

# THE BEREAN

"...EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY..." (Acts 17:11)

## **FACTION IN YOUR HEART**

*A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES  
PART THIRTY EIGHT OF SIXTY FOUR*

"But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth" (James 3:14).

"The heart" is used in the Bible to refer to the seat of thinking and thus of actions. The Lord said, "For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings" (Mt. 15:19). James tells his readers to "purify your hearts" (James 4:8). The words and actions of men are first in the heart before they are expressed. What then would be the fruit of "faction in your heart"? The Greek word here translated "faction" is variously translated. "Strife," "a spirit of rivalry," "party spirit," "selfish ambition," and "rivalry" are other translations. Notice again that this begins in the heart before it comes out in words or actions.

If a person has faction in his heart, he will be driven by a spirit of ambition and competition. He will be fired by an unholy zeal against others who may be in his way. How many churches have been torn apart by one or more being possessed of faction. Faction in the heart cannot remain still if it is kept and cherished. It will be shown in anger and malice against others. It betrays itself in debates and seeking revenge. It will seek to draw partisans to its side in opposition to others. One commentator on the meaning of the word described it as "the vice of a leader of a party created for his own pride; it is party ambition and party pride. It may involve the haughty forcing of his own views on others" (Hort). Diotrephes seems to illustrate this comment. "I wrote somewhat unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth

us not... and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren and them that would he forbiddeth and casteth them out of the church" (III John 9,10) He brooked no opposition from anyone, even the beloved apostle or the brethren he sent.

As teachers of His word we must never attempt to build a party around ourselves. As disciples we should never be a part of a "cult of personality" which seemed to have infected the Corinthians (I Cor. 1:12). We may even develop a factious mind in regard to the church as if it were ours rather than God's. As we speak to people about the Lord and His work, we may come across as seeking to convert people to what we believe or what "our church" teaches rather than to what Christ teaches in His New Testament. We may develop a factious spirit about the church rather than to possess and be possessed by the spirit of a disciple who is one that learns in humility. From an early age we are pressed to "choose up sides" whether in sports, politics, or neighborhoods. That same spirit unfortunately may influence religion. Let us show the world that our only desire is to follow Christ wherever He leads. If others want to follow Him, fine; if not, we will walk along.

(B. G. Echols)

**CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
412 East King Street  
Shippensburg, PA 17257