

Faith – Part 8

First poster. Just to remind us briefly of where we've come in the Kingdom of God; we came through the doorway of salvation; we looked at what salvation is; and then we began to seek to understand working out our salvation. Then we moved into faith, the fuel of the spirit realm; we looked at what faith is according to the Biblical definition; and then we looked at walking by faith; and then to the point of contending for it, which is where we were last time. And I used the simple example of using language such as racing for the boat can have three meanings. You race to see who could get to the boat first; you race with an idea that the first one to the boat would get the boat; or you could race in the name of the boat like our Olympic runners would run for the United States. And likewise contending for the faith, as we're told to do in Scripture can have three meanings. You can contend to have more of it, increase our faith and that's entirely legitimate. Simultaneously we're to contend to walk in accordance with the faith that we've been given. And thirdly, we are to contend for it in the sense of being its representative; because Scripture tells us that we are ambassadors of Jesus Christ. We are living epistles to tell a story of Jesus Christ. We are earthen vessels to bring the living water to planet Earth to other human beings. We are the lights of the world and recognizing that and functioning in that third one is to contend for the faith. One of the rules in the book (secular book actually) The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People is to begin with the end in mind. If you don't know where you're going, it never matters where you are; if you don't know where you're going it never matters which way you're going. So the only way of any of God's study at heart toward us, that we're going to know where to go and understand where we are, is to begin with the end in mind.

So I'm going to begin with the end in mind today as we begin to take our contending for the faith to bring us to the end of our faith. So the end is the following. We're going to end with Jesus Christ; every single thing that Christians do is to end with Jesus Christ. We're to begin with Jesus Christ; He's the alpha and end with Jesus Christ; he's the omega and we walk with Jesus Christ by abiding in Him. We stand on Jesus Christ because He's the rock; He's the foundation and so on. It's all summed up in Jesus. So let's look again at the faith of Jesus Christ because that's where I'm going to end today and then we'll head that way in order to end there. We know that in the darkness Christ endured Hell for us. We know simple truths from the Bible that the wages of sin is death, that includes eternal Hell fire and Jesus paid those wages somehow, He paid that price for us. Remember at the cross, He had the darkness of no communion with the Father as He simultaneously endured the fullness of the wrath of the Father. And that was revealed in that one cry from the cross, My God My God why hast Thou forsaken Me? He was forsaken and the pain of it had gone beyond comprehension. He persevered from that point on by faith, not by sight, as God the Father, in His forsaking Jesus, did not excuse the Son of God from walking by faith, not by sight, as the Son of man on the cross. So if Jesus was not excused from walking by faith and Jesus is our model, then we are not to ever think that we will be excused from walking by faith and the way we walk by faith is to know that we will never be excused from exercising choice in the situation. We need to know that it's always either/or, not portions of each, but either/or with every thought. It's either faith or sin. Remember, Jesus had no sin; He was tempted in every way such

as we are, yet without sin. He had our sins on Him; but He never sinned. Now since He had no sin, ever, in His life, then His walk was all by faith. Well, how do I know that? Romans 14:23 – What is not of faith, is sin. So if Jesus had no sin, that means He never had a single moment that He was not of faith, you see. Well, why is that important? Because we have Jesus, all of Him. We have His righteousness, but not only His righteousness. We have Jesus, not just some portion of Jesus. Colossians 1:27 tells us – we have Christ in us, the hope of glory. And when I say all of Jesus, I don't mean in a physical limiting sense like we have all of Jesus; it means in an availability sense, in an accessibility sense. We have access to all of Jesus. But even though we have all of Jesus in an accessible sense, Romans 13:14 says – But put on the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, there's a two stage process. There's what He has given us by our coming to salvation in Him and then there's our role as we participate in the working out our salvation; put on the Lord Jesus Christ—all of Him. That includes His faith. Now that faith is dwelling in us because we have the Spirit of Christ in us. So imagine that. We have Him in us; but we're then told to put Him on. That involves some action on our part, some engagement in our part, a choice on our part, and so on.

