

# The Characteristics of Real Faith, Part 2

## Ephesians 1:15-16

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

Turn with me to Ephesians 1. We're going to continue in verse 15. We're talking about the characteristics of real faith. Very obviously we're not doing a complete study on faith. Remember we're studying Ephesians, and we're seeing from Ephesians what real faith is. There are so many other things you could add to this. If we took other books we could do months and months of study just on the subject of faith.

As I was meditating on this, I began to think of how faith and love all seem to have something to do with each other. I remember back when I first married Diana. Oh me, that was a wonderful day. It's been a wonderful almost twenty-four years with her. But I was thinking about the fact that I thought I loved her. I very obviously thought I trusted her. She worked at a place where there were all men except for her. For some reason or another I thought I trusted her, but I really didn't. I gave her a fit. I would come home, and I would say, "Did you talk to anybody today? Did anybody...?" You know, I just drove her nuts. But as we grew and as we matured (it took me a little longer than Diana) I began to realize that love grows.

In one of the Gospels, the disciples said to Jesus, "Lord, increase our faith." A soldier came to Him one day and said, "Lord, I believe. Will You help me in my unbelief?" Remember Jabez from the Old Testament? He said, "Lord, enlarge my boundaries. Enlarge my coasts." In other words, "Lord, expand me. Help me to trust you even more." It begins with a little seed in our life, and it grows within us as we learn to love Him and as we learn to trust Him.

You might be already wondering whether or not you even have real faith. Maybe you see the standard of the Ephesian believers, and you say, "Well, somehow I don't think I'm measuring up to that." Well, listen, if you're growing, the main thing is the direction you're headed in trusting God. You'll never get to the place, until you get to glory, that you'll absolutely do it right all the time. The whole thing is tied together with love and trust.

Now I don't worry about Diana. I really don't. I don't think she worries about me. I'm not sure. She's still sort of concerned, but she knows me. I just trust her. She'll come in sometimes and tell me something she's done. Maybe she's spent this or that. That doesn't bother me. I know her walk. I love her, and I love her for what she is. Love and trust just somehow grow together. Isn't it beautiful how God does that?

You say, "I really love Jesus tonight, but I'm not sure I'm trusting Him in every area of my life." Well, I challenge you to grow in that because if you get saved that's when it starts. It doesn't stop there. So often we hear, "God loves you just like you are." Well, certainly

He does. He knows us, but that's a "yes" and "no" situation. No, He's not satisfied with us just like we are. His whole desire is that we be conformed into the image of Christ Jesus Who walked in total conformity with His Father. So if you are complacent with that little statement, "God loves me like I am," and you're not growing in your faith, and you're not learning to love Him more, then friend, you're going backwards. You're not going forwards, and God is not pleased with that. You're not walking worthy as God has designed the walk to be.

Look at this statement. Spurgeon wrote this. I love this, and I trust this is my own heart cry: "If all my senses were to contradict God. I would deny every one of them and sooner to believe myself to be out of my mind than believe that God could lie. And I desire to feel that in every emotion of my spirit, every throb of my heart, every thought of my brain, and everything that is contrary to the plainly revealed truth of God I will count myself a mad man, and I will reckon God to be wise and to be true."

You see, faith is in what God says and who He is and in what He does. Look at verse 15. He says, "For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you, and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you." Paul says, "I am so encouraged by your faith. You're trusting Him, you're trusting His Word, you're trusting what He's doing in your life." It's not just a spur of the moment decision. That's point number one. It's a lifestyle of loving Him and trusting Him and obeying Him. Paul says, "You so encourage my heart."

What's your life like right now? Do people know about you? Are they hearing about you? Are they saying, "Boy, do you know this couple over here? They believe God. Man, they live like they really believe God." That's the witness that we have to a lost world. That's what it's all about. When you entered into the covenant with the Lord God you entered in by faith, no other way. That same faith that saved you is the faith that sustains you. If you're not trusting God, you need to confess that as sin in your life. We're commanded to trust Him. We're commanded not to be anxious about any one single thing in our life because He's the Lord of our life.

