



Chapter 37: Faith and Faith Contending in the Bible

37-1: THE BIBLE'S OWN DEFINITION OF FAITH.

**“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
(Hebrews 11:1 KJV)**

Even in the Bible, few things are as clearly defined as is “faith”!

“...faith is...”, we read in the Word of God as recorded in Hebrews 11:1.

FAITH IS:

- (1). The Substance of Things Hoped For; and
- (2). The Evidence of Things Not Seen.

Substance

Our Christian faith needs substance. Faith like so many other things in life even as love is intangible in that you can not see it, feel it, taste it, or hear it directly. You can see and hear the results of faith and love, but you can not see or hear these intangibles within themselves. As Christians what do we hope for? Well, we hope: (1) To see God face to face and eternally; (2) To be inhabitants of the new heavens and new earth; (3) To be accepted here on earth as a child of God; and so on. Well all these hopes deal with things that can not presently be seen—God Himself, heaven, salvation, and the new heavens and new earth; but the encouraging word of the Bible is that our Christian faith gives “substance” to these things that are hoped for!. Actually “hoped for” being words of the King James English of 1611 does not adequately express the full meaning in today’s English of what was original written by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul in the First Century. Today’s equivalent of this portion of Hebrews 11:1 would be more that what we hope for is “more what we reasonably expect is going to happen.”

Evidence

Christian faith besides giving substance to our legitimate hopes also is within itself an “evidence”. The Apostle Paul who wrote the book of Hebrews was first a lawyer before he became an Apostle, and naturally to lawyers there is little as important as evidence. Of course before we take the present attitude toward Paul that most people have toward lawyers, since all the law of the Hebrew nation was religious law except what they had to heed as being under the Roman government, then Paul’s job as a lawyer before his conversion was to interpret and

uphold the religious laws of the Old Testament as the Pharisees had come to interpret them in the First Century.

When a young man and when Christian Evidences and Christian Apologetics were so important to me in order to provide an intellectual foundation and arguments to justify Christian faith, there were two books very important to me that provided evidence of Christian faith. One was a book by a lawyer who had practiced law before the Supreme Court of the United States entitled *A LAWYER EXAMINES THE BIBLE*. Irwin Linton, the author, maintained in the book that sufficient evidence existed in the Bible to support a prima facie case sufficient for any modern court of law whereby Jesus Christ's claims to be the Son of God would be supported in those courts of law. Further Linton stated that he had never met a lawyer who when he said that he did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who could also say that he had read through the four gospels for himself to determine the validity of the claim. Linton also tells of Simon Greenleaf, the former Dean of the Harvard Law School, who in writing the book *THE TESTIMONY OF THE EVANGELISTS*, and who being at that time an authority on the subject of "evidence", stated that the testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John would be sufficient in any court of law to substantiate the claim that Jesus was and is the Son of God!

Another book that was good in the defense of the Christian faith was that of Mosma's *THE EVIDENCE OF GOD IN AN EXPANDING UNIVERSE*. This book is a compilation of articles written by over 40 scientists in government, education, and industry with evidence from their particular scientific fields as to why they believe in God. The biologists found in the details of the design of man and animals, evidence of God; the physicists found in the atomic and astronomical design of the small and large of the earth and universe the evidence of God; and mathematicians found in the logic of man and the universe evidence of God.

25-2: The Word "Faith" in the Bible.

When you deal with the word "faith" in the Bible, you are dealing with the Bible itself. Faith is indeed the primary subject of the Bible apart from the two major subjects of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; and much of the Bible on those two very fundamental subjects of God and Jesus are there to engender "faith" on the part of the reader or listener. If momentarily we stick with the King James Version of the Bible—primarily because concordances such as *YOUNG'S ANALYTICAL* are more readily available for the King James—we will find that the word "faith" is: (1) Found in the Bible with five distinct Hebrew and Greek words; (2) Two of those five are Hebrew words of the Old Testament and naturally the other three of those words are Greek words of the New Testament; and (3) Faith is primarily a New Testament word with only two usages in the Old Testament as compared to approximately 239 times in the New Testament; and (4) The word "faith" is found in 24 out of 27 New Testament books, faith itself is

found in 27 out of 27 New Testament books as we will find it is also possible to talk about faith without the usage of the word itself.

