

SINNING IS MAN'S DEFAULT MODE!

Today's Text: Romans 3: 9 - 31

Extracts:

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one..." For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God [Rom. 3: 9-12, 22-23]

In computer science, the default mode is the setting that is automatically assigned by an operating system which remains in effect unless cancelled or overridden by the operation. It is a situation or condition that obtains in the absence of active intervention.¹ A similar thing occurs in the human brain when it is at wakeful rest while an individual is not focused on the outside world.² His mind focuses on evil things. That is why we commonly hear it said that an idle mind is the devil's workshop.

Recently, a 49-year-old man, arrested in Lagos, Nigeria, for impregnating his teenage daughter and aborting it twice, told perplexed reporters, "It is not a new thing that a man has sex with his daughter."³ Dr. Brooke Magnanti who attained global notoriety for her sexual encounters as a high-class escort girl working in London, England, recently told BBC World News that she found the work empowering and she would do it again!⁴ Indeed, sinning is man's default mode.

In this week's Bible verses, we are told that both Jews [with the law] and Gentiles [without the law] are ALL under sin. There is no difference and all have sinned and come short of God's glory. Why is sinning man's default mode? What can we do about it to avoid the consequences of sin or of remaining in it? Those and more are the issues that we shall examine in this week's study.

¹ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/default>

² "Default network" from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Default_network

³ Donald Arji, "My dad impregnated me, aborted it twice-teenager,"

<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/01/my-dad-impregnated-me-aborted-it-twice-teenager/> ; Jan. 2, 2013

⁴ Brooke Magnanti, "Prostitution was empowering," *BBC World News*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/hardtalk/9756960.stm> ; 4 Oct. 2012

1. Introduction: Man chose sin from the beginning!

I have always wondered why human beings do not learn from other people's mistakes. Whether in history or contemporary times, we know the consequences of doing certain wrong things and yet we repeat them. For example, we know that those who steal and are caught, tried and convicted will certainly go to jail. Yet, people still steal, using more sophisticated methods! We know that God still punishes people for unconfessed sins and yet we go for worse sins each new day. What is wrong with us?

The answer lies in the fact that sinning is man's default mode. This is well captured in the words of God Himself soon after He had created man where it is written [**Gen. 6: 5-6**]:

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, and the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

To appreciate that pain in God's heart, let us do a quick survey of man's history from creation to the deluge- when God wiped out all but Noah's family from the face of the earth:

a) *The bliss called the Garden of Eden*

The Garden of Eden represents the highest form of economic prosperity that you can ever imagine. Everything was there for Adam and his wife, Eve. They did not need to sow. They did not need to build. God gave them dominion over "the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living creature that moves on the earth" [**Gen. 1: 28**]. All that God required of man was to tend and keep that Garden. In fact, it was Adam that God gave the authority to give names to all the beasts and birds that He had created and "whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name" [**Gen. 2: 15, 19-20**].

How many scientists today can match Adam's prodigy in naming all living creatures? How many rich people can match Adam's wealth of unlimited resources for limited wants? Was too much of good things too bad for him and his wife? It appeared so!

b) *But man chose sin*

God gave Adam and his wife one condition in order to enjoy the bliss of the Garden of Eden in perpetuity. They were free to eat of every tree in the Garden except of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil [**vv. 16-17**]. In other words, ***God gave man the privilege to set his own default mode.***

With that abundant grace of *free will*, man could either choose the tree of life (by obeying God's word to eat only from the permitted trees and live) or the tree of death (by eating from the forbidden tree and thus choosing *self-will*; the knowledge of good and evil, and die). Instead, *man chose self-will, the freedom to choose good or evil*. Adam and Eve succumbed to Satan's deception and ate the forbidden fruit. Thereafter, "the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings" [Gen. 3: 1-6].

What does it mean to be naked? A person who has never worn clothes or body covers is said to be nude. Nude people are not ashamed of it, just as nude creatures like animals are never ashamed of their state. Adam and Eve were created nude. That is why we are told, "They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" [Gen. 2: 25]. As used here, naked means nude. But when a person who is usually clothed then removes his/her clothes, s(he) is said to be naked and may become ashamed. That was why Adam and his wife began to cover their nudity with fig leaves after disobeying God. When God encountered them later, He asked them, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" [Gen. 3: 11]. *Spiritually speaking, therefore, covering our nakedness is symbolic of man's efforts to cover up the shame of choosing sinning as his default mode!* For example, hypocrisy is our attempt to cover up the ugly truth about ourselves! We do it instinctively.

c) *And continued even after the deluge!*

God threw Adam and his wife out of the Garden of Eden to face the consequences of their free will choices. They would from then on have to suffer and sweat to make a living. They would from then on have to die physically and return to dust. Much worse, they had already died spiritually and it would take the Seed of the woman [the Messiah] to deliver them from their spiritual bondage [Gen. 3: 14-19] that we their descendants have inherited. But did that stop man from sinning?

Things got worse. God regretted creating man as we had mentioned earlier. So, He decided to destroy man, beast and all and start afresh with the family of Noah, made up of Noah, his wife, their three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth and their spouses- eight in all [Gen. 6: 18]. When the floods (popularly called the deluge) came, "all flesh died that moved on the earth" [Gen. 7: 21]. But did that wipe away sinning? No! *As soon as Noah and his family had landed on dry land, sinning returned.* The man got drunk. Ham saw his father's nakedness and ran to tell his brothers instead of covering it up [Gen. 9: 20-22].

