

THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

"FACTIONS", "DIVISIONS", "PARTIES"

Agreement must be manifested before any group can successfully accomplish determined goals (cf. Amos 3:3). The local church, a collective group of people, must have internal unity before she can function as God designed. God not only has stressed the necessity of this principle, but has specified how that unity can be produced: through Christ and His Word (cf. I Cor. 1:10-24). However, man has not always submitted himself under God's standard and has substituted his own standard, causing division among God's people. Such self-seeking, and haughty attitudes are behind all "factions", "divisions" and "parties".

I. WHAT THE WORD "FACTIONS" MEANS

- A. ERITHIA - Occurs 7 times in the N.T. and translated "strife" (KJV) "disputes" (NAS) and "selfish ambition" (NKJ), (NIV).
- B. The word originally denoted one who was a spinner of wool or a weaver (cf. LXX, Isa. 38:12). Then, the thought of hireling was attached to its meaning denoting one who worked only to get what he could get out of it. In Aristotle's day, the term described one who "electioneered for office". Hence, our term "factions" is a self-seeking spirit that cares only to be set forward with the approval of others regardless the cost.

II. HOW THE WORD "FACTIONS" IS USED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- A. A contentious attitude against the truth (Rom. 2:8, James 3:14).
 - 1. Including the spokesman of truth (Phil. 1:15-17).
- B. An empty self-seeking attitude (Phil. 2:3).
 - 1. "Vain glory" - an area of strong temptation (I Jn. 2:16).
 - 2. Leads to disunity and ungodly confusion (Phil. 2:2, James 3:16, 2 Cor. 12:20).
- C. The cure: brotherly love that is expressed in humility and service (Rom. 12:10, Phil. 2:3,4).

III. WHAT THE WORD "DIVISIONS" MEANS

- A. DICHOSTASIA - Occurs 3 times in the N.T. and literally means to "stand apart". The term is translated "seditions" (KJV), "dissentions" (NAS), "dissensions" (NKJ), (NIV) and "divisions" (ASV). The thought of division or dissention is conveyed.
- B. The verb form means "to excite", "unsettle", "to stir up to sedition" (Acts 21:38).

IV. HOW THE WORD "DIVISIONS" IS USED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- A. Paired with the begrudging attitude of jealousy (I Cor. 3:3).
- B. Characterized by a self-seeking spirit using deceptive words of doctrinal error (Rom. 16:17-18).

V. WHAT THE WORD "PARTIES" MEANS

- A. HAIREISIS - Occurs 9 times in the N.T. and translated "parties" (ASV), "heresies" (KJV), (NKJ), "factions" (NAS), (NIV).
- B. The word denotes "choice" or "that which is chosen" (cf. Matt. 12:18); therefore a "course of thought" or "opinion". Herein lies the bad connotation of the word. Not that opinions are necessarily evil, but that they become so when they are substituted for a submissive spirit towards truth.

VI. HOW THE WORD "PARTIES" IS USED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- A. A chosen way of belief or life.
 - 1. The "sect of Sadducees", "sect of the Pharisees" (Acts 5:17, 15:5).
 - 2. A reproachful way to refer to "the way" of the Christian (Acts 24:5, 14; 28:22).
- B. Characterized as destructive through false teaching (2 Pet. 2:1).
 - 1. Leads others away from the truth (2 Pet. 2:2).
 - 2. Tragedy of "denying the master who bought them", "the way of truth being evil spoken of", and bringing about "swift destruction".
 - 3. Such men should be avoided (Titus 3:10).
- C. In God's wisdom, He allows such party spirit to raise its ugly head in order to allow his approved ones to be manifested (I Cor. 11:19).

QUESTIONS:

- 1. Explain what attitude lies behind the word "factions" or "strife" ?

- 2. When one is contentious against the truth what is he actually promoting (cf. Rom. 2:8) ?

- 3. What is the cure for "factions" or "strife" ?

- 4. Can members of the church just overlook false teaching?
What does the Holy Spirit command us to do when false teaching occurs?

- 5. Why does God allow the party spirit to rise in the church?

6. Explain why you are NOT GUILTY of "factions" "divisions" and a "party spirit" when you teach that there is only one church authorized by God , and that one must be a member of that church if he or she is saved: