Luke 15:11-31**). The young man decided the source of his unhappiness was his father's house so he decided to leave.

There was within him a hunger, a restlessness, a nameless discontent. There is a lie that some of us believe or are tempted to believe. It is a lie that the answer to our restlessness is out there in the far country – that is outside of God. But the further we are from the Father, the further we are from the answer. In city after city, in sensation after sensation, this boy tried to find the answer for his nameless discontent. The more he fed his hunger, the hungrier he got. The more he fed his hunger, the closer he came to famine. He sought beauty and found bitterness. He sought liberty and found tyranny with a pig's trough at the end of it. The answer is not in the far country. The answer is not in your own self-will. The answer is not in the fulfillment and gratification of self-centered desires. The answer is not in the fueling and feeding of your own inflated ego. There is a part of you which bears the image of your Maker, and unless you satisfy that part of your nature, you will never find that for which your heart is hungering. Satisfy the intellectual alone, but you will still be restless. Satisfy the physical alone, but you will still be empty.

The young man decided the world of sin had more to offer him than the way of his father. He took his journey to a far country. Notice his desire to get as far away as possible. The unfaithful family member often does likewise now. I just have to get away from my (husband, wife, or parents) because they are holding me down and ruining my life. Sin can make us like the prodigal son to hurry away from God's presence and from the church. It is easy to leave God's presence and the church when we see them as the source of unhappiness, so-called slow breakthrough, unresolved challenges and so on.

5. Dead Conscience and Inability To Think – Another tragedy of sin is that it kills our conscience, grieves the Holy Spirit and destroys our ability to think right. When this happens, we find ourselves feeling right while doing wrong.

To give a deeper insight into this point, let's take on a striking aspect of the prodigal son. Yes, the prodigal son was not in his right senses when he demanded his share of his father's inheritance while the father was still alive and the elder brother has not even made such demand. His conscience was struck dead the moment he collected his share, went into a far country, wasted his resources, time and strength in the far country but he didn't completely forget his father's house. When he came back to his senses, he never could completely feel good when he did wrong. Hence, he was able to resolve and implement that resolution, when he returned back to the father and the father's house.

How tragic when we get lost in sin and always feel right while doing wrong; when we go away from the Father - there is no unnaturalness, a homesickness, and a longing for something of which we know we must be a part. When nothing stirs within us, that causes us to know that a life of self-centeredness (a life that puts the material, the destructive pleasure or power or money first) could not be right - It means we have broken the unbroken hold God has on us. This also means we can no longer think well as against what Paul said in **Philippians 4:8** - *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.*

6. Conditional Repentance, Procrastination & Blame Game – Another tragedy of sin is that it gives us the false idea that we can set conditions for our repentance; that we can have the time to procrastinate and avoid taking responsibility for our being lost in sin.

Often some of us who got lost in sin will say, “Now brother, I know that I ought to come back and be restored, but I won’t promise you anything.”

The prodigal son did *not* set conditions for his return. If he had been like some today, he might have said, “Father, I see now how foolish I have been. I know I shouldn’t have left home, and I shouldn’t have wasted my money. That’s all behind me now. I’ve learned my lesson, and I am ready to come home and be your son again. I know you are glad to see me, Father; and I would appreciate it if you would get me some new clothes as soon as possible, because these are in terrible condition. Have the cook fix her best meal, because I’m famished. One more thing, Father: I am greatly embarrassed about all this, so please be careful in the future about referring to my mistakes. This is a sensitive area with me!”

Further, he did *not* try to reform himself while ignoring his father. The story might have unfolded like this: When the young man came to himself, he said, when I can afford decent clothing, I will move to another community where my past is not known. There I will go into business and regain my fortune. I will live a respectable life, make friends, and establish a home.”

Suppose that the young man had carried out that plan—what would we say of him? “Ah,” says the average person, “I would say that was noble resolve and a wonderful achievement. It was bad to sin and waste his money, but it was noble of him to reform his life and become an honest, upright man after all.”

Some people say that they are going to become Christians as soon as they get some things straightened out, but they never have done anything about it. Some have even gone on to the grave without ever doing anything but talk about the change they will make.

The prodigal son did *not* attempt to soften the seriousness of what he had done. Sometimes, when we have done what is wrong and when we are confronted with what we have done, we usually respond to admitting our wrong like this “*Brethren, If I have done wrong, I’m sorry. If I have offended anyone, I apologize.*” The prodigal did not insert no “ifs, ands, or buts.” He said, “*I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight.*”

Lots of people say, “Brother, I’m coming back to the church one of these days, but I can’t right now.” Procrastination is the thief of time and souls! The prodigal was not like Lot’s wife; he did not pause and look back. Many brethren simply cannot return to the church. They have too much pride!