Yes, the world abides forever; yet, there is nothing new under the sun [Eccl. 1: 4, 9]. Man is a sinner and will keep sinning. We have become “inventors of evil things” [Rom. 1: 30]. We have entered perilous times where some so-called believers are “giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron” [1 Tim. 4: 1-2]. For example, in one of the seven churches that the resurrected Christ spoke about through John, the church in Thyatira, a woman with the Jezebel spirit who called herself a prophetess was allowed to teach and seduce the Lord’s servants to commit sexual immorality [Rev. 2: 20]. Today, some major churches in the Western world are set to solemnize same-sex marriages! Indeed, out of the heart proceed those vices that defile a person- “evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness [and] blasphemies” [Matt. 15: 19].

Man cannot save himself unless somebody else who is capable of bringing back the divine nature through rebirth can reset man’s default mode or our Adamic nature. That is the point that Paul has drawn our attention to in this week’s study- the universal remedy which only Christ Jesus could provide and has provided.

2. How to reset your default mode

In broad strokes, Paul made the following points in the Epistle to the Romans; in the verses under consideration:

- There is no human being who is righteous before God; not one [Rom. 3: 10];
- All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God [v. 23];
- No man can save himself by own effort, including the Jews who are under the law of Moses because “by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in [God’s] sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin” [vv. 19-20];
- *The only righteousness acceptable to God is through faith in Jesus Christ “to all and on all who believe” [v. 22]. It is a universal remedy because He is God of the Jews (the circumcised) by faith and of the Gentiles also through faith [vv. 20-30]. That faith is anchored on Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross [Heb. 9: 26] for just as by one man, Adam, sin came into the world, so also by one man, Jesus the Christ, has salvation come [Rom. 5: 17; 1 Cor.15: 20-22]. That is why Jesus has been called the last Adam, the life-giving spirit [vv. 45-50].*

From the foregoing, we can see sin in several ways: as a specific *act* (such as breaking a specific commandment) or a *state* (lack of righteousness even when we claim to be born-again) or *nature* (complete enmity to God and His Christ). I believe that giving up the last two can help us to break the first. We can do so by trying out the following steps:

- a) *Recognize rather than rationalize your sinful state*

It is futile to pretend that all is well with us. We may have enjoyment (the pleasures of material affluence; the avoidance of pain) but it does not give us joy (contentment). The pauper who lives under a mosquito-infested bridge downtown may have a sound sleep whereas the billionaire is rolling sleeplessly on his soft bed in the best part of town, even after swallowing sedatives! Perhaps what the latter needs is to recognize that only God can give us joy, the type that becomes our strength [**Neh. 8: 10**]. He should seek God and not goods.

What is the difference between recognizing and rationalizing sin? Again, we can use the fall of Adam and Eve to illustrate. After eating the forbidden fruit, all they both needed was to admit to God their fault and ask for His forgiveness. Instead, they started to shift blame!⁵ Adam said to God, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” His wife said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” [**Gen. 3: 12-13**]. I wonder what Satan could have said in his own defence!

The best thing is to man up by accepting full responsibility for your depraved state. For example, Paul saw the “wretched man” that he was when he realized that “nothing good” dwelt in him. Even when he willed to do what was good, how to do it was not present with him because sin dwelt in him. Then he cried out, “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” [**Rom. 7: 17-24**].

b) Go to the only One who can save you

Since all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory, Paul directed everyone of us to become freely justified by God’s grace “through the redemption that is in **Christ Jesus**, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed” [**Rom. 3: 23-25**]. In simple language, we were guilty as charged but God accepted someone else to claim full responsibility for our guilt and serve the full sentence in our place. That Man is the only begotten Son of God, Jesus the Christ [**Jn 3: 16-17**], the Seed of the woman promised by God when man fell in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, there is “now no condemnation to those who are in Christ, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” [**Rom. 8: 1**].

You cannot be saved by your family name or fame. Your denomination or church or pastor cannot save you because they cannot even save themselves. Only Jesus can save. When His Father sees the blood of the Lamb on you, He will declare you righteous.

⁵ “Blame Shifting is not Repentance!” *Weekly Bible Study Series*, Vol. 3 No. 3: 20 Jan. 2002; http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume_3/PDFs/Blameshiftingisnotrepentance.pdf

c) *Remain anchored on Him*

Jesus told His disciples, “I am the vine, you are the branches. ***He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing***” [Jn 15: 5]. That suggests that coming to Christ should not be a mere event or episode in your life; it is a turning point. If you cannot continue with Him, why bother to come in the first place? That is why Jesus has said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and ***take up his cross daily, and follow Me***” [Lk 9: 23].

From the foregoing, Paul’s message for you and I is this: ***Adam’s default mode that man has inherited is outmoded and obsolete because it is not compatible with the righteousness of God that man can only receive through faith in Christ Jesus, the One who has died in our place. The time has come for you to buy a new spiritual computer with a different and updated default mode!***

3. Conclusion: Make Jesus your Default Mode!

Jesus has promised believers all through history, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that ***where I am, there you may be also***” [Jn 14: 1-3]. If Jesus is always with you, even till the end of the age [Matt. 28: 20], your mind will become transformed [Rom. 12: 2] and you will have the mind of Christ [1 Cor. 2: 16]. Your Default Mode has been reset. It will no longer be sinning against but fearing God. Is that not exciting?

In the world, you will find tribulations, caused mainly by man’s choice to sin against God continually. But ***in Jesus, you will find peace***. So, be of good cheer because He has overcome the world [Jn 16: 33]! ***So, from now on, make Jesus your Default Mode***. It will no longer be you that live but Christ who lives in you [2 Cor. 5: 17].