

VIDEO PRESENTATION

## Sin and Lostness

Producer: Rick Quintana

*Narrator:* During the reign of King Ahab and his wicked queen, Jezebel, God appointed his prophet Elijah to preach against the sin and lostness of his people, Israel. Today, the same seed which sprouted into sin and lostness for Israel is being sown across the world by the master grower of alienation, discord, and guilt—Satan. The nations are his planting ground and not one is safe from the cold, sharp blade of his plowshare—temptation.

Despite the scientific advancements of our age, the technological developments, the sociological changes in almost every segment of our societies, there is still one common problem for all mankind—sin. The great problems which plague humanity: wars, starvation, crime, disease, social inequities, and poverty have sin as their root cause.

In the West, sin has been redefined as a benign character weakness which can be corrected through behavior modification, social adjustments, or even economic repositioning. The reality that sin separates man from God and leaves him eternally lost until he is reconciled to the Father is largely scoffed at, even by many church leaders. In the East, sin is defined in relative terms. It is treated as lesser degrees of goodness.

Culture now decides what is sin. Politicians declare that the good of the state is the only good which matters. God and his laws of right and wrong are relegated to myth and useless fiction. Lostness steals across countries, covering entire continents with a satanic delusion, robbing millions of souls of eternal life.

*Pablo:* Satan has deceived man about the reality of sin and its absolutely unavoidable consequence without Christ. Multitudes are doomed to be lost and separated from the loving Savior who sacrificed himself for them. By God's grace and mercy, we have seen our sinfulness and lost state. We have sought and received his forgiveness and reconciliation.

It is our utter and absolute duty and privilege to go into the highways and byways and compel unbelievers to forsake sin and accept the Son of Righteousness—to leave their lostness and find the true Way.

## Sin and Lostness

Stephen Tong

The unconsciousness of danger is a greater threat than the danger itself. In the same way, indifference to and misinterpretation of sin are greater dangers than the sin itself.

God does not divide mankind into two categories when he says, "I come not to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance." It is an irony of sinners that they are not conscious of their own status. The Bible teaches that sin is a fact—a fact revealed by a righteous God to sinful men. The difficulty lies in the question, *How can sinners properly understand?* Sin has deprived them of the aspect of godly understanding. The Bible, therefore, continues to teach that the only way to become conscious of human sin is through the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout history, we have always tried to ignore the fact of sin—to believe we were free from any bondage of evil power. Yet, that effect has proven to be self-deceptive, which is shown clearly in the existence of strife—both cultural and personal.

Since the days of the Renaissance, the anthropocentric worldview of natural man has tried to interpret *God* and *soul* through the sinful *self* of man. This worldview sees man as the central point of the universe, who lifts up reason as the absolute tool for discovering truth and considers nature as the final aim of achievements in science, economics, politics, education, psychology, philosophy, and even religion.

There is a common and consistent cause of imbalance and problems. Our societies are full of empty souls, in spite of material abundance; full of the anxiety of war, in spite of unceasing peace talks; and full of insecurity, in spite of the most powerful weapons ever produced. The rate of suicides increases in spite of better living standards; and more families are broken in spite of more freedom practiced in sex and love.

From the Renaissance to the twentieth century, we have been dreaming of human autonomy from the interference of God. Since the nineteenth century, many ideologies have risen to create a modern naive optimism, including liberal theology, evolutionism, and communism. The result has been terrifying wars in the twentieth century. Then followed international revolutions of communism, nationalism, and existentialism—all of which have tried to solve human problems, yet we are still living in a chaotic situation without knowing where the future is heading. To date, the search for man's identity remains a key issue.

Doesn't this tell us that sin and lostness is an undeniable fact? It is no wonder that Karl Barth fought against his two liberal professors, Adolf von Harnack and William

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Hermann, who taught the “brotherhood of mankind” on the one hand and agreed with the Nazi invasion on the other. It is no wonder that the liberal leader, Harry Emerson Fosdick, had to acknowledge the liberals had neglected the teaching of sin and that conservatives understand it better. It is no wonder that Niebuhr had to insist on the biblical teaching for the understanding of sin as inspired by the World War, in his book *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. It is the same reason Paul Tillich wrote in his diary during World War I, “I see not the ruins of the buildings before me, but the ruin of the culture.”

Our cultures seem dead. Even in Russia and China after their victory over the old political systems and after practicing communism for decades, their leaders feel the urgency of renewal. They have many problems yet within themselves.

