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EPHESIANS 1:15-16: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF REAL FAITH, PART 1

by Dr. Wayne Barber
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[Ed. Note: Some time before Dr. Barber preached this message, Michelle, a member of his church, was diagnosed with cancer. She and her husband, Eddie, reacted to the news with a display of "real faith," which beautifully illustrates this message.]

Will you turn with me to Ephesians 1. I want to talk today, just by coincidence about faith. You know I heard a long time ago, "*Coincidence is when God decides to remain anonymous*." I like that. I like that a lot. Just by coincidence the next verse that we're coming up to happens to be talking about people's faith. We're going to be talking this morning about the characteristics of real faith.

Look at Ephesians 1:15-16 where Paul said that...

For this reason I too, having heard (AAPMSN) of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease (1SPA) giving thanks (PAPMSN) for you, while making (PMPMSN) mention of you in my prayers

Paul was encouraged by the faith of other believers.

Isn't it amazing how with Eddie and Michelle we've all been encouraged in our walk of faith? You know, it's been a testimony of faith with both of them since the very beginning. Two people who have been willing to trust God, no matter what. They chose very early on to accept the fact that His agenda was alright to be their agenda. They weren't here to twist His arm to get Him to do what they wanted Him to do. They were simply willing to trust that whatever God does is right. Both Eddie and Michelle know that His ways do not need defending. They trust Him. Had the report not been what it was Friday morning they would still be trusting Him now. We would still be praising Him, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, the God who was, who is and who is to come." He doesn't change. We know His heart. They know His heart. His character is holy. His character is pure. They know that He is in control of all things that happen. Now when I see faith like that, and certainly when you see it and when Paul saw it, not emotional presumption, but real faith, it encourages our hearts.

We're living in a world that's got this thing turned upside down. They're preaching formulas that say if you do this and you do that you can make God do whatever. For some reason or another they think that's faith. No, that's presumption. Folks, real faith is not telling God anything. Real faith is believing Him and trusting Him regardless of what He does. You see, He has chosen to do what He's done in Eddie and Michelle's life. He's faithful to us to do always what's right in our life. What we think is right sometimes and what He thinks is right are not quite the same. To always be believing Jesus is Lord and to be totally submissive to Him, trusting Him regardless, is what real faith is all about. You know, it's amazing to me how we've been teaching verse by verse now for almost 12 years. Have you ever noticed something? Every time we go through a victory or a trial or whatever it is, the next verse absolutely nails it right between the eyes. It seems like it goes along side everything that we're experiencing. His Word is always right on time. You don't plan it. He planned it. We just get involved in what He's doing. I was so encouraged when I began to study this, having the information that I already had before today. It was just exciting in my heart that we could talk about real faith at a time when it needs to be talked about.

Now Paul is writing this from prison. That's not a very likely place that a loving God would allow somebody to be in, is it? Of any of the saints in the whole New Testament Paul certainly loved God. When he finished his life he said,

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. (See **notes** 2Timothy 4:7-8)

He looked back on his life and he said, "You know, I have won the battle over Paul." And not only that, he said, "I believe God has accomplished through me what He wanted to accomplish through me." You know he's in prison when he says this. His life was filled with one trial after another, one prison after another. Here's a man of great faith, a man who had to be encouraged and was encouraged by other's faith. I guarantee you, put the faith of the Ephesians beside Paul, and there may be a difference at times because Paul lived it every day of his life. Nobody ever arrives in this thing. You never get to a point when you don't need to be encouraged in your faith. I never get to a point that I don't need to be encouraged. Paul certainly didn't get that way.

Here he is in prison. Paul had so trusted the Lord. As a matter of fact, in 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, 16 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; (see notes Ephesians 1:15; 16)

It encouraged his heart. He had learned in his life earlier that whatever God dealt him in life was alright because God is a good God, and God does what is good in our life. He trusted Him so much that, if prison was what God wanted, then prison was what Paul wanted. When he wrote Ephesians he was in prison in Rome without a single accusation being held down against him. There was not one thing. This was not the first time, because in Caesarea he had the same thing happen to him. I mean here's a guy that's been knocked around like a ping pong ball, but everywhere he goes he just thanks God for it and allows that situation to work for him and not against him. That's a person who lives trusting God. That's what real faith is all about.

Well, now Paul has just led the Ephesian believers in a time of praise. He starts off in verse 3, and he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The word "blessed" means "worthy to be praised." Now why is God the Father worthy to be praised? The whole thing could be summed up in the characteristics of a loving God that has done everything that is necessary so that you and I might be a part of that love, and experience that which He wants us to experience. In love He blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ, Paul said. In love He has chosen us before the foundation of the world. In love He has predestined us to the adoption of sons through 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 made known the mystery of His will to us. In love He seals us with the Holy Spirit of promise and in love He has guaranteed our inheritance. Now Paul is summing all that up and then he says, "I am so grateful that you're trusting my loving God and knowing that He's doing the good things in your life. I am grateful for your faith. You have encouraged me in your faith."

Are you going through a bad time and you're thinking, "Oh, God loves Eddie and Michelle, but He doesn't love me?" Now folks, listen. He's already proven that He loves you. That's what Paul is saying. If you believe what the Word of God says, then you know that if He's faithful to save you He's also faithful to sustain you. Whatever goes on in your life you know that God loves you. That's God's Word. John says, "We love you because you first loved us." He's done everything that's necessary to prove to you that He loves you. Now do you trust Him when bad things go on in your life?

WHAT IS "REAL FAITH"?