However since the purpose of this first chapter is a definition of “faith” from the Bible, we will briefly look at all 241 usages of this word “faith” in the Bible; for it is in the usages of the word faith in the context of the verses, chapters, and books of the Bible that more define the concept of faith than even the precise definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1. In fact, as we look at the other 240 out of 241 usages of “faith”, you will come to appreciate even more the definition of Hebrews 11:1, especially when you consider the in-context weight of the fact that in Hebrews chapter 11 alone there are 23 other usages of the word “faith”; and that is a good place to start our study of the definition of faith as we find that Paul is summarizing faith in the Old Testament where the word faith itself has not previously been used. For example, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses are mentioned in Hebrews 11 as practitioners of faith, and yet the word “faith” is not mentioned except twice in the Old Testament. Just before we look at the usages of faith in Hebrews 11, we will look at the two usages in the Old Testament.

The Word “Faith” in the Old Testament

1. Faith in Deuteronomy 32:20.

The Hebrew word translated “faith” here in the King James Version is more literally in modern English translated as “faithfulness” or “steadiness”.

“And he said (God said), I will hide my face from them (from the children of Israel), I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.” (Deuteronomy 32:20 KJV)

2. Faith in Habakkuk 2:4.

Here the Hebrew word is more literally “faithfulness” or “stability”; but it gets redefined as do so many other Bible words when it is quoted in the New Testament, and naturally we would have to think that in the mind and heart of God that original meaning was in the Old Testament all the time, beyond the common usage of the Hebrew, or Greek, language in the ordinary usages of the conversations or other documents of the times.

a. Habakkuk 2:4 in the Old Testament.

“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.” (Habakkuk 2:4 KJV)

b. Habakkuk 2:4 in the New Testament.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel ; for it is the power of God for salvation to every one who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, `But the righteous man shall live by faith’.” (Romans 1:16,17 NASV)

By the way, here in Romans 1:16,17 and in Habakkuk 2:4 as quoted in Romans 1:17, we see examples of both substance and evidence in faith. Here we see: (1) Gospel; (2) God's power; (3) Salvation; (4) Believes; (5) Righteousness; and (6) God. God we have never seen!

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” (John 1:18 KJV)

The righteousness of God we have never seen.

Fortunately the righteousness of God was given some substance in the Old Testament by the laws of God, particularly the Ten Commandments, and in the New Testament by the record of the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ—

“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17 KJV)

“Faith” in Hebrews 11

1. Hebrews 11:1.

“And what is faith? Faith gives substance to our hopes, and makes us certain of realities we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1 NEV)

2. Hebrews 11:2.

“It is for their faith that the men of old stand on record.” (Hebrews 11:2 NEV)

The New English Version adds “faith” to 11:2 whereas the implication of the King James Version is the same with “it” for faith, referring to the “faith” of Hebrews 11:1 as the “it” already on record.

“For by it the elders obtained a good report.” (Hebrews 11:2 KJV)

This also serves to remind us that we are about to look closely at the “elders” or forefathers of the Old Testament and their good records or reports of faith, although the word “faith” is not mentioned in the original record.

3. Hebrews 11:3.

“By faith we perceive that the universe was fashioned by the word of God, so that the visible came forth from the invisible.” (Hebrews 11:3 NEV)

True, we can see the universe; and therefore we do not need the substance or evidence that faith gives -ah, but while we see the results, we do not see that God brought it into being instead of some great explosion or some other means that the majority of the world believes!