### What Sin Is Not

Though man has tried to escape the fact of sin to dilute and reinterpret it—man can never escape God’s references to it in the Bible. The Bible clearly teaches that sin began with the historical fall of Adam, the first and the representative of mankind. Before discussing what sin is, let us first consider what sin is not.

The Bible leaves no room for the concept of the eternal pre-existence of sin. Sin is not an entity of self-eternal existence. Sin and evil are not self-dependent realities, neither are the Devil and the demonic powers. Nothing and no one but God himself is the only self-existent and eternal reality. Only God is without beginning and ending. The Bible rejects ontological dualism in religion.

The Bible leaves no room for the concept that sin was created by God or caused by him. God is neither the cause nor the source of evil. The word *evil* in Isaiah 45:7 (KJV), refers to the punishment of God in history as the manifestation of his righteousness and sovereignty to this sinful world, but not ontological or moral evil.

The Bible leaves no possibility for God to be held responsible for sin. The only reference is the mysterious permission of God for the occurrence of evil, which was the result of the misuse of the freedom created within spiritual beings.

Sin emerged from the creatures themselves. It was the creation of created ones against their Creator. About this, Jesus said, “When he [the Devil] speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44, KJV).

### What Sin Is

The Bible teaches that sin is more than ethical failure. To merely equate sin with misconduct is too simplistic.

Philosophically, *sin* means “missing the target.” The New Testament uses the Greek word *hamartia* to indicate that man is created with a standard, or target, as the purpose of life and conduct. This means we are responsible to God. When sin occurs, we fail to achieve God’s standard. After the Fall, man’s view of the target became blurred, and the standards of conduct were missing. God sent his Son to delineate the standard again and made him our righteousness and holiness. The rediscovery of the aim of human life can only be found through the perfect example of the incarnated Christ.

Positionally, sin is the removal of the original state. Man was created distinctively, in a unique position, in order to be a witness of God. We were created in between God and the Devil, good and evil, after the fall of Satan. Man was created in a neutral state of goodness, yet to be confirmed through the way of obedience; created a little bit lower than God, yet in dominion over nature; and created after God’s image and likeness. The true submission of man before God’s sovereignty is the secret of governing nature, and

to achieve the true aim of glorifying nature’s Creator in man’s life. Temptations come in the sense of trying to draw man away from his original God-planned position. Then comes misconduct. The same happened with even the archangels. The Bible says, “They kept not their first state,” to describe their fall.

Sin is also the misuse of freedom. The greatest honor and privilege God gave man was the gift of freedom. Freedom has an undiminishable factor as the foundation of moral values. Moral achievements can only be rooted in willingness, they cannot be forced. Spiritual freedom offers two choices: God-centered life or man-centered life. When man submits in his freedom to God, it is a return of that freedom to its original master. Man chooses to seek the joy of freedom within the limits of God’s truth and righteousness. God is the reality of righteousness, and any departure from him will cause unrighteousness. The self-centered life is the cause of sin, and self-centered intention is the beginning of unrighteousness. Freedom without the limits of the righteousness of God becomes false freedom. It is not the freedom Jesus spoke of when he said, “No one can follow me without denying himself.”

Sin is a destroying power. Sin is not merely a failure in conduct, rather, it is a consistent, binding power which indwells sinners. Paul uses both the singular form and the plural form of *sin* in the book of Romans. The plural form of *sin* indicates wrongdoings, but the singular form means the power that drives sinful conduct. Sin has deprived life to such a degree that there is not one single aspect of life which has not been distorted or polluted. The Reformers insisted on and persisted in fighting against the incomplete understanding of the power of sin in medieval scholasticism. Sin not only pollutes the sphere of the will, it penetrates emotion and reason as well. The ultimate result of this destroying power is to cause man to be self-abusing and self-killing. As Kierkegaard said, men are born in sin. The only power we possess is the power to kill ourselves.

Sin is the rejection of God’s eternal will. The ultimate result of sin is not only to harm man, but to oppose the eternal will of God through man. Calvin said, “Nothing is greater than the will of God except God himself.” The creation of the universe, the salvation of mankind, and eternal glory all exist by the will of God. Sin is the rejection of the will of God, so Christians need to be conscious of the importance of faithful obedience. As Christ taught his disciples to pray, “Let thy will be done, on earth as in heaven.” The Bible also teaches us, in 1 John 2:17 (NKJV), that “the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

### Sin and Cosmic Relations

The event of sin did not stop, it is an ongoing evil within the sinner and a disturbance to cosmic order. Sin destroys relationships, both personally and cosmically, including the relationships between man and nature, and man and men. Sin also destroys the relationship between man and himself. Therefore, sin makes harmonious life impossible. Yet, deepest of all is the destruction of the relationship between man and God.

