

## Faith – Part 6

We came into the Kingdom of God through the doorway of salvation; we looked at what salvation is and then began the process of working it out by understanding that faith is the fuel of the spirit realm. That a transcendent creator God will never have a created finite being approach Him any way other than by faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God. So, faith is the fuel. We looked at what faith is; began to process our walking by it and today we'll move into contending for it. Now last time we left it, remember, at the chicken and the egg dilemma.

We know that walking by faith has two meanings. It means empowered by; and that's the one that we prefer to use. We know that faith is a gift from God; we know that we're to ask for it; we know that we can grow in it. The problem is, when we do not walk by faith, we tend to regard it as a faith failure and then ask for more faith. Our response is to ask for more of that which we see as failing. And what I'm trying to do is to bring into our consciousness that commonly, that's not the issue. Because consciously or subconsciously if we function only in the frame of reference that faith is a gift from God and the faith was inadequate; and therefore, somehow God did not provide enough faith for us to have overcome the circumstance that we were dealing with. That's a backdoor way of excusing ourselves and remaining unchanged and the continuing the cycle of running laps in the wilderness instead of moving into the Promised Land called the abundant life.

But the second meaning is walking by faith meaning in accordance with. And this is the one that God expects us to function in. Romans 12:3 says He's given each of us a measure of faith. Well, then according to I Peter 1:9 (in the King James Version) – We have received the end of your faith even the salvation of your souls. So the end of our faith is to come into Jesus Christ. Thereafter we are to walk in accordance with our position of being in Jesus Christ. We received the gift of faith that brought us into Jesus, the assurance of what we hoped for, that Jesus is Who He says He is; He is the Son of God; He is the Son of man; He is our Savior. But now our task is to walk by faith, meaning in accordance with all of those things that I've just articulated. We're to walk in accordance with the fact that we are in Christ. And that's how we fulfill Acts 17:28 – For in Him we live and move and have our being. We don't do anything as New Testament Christians other than be in Him. Well, how do we do it? Well, one thing we have to do is contend for it; because it's not something that just occurs automatically. And that's the subject for today.

I don't ordinarily use expositional teaching; it's a wonderful method of teaching; it's just not the method that God has given me. Mine is more subject oriented, taking broad themes that are foundational in the Christian faith and articulating those. But today we're going to take one verse of Scripture, dissect it and apply what we've learned thus far in our walk in the Kingdom. That next step is what I call contending for the faith. It's to take an attitude of aggression toward the Word of God. Now we will either contend for the faith, which is to obey or disobey and continue to walk in relative passivity waiting for something marvelous to happen in our Christian lives. To contend for the faith is another way of fulfilling Matthew 4:4 – And to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

I Peter 1:13 (in the New American Standard Version, which is the one I commonly use. If I say any Scripture that's from a different translation, I'll give you that different translation.) – Therefore gird your minds for action; keep sober in spirit; fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. So let's analyze this verse and examine

how to contend for the truth in this verse. And ask ourselves the question: Do we contend for the faith or do we fail to pay attention to the contention; and therefore drift? Because Hebrews tells us pay attention, lest you drift. We have well worn ruts in the flesh and if we don't pay attention, we will drift. So you've heard me say that Jesus paid it all, except we are to pay attention. And if we don't pay attention to walk by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God with an aggressive sense, then we will drift through passivity to live lives in the flesh; and therefore, not experience the abundant life. The first word in this verse, "therefore." Well you've heard it said therefore is there for a reason. Therefore, of course, means all that Paul has written before in this epistle; but I'm going to take a slightly different slant in view of the specific experience of the communal group that we have here. Therefore means in light of all that we have experienced on this journey to the cross and through the cross and into the Kingdom.

We went to the beginning; we started at the beginning because that's where the sovereign God Who created the Heavens and the Earth told us to begin. In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth. And remember that awakened in us a revelation of the Holiness of God. And by that revelation we learned that the only proper response to the Holiness of God is the fear of the Lord, the awe and reverence of that Holy God. And that awe and reverence of the Holy God led us to define truth as what God is and how God views everything else. And only by defining truth in that way, by seeing God as He is, can we see ourselves as we are which is the sin of man. And the root of the sin of man, remember, our judging of God. The tendency in the heart of man to pronounce himself as able to do this thing; able to be self determined. Although the God Who created the Heavens and the Earth tells us in Jeremiah 10:23 – it's not in man to determine his own ways; it's not in him to determine his own paths.