The prodigal son did *not* make excuses for what he had done. He could have engaged in finger-pointing. He could have told his father, “It really is not my fault. You should never have given me the money. You know I’ve never been able to handle money!” He could have blamed his friends: “I couldn’t help it; I just fell in with the wrong crowd.” Instead, he acknowledged, “*I have sinned. . . .*”

The prodigal son got a solution to his sin problem after making a resolution to return to the father and taking responsibility for his sin.

7. We Get Lost In Sin Even In The Church –Another tragedy of sin is that it falsely secures our position in the church and truly anchors our soul to being eternally lost. When the prodigal son resolved, repented and returned home, the father was excited at his son’s return. However, the elder brother did not share his father’s attitude toward the lost! (**Luke 15:29**).

The elder brother would neither seek the lost nor rejoice when the lost was found. He was so angry that he felt his hard work in the father's house was a platform for him alone to deserve the father's love, mercy and blessings. He looked down at those who did not live up to his standards, refused fellowship with the younger brother; he also refused fellowship with this father. He was just like the Pharisees.

The Pharisees and the scribes' view of serving God had been the country club model which declared that they were an exclusive brand of people, and the low life of this world did not need to apply for membership. In their warped minds, service to God was limited to people who did not have any real problems and had always been good specimens of morality. The Pharisees had concluded that their righteousness was what made them appealing to God. They flaunted it to impress man and to obligate God. The strange thing about this is that their breed still inhabits the Lord's church in this time.

Yes, in the church some of us think that because we have spent years in the church; because we are members of the one true church; then new or recent or younger members of the church should be treated with levity; then those are outside the church do not deserve the mercy, deliverance and salvation of God (if they truly repent and converted to Christ). We today sin in the same way; we neither seek the lost nor rejoice when the lost are found: If a gospel meeting is held, we will neither invite others nor attend ourselves. We will not talk with our friends about the gospel. We can talk about business, football or television programs, but not about our Lord.

G. C. Brewer commented on this fact: When people today get in a similar condition, and then repent, we have church members who are ready to say, "Yes, it is time to repent now. [But] I don't have any confidence in him. Why didn't he repent before he was caught? Why didn't he repent before he had to? Beloved, you do not reason correctly, and you do not manifest a spirit of sympathy and forgiveness. Be careful that you do not act like the older son of the parable. People sometimes have to hit bottom before they come to themselves. The boy of the parable did not come to himself while he had money and clothing and friends. He had to be reduced to the direst straits before he was sensible of his sin. Remember this when you are inclined to be censorious and Pharisaical.

CONCLUSION

Even though we have sinned and have separated ourselves from God - In order to overcome the problem of sin, we must first acknowledge that sin is the problem. We must resolve to do what is necessary to obey God, and then take immediate action!

There is never complete happiness outside God. God's main interest has always been in saving the lost from their sins. God is concerned about sinners, no matter how they may have become lost. He rejoices to see the one He loves change his life. He offers a fresh start.

The greatest tragedy for those who are separated from God and are dead in sin is that, unless they repent and turn to God, they will ultimately face eternal consequences. "The wages of sin is death"—eternal death, or eternal separation from God (2 Thessalonians 1:7–9). Throughout eternity, unrepentant sinners will experience the just but painful retribution for their sins in hell, the "second death" (Revelation 20:14, 15; 21:8).

REFERENCES

- Bill Smith (1987, 2005), *The Wasteful Steward* (Truth for Today)
Leon Barnes (1991, 2005), *L U K E -The Tragedy of Emptiness* (Truth for Today)
James Cail (1985, 2004), *The Prodigal Son* (Truth for Today); Earl I. West (2017), *Restoration Studies Man and His Sins* (Truth for Today)
Coy Roper (2010), *HOW TO COPE WITH PROBLEMS - When the Problem Is Sin* (Truth for Today)
Coy Roper (1988, 2000), *God's Lost And Found Department* (Truth for Today)
J. Wayne Kilpatrick (1984, 2003), *Restoring the Erring The Return of the Prodigal* (Truth for Today)
Avon Malone (1983, 2004), *The Son's Restlessness and Return* (Truth for Today)
Charles B. Hodge, Jr. (1988, 2003), *Repentance* (Truth for Today); David Roper (1997, 1998), *Memories of Home* (Truth for Today)