From the original privilege, we are created higher than nature, and nature is created for man. Man is to appreciate, enjoy, govern, preserve, and interpret nature as man’s prophetic function. But sin turned man into the abuser, the enemy, and even the destroyer of nature. Searching nature and discovering the truths of God revealed in it, is the foundation of science. Yet, since the appearance of sin, science has failed to function as a tool to glorify God and has been used as a demonic instrument to destroy nature and man.

As the result of broken relationships between man and men, man has lost the

potential to reflect the love of the triune God, which is the model of human community. It makes mutual respect, trust, edification, and mutual accomplishment in our society impossible. Instead, we see the absoluteness of the individual "self" to reject others with the self-centered life that causes tension and unceasing hatred. Man has become his own enemy. He has lost all spiritual peace, eternal security, and confidence of life's meaning. Therefore, the existence of man has become an isolated island in the universe. Others' existence has become a hell which threatens us. These are all reflected in modern atheistic existentialism.

The most serious broken relationship is between man and God, which is the cause of the brokenness of other relationships. When man is separated from God, no other relationship is able to be restored. It blocks all possibilities of personal peace in our spirits and universal peace on earth. The twentieth century was the practical field of nineteenth-century ideologies, yet we see no true hope for our future, even now in the final decade of this century. More than at any other time, we need to seriously rethink and reevaluate the shortcomings of the ideologies derived from anthropocentric humanism.

The Bible says, God is Love, God is Life, God is Light. He is also the God of truth, righteousness, and holiness. What kinds of societies will exist if we depart from such a God as is revealed in Christ? The only possibilities left will be hatred, death, darkness, deception, injustice, and corruption. This is precisely what we see in our world today.

## Sin and Lostness

Separation from God leads sinners into a state of lostness—lostness from the countenance and presence of God. Sin causes man to fall short of God's glory. The Augustinian concept of sin as the lacking of good needs to be understood as a result of sin in man, rather than as the interpretation of sin itself. When sin occurs, the glory of God is immediately removed. The privilege of man as the representative of God and the reflector of his glory ends. The removal of the glory of God from man leaves him in a pitiful state. Man will live without honor and greatness, education will be devoid of truth, human rights will contain no righteousness, knowledge without wisdom, lust without love, science without conscience, and freedom without control. As reflected in the book of Ezekiel, the glory of God removes gradually and departs from the temple of God. It means the judgment of God is near, the doom for the world is at hand.

The effects of the state of lostness are seen in many areas:

1. *Universal identity.* Separation from God makes man a universal prodigal, determined to be tired of his ungrounded existence and uncontrolled freedom.
2. *Spiritual dignity.* Man was crowned with glory. Sin destroys the unity between man and God, and dignity becomes an idea without reality.
3. *Inner security.* Men are created for God and can only obtain peace and security in God himself. When the separation occurs, our peace is ended.
4. *Eternal direction.* God is our origin and our conclusion. Potentially, the image of God indicates that man is created to be like God. Theologically, man is to live for him as life's final goal. When sin occurs, eternity loses direction.

Not only this, lostness affects sinners themselves. Men are lost from the presence of God forever. Man is lost from the source of truth, righteousness, love, and eternal

blessings. The result of sin is more than terrifying. The judgment of God will be upon sinners; then will follow the second death, which the Bible calls hell where the love and truth, and the presence and holiness of God are eternally withdrawn.

Believers and evangelicals all over the world need to reaffirm the seriousness of the fact and the effect of sin, as it is taught in the Bible. This affirmation is crucial in this post-liberal and post-modern era, both theologically and socio-politically. We also need deep conviction for the need of sinners for salvation, and fervent affection to love sinners. Let us faithfully proclaim the gospel to the sinful world.

"Repent ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand." "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." These great forewords of the gospel remain valid until the end of the world. Let us shout, "Repent, ye people, rend your hearts but not your garments!" to the leaders and the people of the world. Let's lift the Cross of Christ high, which is the only hope of mankind, so the Holy Spirit will illuminate our generation to accept Christ. Let us humbly confess our sins before God, to reopen the door of heaven and regain the mercy and forgiveness of him.

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain! Glory be to him forever and ever more.