4. Hebrews 11:4, “by faith” Able left a memorial to faith and to righteousness by faith in that he sacrificed according to obedience, according to faith in the words which God spoke to him. Cain tried another way, and it did not work in the sight of God!

5. Hebrews 11:5—Enoch pleased God, his faith in God pleased God; and that same faith was so great that God took him straight to heaven without passing through the portal of death.

6. Hebrews 11:6, Faith is the only way to please God!

“But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6 KJV)

NOTE: Here is something that is apparent but still needs to be noted. “Believe” is the verb form of the noun word “faith”, so that while the book of John does not use the word “faith” as with some other books of the New Testament, indeed of the whole Bible, the word “believe” is found in those books.

What must men believe in order to please God?

(1). That God exists. That God is!

(2). That God rewards those who diligently seek Him. Those that sought God sincerely in the Old Testament through the Law, and those who seek God sincerely through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ after His Advent.

7. Hebrews 11:7: Noah could not see the rain yet nor the Flood of the whole earth that would come, yet he believed the word of God when God said that it was going to rain for 40 days and nights enough to Flood the whole earth and destroy everything living; and by this believing or faith, Noah “became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Heb 11:7 KJV).

Right here we could discuss extensively if desired as to whether this “righteousness” of Noah, a righteousness by faith, was seen or not seen. In other words as to whether it needed substance or evidence like faith, or as to whether the righteousness already had substance? To sufficient answer that question as with all questions in the Bible related to man’s righteousness—even as with Habakkuk 2:4 and Romans 1:16,17 quoted earlier, we must distinguish between legal righteousness and actual righteousness.

(1). Legal righteousness is that in the sight of God which therefore can not be seen by us even as God Himself can not be seen by us. Legal righteousness is sometimes called “justification” or the “atonement”. It is the legal act on the part of God whereby when God sees our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, He declares our righteousness to be the same as that of Jesus.

(2). Actual righteousness is the continuation of salvation after the initial regeneration or germ of salvation. At the new birth, or regeneration, the spirit of Christ is planted as a germ in our human spirits whereby we can grow in actual righteousness or Christlikeness. Sanctification is that process by which the power of the Holy Spirit continues to make us more actually righteous based on our increased faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

8. Hebrews 11:8-19, the Faith of Abraham.

Read it for yourself in conjunction with the fact that God Himself preached the Gospel to Abraham as recorded in Galatians 3:8 and Genesis 12:1-3—

“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” (Galatians 3:8 KJV)

Even as you don't see the word "faith" when you read Genesis 12:1-3, nor do you see God justifying (justification or atonement) neither Abraham nor the Gentiles to come, you also do not see the word "Gospel" in Genesis 12:1-3. However, although you do not see the word Gospel or faith there, you know it is there in concept apart from the actual words because the New Testament says it is!

"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3 KJV)

9. "By faith" Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, Hebrews 11:20-22.

10. "By faith" and Moses, Hebrews 11:23-29.

11. "By faith" and Joshua and the children of Israel marching around the walls of Jericho, Hebrews 11:30,31.

12. "By faith" a whole host of men and women of the Old Testament, Hebrews 11:32-40.

25-3: IMPACT OF THE HOPE!

In order to get the full impact of Christian faith, we must first get the full impact of Christian hope—"now, faith is the substance of things HOPED FOR..." Three things are most important in the Christian life—faith, hope, and love; and although the greatest of these is love, in order to appreciate the full impact of the love of God in providing Christian faith as a way of life, we must see also all that God has provided both in this life and the life to come. All of this is summarized in HOPE!

