

THE FULLNESS OF GOD'S MIND PART 2

Marshall Stiver, March 3, 2023

Greetings everyone. I've been looking forward to finishing part two of this study titled, "The Fullness of God's Mind. In our previous study we compared God to a coin and for a good purpose. Every coin has two sides.

On either side of the coin we were then going to write an attribute of God. We reasoned that since the most compelling attribute of God is love that love would be written on the heads side of the coin.

On the tails side, we would put an equally compelling attribute of God but one that isn't generally thought of first. The word "hate" would be printed on the tail side. This is the coin that represents God, love and hate.

We referenced Psalm 45:7 where it says of Christ, "You love righteousness and hate wickedness." That's the reason for making our coin the way that we have because that is what's written about Christ.

Love and hate are inseparable. One side of the coin is just as valuable as the other. The lesson for us is simple. To be an overcomer we must learn to hate sin in our own life just as God does so that we can understand and can comprehend it's evil. This will supply the motivation to conquer sin through Christ in us, through the Holy Spirit abiding and empowering us.

Our minds play a big part in this. None of us will ever cease to flirt with evil unless we truly hate it. Think about the things you've overcome in your life. Have you really hated those things? Those are the things that we overcome. And none of us will ever go after good unless we truly love it passionately.

Proverbs 6:16-19 is the basis which defines the things God hates:

Proverbs 6:16 These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him:

17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood,

18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil,

19 A false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.

In the previous study, we made every effort to gain more understanding of why God passionately hates these things. That's what we want to do in this study as well. The last time we looked at the first three of these things that God hates. All seven of these things that God hates relate to how we can harm our fellow man. That is very valuable for us to comprehend. God is very interested our having a quality life.

Knowing God's mind in this should be very encouraging to us as to how much He values the comfort of human life, how He desires for it to be. He desires for humankind to have life but at a far more abundant level than what we find in this world that is presently governed by Satan.

The understanding of God's hatred of these next four items, instilled in our minds, is what allows us to love as He loves, when we develop a hatred for these same things that He hates.

The first of these four is God hates a heart that devises wicked imaginations. On this particular point, Matthew Henry's Commentary says:

"Subtlety in the contrivance of sin, wisdom to do evil, a heart that designs and a head that devises wicked imaginations, which is acquainted with the depths of Satan and knows how to carry on a covetous, envious, revengeful plot, most effectually. The more there is of craft and management in sin the more it is an abomination to God."

The last sentence is a very comprehensive explanation of how much God hates a heart that devises wicked imaginations. With that bit of commentary in mind about the craft and management of sin, consider Romans 1:18.

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Evil comes from those who suppress the truth. Where is truth suppressed? What part of us is affected when truth is suppressed? It's our mind, it's our heart. It's in the mind that has been exposed to God in one manner or another. Paul is describing what happens to a mind that willingly devises wicked imaginations.

19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

People who have known about God, the Creator of all that there is, degenerate mentally and spiritually over time as God becomes smaller and smaller in their minds. It can happen to any of us. God is not glorified when that happens. Self is being glorified in this process. In that state of mind, that mind will become spiritually darkened with no access to God over time.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

One example of that happened in 1980 when it became illegal in the United States to display the ten commandments in public schools. It's like replacing good with evil. If you look at our schools today, taking the ten commandments out almost seems tame as compared to what's being allowed in schools today. Quite interesting.

23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

God, in their futile minds, becomes like an inanimate object. Just an object, just a thing. We can look at how wicked imaginations drive the mental and the spiritual slide. This is a process. It's describing the slide of the mind away from God.

24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,

God gives them up to their wicked imaginations, the very thing that He hates, He gives them up to those things which we see all around us today. I just talked about public schools. We can talk about the news, the media that we watch. We see it.

25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.

27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

We are reading this to get the full complement of this entire thought process. We really don't need to comment on what we've just read in these last few verses. The media covers this for us every day. We can see this every day.

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

That word, debased, is one that we should define. This is what Gill's Commentary says regarding a debased mind.

