

When I was in grammar school, or perhaps early high school up in a little town in N. Michigan, the local newspaper carried on a discussion for quite some time between different people who wrote in. It began with someone writing in strongly criticizing the Bible and then someone answered. And as it went on they kept writing letters to show that after all there are contradictions in the Bible, and they would quote a verse such as "No man hath seen God at any time". Then they would quote another verse where someone would say that he had seen God, and other such contradictions. You will find verbal contradictions in any book. I think it is important we realize that. We believe that God's Word is inerrant, it is free from error but that means that we study it carefully to see what it really says and really means. We don't mean you can pick a few words here and a few words there and never find any apparent contradiction between these. One of the commonest errors is that of thinking of words as things. Just what does this word mean? Let's trace it through the Bible and assume that everything it says about this word fits together. Well, words are not things. Words are areas, areas of thought. Words represent human concepts. Very often we can have a concept but it is hard to get the word for it. We have to pick the best we can. A very well known illustration of this of course is the case of the word faith. Paul and James as far as words are concerned flatly contradict each other. In Rom. 3:28ff. Paul says one is not saved by works but only by faith. He says Abraham was saved not by works but by faith. Then we get to James and we find James says Abraham was saved by his works, and he says faith without works is dead. You have an absolute verbal contradiction between James and Paul. But as someone has said, It is exactly like two men sitting back to back and warding off attacks from two different directions. They are however using the word faith in two different senses. To Paul faith is a living reality. It is a relationship to Christ, a relationship which shows itself in what we do, but it is not what we do that matters but the fact we have the relationship. To James he is using the word faith in the sense of saying you believe something and there is nothing much worse than dead orthodoxy except of course living heresy. But to say you believe something that does you no good at all. To give a testimony, to sign a creed -- it is what you believe in your heart, what really means something to you.