"Behold, I make all things new..." (Rev 21:5)

One word, the word new, as found in Revelation 21:5 above can make obvious the full impact of hope upon Christian faith! While they may seem a tremendous burden to place on one word, even the word new, it helps when we realize that this word and with the words above in Revelation 21:5 comes from God Himself, from "he that sat upon the throne" (Rev 21:5). Quickly in the book of Revelation the Almighty God the Father becomes "HE THAT SAT (AND SITS) ON THE THRONE". In other words, God the Father reigns supreme over all the universe; and although the Father has placed all things under the feet of Jesus, and by Jesus all things consist and have their being, above the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the Almighty God the Father who is sitting supreme on the great white throne. Just above the clouds, and with His feet in the clouds, sits God the Father in another dimension that we can not see. He sits on the "circle of the earth" so that He can see every sparrow that falls to the ground or each lily of the field that neither toils nor spins, yet your heavenly Father cares for them.

This God, the God of love and power, the God of the great white throne on the circle of the earth, and the God of the Lord Jesus Christ and full salvation, is the God who speaks, saying, “Behold, I make all things new...” You can count on it that all things in the heavens and on earth will be new. Counting on it, counting on these words from the Great Almighty God sitting on the great white throne of the universe is what faith is all about. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Faith believes that God is, that God is sitting up there on the great white throne caring and watching; and that this God rewards those who diligently seek Him!

God is making “all things” new:

1. God is making a new earth.
2. God is making new heavens.
3. God is making a new people to inhabit the new earth and under the new heavens.

All presently in this universe is very fragile. As physicists have told us for generations and as stated in the second law of thermodynamics—the order of the universe is decreasing. It is called the “law of entropy”. Entropy is increasing, and entropy is essentially disorder. So that the law of entropy tells us that order is decreasing in the universe and disorder is increasing. Sometimes we might tend to think that this physical law also has a social implication as a few weeks ago we witnessed in the news the anarchy, riots, and destruction in the city of Los Angeles. As we realize that our American society has within it the potential for self-destruction. Even as we realized also with the Judge Thomas affair that if America is destroyed, it must be destroyed from within as no foes are powerful enough to destroy it from the outside; and that this way of destruction is to destroy each other democratically in the public forum as we kill reputations, careers, and respect for others. With the boomers it has become very popular to tear down without grace and without compassion. No doubt these social as well as physical potentials for destruction are what the Apostle Paul had in mind as he wrote: **“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” (Romans 8:22 KJV)**

The earth itself groans with earthquakes; the heavens of the universe groans with falling stars and entropy; and society and the individuals that make up society groan in self destruction for something better, and to be better! Even as the Creation of the world of the Genesis account includes the stars, the moon, the sun, man, and all the animals, fish, and birds, even so must the “whole creation (which) groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” include man, earth, and the heavens. The obvious analogy here is of a woman in travail and groaning to give birth; and even as that pain of birth is endured in order for the hope of bringing forth a new child, even so the groaning of this old earth, heavens, and man is in the hope of the new earth, new heavens, and the new man.

In order to build faith in hope, and hope in faith, we will base our faith and hope on the context of the Word of God as given in these verses that surround in context of Romans 8:22. In other words, we will develop more understanding of Romans 8:22 by developing more understanding of the words that surround Romans 8:22.

Romans 8:18-13—

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope; for what man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” (Romans 8:18-13 KJV)

The contrast is obvious between the present life and the life to come—“the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”. This is the contrast between “the present life” and the future life; and while some criticisms of non-Christians or of social Christianity have been valid in that Christians have and do sometimes ignore the applications of Christian faith to this present life while concentrating solely on the future life, it is still true that THERE IS

NO COMPARISON BETWEEN THIS PRESENT LIFE AND THE FUTURE LIFE.

And that while we must heed the faith contending of the Apostle James—to be discussed in the second half of this book—that faith is dead faith in this life without words in this life, it remains a fact of the Bible, the Word of God, that the priority is for the future life where all things, people and universe, will be made new!