"A vain empty mind, worthless, good for nothing devoid of all true knowledge and judgement; incapable of approving what is truly good, or of disapproving that which is evil;

a mind that has lost all conscience of things, and is disapproved of by God and all good men.”

This mind is one that willingly devises wicked imaginations. That’s how it functions. What does a mind like that produce? Continuing right on there in verse 29. This is the produce of that mind that devises wicked imaginations.

29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,

30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;

These things come from a debased mind. We read things like this and hopefully we’re not so accustomed to it in our society that it doesn’t just glare at us, it doesn’t just scream at us. These are horrible things. They come from a depraved mind. Something that is almost worse than an animal mind.

32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

The demented mind, a mind totally turned, a debased mind only practices things worthy of death in God’s eyes and it wants those around itself, mind for mind. It wants to have company like birds of a feather flocking together. Those who will have the same wicked imaginations.

None of us delight in any of these things that are listed in the previous three verses. A society filled with these things, as ours increasingly is, should make us sick. It should really make us sick to our stomach, to our heart and our mind, to contemplate what’s really happening. The abominations around us.

You see, the more that sin is crafted in the human mind apart from God and then acted on, the more it is an abomination to God. It’s something that’s crafted and developed and worked at. The mind’s been contorting, going back and forth, and coming up with whatever it comes up with.

There is very little written actually in this particular in Romans account prior to the flood to give us a full flavor of what society was really like at that point. Genesis is specific.

Genesis 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

What we read in Romans 1 really fills in a lot of blanks. The world, almost exclusively, (we know Noah and his family were spared) but almost exclusively would have been of a debased mind up to this point. It was full of all sorts of evil.

1 Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them,

2 that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

3 And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”

So again, there's not a lot written here but there are some pointers. Very clearly God took acute note of who was marrying whom. It matters to God. He said His Spirit would not struggle or strive with man forever because of what they were doing. There was something that wasn't good happening in these marriages.

God has never wanted (and we can look at this in scripture) God's never wanted His sons or daughters, in other words those who follow Him, to intermarry with those who don't. Very obviously He didn't like what He saw because He knew the course that it would take. The reasoning is very simple. I know we can comprehend it straightaway. The evil example of an ungodly mate can corrupt or hurt the godly individual. A family's tie to God can be destroyed when the children are influenced by the parent who has no fear of God.

Sometimes an unbelieving mate can be won over by a converted mate because of their conduct and so on. But all too often, that doesn't happen. That wasn't happening in this case we would have to conclude. The children can so easily take on the thought process of the one who devises his or her own evil course in life. It's the downward slope. It's the easy slope.

And as families begin to fail, the godly diminish in number. Now we're talking about a progression that happens over time. As families begin to fail the godly diminish in number and over time a culture of only evil will continually dominate. That's what was happening on the earth. That's what God saw before the flood. That is also what is developing around us today. Minds that willingly devise wicked imaginations, that's what we see in our culture and around this earth today.

But remember, it's very easy to look at that and say, “Well, that's what they're like.” Remember, we're studying this in order to learn to hate in ourselves the things that God hates so that His love can displace anything that's evil or wrong within us. That's why we're looking at it.

It's very easy to look at the pre-flood period of time and be repulsed, but what about us here and now? Christ says:

Mark 7:21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.

23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”

Christ is speaking to His disciples here at this point. He's giving them a base of understanding. He taught His disciples many, many things. This is part of it. He's giving them a base of understanding from which they can later teach as they teach others who will be called by our Father.

But the other side of it is, He's also teaching them what to look for within themselves. These were not perfect men. These were people just like you and me. He was teaching them to look within themselves as they developed under His care.

Learning to passionately hate our own heart when it even begins to devise a wicked imagination is our very own responsibility as we proceed on our way to loving as God's does. We'll get there if we take it seriously.

The fifth thing that God hates is:

Proverbs 6:18 ... Feet that are swift in running to evil,

The two, you take the first one we just covered, “The heart that devises wicked plans” and “feet that are swift in running to evil” really work hand in hand. We can see it instantly. The evil that the heart devises are carried out speedily and even greedily thereafter. That is an abomination to God. It's how fast can we get away from Him and away from the truth that will help us to come to actually inherit eternity forever in peace. As I said, this is an abomination to God. It's not a hard thing to hate in our present time.

