

Romans 1:29 B

Student Notes:

“They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice.”

In his second section Paul repeats the prior words about humanity’s condition. The next five descriptions are the proof of the human race’s degradation and dysfunction. (destroyed relationships.) In short, they are a catalogue of what happens when God’s intentions for the human family are corrupted by evil.

1. Envy:

Greek word for envy speaks of pain, uneasiness, or discontent when someone else prospers. Fully realized, envy is accompanied by a degree of hatred. There’s probably no better example than at the beginning of the human experience. (See Genesis 4:4-7)

Alfred Barnes on envy: “It seems to be natural to the human heart. It is one of the most common manifestations of wickedness, and shows clearly the deep depravity of man. Benevolence rejoices at the happiness of others, and seeks to promote it.

New Testament warnings about harboring envy: Titus 3:3; James 3:16. (See also: 1Corinthians 13:4; Galatians 5:21; 1Timothy 6:4; James 3:14; 1 Peter 2:1)

2. Murder:

Our technical definition: "The taking of human life with premeditated malice by a person of a sane mind."

The Greek word Paul uses has a much wider meaning: All taking human life except as the punishment of crime. (A common practice in the Roman Empire – and among all Gentiles.)

Example: Roman Gladiatorial contests at the amphitheaters. Gibbons: "Several hundred, perhaps several thousand victims were annually slaughtered in the great cities of the empire."

3. Strife or Debate:

We associate debate with arguing a point or with bringing to the surface some issue. The Greek word Paul uses also denotes an altercation connected to anger or heated zeal. See: Romans 13:13; 1Corinthians 1:11; 1Corinthians 3:3. (See also: 2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:20; Philippians 1:15; 1 Timothy 6:4; Titus 3:9.)

4. Deceit:

The Greek word Paul uses for “deceit” refers to any type of fraud or falsehood. In Paul’s day deceit was a common trait of Gentile or pagan cultures.

Evidently, this also was not uncommon among the Jews. Jesus’ words the first time he met Nathaniel: “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! (deceit)”. – John 1:47

Paul’s words to Titus about certain deceitful factions from the Greek island of Crete: “They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. Even one of their own prophets has said, “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.” This testimony is true.” (Titus 1:11-13)

5. Hostility:

Greek word “echthros”. Noun form: someone openly hostile. Adjective form: someone who is animated, displaying a deep-seated hatred.

Used in a number of contexts in the Bible: 1. Those who have an active, hostile attitude towards others, in other words, an enemy: 2 Thessalonians 3:15. 2. Those who are God’s/Christ’s enemies: 1Corinthians 15:25; James 4:4. 3. The Devil -- as the most bitter enemy of the God’s sovereignty: Luke 10:19; Matthew 13:39

All of these things describe humans after their rejection of God. And yet, Paul has twelve more adjectives to employ as he depicts how humans who have been “given over” by God live by their own choice. We will see these next.