1. Romans 8:18. We must distinguish between the three aspects of salvation: (1) Salvation in the past which is called “regeneration” or the new birth which happens or happened the first time that a Christian expressed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; (2) Salvation in the present which is a matter of Christian growth or growth in Christlikeness which is generally called “sanctification”; and (3) Salvation in the future of which Paul is writing in Romans 8:18, “the glory which shall be revealed in us”. This last aspect of future salvation is much greater than the past and present aspects of salvation: this last aspect of salvation in the future is the very reason that Paul at the close of this passage in Romans 8:24 writes of “we are saved by hope”; for this is a salvation still to come. One which requires hope and requires faith!

2. Romans 8:19. Here is another way to say hope and faith: “earnest expectation”. It is more than legitimate expectation: It is earnest expectation! What do we wait to happen in the future as we continue in earnest expectation? The answer is here in this verse—“for the manifestation of the sons of God” These are the new creatures of the new heavens and new earth, the new sons of God. Even as Jesus Christ was and is the “firstborn of God”, so also is every Christian the secondborns as sons of God. As the Bible tells us in John 1:12.

“But as many as received him (Christ the Word made flesh), to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12,13 KJV)

The Apostle John is so fearful that we are going to miss the prime purpose of the book of John which is to “believe” in order to have “life”, abundant life at the present time and eternal life in the future, that here at the beginning and in the first chapter he lays out the whole plan of salvation around the Lord Jesus Christ as the “Word made flesh”.

3. Romans 8:20. This matter of every person on the face of the earth “being subjected to vanity” speaks also of this tendency of individuals and societies to self destruct. The Apostle James, quoting from the Old Testament in Proverbs, says it this way of even the Christian spirit:

“Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” (James 4:5 KJV)

No, the Bible says nothing to vain for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see; and the Bible, Old and New Testaments, tells us that even after the initial faith and new birth that the old spirit stays inside us, that spirit even of a Christian which continues to envy, to vanity, and to self destruct.

4. Romans 8:21.

“Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” (Romans 8:21 KJV)

(1). FROM: the bondage of corruption, from vanity, and from the spirit within us which lusteth to envy.

(2). TO: glorious liberty from corruption, from vanity, and from the spirit within that lusteth to envy; and to being a complete and completed child of God, a complete new creation in Christ!

5. Romans 8:22: “FOR WE KNOW THAT THE WHOLE CREATION GROANETH AND TRAVAILETH IN PAIN TOGETHER UNTIL NOW”. (ROMANS 8:22 KJV)

(1). Romans 8:22 in the New English Version.

“Up to this present, we know, the whole created universe groans in all its parts as if in the pang of childbirth.” (Romans 8:22 NEV)

a. “We know”—this is a matter of faith, hope, and understanding, that we have the confidence to know.

b. “The whole created universe groans”—this gives us obvious understanding that it is the whole universe of earth, heavens, and created beings.

c. “In the pangs of childbirth”—this gives us obvious understanding that the groaning and travailing of the King James Version is that of childbirth. The earth is in the pain of child birth to bring forth the new earth; the heavens are in the pains of childbirth, or entropy, to being forth the new heavens; and men and women are in the pains of childbirth to bring forth new men and new women.

(2). Romans 8:22 in the New American Standard Version.

“For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.” (Romans 8:22 NASV)

6. Romans 8:23.

“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” (Romans 8:23 KJV)

(1). We wait in hope and faith as Christians for the complete body.

(2). We wait in hope and faith for the completed work of the Holy Spirit inside and outside our bodies, sanctification and glorification.

(3). We wait in hope and faith for the completed adoption as children of God.

(4). We wait in hope and faith for completed redemption; that is, for the complete salvation of our bodies as well as our souls and spirits.

7. Romans 8:24.

How are we saved? “For we are saved by hope...” Is it hope if we can see our salvation already? No, “but hope that is seen is not hope...” You are out of luck if you can see your salvation as completed already, because this is not hope! If you see your salvation then you have nothing to hope for: “For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?”

8. Romans 8:13.

“But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” (Romans 8:13 KJV)

37-4: FIRST CENTURY HISTORY OF FAITH CONTENDING.