Scenes of this “feet that are swift in running to evil” we see all the time. They get captured on people's cell phones. They get captured on security cameras. And we get to see it then in the news.

How often have we seen a group of people, sometimes older, sometimes younger, attack a lone individual? I'm saying over the course of the last couple of years this is becoming increasingly frequent. More and more as time wears on. That victim will be pummeled, people will just be swinging their fists and pummeling this poor person until he or she goes down and then repeatedly kicked after the victim is unconscious.

Through it all, the attackers almost appear as if they're competing with each other in order to land the next blow or to do the most damage. It is an evil frenzy. It is sub-human. It is animalistic. It is almost sub-animal is what it is. That's what we get to see. We understand what evil looks like.

Isaiah 59:7 Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; Wasting and destruction are in their paths.

8 The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways; They have made themselves crooked paths; Whoever takes that way shall not know peace.

Here again, we see a thought process that devises wicked plans is followed with feet that are greedy in running to do evil. They can't wait. They're anxious to run to evil. Is this inexplicable, the thing that Isaiah described and the thing that we're seeing with our culture today, is it inexplicable? Does it just happen? Of course, we know that it doesn't just happen. There is no causeless curse. Everything has a beginning. Let's go up to verse 1.

1 Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.

2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

There we have it. Tremendous understanding for us. Our sins separate us from God. Obviously, He's talking about those sins that are not repented of. Or that we're not eager to repent of, that we're wanting to linger in and be Laodicean-like. Unrepented of sin closes God's ears to us. Perhaps in your life, I know in mine, there have been times when I have felt like my prayers were going nowhere. Probably most of us have experienced that. This is a description of that. God closes His ears when we're not in a repentant frame of mind.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, (upside of what we're talking about. John continues) ...

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

That's a very vital point for those of us whom God has called. Because we do know the difference. We have been called. Our minds have been opened. The point is that if we pretend that we have no sin, if we just want to forget about it like it'll go away or it really doesn't matter, then we're walking in darkness and in effect we're closing God's ears to us. And we're not allowing love to develop within us because we don't hate what's going on.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

I don't know how you'd improve on what John said. It's so simple and it's so true. It's very plain. We would have to be literally stupid to not zealously be searching our own heart and our own mind. I'm sure it's understood but we'll just say it for the sake of clarity. Ours is the only mind that we can search with God's help through His Spirit. It doesn't do us any good to focus on what somebody else needs to do. It's what we need to do.

But the fact is that many, many people today, not only don't have God's ear, they literally don't even know who He is. We talked earlier about how it is a culture could become like it was before the flood and like it is becoming increasingly quickly today. The more that families fail and the godly diminish, the faster our culture runs toward evil. That's what's happening.

Jeremiah 4:22 "My people are fools. They don't know me. They are stupid people. They don't understand. They are experts in doing wrong, and they don't know how to do good."

I mentioned the word "stupid" just previous to this. That was for a purpose. A common dictionary definition of stupid is "having or showing a great lack of intelligence or common sense or dazed and unable to think clearly."

But this verse adds a lot more depth to the standard dictionary, because it comes in at the spiritual level. Stupid people are also foolish, and they lack understanding. They don't understand why things are the way they are. Stupidity, foolishness, and a lack of understanding are all bound together by a common fact. Such individuals do not know God. They don't know God. They, therefore, lack the knowledge of the truth to be able to come to sound conclusions through a clear state of mind. That's what you call spiritual stupidity. For anyone of us to trust in the reasonings of our own mind apart from God is, just what I said, spiritual stupidity.

So stupid, and evil thoughts morph. They merge into one and turn loose the feet that want to run to destruction. That want to run to mischief, to evil. That's how it works. We can see why God hates these things and I know we hate them too. We do. But to what degree? To what degree do we?

There is a very good way for us to get a very good read on ourselves. That is, do we run headlong, I mean greedily at overcoming with even greater zeal those who run to do evil? That's how we have to be. We have to be on fire on this spiritual path that God called us to and that we chose. We covenanted with Him to go on. We have to have a zeal to hate these things.

