

Intro:

January 13, 1992 issue of Fortune magazine featured the "Biggest Business Goofs of 1991."

In an act of corporate cooperation, AT&T reached an agreement with the power company in New York City, Con Ed. The contract stated that whenever power demands exceeded the utility's grid, AT&T would lessen their demands on the electric utility by throwing a switch, unplugging some of its facilities, and drawing power from internal generators at its 33 Thomas Street station in lower Manhattan.

On September 17, AT&T acted in accordance with their agreement. But when AT&T's own generators kicked in, the power surge kicked out some of their vital rectifiers, which handled 4.5 million domestic calls, 470,000 international calls, 1,174 flights across the nation carrying 85,000 passengers, and the total communications systems linking air traffic controllers at La Guardia, Kennedy, and Newark airports.

The alarm bells at the 33 Thomas Street station rang unheeded for 6 hours.

The AT&T personnel in charge of the rectifiers were away attending a one-day seminar on how to handle emergencies.¹

We are studying something that could simply be called, "consequences." One of my commentators calls it the 'sin-retribution sequence.'²

The basic sin is a refusal or rejection of the knowledge of God.

- Not due to inadequate information
- Not due to ill treatment from God
- Simply due to human depravity and self-will

All other sins are rooted in the essential war man has declared on any knowledge of God — and are themselves a manifestation of God's ongoing judgement against humanity.

Because of the sin of rejection, God delivered man over to:

- Impurity
- Degrading Passions
- And now this week we will see, *Given over to a Depraved Mind* [a 'bouquet' of spiritual weeds]

¹ Phillip W. Gunter, Leadership Magazine, Winter 1993, p. 48

² Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 117.

The first two deliverances have to do with God's wrath poured out in the form of corrupted sexuality, the first tightly connected to idolatry, the second connected to the overthrow of the divine order in humanity.

- Uncleaness [impurity] = replacing God with gods
- Degrading Passions = worshipping self above all order and decency
- Depraved Mind = disordered value system; right is wrong, wrong is right, resulting in dangerous deeds against others

Read Rm 1.18, 28-31

Proposition: The mind that disapproves of God becomes the mind that approves of all kinds of evil.

I. Different category, same consequence

A. The root sin is the same: idolatry

1. Easton Bible Dictionary: "image-worship or divine honour paid to any created object."³

2. Idolatry is essentially a spiritual problem

a. Eph 5.5: covetousness = idolatry

b. Col 3.5: covetousness = idolatry

'eager to have more, especially that which belongs to someone else' – desire, self above all other considerations

c. 1 Jn 5.19-21: deviation from the true knowledge of God in Christ = idolatry

3. The selfish deviation from the true knowledge of God – the theme of Rm 1

a. The knew God, did not honour God, instead exchanged God for idols (1.21-23)

b. They were given over to uncleanness because they would worship the creature instead of the Creator (1.25)

c. They were given over to degrading passions because they rejected the truth of natural revelation (1.26-27)

³ M.G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996, c1897).

- d. They don't acknowledge God, they are given to a depraved mind (1.28)

“In vv. 22-24 and 25-27 Paul has shown how the sexual immorality that pervades humanity has its roots in the rejection of the true God in favor of gods of their own making. In the third and final portrayal of this sin-retribution sequence (vv. 28-32), he traces sins of inhumanity, of man's hatred of his fellow man in all its terrible manifestations, to this same root sin of idolatry.”⁴

B. The category: inhumanity

1. Previous categories: defiling self or overthrowing God's order
2. Current category: inhumanity – antagonism to God by violence against others
 - a. Not convenient [not proper, NAS] – “A technical term with the Stoics, ‘what is morally fitting’.”⁵
 - b. “Most of the words which follow describe sins of malignity or inhumanity rather than sensuality, but they cannot be classified. [the things not morally fitting] covers all.”⁶

C. The arena of condemnation: the mind, the value system

1. A play on words
 - a. In their minds, they disapproved of God
 - b. God gave them over to disapproved minds

“As they did not think fit, after trial made, to keep God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a mind which cannot stand trial.”⁷

2. The mind that has abandoned God cannot think straight
 - a. They have no fear of God in their eyes

⁴ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 117.

⁵ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Romans*, p. 47.

⁶ James Denney, "St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans" in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., p. 594.

⁷ James Denney, "St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans" in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., p. 594.

1) Ps 36.1-4

2) Rm 3.18

b. A tragic example, King Saul

1) Chosen of God to lead Israel, initially faithful, but headstrong

2) Unable to evaluate reality

a) God commanded him to eliminate the Amalekites, he fails, but look what he says (1 Sam 15.13-14)

b) Listen to Samuel's rebuke (1 Sam 15.18-21)

Saul isn't thinking straight – he is out of touch with reality, evidence of the extent to which his mind is turned from God.

3) Consider the last tragedy of Saul's life (1 Sam 28)

a) The setting: Samuel dead, Saul had opposed spiritualists, Philistines mustering troops, the Lord refuses to answer (1 Sam 28.3-6)

b) Saul's solution: find me a woman with a familiar spirit (1 Sam 28.7)

4) Consider the deeds of Saul in the latter years of his reign

a) Jealousy of David

b) Envy of David

c) Malignity against David, pursuit of David, desire to murder David

These are sins of inhumanity, the example of a man delivered over to a depraved mind

The extent to which a man disapproves of God will reflect itself in a stunted, defective, and disapproved mind — it is the consequence of idolatry, the supremacy of self in one's heart over against God.