Maybe that's the point of growth that you're in right now. Maybe something's happened. A crisis of belief has come in your life. You're not willing to go on and trust God in what He says. You're going the other direction, and God's trying to speak to you somehow through all of this.

Well, Paul has just told them how much God loved them. He says, "In love He's blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. In love He has chosen us before the foundation of the world. In love He has predestined us to the adoption of sons to Jesus Christ to Himself. In love He has seen to it that in Christ we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of our trespasses. In love He has made the mystery of His will to us. In love He has sealed us with the Holy Spirit of promise. And in love He has guaranteed our inheritance." Now that's who He is, and that's what He's done for us. Now he says, "You encourage my life because you're living according to your faith in Him day by day." The lifestyle of those Ephesian believers quickened an old man's heart as he was in prison having to face daily uncertainties of what was going on in his life.

So first of all, the first point was faith is a lifestyle. It's not a spur of the moment decision. Secondly, faith, real faith in Jesus Christ, trusts His motive when He allows things to go bad in your life and when He allows difficult circumstances to appear in your life. Now let me say that again. Real faith in Jesus Christ trusts His motive when He allows you to go

through difficult circumstances. You trust His motive. Remember the song, “When you can’t see His hand, trust His heart?” The object of their consistent faith was the Lord Jesus Christ. My faith has found a resting place. That’s where it is. It’s the object of faith that is everything about faith. What are you believing in? It’s the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When you focus in on Him you trust His motive even when He allows you to go through difficult circumstances. The term is right there in the verse. Verse 15, “For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you.” There is a term there for Lord which we look at and see “master” or “authority.” They looked at the same term and saw something more. The word *kurios* is used there for Lord. It’s the word that meant “the one who exercises his authority to do good and what is moral in a person’s life.” It’s a very special word. They understood it that way. When you refer to somebody as lord using the word *kurios*, you’re referring not only to somebody in the position of authority, but you’re referring to somebody who, in that position of authority has a concern and a passion for others who are under his authority. That’s what the word means. It expresses concern. When you refer to Jesus as Lord Jesus Christ, you’re not just referring to the position He holds, but you’re referring to the compassion He feels for the people whom He oversees. They understood that, and I think it’s high time that we understand that. Whatever He does in the authoritative position that God’s put Him in is for our good, always for our good.

Jesus is the one who is the fulfillment of that covenant promise in Jeremiah 32:40. Remember what it said? God said, “I will not turn away from them to do them good.” Whatever God is doing to people in the new covenant is good. It may look as if it’s bad, but God, as Romans 8:28 says, causes all things to work together for good, that which is benevolent to us, that which meets our spiritual need. God does that in our life. Even when we’re going through difficult times, He’s still doing good in our life.

Faith trusts His motive behind the difficult circumstances He allows us to go through. That’s why James could say what he said in James 1. Look over there for a minute. This is why James says in James 1:2, “Consider it all joy, . . . when you encounter various trials.” That word “encounter” means “to stumble into” because that’s the way difficult things come to us. We don’t plan them. Don’t you wish you could plan them? But you can’t plan them. You stumble into them.

One of the things that blessed me when I was studying through this one day, taking it a word at a time, was that little word “various.” That little word “various” is a powerful word. It means “multicolored.” Our trials are multicolored. But now listen, if you know that God’s motive in your trial is to do good for you, and He’s going to cause the things to work out the right way on an eternal perspective, then you need to know something else. If the trials are color-coded, look at I Peter 4:10. Here we find a subject that’s bigger than the context. I’m not violating a context. Spiritual gifts are just one little aspect of God’s grace. God’s grace is much bigger than talking about spiritual gifts, and look what he says about it: “As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Guess what? The word “manifold” is the same word as “various” over in James. It’s multicolored. “You mean to tell me that God’s grace is color-coded to my trials?” Yes, and what is God’s grace that He wants to do in me and to me and through me that I can’t do myself? The transforming power that God has in my life. When I’m going through a difficult time I can bear up under it. I can endure it. Why? Because God will give me the special grace to go through it. Now He might just throw in what I want Him to do, but sometimes He doesn’t do that. Why would He do that? Because He’s always

doing good, whatever's going on in my life.

