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Romans

...being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,... Romans 1:29

This verse is continuing on with those that God gave over to a debased mind that now “do those things which are not fitting.” Forthcoming from Paul’s hand is a list of 23 of these things and they fit people of every stratum of society and from the most backward of people groups to the most economic and socially elite in the world. Some people may be filled with many in the list and some with just a few or only one, but the depravity of the human heart finds its release somewhere in this list in fallen man.

Considering that man was made in God’s image and with the intent and purpose of bringing Him glory, this list is a scathing indictment on us. The first is “all unrighteousness.” This is a broad brushstroke of those who are in Adam and it speaks of every angle from which sin can attack – the thoughts, the words, the actions, the inactions, the motivations, etc. This thought covers these both outwardly toward others and inwardly toward self. The man who was created to be spiritually connected to God is carnal and unspiritual.

The next in the list has been covered in the preceding verses – “sexual immorality.” This is any sexual thought, action, or contact which occurs outside of the bonds of a marriage between a man and a woman. God presented Eve to

Adam and thus the pattern was established at the beginning. The Law of Moses, the arrival of Jesus, and the introduction of the Church Age all confirm the original intent and pattern. Sexual sins are personal and intimate and therefore they require one to be in tune with God's intent at all times lest they take over the unsuspecting or unprepared.

Next on the list is "wickedness." This word speaks of intentional harm against others. A good word to understand this would be malice. John Calvin states, "It is that depravity and obliquity of mind which strives to produce injury on others."

From wickedness we move to "covetousness." Coveting is the last of the Ten Commandments and so is it isn't perceived "as bad" as other sins. But this is the opposite of the truth. Coveting leads to the committing of the other sins. When one covets something else, they take their eyes off God and replace Him with that thing – thus breaking the first commandment. Coveting another man's wife leads to adultery, thus breaking the seventh commandment, etc. We need to be thankful for what we do have and fix our eyes on Jesus, not on the things we don't possess.

"Maliciousness" is next and indicates ill will which is fundamentally vicious in nature. One may consider a soul longing for revenge and filled with extreme bitterness in this category.

Another of the list is being "full of envy." Webster describes it this way "Pain, uneasiness, mortification, or discontent, excited by another's prosperity, accompanied with some degree of hatred or malignity, and often with a desire or an effort to depreciate the person, and with pleasure in seeing him depressed." The soul filled with envy is bitter indeed and will go to great lengths to injure another simply because someone else has received something they feel they deserve and which the other didn't deserve.

"Murder" is in the list and is also the sixth commandment. Murder does not include the lawful taking of a life for a capital crime; the taking of a life in self-

defense; or the taking of life in legitimate battle. The Bible is perfectly clear on these issues. What it does speak of is the intentional taking of another human life apart from these exceptions. Man was created in God's image and therefore to willfully take another life is an attack against God's image bearer. This includes the crime of abortion. When a society devalues human life, either by authorizing the murder of others, including the unborn, or by withholding the execution of capital crimes, that society becomes implicitly guilty in the blood that was shed.

"Strife" can be summed as conflicting with others about words more than things. It is seeking glory and victory in speech and conflict rather than for the truth. This sin has become so commonplace since the introduction of the internet that it is everywhere at all times. Social media has given everyone the ability to attempt to seem authoritative on a matter whether they know what they are talking about or not. People strive for the sake of strife.

"Deceit" is engaging in deception. People engage in "philosophy and empty deceit" as Paul says in Colossians 2:8 and thus make boastful pretense to their own morality even though they are often the basest of beings.

The next on the list are those filled with "evil-mindedness." This is the mental state of someone who is filled with Satan and not by God. They abound in wickedness. It is an insatiable mental state which consumes every thought and then is displayed in every action. Because of this the inevitable result is that "they are whisperers." Gossip, whether of truthful things or untruthful things, has the main intent of conquering and dividing. The evil-minded don't have felicity and peace on their mind, but rather conflict and hatred. They sow the seeds of these things with their whisperings.

