

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Contention**Contention, on: 2006/4/9 3:01**

STAND & COMFORT Newsletter Email NEWSLETTER #28 (Vol 2 No 13) By Ed Tarkowski

CONTENTION: Its Various Forms

There are seven Greek words that can be translated as "contend" in its various forms (contended, contending, contentious, contentions, contention). When I think of contention, I usually think of it in a bad sense, a disrupting of the Church that causes division and confusion. Contention, though, comes in two forms, good and evil.

I decided to look at the word in all of its forms in order to help our understanding of what contention is and is not:

1. CONTEND "epagonizomai" (G1864)

One occurrence: Jude 1:3

We are all familiar with the use of the word CONTEND in Jude:

Jude 1:3 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 ("epagonizomai") for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

This is the only time this phrase "earnestly contend" is used in the New Testament. Jude's use of the word "diligence" makes this more than just an exhortation. It adds an intensity to his writing, as "do this now, don't wait." The reason was that false teachers perverting the faith had entered the church, and this needed immediate attention.

The Greek word ("epagonizomai" G1864) means "to struggle for" the faith, to intensify a healthy anxiety for keeping others from going into error. Jude says it "was needful" for him to write about this situation, not because the Church wasn't already contending for the faith, but that there was an increasing need to intensify this defense because of men creeping in unawares who were "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 4). They were bringing into the Church false doctrine and practices that denied the Lord Jesus, and this called for an intense struggle for the faith.

Along with this call to defend their common faith was the call to keep themselves in the love of God (v. 21) while struggling to "pull out of the fire" those listening to the false teachers. Jude's message called for humility in the fear and love of God as the believers intensified their defense of the faith:

Isa 59:19 When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.

The Church was to do these things while remembering and looking forward to the coming of Christ, knowing God would judge all who would not hear and respond to the truth. The capstone of Jude's encouragement was that as long as they held to the truth and delivered that truth in the character of Christ, believers could look to God to keep them from falling in their task and one day rejoice in His presence, while the false teachers would receive their judgment from the hand of the Lord when Christ returns.

2. CONTENTED "diakrino" (G1252)

Eighteen occurrences: Acts 11:2-3; Mat 16:3-4; 21:21-22; Mark 11:23; Acts 10:20; 11:12; 15:8-9; Rom 4:20; 14:23; 1 Cor 4:7; 6:5; 11:29; 11:31; 14:29; James 1:6; 2:4; Jude 1:9; Jude 1:21-23

Translations in Scripture: CONTENTED, DISCERN, DOUBT NOT, PUT NO DIFFERENCE, STAGGERED NOT, MAKE THEM TO DIFFER, WAVERETH NOT, NOT PARTIAL, MAKING A DIFFERENCE

One of the Greek root words of "diakrino" is "krino." It is used in this way:

Luke 6:37 JUDGE ("krino," G2919) not, and ye shall not be JUDGED ("krino"): condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

"Krino" means "to distinguish" or "decide" with the idea of punishing someone who believes a spiritual falsehood. Christians are not called to this type of action. What we are called to is "diakrino," whose other root is "dia" (G1223), meaning "denoting the channel of an act; through." "Diakrino" is a passive form of judging, better labeled "discerning." It means to distinguish between what is right and what is not in order to separate oneself from error. In every situation, a speaker condemns himself when he speaks falsehood or justifies himself by speaking the truth:

Mat 12:36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Here is a good example of the meaning of the word "diakrino":

1 Cor 14:29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other JUDGE ("diakrino").

In the early Church, the emphasis was on judging the truth or falsity of the WORDS of the prophets and exposing any lies in a prophecy or teaching. Everyone was to take note of this discerning process and the one in error was to be corrected. This process of discerning was to protect the truth from being corrupted, no matter who had brought forth the word of the moment. Looking back to Jude, we read,

Jude 1:21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

22 And of some have compassion, MAKING A DIFFERENCE ("diakrino"):

23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

A Christian is to determine how to talk to a particular person in error or in danger of falling into error. In some cases, all that is needed is "a gentle contention," presenting the truth in gentleness and mercy because of the spiritual weakness of the brother. But to those in the grip of spiritual falsehood, and even spreading the falsehood, a stern and sharp contention is necessary. The choice of a stern or gentle contention does not indicate a lesser love for one and more for another. All is to be done in the love of God towards those entertaining or having fallen to falsehood.