Okay, we have the faith as set out in the first six chapters of this commentary. Now, what are we going to do with it? The Bible teachings that we are to do three things with our Christian faith: (1) Grow in it; (2) Evangelize with it; and (3) Contend for it. While growing in the Christian

faith is important for both ourselves and others with whom we evangelize and contend, the second two are strictly for other people—to contend with the Christian faith for the benefit of others and we evangelize for the benefit of others, the two for others aspects of Christian faith have approximately equal priority in our Christian efforts. This is indicated by the temporal priority the Apostle Jude gave to faith contending as he stopped writing a book on the salvation of evangelism in order to write a book on faith contending—

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3 KJV)

You see how “faith” here in Jude 3 covers the two distinct usage of faith in the rest of the New Testament—as a summary and as an individual exercise—which were discussed in the first six chapters. And the way Jude writes of “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” leads us to believe that all the Apostles except Jude have already done their job of delivering in written and verbal form the summary of faith in their books of the New Testament—first Matthew, then Paul, then James and Peter, and lastly John before the Apostle Jude comes to write about the necessity of “Faith Contending”!

THE REASON THAT FAITH CONTENDING IS NECESSARY IS BECAUSE THE FAITH BECOMES DISTORTED BY THOSE WHO PRACTICE CONTENTIOUS FAITH!

What Happened in First Century Christianity?

You miss the whole point of Jude, of faith contending, and of the primary reason for faith contending if you do not realize that the problem then and now is with certain leaders that are inside the Christian faith! “For there are certain men crept in unawares...” (Jude 4 KJV): these men, leaders in certain churches were inside the Christian movement; and that is the kind of men that the book of Jude is dealing with, the kind of problem with which faith contending then and today must deal. **FAITH CONTENDING DEALS WITH CONTENTIOUS FAITH ON THE PART OF CONTENTIOUS LEADERS IN SOME CHURCHES!** Let me briefly summarize what happened related to Christian faith in the First Century churches, and which simultaneously created needs for increased faith and faith contending: (1) The Apostle Paul near the end of his missionary journeys called the elders of the church at Ephesus together to warn them as to how quickly men immediately after his departure would come into their churches from outside and some men homegrown that would divert from the faith; (2) About the same time Paul was working with the Gentile churches, the Apostle James found it necessary to explain to Jewish Christians the difference between dead faith and living faith, between faith with works and faith without works; (3) Likewise about the same time the Apostle Peter had to also write the Christian Jews to warn of dogs that were returning to their vomit; (4) Later the Apostle John wrote first Revelation and then the Gospel of John to give men the proper basis for belief, believing in the

Lord Jesus Christ; (5) then in 1 John while setting forth that certain men can not be prayed for who have committed the unpardonable sin, the Apostle John urged in the spirit of faith contending to “test the spirits” because many false spirits and Antichrists were already in the world; (6) II John had to deal with those false spirits and Antichrists in terms of an exclusion from the company of Christians; (7) Since those of contentious faith quickly assimilate all characteristics of the real faith by the time of III John the practitioners of contentious faith had begin to reject a real messenger from a real Apostle from their company; and (8) The Apostle Jude reiterates about the warnings of the Apostles Paul, James, Peter, and John concerning men that would crept into the First Century Christian movement unawares, leading other Christians astray.

Above is a brief of what we will look at in more detail in this chapter. These conclusions and perspectives will be supported with quotations and references from the Scriptures. You will find that what we are talking about is a FIRST CENTURY HISTORY OF FAITH CONTENDING.