That's the heart of God. I can trust His motive. For every low place that I go through I've got a high place. Habakkuk said, "He made my feet like hinds feet to walk on high places." Then he said, "He made me to walk on my own individual high places." All of us have our individual low places, and all of us have our specialized individual high places. When we're in a low place, and we're going through a trial we trust in the heart of God. God will cause that trial to work together for good for us. He'll lift us up on a high place. He may never change the circumstance, but He'll change us in the midst of the circumstance. Walking by faith trusts His motive.

The thing that's blessing me as I look at this through Scripture is that life is never supposed to work against me if I'm a believer. It always works for me. My trust is in the One who is orchestrating it. I know that His motive is right regardless of what my mind sometimes wants to tell me. I can trust His motive in whatever He allows or whatever He does. He's a benevolent ruler over me. He's concerned about me. He'll never turn His back upon me to do me good. Sometimes that good is chastening me and disciplining me and scourging me. He brings you right down to the very edge. God will sometimes create circumstances and orchestrate them. Sometimes we inflict our own pain, but you've still got to realize that God is still overseeing that in our lives. He has a good desire to bring us to Himself, to rescue us in the middle of it, to draw us to Himself. Whether He ever changes our circumstances or not, we serve a God that loves us and has proven it beyond any time that we'll ever need to defend Him.

Well, real faith in Christ is a lifestyle, not a spur of the moment decision. It's not what you do when your kids get sick or your marriage gets on the rocks, or where you don't have any money. No! It's an everyday, moment by moment, saying, "God, I trust who you are. I trust Your Word. I will obey You no matter what." But then secondly, faith in Christ Jesus trusts in His motive. So when bad things happen I don't run and hide. I know somehow He's in control of it, and nothing can get to me that doesn't get by Jesus first. *Kurios*—He's the Lord Jesus Christ, the benevolent ruler. He cares about the people over which He oversees.

Finally, real faith in Christ Jesus (and this one was a surprise to me), is accompanied by something that normally I wouldn't look for. In other words, how is it manifested in people who are really trusting Christ? How do you know who they are? Well, sometimes you don't. Sometimes they can fake you out. You may think they're trusting the Lord. They know how to say it, and they know how to do it, but maybe in their hearts they really aren't. Is there any other way we can know who they are? Yes. Real faith in Christ Jesus is accompanied by an unconditional and compassionate love for others. In other words, if you believe He's working that way in you, then you're willing to open your heart up and let Him work that way through you to others. That's your whole desire to others. That's His heart working in you.

"Now Wayne, that's far-fetched. Where did you get that?" Look at verse 15. "For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you, and your love for all the saints." Now, what are we talking about? Listen, when you talk about faith you're talking about everything in the Christian life. You're talking about your relationship with Christ. You're talking about you loving Him and trusting Him and obeying Him. That is the normal Christian life. It's the life of faith. Without faith we cannot be pleasing unto God. When you're allowing God to work in you, and you're trusting Him, His motive, His

Word, and all that He's doing, obviously if He's working in you, it's going to be manifested by Him working through you. The way you treat others is going to have a whole lot to do with how much you're walking by faith in Him.

John 13:35 gives us a principle that we need to hang on to. It says, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." One presupposes the other. If you have faith in Him, and it's working in your life, and you're trusting Him, then it's going to have an outflow. It's going to touch somebody else around you. There's going to be a kind of love that's just incredible. Isn't that amazing? How do you know people in the body of Christ are really trusting Christ? Well, look how they treat one another. My relationship vertically with Him is directly somehow hooked in to my relationship with others that are around me. You see, that's why it's been so easy to fake it. Some of us know how to say it, but we're not expressing it to other people that are around us.