Next poster. What I'm pointing out on this poster is those three simple truths. God is available to us as Christians; because His Spirit of His Son is indeed in us. And God would not tell us to put Him on, if we couldn't put Him on. So the very command implies that we exercise the choice to the degree that God has given us choice; and then He may empower the process thereafter, but He still calls upon us to act in obedience in order to function. So God has made Himself available to us as New Testament Christians; we are avail-able—just splitting the word, but there's still a choice. We will avail or not avail. Imagine that! So sometimes we need to remind ourselves of the following. We have His righteousness; but we have His righteousness...we can't have that without simultaneously having His faith because His righteousness and His faith can be distinguished but never separated; because He was righteous because of His faith. If He for one moment had ever not walked by faith, He would not have been righteous. Thus, He could not have been our Savior, you see. So sometimes we tend to pray for our faith to be increased, when what we really need is simply for our knowledge to be increased; because our faith will never seem to be bigger than our knowledge of what we actually have. So we need to know more or at least remind ourselves of what we have in Jesus. We have faith in what we know of Jesus; but if our knowledge is small, then our faith will seem to be small when matched against our circumstance. Now I've mentioned this long ago; but that's why sometimes (not always, but sometimes), I prefer the King James Version about some pertinent verses that keep calling to mind (in my dull mind) the spiritual truth as follows. There are two faiths in play here. We tend to function on the one and relatively ignore the other. That's our faith, which we focus on, and the faith of Jesus which we tend not to be aware of. These are all King James quotations from the next four verses. Galatians 2:16 – That we might be justified by the faith of Christ; and that's what I just through talking about. If He had not walked by faith every step along the way, He would not have been righteous because what is not of faith is sin and then He couldn't have been our Savior. So we are justified by our faith in Christ; but we can only be justified by that faith because of the faith of Christ; and that's the distinction I'm trying to draw. Galatians 2:20 – The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of

the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 3:22 – But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Christ might be given to those who believe. And Philippians 3:9 – And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

The point I'm making is this with these two faiths. We tend to focus on our faith, and that's good. But there's also the faith of Christ. So it's fine to want more faith, but when we focus only on our faith, it tends to keep our focus on ourselves, not on the faith of Jesus. So it's fine to say increase our faith, that's Biblical; and we looked last time that faith can grow, that's Biblical. But we need to remind ourselves constantly that when we have faith in Christ, we have the faith of Christ because we have Christ Himself—all of Him at least in an availability sense. So instead of keeping the focus on your faith, focus on the “in Him” part; because the object of the faith is always greater than the faith itself. When “in Him,” you have Him and, thus, have His faith. It's resident within you; it's accessible to you; but to access it, you have to take your eyes off of yourself. That's what Hebrews 12:2 speaks of – fixing our eyes on Jesus because we tend to become like that which we behold. So if we're beholding ourselves, we tend to become more sin because our self is functioning in the flesh, taking pleasure in sin. When our focus is on our faith, we keep the focus on ourselves when we're always assessing our faith in regard to how it matches up with present circumstances. That's how we think our faith is strong or weak; it's by matching it with circumstances. And that's fine so long as that's not all you do; because if all you're doing is assessing your circumstances, assessing your faith and how it matches up with your circumstances, then your eyes are still kept on yourself instead of fixing your gaze on Jesus. So when you fix your gaze on Jesus, that's when you begin to fulfill Acts 17:28 In Him we live, and move, and have our being.

So the purpose of our faith, even the end of our faith, is to be in Him. When in Him, He becomes our focus; He becomes the object on which we gaze; not our faith, not ourselves, and not our circumstances. So if we persist in keeping our focus only on ourselves, on our faith, and on our circumstances, it can actually, I think, be carried to a point of self worship, where our purpose and our focus becomes getting God to meet what we perceive as our needs rather than simply worshipping God in the circumstances by keeping our eyes on Him. That may explain, in fact, why often God doesn't seem to remove us from our circumstances. We've not learned to worship Him and focus on Him in the midst of our circumstances. We tend to see relief from our circumstances as the goal; but God sees worshipping Him in spirit and in truth in the circumstances as the goal. That's why even focusing (if you remain focused) on our faith, it can become a false idol. Where an idol can be, remove me from our circumstances, rather than accessing and projecting the faith of Jesus into the circumstances because that's what brings Him glory. So anytime our focus is on our faith, it means that our focus is on ourselves and on our circumstances and that's true because we assess our level of faith based on how we see it comparing with our circumstances. And that's okay so long as that's not the only thing that you're doing. Remember Jesus is not just in us; He is accessible to us. Hebrews 1:1-3 – includes, Jesus is the exact representation of the nature

of God. II Peter 1:4 – We are partakers of the divine nature. So Jesus is in us; Jesus is the divine nature; but we are partakers of the divine nature.