In another use of the word "diakrino," James describes contention within some who distinguished the importance of people depending on whether they were rich or poor. In this case, the rich were being treated more favorably than the poor. James' rebuke is seen in verse 4:

James 2:4 Are ye not then PARTIAL ("diakrino") in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

Here James uses "contention" in a bad sense to describe the inner condition of some. All in the body of Christ have equal standing before Christ, and James rebuked any decision to show favoritism towards the rich. Such a distinction is not consistent with the faith of those in Christ. James labels such thoughts as evil, making those men unjust judges.

3. CONTENTION "paroxusmos" (G3948)

Two occurrences: Acts 15:39; Heb 10:24

Other translation in Scripture: PROVOKE

This word for contention ("paroxusmos") is used only twice in the New Testament. It means "incitement (to good), or dispute (in anger)." It is a "swift" or "sharp" action ("oxus" G3691) with the expected response or reaction to be immediate. A verse depicting an angry, inciteful action and response is found in Acts 15:

Acts 15:39 And the CONTENTION ("paroxusmos") was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

This was a personal confrontation and not one over the spiritual truths of God. Paul did not want to take Mark with him on a missionary journey because Mark had proven unreliable in a prior situation. Barnabas objected and thus a conflict arose. Personal contentions between believers, if let go, can cause others to be tempted to take sides, bringing a division in the body that affects fellowship and casting a shadow on the manifestation of love toward one another. It is apparent, though, that Paul and Mark made things right with each other, as Paul later told the Colossians to receive Mark (Col 4:10) and instructed Timothy to send Mark to him because he was important to the work for the gospel (2 Tim 4:11). They overcame their difference for the sake of the gospel and the ministry. (Ironically, their personal dispute and temporary separation did not hinder the spread of the gospel. Their going their separate ways for a time actually spread the gospel to further areas. God works all things to the good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose). But it is important to know that Paul and Mark reconciled, which all Christians having personal disputes with one another should do for the sake of Christ and the gospel.

A "good" provocation to loving one another and good works is found in Hebrews 10:

Heb 10:24 And let us consider one another to PROVOKE ("paroxusmos") unto love and to good works:

4. CONTENTIOUS "philoneikos" (G5380)

One occurrence: 1 Cor 11:16

5380. philoneikos, fil-on'-i-kos; from philos (G5384) and neikos (a quarrel; prob. akin to G3534); fond of strife, i.e. disputatious:--contentious.

5384. philos, fee'-los; prop. dear, i.e. a friend; act. fond, i.e. friendly (still as a noun, an associate, neighbor, etc.):--friend.

Looking back to the previous use of contention ("paroxusmos") between Paul and Barnabas, we can see the contrast to this word, "philoneikos." Paul and Barnabas and Mark were not "fond of strife," but rather constantly spoke out against it. "Philoneikos" seems to indicate a tendency to quarrel among people in fellowship with one another, if we are to read the only verse in which it is used:

1 Cor 11:16 But if any man seem to be CONTENTIOUS, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

Paul is speaking about the custom of the day regarding head coverings, and the fact that in this culture it would be offensive to many to change the custom. Apparently, he knew there was someone who would not like his decision and would raise objections, so he concludes the matter simply, by telling the contentious one that there was no other custom in the church where they were located.

Here "philoneikos" refers to a member of the body of Christ who is constantly contentious. He is "fond of strife," loving to stir it up as a self-serving work. Such a person brings aggravation and frustration to the Church, causing members to take sides in such issues rather than helping it to grow in unity and the knowledge of Christ. So Paul nips in the bud any possible dispute over his statement, knowing that contention could easily rise in the Corinthian church.

5. CONTENTIONS "eris" (G2054)

Two occurrences: 1 Cor 1:11; Titus 3:9-11

The Greek word "eris" is also used to describe contentions in the Church:

2054. eris, er'-is; of uncert. affin.; a quarrel, i.e. (by impl.) wrangling:--contention, debate, strife, variance.

1 Cor 1:11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are CONTENTIONS ("eris") among you.

The Corinthian church was being affected by human sentiment, with some favoring Apollos, some Peter, and some Paul as the one they followed. The result was contention, strife, and division. Paul speaks to the Corinthians as one family and d points to Christ as the one that all are to follow. It was Christ alone who saved them by His death and resurrection. Th

ey owed no allegiance to any other person, but Christ was to be the head of all. In this discourse, Paul speaks right into the contentions and settles the matter once and for all by pointing all to Christ.

In today's Church, there is similar exaltation and following of men and their ministries, especially concerning the "new prophets." Some have even been praised as the world's greatest prophet, while their "prophetic words" have brought unscriptural "new" revelations to the Church. Because many have followed them, the effect it has had on the Church is the need for much contention (e.g., #1 above: "epagonizomai") or defending of the faith.

The other use of this word is found in Titus:

Titus 3:9 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and CONTENTIONS ("eris"), and strivings about the law; for they are UNPROFITABLE and vain.

In this situation, contentions had arisen over the law and various rulings and interpretations concerning meat and drink offerings. etc. Paul says to stand away from these contentions, and instead to concentrate on Christ and all we have in Him. In the previous verses, he wrote:

Titus 3:4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,
5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;
6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;
7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
8 This is a faithful saying, and THESE THINGS I WILL THAT THOU AFFIRM CONSTANTLY, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. THESE THINGS ARE GOOD AND PROFITABLE UNTO MEN.

In other words, knowing Christ and speaking of Christ as related in Scripture was profitable. These other things only brought contentions based on puffed up knowledge and were unprofitable, fostering vanity.

6. CONTENTION "eritheia" (G2052)

Six occurrences: Rom 2:8-11; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:19-21; Phil 1:16-17; Phil 2:3-5; James 3:14-16

Translations in Scripture: CONTENTIOUS, STRIFE

Strong's defines this Greek word for "contention" as:

2052. eritheia, er-ith-i'-ah; perh. from the same as G2042; prop. intrigue, i.e. (by impl.) faction:--contention (-ious), strife.

Paul used this word to define those who brought contentions into the Church, yet did not believe the truth:

Rom 2:8 But unto them that are CONTENTIOUS ("eritheia"), and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,
9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;
10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:
11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

Those in our day who do not believe in the Trinity or the deity and pre-existence of Christ are like those mentioned in these verses. Paul says they are obedient to unrighteousness and are deserving of God's indignation and wrath. Paul himself doesn't curse them in verse 9, but points to God as the final judge who will pass sentence on them as described in verse 11. Paul uses this word "eritheia" again in 2 Corinthians:

2 Cor 12:20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, STRIFES ("eritheia"), backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

Here Paul is warning the Corinthians that he had better not see what he saw when he was there the last time: "debates, envyings, wraths, STRIFES ("eritheia"), backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults." (I wonder what he would do if he went onto the internet to Christ)

stian forums nowadays?) Though "strifes" is the word we are concerned with here, I will also give a short description of the other negative words in this verse:

"Debates" - defined by Strong's as "quarreling" ("eris," G2054) - the internet is loaded with debates. Seeking the truth with others has to be based on a love for the truth and a desire to cast off all that is not true, to admit where one is wrong, and to correct false beliefs. Having an attitude of needing to "be right" is not an option in the seeking of truth. Such an attitude leads to quarreling. One who has the truth has no need to quarrel with others, but to make an entreaty in love to the one believing a lie and encourage him to study the Scriptures in their proper context. When one person begins to quarrel over Scripture, the other must maintain himself in the fruit of the Spirit, and if things get out of hand, just leave the conversation.

"Envyings" - Strong's, "heat" ("zelos," G2205)) - The idea is a person getting hot under the collar - seething jealousy - because another has what he desires for himself. It's a fervency to outdo the other at any cost in a particular arena: the desire for a better revelation than another had, or greater signs or bigger wonders. Ambition is a demoralizing evil in the modern day Church.

"Wraths" - Strong's, passion, indignation, to sacrifice by fire ("thumos," G2372) - often seen in the insults and condemnations coming through the words of an adversary to the truth.

"Strifes" - Strong's, factions, contentions ("eritheia," G2052) - I have actually had people tell me that they wrote what they did on an internet discussion forum just to stir things up. Then there are those who purposefully enter the forums to bring false doctrines into the conversations, which disrupts good studies and hinders and confuses the sharing of the truth or the search for truth in Christ. Paul said,

Phil 1:16 The one preach Christ of CONTENTION, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:
17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

Those who really defend the gospel on the forums become targets for such displays of arrogance. The self-ambitious have a factious spirit and have no interest in building up the body through uncorrupted teaching. Causing strife is an indication that one wants to exalt himself above others and suggests a self-ambitious spirit.