2 Corinthians 7:11 For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

Hopefully, that could be said of all of us. Honestly I believe it must be said of all of us if we are to see Christ when He returns and for Him to know us. That has to be our mind right there.

We know the story well. The brethren in Corinth had been tolerating open sin in their midst. They were doing what we today would call social correctness. They were being socially correct. They were compromising with sin, which is what social correctness is. That's something that God doesn't do.

God forgives. His mercy and His forgiveness are higher than the heavens upon repentance. Upon us turning with the desire we see here in Corinth. That's when He unleashes all of the forgiveness and mercy. That's what puts a person on the path to perfection. That's the path that we all want to be on.

But to do that we have to have a heightened sense of carefulness as to the thoughts that we allow ourselves to entertain. Thoughts that could lead us to want to compromise or to run swiftly towards evil at some point. We have to have a zeal. We have to have a burning desire, to take revenge on our thoughts and actions that are not approved by God! And when that's our attitude things change, things get wonderfully better. We must realize that our being lukewarm to the thoughts that lead to a swift delivery of evil are just like the mob of people who attack and pummel an innocent person to unconsciousness or death. That should turn our thoughts and actions into a headlong sprint that leads to life. We don't want to be those that are spiritually dull and following the impulses of the world.

The sixth thing that God hates is:

Proverbs 6:19 A false witness who speaks lies...

So let's consider God's hatred of this. In John 8, verse 44, Christ said that Satan was a murderer from the beginning and that he is a liar and the father of all liars. From the very beginning of God's human creation, we can see, and we can feel to this very day, the magnitude of the power of a false witness who lies. Satan, as Lucifer, had previously been in God's presence and was therefore a witness of God. He knew exactly who and what God was and for what He stood. He was a witness.

But he transitioned when the wicked thoughts began to run through his mind causing him to want to do something about it, to run toward evil. He transitioned from Lucifer to Satan and he became a false witness that speaks lies.

Since the Garden of Eden, the whole of human history has been set on a course to destruction. We don't see the world getting better every day, do we? We'd love to see that. And the time will come.

We know that Satan has deceived the entire world. Satan's lies and deception have affected all people through time with the only exception of Christ. Think about that.

Every person who's lived, all the billions of lives that come into being and lived out their lives have been affected by Satan's lies and deception.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

It affected every, last person. How great of an abomination is that to God? Here God is seeking a family and seeking to bring men into His family, His eternal family that is composed of unity and love and peace and all the fruits of the Holy Spirit. It's been all derailed.

It wasn't just Adam that sinned and earned its penalty which is death. We know and we understand every last one of us have sinned and therefore earned that same penalty. You see, the lies of a false witness are like a corrupt scientist (if we want to create a scenario) creating a virus that will infect all of earth's inhabitants. And the unsuspecting don't even know initially that they've been exposed or that they've been infected. This is the fruit of a demented, demonic mind.

The basis that we're coming down to is the intent of a false witness is to cause harm. There is no intention of anything good coming of it at all. God's intent is just the opposite of Satan's. Christ says:

Acts 26:18 to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

Christ, who is a true witness of our Father, came to deliver us from the darkness of lies and deceit to the light of the truth of our spiritual rescue through Him. He came to deliver us into the rescue so that we could begin to become just like Him, to become a true witness.

Do we love to speak the truth in love in order to build up our brother or sister in the faith? Are we zealous for that? Is that something that we are hot about doing? Is it an abomination in our mind to digress even minutely to what we've witnessed?

Jezebel is a very good example of a false witnesses telling lies. This is about Jezebel and how she sought to get Naboth's vineyard for Ahab and the mindset in which she did it:

1 Kings 21:8 And she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who were dwelling in the city with Naboth.

9 She wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people;

10 and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, You have blasphemed God and the king. Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die.

11 So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them.

12 They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people.

13 And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, “Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!” Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died.

14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, “Naboth has been stoned and is dead.”

15 And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, “Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead.”

It is a pitiful story. When you think of what has happened it is a horrible thing. Here is an innocent man, and a God-fearing man. He didn't want to give up the possession that God had given his family which he was retaining to that day. And he's put to death by the lies of false witnesses. That is a horrible thing anytime something like this happens.

But there is far more to the story than that. Jezebel got the leaders of the city, in effect, to serve as false witnesses as well. She was actively trying to corrupt the leadership. Turning them away from God, from any conscience they might have had in order to get what she wanted.

We know well, in our present day, what comes of corrupt leadership. It's distressing to see what is happening within our country. But it proves the point. Our country is being turned away from God.

God's instruction through Moses confirms this for us. How severe, how awful, how evil a false witness that bears false lies is:

Deuteronomy 19:16 If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing,

17 then both men in the controversy shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days.

18 And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother,

19 then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you.

20 And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you.

A very clear principle that when a person was proven to be a false witness, whatever his objective was, whatever his intent was by telling that lie as a false witness, that would be applied to him. If it were wealth that he sought, that's what he would lose. If it was the other man's life, that's what would be taken. We get the picture. It was severe. The purpose of it all was that those around the lying false witness would hear of the outcome and fear to do anything of the sort. Then evil would be stopped from spreading. That's what God's intention is, to stop the evil from spreading.

What Jezebel was involved in would be what we call fake news today. Those leaders who create a false narrative and follow through with it. Naboth was a victim, if we want to put it again into modern terminology, he was a victim of cancel culture. Cancel culture operates on the premise that there is no God. To Jezebel there was no God. The God of Israel was nonexistent in her mind. It operates on the premise that there is no God, and there is no moral compass as to right and wrong. Decisions then, are ruled by impulse and by emotion. That's what we saw in the case of Jezebel.

That's what we see, to a large degree within our own government today. And of course, when decisions are ruled by impulse and by emotion what do we have? We have what we are approaching today, which is mob rule. We're beginning to see visages of that even now.

False witness speaking lies can alter a nation's course. That's why God instructed what He did in Deuteronomy so that Israel wouldn't have taken a bad course.

Now we can see the destruction over the earth and over a nation potentially through a false witness telling lies and that is something that we hate to a degree. But let's turn the heat up on it just a little bit. We could ask ourselves, could I, could you, be a false witness speaking lies? Is it possible?

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by [which] we cry out, "Abba, Father."

16 The Spirit [itself] bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

Those of us who have been spiritually begotten, who have been baptized and received the Holy Spirit, we are begotten children of God. And we bear witness of God in our lives through that spiritual connection that we have. Is that connection visible? Is it really visible? Is that connection really real?

We know that not all who have been baptized and received the Holy Spirit will inherit the Kingdom. One of several instances we could go to prove that is in Matthew 25.

Matthew 25:34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;

36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’

37 “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?’

38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?’

39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’

40 And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’

A true witness of Christ isn’t just a keeper of the commandments. Anyone who keeps the letter of the law could be someone who Christ will not know at His return. We have to go beyond the letter to the spirit. What we are at heart, what’s inside there, what’s the inner workings of our minds that speak to whether we are a true or a false witness. Christ addresses both kinds of witnesses. If we continue to read further we could read the other kind of witness as well.

Those who won’t be recognizable to Christ at His return are those who received the Holy Spirit after baptism, but they didn’t take it seriously. They didn’t learn to hate the things that God hates. If that doesn’t stir us to hate even the slightest hint of being a lying false witness at heart nothing will. If that doesn’t put any fear of God into us as to how fervent we should be then nothing is going to make any difference.

The seventh thing that God hates is those:

Proverbs 6:19 ... who sows discord among brethren.

Discord means strife, conflict, friction, hostility. It is the polar opposite of the complete unity that exists between Christ and our Father, which is what they desire for us to have. Discord leads to hate and death. Unity leads to love and life forevermore.

In James 3 we see that wisdom is required in order to attain either one, death or life, or discord or unity.

James 3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking (we don't want to give up what we want) **in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.**

15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

The wisdom that produces strife, conflict, or hostility along with confusion and all the other evil things that can be mentioned is demonic. Demonic wisdom produces that. James contrasted it with godly wisdom that produces the peace, the love, and the unity all desire. We all innately, just naturally want to have that. And its source is God's wisdom.

So, whoever sows discord among brethren is yielding him or herself to the wrong spirit – Satan's spirit. The spirit of the adversary, the spirit of evil. That bit of understanding is, I think, very compelling in terms of coming to see it and then to hate it when we see it within ourselves.

Paul confirms the power of the wrong spirit at work within the Church:

1 Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, (unconverted is what that means) **as to babes in Christ.**

They were of the wrong spirit even though they had received the Holy Spirit at baptism. They were of the wrong spirit, and they were therefore spiritually undiscerning. Lacking godly wisdom.

2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;

3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?

We know because of living in the time we are living today with the Church very much like it was in Paul's day, we know exactly what he is talking about. It is pointless for us to look around the Church in our own organization or outside of it and point a finger. That's pointless. If we're honest with ourselves, which we must be, probably every one of us have struggled over these things to one degree or another as we are progressing on to a different line of thought.

But it doesn't make any difference at all if someone else has struggled in the same way. no one else can learn to hate it as God does for us. Whether it's between organizations

or right here among ourselves in our local congregation, discord among brethren is demonic. God hates it. It is an abomination to Him. It's something we don't want to be a part of. Some brethren in Corinth were having difficulty coming together to properly keep the Passover.

1 Corinthians 11:17 Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse.

Here they are on the most solemn of occasions of the year for God's people. A time that commemorates Christ's total sacrifice in our behalf, so that we can come to have the very unity and oneness and love that He and the Father have. And here they are and they're failing.

18 For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.

19 For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary says this of divisions, "recent dissensions in the congregation through differences of opinion." We can relate to that very, very easily. And of factions the commentary says this, "schisms which have now become inveterate" meaning long established and unlikely to change. It's not hard for us to relate to any of this.

The really sobering aspect, and this is what I want us to focus in on now of verse 19 is that all of this division and factions would eventually prove those who are approved by God. Which means some are not going to be approved by God. It would sort out and make clear those who truly had learned to hate in themselves any slight tendency to sow discord among brethren. Christ will know the sower of unity at His return. He'll know the sower of discord at His return. But He won't know them in the same way that He knows His own. His own will be sowers of unity.

Let's consider one final aspect on this point. We're going to go to some verses that none of us are eager to read on a daily basis. They're heavy. No one likes to think of these things but Christ did think of them and He spoke of it for our understanding and for our edification. He did it out of the deepest love and concern for us. It's important that we understand this.

Matthew 24:9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

Let's just insert here, it doesn't say that they will kill everyone. But it does say that some will be killed.

10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

In another place Christ said, "if they persecuted Me, they will persecute you" and persecution will come in our time. I would also say that Christ is speaking to those who understand what He's talking about. He's speaking to the Church. He's talking about this happening among believers when the persecution comes on the Church.

We were just talking about how Christ will know the sower of unity at His return. He's going to know that sower. He's going to recognize him because the Holy Spirit is there, and they have learned to hate the things that He hates and love the things He loves. They are the ones who passionately hate any vestige of discord among brethren. Especially if they're the ones who are contributing to it. That's what they have learned to hate. It's not about what somebody else does.

In their minds, betraying a brother or sister in Christ is unthinkable. It is the worst of any thought that could come into mind. It's unthinkable. It is of the devil. Those who passionately hate discord and passionately love unity, won't hate their betrayer. They will not hate their betrayer. They will be praying for and with one another and encouraging one another to hold fast to the end. Because they know this is going to come. That there will be some who will not have learned to hate the things that God hates. And they'll know that.

It is a good mental and spiritual exercise to imagine the possibility of ever betraying a brother or sister in Christ. Can you imagine it? Can we conceive of that in our minds? Think about how that would make us feel. It will help to burn into our minds God's own hatred for those who sow discord among brethren. We must hate fervently any such tendency in ourselves.

Ultimately, the more we learn to passionately hate the things that God hates, the more zealously we'll take on His unstoppable love.