Coming at that from another Scriptural angle in John 6 beginning with verse 48 – Jesus told us to eat His flesh and drink His blood. Well He was not recommending cannibalism; He was speaking of the spirit realm using a physical model. To eat and drink Jesus is to partake of the divine nature. So how do we partake of it? Well we have to have an aggressive heart of contending for it. I Peter 1:13, we went through expositionally – therefore gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. You see, if your hope is fixed on the level of your faith matched against the circumstances, that doesn't quite match what's said here, fix your hope completely on the grace brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. So the greater grace that's brought to you is when you have the revelation that Christ is in me; I have access to Him; He has the fullness of faith that cannot be transcended. It's available to me; that's the nature of God—to have it, to be in me, to make it available and I'm to put it on. I'm to partake of it, you see. And we partake of it by having that aggressive attitude toward taking our faith in Christ to then function in Christ as opposed to focusing on our faith and its adequacy or inadequacy. Remember this is a holy romance. God is love. We reciprocate the love relationship. How? By choosing God; and we choose Him by choosing to walk in the light of His truth. We come into the Kingdom of God through the doorway of salvation; but then even after salvation, we participate. It's God working in us; but we are participating in the working out our salvation, because He continues to function in the love relationship with us. We do not ever become mechanical robots.

So let's remind ourselves what happened at salvation. We were born again. That's not just a word; we were born of the Spirit of God, born to spirit life, the life of God Himself because He is life and He imparts life. Remember II Corinthians 11:3 – do not be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. Any time we think this is complicated, it means we're being led astray from the simplicity of it. And if God has given me one message, it's to take what we learned recently in the Emmaus class, it's the metanarrative, it's a thread that extends throughout Scripture such as the life, the blood, the glory, something of a thread you can trace throughout all of Scripture. He's given me a certain revelation to express the metanarrative of choice. The role of the human will and how it begins with Adam and Eve, God or ungod, and progressively, it's the same choice all the way to the end of Scripture in Revelation where it's take the mark of Christ or the mark of the beast. It's always the one choice with the two options. The metanarrative called choice in Scripture. II Corinthians 1:20 – For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him, Jesus, they are yes. Think of that. The accumulated promises of God represent our global vision; and our vision is our sustaining view including projecting into eternity future. And it's only that because of all the promises being yes in Jesus. That Christ in us is the hope of glory. See if all the promises of God were not yes in Jesus, then Christ in us would not be the hope of glory. That's how those two Scriptures connect. So in a nutshell, that's the simplicity. It's always God or ungod; and for us as New Testament Christians, it's Jesus or anti-Jesus in regard to how we exercise our choices.

Now devotion to Jesus (don't be led astray from the simplicity), well what's the devotion? John 10:10 – I came that you might have life and have it more abundantly. John 14:6 – I am the light. You see, He not only gave His life for us, He came to give His life to us, to make it accessible to us. And in Scripture, that's what's called the abundant life. Love, joy, peace, and so on all the fruit of the Spirit; I came that you might have My joy, that you might have My peace, you see. But here's where we miss the point. He came that we might have life (and we do), but He also came that we might have it more abundantly. So we have it in the sense that it's in us, but the more abundant part is when the expression of it flows out, filling our minds, renewing our minds and flowing out on to planet Earth. And that tends to escape us. The more abundant life means it's not only in us, not only accessible to us, but that it is loosed into our natural minds and then projected externally into the physical realm. Well that occurs by the spiritual principle of agreement. We do that by an act of our wills. Remember, our will is what exercises choice. But really in its most basic understanding, our will is our worshipper. Our will simply declares and makes the choice at each moment what we're going to worship.