The Miletus Pastor’s Conference

Paul at the end of his missionary journeys and before he went to Jerusalem where he had been warned that imprisonment awaited him, called the Ephesian elders together at Miletus for a Pastor’s Conference. He warned them what would happen immediately after his departure, how that “grievous wolves” would come into the churches of Asia from two sources: (1) Some would come from outside the churches on promise of letter; and (2) Others would be home grown Christians and Christian leaders—

“Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has given you charge, as shepherds of the church of the Lord, which he won for himself by his own blood. I know that when I am gone, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from you own body there will be men coming forward who will distort the truth to induce the disciples to break away and follow them. So be on the alert; remember how for three years, night and day, I never ceased to consul each of you, and how I wept over you.” (Acts 20:28 31 NEV)

How quickly the “savage wolves” can come in behind evangelistic and Christian growth work! Paul worked at Ephesus for three years, giving them the best efforts of a loving and knowledgeable Apostle. The Bible tells us that during this period of time that the efforts were so extensive that all Asia heard the Gospel with Ephesus as an evangelistic and teaching base. It is here that we see, no doubt, the foundation for all the seven churches of Asia Minor that are mentioned in the first chapters of the book of Revelation, which by the way is also an exercise in faith contending and part of the First Century History of Faith Contending. Now, one point that I will consistently make here is that if the savage wolves came immediately behind the Apostle Paul himself and in the First Century, what do you expect to happen in this Century? Ah yes,

they are here; and they are in the Christian movement; and they are as hard, if not harder, to recognize as they were in the First Century.

Paul calls them “savage wolves” or “grievous wolves”—Acts 20:29.

The Apostle James calls them “enemies of God” since they are a friend of the world—James 4:4.

The Apostle Peter calls these “false teachers” “natural brute beasts”, comparing them to the Proverbs about dogs and vomit and pigs and mud—II Peter 2.

The Apostle John calls them false spirits and Antichrists, warning not to pray for them when they have crossed the boundary of the unpardonable sin—I John.

The Apostle Jude calls them “spots in your feasts”, clouds without water, raging waves of the sea, and wandering stars—Jude 12,13.

“Wow, these are horrible men,” you might say. “We don’t know any of them since such would be immediately apparent if they came into our fellowship.”

NOT SO; AND THAT IS PART OF THE PROBLEM—ALSO THE REASON THAT PAUL USES THE WORD “WOLVES” AS IN “WOLVES IN SHEEP’S CLOTHING. YOU CAN NOT RECOGNIZE THEM. IF YOU COULD RECOGNIZE THEM THERE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM!

Dead Faith versus Living Faith

The whole book of James by the Apostle James is truly an effort to “contend for the faith” by pointing out to first century Christians and therefore also to us what is the difference between real Christian faith and simulated Christian faith. The problem then as today was that many claimed to be Christians and Christian leaders who were not Christian at all!

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:19,20 KJV)

And James is much deeper than faith versus works. It is faith with a certain kind of works versus faith without a certain kind of works. All Christians and all humans have some kind of works, some sort of things which they do good or bad and in between; and the things which we do are called our works. We definitely have some kinds of works; but the Apostle James is going much deeper than faith versus works in defining the kind of works that are accepted as living proofs of living faith.

1. Living faith brings tribulations which give birth to Christian patience, James 1:3,4. By the faith tribulation is faith contending itself because it tests your own faith—

“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.” (James 1:3 KJV)

2. Living faith receives wisdom from God, James 1:5.

3. Dead faith doubts the receiving of wisdom, and is like driftwood on the sea that drifts from place to place, James 1:6.

4. Practitioners of dead faith are double minded men, unstable in all their ways, James 1:8.

5. Practitioners of living faith endure trials, receiving ultimately the crown of life which is Eternal Life, James 1:12.

6. While dead faith listens and does not do being a forgetful hearer, living faith listens and does, James 1:22-13.

7. There are those who appear to be religious, these practitioners of dead faith; but the fact that they do not control their tongues shows them not to be among the practitioners of living faith, James 1:14,27. You see how the real contrast in the book of James is between a certain kind of works which cannot control the tongue versus another certain kind of works which can control the tongue. And the kind of works—the works of living faith—which can control the tongue are also the works of pure religion, the kind of works that visits the fatherless and widows in their afflictions and that keeps itself unspotted from the world.