The list will continue as Paul describes the state of the human soul who is at enmity with their Creator. Only through the new birth which comes by calling on Jesus can this state be terminated in a person. This doesn't mean it will happen all at once, or even in this life, but that through His work we can be free of these things and thus work to please God until the day He glorifies us.

Life application: Take time to reread the list of today's sins and think about where you can improve your own life and actions concerning any of them which still arise in you.

... backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,... Romans 1:30

The lengthy list which began in the previous verse continues on now. Paul includes "backbiters" as our first of verse 30. A backbiter is similar to the "whisperer" of the previous verse, but what the whisperer says silently, the backbiter says openly – yet not in the presence of the one they are defaming. This is the person who would openly walk up and hug someone but as soon as they leave the room they would find malevolent words with which to tear them up.

Next Paul lists "haters of God." This is one of the most common sentiments found in the world and yet it is of the highest category of crime there is. The Bible says, the "fool says in his heart there is no God." Such is the atheist. However, the person that says He hates God is a double fool because he openly acknowledges there is a God and yet he also shows contempt for Him. Nothing could be more astonishing and yet it happens all around the world all the time. The epitome of this hatred is directed by those at enmity with Jesus Christ. The reason for this is explained in John 15:24, 25 –

"If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'" John 15:24-25

When someone claims to love God and yet hates Jesus, they surely have distorted thinking. Jesus is the One who reveals the unseen God to us. He is the second member of the Trinity and therefore to deny Him is to deny God; to hate Him is to

hate God. And this inevitably leads to the consequences of this – “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.” (John 15:18) God’s people are hated because God’s Son is hated.

The next group Paul highlights are the “violent.” This word is translated differently by various translators. It comes from the Greek hyperephanous. The word phaino means to “shine forth” and hyper is “above” or “over.” Therefore, this is better translated “prideful” or “proud.” They believe they shine over and above anyone else. This is one of the chief sins noted in the Bible because when pride steps in, then the proud person has only contempt for everyone around him, including God. It is self-deification. The NKJV translates this “violent” and this is often an inevitable result of pride. When someone who is prideful gains power and authority, it can be brought out in the most violent of ways.

Next come “boasters” in our list. This is a good follow up to those who are prideful because along with pride comes great boastings of self. Those who are boastful will trump their achievement above those of everyone else and nothing will satisfy their lust for praise. When it comes, more boasting comes in hopes of more praise. This is the person with the “I” problem. He sees himself and nothing else... “I, I, I.”

From boasters we move to “inventors of evil things.” The word is kakon, meaning “evil.” This is speaking of those who simply invent new forms of evil. Their minds think up perverse things, wicked things, and innovative things – all which will satisfy a lust for accomplishing evil in new and exciting ways. The porn industry fits this well. As people become numb to one form of perversion something new is introduced to excite the audience. This cycle eventually leads to such horrors as “snuff films.” When the sex is no longer enough to satisfy, murder is included in the act. The horrifying level to which the depraved mind will sink to seems to have no end.

The final category in today’s verse is those who are “disobedient to parents.” The family is the nucleus of a well running society. When the family structure breaks down, the society naturally breaks down as well. And so discipline within the

family must be maintained. So great is the necessity for this, that God when speaking the law to Israel included this –

“If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.” Deuteronomy 21:18-21

Likewise, in Exodus 21:17, the Lord noted that anyone “who curses his father or his mother” shall be put to death. Unfortunately modern society has completely reversed the roles and television shows commonly portray children who are insolent to their parents and who tell them what to do rather than the other way around. This can only lead to chaos within a society because God’s order of what is right has been rejected.

Life application: Take a moment and reread the types of inappropriate behavior Paul mentions today and think about where you can improve the conduct of your own life. Stand firm on God’s word and know that He has not only shown us the proper way of conducting our lives, but He has shown us what displeases Him as well.