Paul labels "strife" as a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20) in contrast to the fruit of the Spirit, warning that "as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (v. 21).

In James, we are told to get rid of "bitter envying and strife" because these things birth lies against the truth:

James 3:14 But if ye have bitter envying and STRIFE in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.
15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.
16 For where envying and STRIFE is, there is confusion and every evil work.

"Backbitings" - Strong's, speaking evil of another ("katalalia," G2636) - insults, bad characterizations, defamation of character, etc. spews from the mouth, the worse the better. When someone aims this evil weapon at someone, it could very well influence others to not listen to one who has the truth about true salvation.

"Whisperings" - Strong's, slander ("psithurismos," G5587), probably akin to uttering an untruth or attempt to deceive by falsehood ("pseudomai," G5574)
- a whispering in the ear seems to be indicated here. Gossip is usually done in private, while slander is done in an open forum. In many instances, both these sins are practiced to raise oneself to an esteemed position over another or because of anger. Of these "whisperings," Robertson's Word Study states:

An onomatopoeic word for the sibilant murmur of a snake charmer (#Ec 10:11).

"Swellings" - Strong's, haughtiness ("phusiosis," G5450) from ("phusioo," G5448) make proud - There's nothing worse than someone who is determined to straighten you out. The attitude usually manifested along with haughtiness is arrogance. I remember one person who was going to tell me what God had said concerning the time the Day of the Lord started. I was told I should listen and maybe God would tell me something. The person then made his case by interpreting Israel in an OT scripture AS BABYLON! His error was obvious to all, but he couldn't see or accept it. Pride blinds such people to

o their self-centeredness and is detrimental to the body of Christ. It is almost impossible to talk to anyone who "has the truth" and "proves it" through a spirit of haughtiness and arrogance. On the other hand, what helps convince others to at least listen to you and consider that may have the truth is to maintain yourself in the love of the Holy Spirit as you present Scripture in its proper context.

Phil 2:3 Let nothing be done through STRIFE or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than the mselves.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

"Tumults" - Strong's, instability, disorder ("akatastasia," G181) - the effect of confusing doctrines, speculations, "good guesses", suspicions, exaggerations, an assortment of interpretations for one verse, forming doctrine to fit one's dreamt-up scenario, evasions, and changing the subject. All of these bring instability to the Church and open the door for changing the standards set by Scripture.

The last word used to relate "contention" is "agon":

7. CONTENTION "agon" (G73)

Six occurrences: Phil 1:29-30; Col 2:1-2; 1 Th 2:2; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7; Heb 12:1

Translations in Scripture: CONFLICT, FIGHT, RACE

All of these verses have to do with the defense of the faith in the face of conflict. The Christian has a race to run, to defend the faith no matter what comes at him, to persevere in the sharing of the gospel and the building up of the body of Christ:

73. agon, ag-one'; from G71; prop. a place of assembly (as if led), i.e. (by impl.) a contest (held there); fig. an effort or an anxiety:--conflict, contention, fight, race.

Phil 1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;
30 Having the same CONFLICT ("agon") which ye saw in me, and now hear to be

Col 2:1 For I would that ye knew what great CONFLICT ("agon") I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

1 Th 2:2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much CONTENTION ("agon").

1 Tim 6:12 Fight the good FIGHT ("agon") of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Heb 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the RACE ("agon") that is set before us,

2 Tim 4:7 I have fought a good FIGHT ("agon"), I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

#2 Encouragement From The Early Church

In the third century, Cyprian wrote to his friend Donatus:

"It is a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and good people who have learned the great secret of life. They have found a joy and wisdom which is a thousand times better than any of the pleasures of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people, Donatus, are Christians... and I am one of them."

<http://www.ncinter.net/~ejt/List.htm>

(<https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?viewcategory&cid582>) More good Articles on SI.

Re: Contenting, on: 2006/4/13 23:38

This was written by this older brother who's been around the block of Ministry for well close to 40 years and writes it after Forum exposé.

I think it's worth Printing and having as a reference. Fer Shur !!!