So God says it's not even in you; I created you and I didn't put it there, but man says in his rebellion, oh yeah it is, I can do this thing. That's what Eve said, I can do this thing; Adam—I can do this thing; and every human being ever since has said I can do this thing. And that sets the stage for God's judgment of us based on our judging of Him in our pronouncement that we are self determined. That should lead us to an understanding of the judgment of God in view of His holiness and our sin; what can a Holy Being do other than judge the difference between the two; because He cannot excuse evil because He is Holy. Well then if we understand God's judgment of us, we shouldn't struggle too much with the reality of Hell. The reality of it and the horror of it, and remember then we moved into the beauty of it, and then compared with the reality of Heaven. And the difference between those two is the cross of Christ. Now don't lose sight of what I'm saying. All this is included in the word, "therefore;" because if you're not interpreting I Peter 1:13, taking therefore and looking back at all that we've traversed on this journey, you will not follow through to live by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God in the rest of this verse. So therefore is the foundation for the contention for the faith that exists in the rest of the verse. So at the cross of Christ, remember, included but not limited to, the God man in the Garden, perspiring blood at the contemplated travail that was about to follow. The suffering of Christ (both physical and spiritual) leading up to that question that God let hang out there in the air for all time for us to ponder—My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Me? And then leading up to it is finished. And then Father into Thy hands I commit My spirit. And then the grave; and then the resurrection; the ascension into Heaven—all those aspects connected to and immediately following the crucifixion of the Son of God to pay the price for our sins. You see, all of that is included in that word, therefore. In light of all that we've learned about the

Kingdom of God so far, about the doorway called salvation, including in a global sense, our justification, our progressive sanctification and ultimately our glorification.

And then faith, what is it? Walking by it; empowered by it as we walk in accordance with it. So therefore is a powerful word. I mean it's not just an idle little word of a certain number of letters; there's a lot embedded in the word therefore. So in the light of this group, in the light of this series, all that we have covered is just sitting there in power waiting to be unpacked, encapsulated in that little word, therefore. Now there's a veiled command in every Word of God, even in therefore. We get to choose where to function in the light of all that's embedded in therefore as I have just articulated it or we get to ignore it.

Next poster. Remember, where choice comes from, the origin of choice. God is; God is love; love is relational; relational is choice. If one choice is God, any choice other than God has to be ungod or in our terminology, ungodly. So we get to choose whether to function in the light of therefore or not. If we choose to function in the light of therefore, including all that we've covered on the journey to bring us to this session today, then we are choosing God. But if we choose to ignore all that's embedded in the word, therefore, then we are choosing ungod. We are choosing to live with passivity toward every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

The next word in the verse is gird—therefore gird. Well gird means to prepare. Well notice that's something that we are to do; therefore gird. This is a command for us; it's not something that God does. When we're given a command, there is an inherent choice for us. We either do it or we don't do it. What makes the choice? Our wills do. Our wills we think of as our chooser (and it is our chooser), but another way of phrasing it is our will is our worshipper; because every choice we make if it's between God and ungod is choosing to worship God or ungod. So God gave us wills that we would exercise choice between Him and anything other than Him; so our will in reality is choosing what we are worshipping. And remember He gave us choice; He gave us wills to make that choice, so our relationship with Him can be of love and not of mechanical robotic slavery. Now we will either choose Him, agree with God, or judge God that He's not worth agreeing with, that our thoughts are higher than His thoughts. Now since we know that the Bible is the Word of God, written by the Spirit of God, then it becomes obvious here which choice is God and which choice is ungod. Since the Word of God commands us to gird, then if we do gird, we are choosing God. If we do not gird, we are choosing ungod. The sentence goes on.