What is this love that we're talking about? The word is *agape*. It refers to the kind of love that is intensely committed to one's spiritual best. Now where would that come from? It would have to come from a Ruler who was intensely committed to one's spiritual best. When He's working in me He transforms me and begins the work through me. My attitude towards others is a direct reflection of His attitude towards me. I begin to see others for the first time in their need, and my heart will reach out to want to meet that need. It's not a feeling, but it's a willingness to sacrifice for the betterment of someone else. It's totally unlike anything the human flesh can produce.

So, do you want to know whether or not you're trusting God? Well, stop looking at your finances. Stop looking at the problems you've got right now. Shift gears and look at your relationships. See how the two are connected. If I'm walking by faith He's doing a work in me and to me, but if I'm walking by faith He's also doing a work through me. It's going to be manifested in the way I see others and the way I care about the needs that others have.

Look over at Galatians 5:22 for just a second. Paul talks about this love and shows you that you can't produce it yourself. It's something God the Holy Spirit has to do. As a matter of fact, it's the signal that God's working in your life. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..." That's the evidence of that love working in somebody's heart. So when you have people in the body of Christ who can't get along with one another people, who are more interested in themselves than they are somebody else, then obviously you've got people in the body of Christ who are not walking by faith. God's not doing something in them, therefore, He's not allowed to do something through them.

Who are the people who have real faith? They daily place themselves in God's hands, and they don't make demands upon Him. It's a lifestyle. That's the way they live. They trust His motive in the difficult times. They know that He loves them, and whatever He does is right. They experience His working in them which is evidenced by their unconditional love for the people of God. That's what real faith is all about. If we're going to walk by faith then the world will know it. They'll know it sometimes not by how much we affirm that we believe God, they'll know it by the way we treat one another, by the way we love one another. Automatically they'll know it. If God's doing a work in me then He's changing me, and that heart that He has toward me now is turned and expressed towards somebody else who is around me.

In verses 15 and 16 Paul says, "For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you, and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving

thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers.”

You know, we’re just a piece of the body. We’re certainly not the body of Christ. I’ve said many times that if God doesn’t lead you to our church you need to go wherever He’s leading you. The door swings both ways. We just want people that are sent. All we want is whatever God wants to do in your life. We’re not trying to measure your spirituality by how often you come to church or how much you get involved. We just want you to know God, to walk with Him and to experience Him. I guarantee you we won’t have to worry about anything else because the results will be dynamite. It’s what God does.

So often we miss the boat of what Christianity is all about. We’re not talking about “Churchianity,” we’re talking about Christianity. Christianity is a walk of faith, believing who God is, believing in Him, what He does and believing everything that He says.

“When your senses,” as Spurgeon says, “ever seek to contradict anything about the character of God, then you should deny every one of them and rather believe yourself to be out of your mind than to believe for a second that God could lie.” That’s the walk of faith. Where you are in that journey is between you and the Lord. I’m not here to judge you. You might have just gotten started, or you might be way down the road. The key is are you moving and progressing or are you backing up? That’s the key.

Remember this. Your reputation is what people think you are. Your character is what your wife and your children know that you are. You’re either a man of faith or you’re not. We want to examine where we are in our faith walk. Are we trusting God regardless of what He does? Are we trusting God in all that He says, and are we trusting God in the motive that He has behind what He allows into our life, who He is, all those things that are involved? Just meet with the Lord. Say, “God, I want you to answer this.” Probably you already have had it answered. “Where am I in trusting You? Where am I trusting Your Word in my life? What’s my relationship like to my brothers and sisters in Christ? Is it what you want it to be? Is my heart full of peace and joy and things that ought to be there? Is your Spirit working in my heart?” See what the Lord says to you.