

4. Degeneration.

This category of antagonism and hatred is defined as follows:

A lowering of effective power, vitality, or essential quality to an enfeebled and worsened kind or state. Intellectual, moral, or artistic decline. Synonym: Deterioration: stresses physical, intellectual, or especially moral retrogression.¹

In our study it refers to believers who live in cosmic two and engage in degenerative behavior patterns as defined above. The resultant deterioration causes and consistent decline to an ever-worsening state.

This is a condition often defining a person who is ignorant of the filling of the Holy Spirit and how it is acquired or one who consciously rejects the rebound technique.

Degeneration of the immoral variety is often quite obvious while moral degeneration is subtle because it is camouflaged with human good. We will observe each variety.

For example, immoral degeneration emerged from the sin nature's area of weakness while moral degeneration is promoted by its area of strength.

Immoral degeneration includes obvious sins including crime, violence, sexual perversions, drug addiction, alcohol addiction, lying, adultery, fornication, and covetousness.

Paul takes up sexual perversions as an example of immoral degeneracy in:

Romans 1:24 - God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to impurity, to dishonor their bodies among themselves.

v. 25 - They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

¹ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.vv. "degeneration," "deterioration."

Romans 1:26 - For this reason God gave them over to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged the natural sexual relations for unnatural ones,

v. 27 - and likewise the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed in their passions for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. (NET)

Because of the wide-ranging impact on society, sexual degeneracy will be managed by the justice of God. Its deleterious effects on those involved have secondary and tertiary impact on the entire society.

The final verse of Romans 1 indicates the divine administration of discipline on those who are involved in sexual degeneracy:

Romans 1:32 - Such are those who though they have complete understanding of the righteous decree regarding salvation, (that those who practice such things are deserving of death) not only are doing the same things, but also give their approval to those who practice them. (EXT)

When an unbeliever hears a clear presentation of the gospel – faith alone in Christ alone – and reacts to it, then he also has clear understanding that in doing so results in spending eternity in the lake of fire.

Immoral degeneration not only results in damage to the soul, but it may also invite other complications including venereal disease of various kinds.

The behavior damages the right man-right woman relationship, breaks up families, damages the souls of children which has impact on the following generation, promotes deviant behavior in others or invites acceptance of the behavior from those who are motivated by human good that results in evil.

This places those who practice or support this form of deviant behavior to become targets for divine discipline as is noted in:

Galatians 6:7 - Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also harvest.

v. 8 - For he who sows in the flesh shall of the flesh harvest corruption, but he that sows from the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit shall from the Spirit harvest rewards for eternity. (EXT)

This passage makes reference to works produced by the flesh and those under the power of the Holy Spirit. The sowing has to do with the source of one's production while the harvest has to do with their results at the evaluation tribunal of Christ.

The pertinent point regarding the unbeliever is that mocking God harvests eternity in the lake of fire.

The believer imitates the works of the unbeliever when he becomes involved in production from the source of the flesh, the sin nature.

Saul [Paul] considered his persecution of Christians to be acts of divine good which he ignorantly sowed from the source of the flesh. What he harvested from those acts occurred on the Damascus Road:

Acts 9:1 - Now Saul, still breathing out threats to murder the Lord's disciples, went to the high priest,

v. 2 - and requested letters from him to the synagogues in Damascus so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, either men or women, he could bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

v. 3 - As he was going along approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.

v. 4 - He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

v. 5 - So he said, "Who are you, Lord?" He replied, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting!"

v. 6 - But stand up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." (NET)

In Acts 9:4, the Lord asked Saul, “Why are you persecuting Me?” Saul was then instructed to go to Damascus to the home of Judas where he would encounter a man named Ananias.

Paul’s salvation allowed him to take on the duties of a “chosen instrument” for the Lord to communicate divine truth to Gentiles of SPQR, emperors of Rome, and the Jews.

The word “chosen” [ἐκλογή (*eklogé*)] refers to Paul’s positive volition to the gospel and resultant “election” while “instrument” [σκευή (*skeuế*)] speaks of “service” to the Lord under the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul recognizes himself as the ultimate recipient of the Lord’s mercy since he was the foremost of all sinners.

1 Timothy 1:12 - I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,

v. 13 - even though I was formerly a blasphemer and persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;

v. 14 - and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.

v. 15 - It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost.

v. 16 - Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. (NASB)