Therefore gird your minds—that is what we are to prepare—to gird our minds. So what does it mean to prepare your mind? Well it means to set your mind. How? By functioning in the light of therefore, letting your will look at all of that and then in the light of the therefore, you begin to prepare to set your mind by using your will. The King James Version speaks of the loins of your mind. Now the loins of the mind simply means the seat of a creative power like the loins of the body refer to the seat of the procreative power. That is to say, your will is used to set the mind on that which contains the power of God potentially if you choose God, but not if you choose ungod. Gird your minds, not someone else's. You see, you can't prepare someone else's mind; you can only prepare your mind. In other words when it comes to this verse, you mind your own business by minding your own mind; because that's the only mind that you can actually prepare. You can plant seeds of the Word of God into other people's minds; but you cannot prepare their minds. That's an act of their will. So, therefore gird your minds for action. Now we prepare our minds for something, for action, not for passivity because (pay attention) lest you drift. If you

don't actively and aggressively contend for the faith by preparing your mind for action, then you will not pay attention and you will drift to the things of the flesh and you will not experience the abundant life. That simply takes you back to where you started before you knew the Word of God, where you default to the flesh. So if you gird your mind to be passive, then you default to the flesh. But no, we're told to gird our minds for action. We use our wills to prepare our minds for action.

Well what action? Well, it'll tell us in a minute, but let's digress a bit to understand the two broad choices. Romans 8:5 – For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh. But those who are according to the spirit, the things of the spirit. So we set our minds on one of two things: either the flesh or the things of the spirit. The things of the spirit are the same things that I began to enumerate as included in the word therefore, all that we've covered before. So up to this point, you have used your will to prepare your mind for action and that action will be in one of two realms: either the flesh or the spirit. To this point in this one sentence, we have used our wills to make three choices. And if we're not mindful of how there is a choice involved at each step along the way, we'll fail to recognize how many choices are intrinsic. And if you don't know how many choices are intrinsic, you will not contend for the faith. Our first choice was to function in the light of therefore or not. Our second choice was to gird or not. If we gird or prepare, we've chosen God. If we do not gird, we've chosen ungod; we have walked in accordance with ungod. The next choice is prepare our minds for action or passivity. If we choose action we've chosen God; if we choose passivity, we've chosen ungod. We've walked in accordance with ungod.

The next choice is another command. We're told to keep sober. Well, what does that mean? Ephesians 5:14 speaks of arise oh sleeper. So one aspect of keeping sober is to be in a state of full wakefulness, even as you listen to me today, not because it's me; because we're coming together to share the Word of God. So the mind is brought into a state of full wakefulness. And Ephesians 5:14 says arise oh sleeper. In other words, you've got to arouse yourself in order to be sober minded. Then it means clear minded. You can be in a state of full wakefulness but still not be thinking clearly as you're just kind of bouncing around in your thought life with no specific vision or goal or purpose. So you're not to let anything muddle your thinking even while you're in a state of full wakefulness. Now that means to remain clear minded about what your options are with each thought that occupies your mind, to keep clear about what the outcome of each option is. Then we're to be truth based; because remember truth is what God is and how God views everything else. I don't care how wakeful we are and how clear we are; if we're not functioning in the light of truth being what God is and how God views everything else, we will not be living by faith in accordance with faith of the God of the Bible. Be clear about what you consider the source of truth. Now that doesn't mean a one time or an occasional act. Every choice that your mind is exercising is an act of worship of something. We tend to think that we'll go over here and worship for this preset period of time and then we'll come together again at a later time and worship again and fail to recognize that we are given wills to exercise choice because every thought that we have is an opportunity to worship God or worship something other than the God of the Bible.

It also means to be serious minded because these are serious issues. I'm not opposed to humor so long as humor doesn't distract someone from the seriousness of the material that's being discussed; because we're talking about our eternal destinies here. We're talking about what kind of testimony we give to the rest of human life while on planet Earth. These are serious issues.

So if we choose to keep sober minded, then we're choosing God because that's what the Word of God in this verse is telling us. But if we choose any pathway other than wakefulness, with clarity and understanding the truth of God and with a serious demeanor about it, we are not keeping sober and if we're not keeping sober in that context, then we are choosing ungod to drift rather than choosing God as an act of worship to reveal Him to planet Earth.