So, what kind of inhumanity are we talking about?

II. Disapproved mind, disapproved deeds

Note: this is not an exhaustive list, but it is the *longest* such list in the New Testament.

A. General categories of disapproved deeds
[unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil]

1. The word 'all' applies to each of the first for general terms
2. Unrighteousness
3. Wickedness

“The disposition to inflict evil”⁸ ... “active mischief”⁹

4. Greed

“Literally, the *itch for more* ... “¹⁰
“‘Greed’ is more specific than the other three words in this first group but is perhaps included because greed is so basic to so many other sins.”¹¹

5. Evil

“Malice in practice”¹² ... “inordinate viciousness of disposition”¹³

B. The sins of envy
[envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, whisperers, slanders]

1. All of these sins revolve around envy

“Envy is the hatred that arises in the heart toward one who is above us, who is what we are not, or possesses that, which we cannot have, or do not choose the path to attain.”¹⁴

2. Murder

Envy = _____ , murder = _____
But these are not just ‘sound-a-likes’, murder is motivated by envy.

⁸ Charles Hodge, *Romans*, p. 42.

⁹ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Romans*, p. 47.

¹⁰ William R. Newell, *Romans: verse by verse*, p. 36.

¹¹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 119.

¹² Charles Hodge, *Romans*, p. 42.

¹³ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Romans*, p. 47.

¹⁴ William R. Newell, *Romans: verse by verse*, p. 36.

3. Strife – you can easily see the connection
4. Deceit

“The Greek word means ‘a bait for a fish,’ and so, to catch with a bait, to beguile. So in what is called ‘business’ today, men are baited and lured: and ‘society’ lives by it!”¹⁵

5. Malice
 - a. “Malevolence, the disposition to make the worst of everything”¹⁶
 - b. “The tendency to put the worst construction upon everything”¹⁷
6. Whisperers [gossips, but sneaky gossips]

“By this Greek word of hissing sound (*psithuristas*), the Septuagint ... renders the Hebrew *lahash*: ‘a snake-charmers “magical murmuring”.’ Let those privately peddling evil reports, remember that God views their tongue as the slithering of the adder!”¹⁸

7. Slanders – lit., ‘to speak against’

Do you see how King Saul fits here? Do you fit here?

- C. The sins of arrogance
[haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents]

“The sin of human self-exaltation before both God and other people is conveyed in the next three words, ‘proud,’ ‘arrogant,’ and ‘overbearing.’ Trench distinguishes them, arguing that the first focuses on activities, the second on thoughts, and the third on words.”¹⁹

1. Arrogance revolves around the hatred of God [and exaltation of self].

¹⁵ William R. Newell, *Romans: verse by verse*, p. 36.

¹⁶ William R. Newell, *Romans: verse by verse*, p. 36.

¹⁷ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Romans*, p. 47.

¹⁸ William R. Newell, *Romans: verse by verse*, p. 37.

¹⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 120.

2. Arrogance is the root of disobedience to parents

“Literally, not able to be persuaded by parents.”²⁰
“That disobedient to parents is included in this fearful list shows how the sacred writers regarded this sin.”²¹

D. The sins of emptiness [things sinners are lacking]

[without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful]

1. Each of the last words begins with the letter **W**, creating ‘assonance’ – the meaning of the **W** is ‘without’ – speaking of a lack of some quality

2. [without understanding]:

a. “**Senseless** means ‘without insight into moral or religious things’ — that is, so blinded and besotted that evil is thought of as good and good as evil.”²²

b. “without conscience”²³

c. “Those who, because of their rejection of God (cf. 1.21, 28), can no longer comprehend the will of God.”²⁴

3. [covenantbreakers]:

“False to their engagements”²⁵ “one who refuses to abide by covenants and treaties”²⁶

4. [without natural affection]:

“**Heartless** refers to those in whom the natural affection for parents or children is suppressed.”²⁷

²⁰ William R. Newell, *Romans: verse by verse*, p. 37.

²¹ Charles Hodge, *Romans*, p. 42.

²² Charles Hodge, *Romans*, p. 42.

²³ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Romans*, p. 48.

²⁴ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 120-121.

²⁵ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Romans*, p. 48.

²⁶ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 121.

²⁷ Charles Hodge, *Romans*, p. 42.

5. [implacable] [BYZ – not in eclectic texts]:

'Irreconcilable' – 'that cannot be persuaded to enter into a covenant, implacable',²⁸

6. [unmerciful]:

"The meaning of _____ and _____ is often expressed in highly idiomatic ways, for example, 'to refuse to look at,' 'to turn one's back on,' or 'to refuse to hear a person's cries for help.'"²⁹

Conclusion:

What a picture! Do you see any of these things lurking about in our world?

"What Paul says about the ancient heathen world is true in all its essential features of men in all generations. Wherever men have existed, they have shown themselves to be sinners, ungodly and unrighteous, and therefore justly exposed to the wrath of God."³⁰

But remember – the presence of these sins in humanity *is* the wrath of God against men.

As societies turn away from God, the wrath of God against men becomes increasingly evident:

- Uncleaness
- Perversion
- Depraved minds

Proposition: The mind that disapproves of God becomes the mind that approves of all kinds of evil.

What evil do you approve or allow in your life?

May God help us!

²⁸ Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

²⁹ Louw-Nida *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd Edition, Edited by J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida. Copyright © 1988 by the United Bible Societies, New York, NY 10023.

³⁰ Charles Hodge, *Romans*, p. 41.