So it pleases God; it's to His good pleasure that the relationship be of love and not of robotic slavery. But here are some key points that we'll follow through as I go through this series. We get to choose that it may be of love; but we never get to choose not to choose, because when we don't choose, we default. Well, what do we default to? To the well worn habits of the flesh that we've been practicing in for decades. So, we get to choose but we don't get to choose not to choose. And we don't get to choose what the choices are. We don't get to select the choices; the choices are always God and ungod, projected for us as New Testament Christians, Christ or anti-Christ. And we also don't get to choose the consequences of the choices. On the one hand is the abundant life when we choose to function in Jesus Christ. On the other hand is deadness—deadness to the abundant life, dead testimony, dead works, no fruit, in other words. But we get to choose. So don't be led astray from that simplicity that we get to choose that it may be of love. We don't get to choose not to choose; and the choices are Christ or anti-Christ with every choice. So when we choose God, we are for Him, we gather, we are sowing God, we will reap more of God because that's a promise of God, we're saying I love you too in reciprocation of the love relationship. We are gathering for Him, we're walking by faith in Him. But when we choose ungod, either by active choice or by default by not choosing, we function against Him, we scatter, we sow ungod, we will reap more of ungod, we're saying I do not love You more than this ungodly thing that I'm choosing to function in, I don't love You enough to aggressively contend for You to choose You, I don't love You enough to keep me from defaulting to the flesh, and then we walk by faith in ungod, you see. We're functioning as anti-Christ even though we are children of God through Jesus Christ. So God's provisions are never short, His arms are never short; but we stop short of His arms and short of His provisions, you see. His task is to provide; our task is to partake. He gives bread; we choose whether or not to eat it. He gives blood; we choose whether or not to drink it. So eating the Word of God is to agree with God. But remember the stages in eating; eating includes more than just putting it in your mouth. Eating includes more than just chewing it. It's fine that we chew on the Word of

God; but chewing is only beneficial if it's preparatory to swallowing which completes the process of eating. So we're not bad at kind of meditating on the Word of God; but we will know we have swallowed it, in fact, eaten it when we are in the process of becoming it. Because if you eat it instead of just chewing it, you will become it, you see.

He gives faith. We are to walk in accordance with, in a manner consistent with the faith that He has given us. He gives power. We light the fuse; and that's done by agreeing with God each step along the way by choosing Him. So He has put a keg of dynamite in us. Remember the word power in the Bible is dunamis, and that's where we get our word dynamite? I'm not a linguist; but that's what I read. And that explosive power is within us; but we light the fuse. Now what happens tends to be the following. When it doesn't explode within us, we tend to go back and focus on ourselves and somehow in some way even maybe blame Him. But the problem is that we simply refuse as an act of the will by active choice or by default, not to light the fuse. So how do we light it? Well by applying spiritual principles. Now I'm going to take the following verse slightly out of context; but I'm going to make a spiritual point by doing so. Matthew 16:19 – Whatsoever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven; what you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven. So who does the binding? We do. Who does the loosing? We do. So God completes the process; but we initiate the process by our choice. Now we tend to think of binding and loosing as involving various things; but ultimately, it comes down to one thing. We are engaging in the process to either bind or loose God. Now that doesn't mean that we overrule His sovereignty. God is sovereign and can always overrule us whenever it's His good pleasure; but simultaneously, with binding or loosing God, we are binding or loosing self. That's the Scripture, deny self, take up your cross, and follow Christ, you see. So to deny self is nothing more than binding self, and when you bind self, you are following Christ and loosing Christ. But you can't loose Christ while following self, you see. That's the point I'm using to bring these principles together.

So when we capture a thought in obedience to Christ, we call into play several spiritual principles. We're being faithful over a little thing. We are sowing Christ; we will reap more expression of Christ. We are agreeing with God, surrendering with God. Then ultimately what we're doing is loosing the power of God to operate in that arena. We have loosed God. With every thought that we do not capture in obedience to Christ, we are being unfaithful over a little thing. We are sowing something other than Christ and we will reap more of that something rather than reaping Christ. We are disagreeing with God. Then ultimately what we're doing, is expressing self, living in self determination, not following Christ, and thus, relatively speaking binding Christ in that arena of our lives. And we're binding Him by positioning ourselves as the judge of God. You see why we went through all that preparatory to coming into New Testament Christianity, but the same principle follows all the way through. So recall that at every moment we are functioning either for God or against God. We are gathering for God or scattering from God. We are binding God or loosing God. Judging God or submitting to God as judge. And at every moment of our lives as New Testament Christians, we are either functioning in self determination or functioning in God determination. And as we go forward in the Kingdom of God and we get to the terms flesh and spirit, we're going to see that the spirit is to have the basis of Jesus Christ for every detail of life and the flesh is to have self as

the basis for every detail of life. Same principle extended forward looking, using different terminology embedded in Scripture.

So stay with me, guys, as we go forward because I think we're going to land in a beautiful place. So as always, my time is up and I thank you for listening.