Then it says keep sober in spirit. We're always to keep sober about the two realms in which Christians dwell—the flesh or the spirit. In spirit means a lot of things. It means to be sober about who you really are; because you are, at your core, an eternal spirit creature who lives in an earthly house. Therefore we're counseled here to make all of our choices based on the spirit realm—not on the physical realm. And I've created a little poster that I don't think we've used in these sessions; but as simple as it is, it's to help keep me focused in regard to how to make these choices. I call the poster "Duh"; and that's more for my benefit than anyone else's benefit; because I have on there a series of reminders that's a spirit because God is spirit; and in the beginning God. The spirit preceded the physical; the spirit created the physical; the spirit upholds the physical; the spirit transcends the physical; the spirit judges the physical; the spirit will outlast the physical; so which one should I live by? Duh...the spirit or the flesh, that is the physical? So we need to keep sober about the fact that in the spirit realm, there are two competing entities: God and ungod. And camouflaged beneath that theologic statement, there are two competing kingdoms and only two: the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. You see, we tend to think in terms of all the "isms" and all the philosophies and so on as being different. But they are not. There are only two: the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Because when you look at it through the book of Revelation and so on, you'll see that everything is summed up in Jesus. It's either pro-Christ or anti-Christ. Every single "ism" that the human mind has ever produced is the same thing under satanic influence that is anti-Jesus Christ. There are only two. In its global understanding, there is no difference between Buddhism and Hinduism and Islam and all the philosophies and religions of man apart from Christianity; because it is either pro-Christ or anti-Christ, you see, no more choices than those. And we need to see what these two competing entities are; because even Satan worshippers can keep sober in spirit; but then they choose the wrong spirit. They choose the anti-Christ spirit as opposed to the Spirit of Christ Himself.

So here then we face, unsurprisingly, two more choices each being God or ungod. The Word of God commands us to keep sober in spirit. So if we keep sober in spirit then we can choose God. But if we keep sober in anything else, namely in the flesh, then we choose ungod. But keeping sober in spirit isn't the last choice; because if we keep sober in spirit, we still get to choose which spirit and there are only two competing spirits; ultimately there's pro-Jesus Christ and anti-Jesus Christ. So if we choose Jesus Christ then we have chosen God in the theologic sense. And if we choose anything other than Jesus Christ, walking in the light of every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God, then we've chosen ungod. We've chosen the kingdom of Satan whether we know it or not.

Therefore, gird your minds for action, keeping sober in spirit, fix—now we have another command. We're told to fix. Well we know the common meaning of fix, meaning to correct something or make it work correctly; but a different meaning of course is intended here, meaning to hold or direct steadily, to set or place definitively, to give an unvarying form to. Those are dictionary definitions. In other words, we are to hold, to direct steadily, to set, to place definitively, and to do so in an unvarying manner. Well who is to do that? We are; not God!

Whenever we're given a command, we're given a choice. Surprise! The choice is God or ungod. If we fix, direct in an unvarying manner, set definitively, then we're following the command of God and the Word of God; and thus, we're choosing God. But if we do anything else, if we choose not to fix, then we have chosen ungod; and we join the satanic realm by doing the work of Satan by performing that which is anti-Christ. So what are we to fix? Our hope—fix your hope. Well, what is our hope? It's our optimistic expectation and it has to contain both components to have hope in a Biblical sense. You truly expect it to happen. It is not a vague sense of possibility and it also has to include optimism. So hope, in a Biblical sense, is optimistic expectation. When we fix our hope, it means you've hitched your wagon to hope. You hitch your wagon on to hope which is your optimistic expectation. Who fixes it? You do! We are commanded to do that in the Word of God; God is not commanded to do that. So if we fix our hope, then we've obeyed God and chosen God. If we fix anything other than our hope, then we've not obeyed God as is expressed in this verse and we've chosen ungod.

Fix your hope completely. How much hope do you fix? All of it. How much hope do you not fix? None of it. So if you fix your hope completely, then you've obeyed God. You've walked in accordance with God. If you don't fix your hope, or if you fix your hope incompletely, then you have disobeyed the Word of God and you've chosen ungod and walked in accordance with ungod which in its final analysis is doing that which is consistent with being anti-Christ which is the satanic realm. Fix your hope completely on the grace. Well what is grace? Unmerited favor. From Whom? God. To whom? You. Favor is something that's unmerited; but it works for your benefit for your best outcome; it gives you support and sustenance and so on. So if you fix your optimistic expectation completely on the unmerited support, unmerited sustenance, unmerited beneficence, then you have chosen God in the flow of this verse. But if you don't fix your optimistic expectation, or if you fix it on anything other than the grace of God, then in the context of this verse, you have chosen to follow ungod, to walk in accordance with ungod. Recall also that grace includes in an unmerited sense, the omnipotent power of God operating on your behalf for His glory because the two are yoked. Whatever is for His glory ultimately will be on your behalf, you see, because you can't distinguish the glory of God from that which is beneficent for you over the long term.

Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you. This grace is brought to you. You don't go find it; it's brought to you. It's God's grace; He elected you and He brought it to you. So if you think that you merit the grace, you've chosen ungod. If you think that maybe you didn't merit, but through your wisdom you figured it all out, you've chosen ungod; because when you do those things, you have judged God. You judge God by judging that it is not brought to you from God, but it is something that you figured out and went to obtain which is a performance act which is nullifying the grace of God. Remember Isaiah 42:8 – I will share My glory with no one. Nor should He, remember, because God is the only thing in all of existence that's truly worthy of glory. So when you try to claim that you did it, then you are stealing part of the glory of God.

On the grace to be brought to you at the revelation. Well, what's that? Well it's the revealing of something that previously was unknown. When speaking of God, it means God's disclosure or manifestation of Himself to man. So God gives us the method: by grace, His grace. He tells us how it's to come. He brings it, He gives us the method by which that grace comes: by His revelation which means His disclosure and manifestation of Himself. So if you agree that it is by God's disclosing Himself to you, then you have chosen God in the flow of this verse. If you

disagree by thinking that you figured it out or that you merited it, then you've chosen ungod and you walk in accordance with self determination which is exalting itself against God. And then you are doing the work of Satan, because you're walking by faith in yourself and your ability as opposed to walking by faith in the sovereign God Who created the Heavens and the Earth. Grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. So what's the method of God's disclosure or manifestation of Himself to you? By revealing Jesus Christ. God has spoken to us in these latter days through His Son. This is My beloved Son; listen to Him. So if you agree that it's by grace and that grace is brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, then you're agreeing with God and choosing God. But if you walk by faith in anything else other than Jesus Christ, other than it was brought to you, other than the grace of God, then you're exalting self against the God of Genesis 1:1 and ultimately you will not experience the abundant life. Why is this? Because God is sovereign and He chose to do it this way. It's contained in the Holiness of God. It's therefore contained in the therefore that began the verse that we're looking at today. So if you don't begin with therefore, you will not end in Jesus Christ, you see.

So I'll end with this comment that I'm quoting from Ziggy, the cartoon character. Ziggy said your future is determined by your past. So be very careful what you do in your past. Your precious present today, as you walk out of this room, will be your past when tomorrow comes. And remember Isaiah said tomorrow will be like today, only more so. So if you walk out of this session today with the same degree of passivity toward all that's contained in this verse, then your tomorrow will be like today, and have only more passivity than you walked in here with. But if you choose today as you walk out of here, to reawaken, to walk living by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God including in this verse, and awake that attitude of aggression to contend for the faith by making each choice contained in this verse, then that more aggressive attitude will ensure that your tomorrow will be more like today; you'll be more aggressive tomorrow than you are today, you see. And this is part of the dunamis power of God that's living and active and sharper than every two-edge sword. But how can we expect it to operate in its power when we walk in passivity refusing to choose it, refusing to live in the light of it, refusing to walk in accordance with it, you see. So I'm not insisting this verse is a magical verse, what I'm doing is taking one verse and trying to approach the subject of contending for the faith by pointing out the difference in an aggressive attitude toward it as opposed to a passive attitude toward it. You could read eighteen chapters or eighteen books of the Bible and come away with no more aggression. Or you can take one verse and look at it with an aggressive attitude and walk out with a changed life, at least the beginning of a changed life, you see. And I'm preaching to myself too, not just ya'll. Don't think I've positioned myself above the group. What I'm doing is trying to live in the light of that verse that says teacher, do you not teach yourself, because I've got to allow it to circumcise my own dark heart, to function in the light of it, to access the abundant life. So my time is up and I think you for yours.