Just exactly what is "real faith"? Well, the first point I want to talk about is that real faith, this kind of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, is a lifestyle, every day, every moment, every hour, not just a spur of the moment decision. Faith is a way of life for these believers. Paul says again in 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." Not just a one time thing. It's not just when the kids get sick. "Oh, I think I need to trust God. Oh, my marriage is falling apart. I'll think I'll come to God." Or "My bills can't be paid. I'll think I'll run to God." That's not faith. That's not faith at all. All that is is a presumptuous testing of God to see if He is willing to be your cosmic bellhop and bail you out of a mess that you got yourself into. No, trusting in God is in the good times as well as the bad times. It's a consistent attitude of the heart that has to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That little phrase "which exists among you" really isn't in the text, but it is so implied by the text that the translators put it down. Paul says, "I've heard it." Oh man, what a testimony. My prayer is we'll not be known for how great our Sunday schools are or how many people come here or anything that goes on here on Sunday. But boy, the greatest testimony of this church is when we move out in that community, and they say, "There goes a people who have faith in a living Lord Jesus Christ." That's the key. That's what encourages believers, not how big we've grown. As a matter of fact, every time I share that with churches it discourages a lot of

them, especially churches I've gone to that have no prospect of growth like we have. What's growth? Lots of people. Hey, that's wonderful, if God's brought you. But listen, the key is our testimony. It's not how big we get. The testimony is how much we're willing to trust the Lord Jesus Christ, our faith in Him, that's what needs to go out from here. The fact that we trust God, not men, but we trust God. Well, the word for faith is a word that we ought to know by now. We've said it so many times. It's the word *pistis* (see word study). It comes from [peitho](#). *Pistis* means "to put your trust into somebody." It means "to believe in somebody," but [peitho](#) carries it even a step further. It means "to so believe in that individual that you're willing to bow down and cast yourself and abandon yourself to Him and surrender to whatever He does." That's faith. That's trust. That's believing in someone. It means absolute trust. When it comes to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ it means "absolute trust in who He is and what He does and in what He says."

Now folks, we're supposed to be people of faith, people who believe the Book. Hebrews 11:6 (note) tells us something. It says without this kind of faith it's impossible to please God. It starts at salvation, and it goes right on from there. Look at Ephesians 1:13. It says, "In Him you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed." [Pisteuo](#), comes from *pistis*, which comes from [peitho](#). It's all tied in there together. Once they believed, having heard the gospel of the salvation, they continued to believe. They not only trusted Him to save them, they trusted Him to sustain them in whatever was going on in their life.

I want you to turn to 2 Timothy to see something that I believe relates here, because we need to see that faith can be faked. There are a lot of people who say they have faith. That's basically what the book of James is talking about. Many people say, "Oh I believe." Well, do we or do we not? You don't tell people what you believe. You live it out before them. That's what shows people what you believe. In 2 Timothy 1:5 (note) Paul is writing to Timothy from his second imprisonment, perhaps the worse time in his life, and encourages Timothy writing that...

"For I am mindful of the sincere (unfeigned, undisguised, without hypocrisy) faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure (persuaded, confident) that it is in you as well" (see notes on 2 Timothy 1:5-6)

Now he's not talking about an inherited faith. Not at all. He's talking about the fact that Timothy's grandmother trusted Christ, and then his mother trusted Christ, and because of that it gave him an example. One day he trusted Christ on his own. It's not because grandma did it that he got it. That's not what he's saying. He said your [sincere faith](#)." The word "sincere" [anupokritos] means "without any pretense whatsoever." You're not faking it. You're not trying to make people think that you've got it when you don't have it. You say, "How in the world do you know that somebody has it?" Well, you really don't when things are going well. The only time you know they have it is when things aren't going well. Put a man under pressure and you'll find out quickly what he's like.

I've been concerned about what's going on in our world. I don't know about you. Do you get that on your mind sometimes. I just see some things happening in our world. But listen, I know God's in control of our world. I know that. From what I'm seeing, folks, I don't think it's going to get that much better. All of the reports seem to be glowing right now. Stock markets are up. Interest rates are down. Hey, don't believe in that kind of thing. That's here today, gone tomorrow. We're going to find out one of these days. I'm telling you I'm not a prophet or a son of a prophet. We're going to find out who is and who isn't when the pressure gets on all of us. God has a way of doing that. You know, judgment starts at the house of God. He's going to find out. He has a way of doing that by allowing circumstances to come into our lives, and then what surfaces is what's on the inside. When you squeeze a lemon what's on the inside of it is going to come out of it. Are you bitter and critical and judgmental of everything that goes on? If so, does that show you're really trusting God?

People say, "Oh, we believe God's in control." No we don't! We don't live that way anymore. He's got a plan and if it's not like we think it ought to be then we're going to change it. And guess what? If it works, we'll take the credit for it. God gets no glory for that. You see, people who have faith trust Him even when it's beyond what they think or what they can do. They just trust the fact that it's God doing what He's doing.

Well, faith can be faked. How do you know it's faked? Listen to what you're saying. Listen to how you're living. It won't take you long to figure that out. You either believe God or you don't believe God. I'm so grateful that John the apostle got to go in the throne room. Aren't you? I am. We're studying Revelation again, and I'm so grateful that I'm doing it again because the first time I studied it I learned the questions to ask the second time. I'm glad John got to go in the throne room. Man, he got to walk into the control tower of God. When I was fifteen-years-old and in the scouts, I got to go to Philmont Scout Ranch and go up into the control tower of an Air Force base. I got to watch them talk to the pilots. I got to watch them bring those planes in. It was so exciting to see how it all worked. Somebody really was in control of all that confusion up there. John didn't get to go into a control tower of an Air Force base. He got to go right into the control tower in heaven. He got to see all the events that we can't understand because we're mere men. He got to see the One sitting on the throne. He got to see the lights that emanated from the throne. He got to see the sea of crystal glass. He got to see the jasper and the emerald and all those beautiful colors of the throne. He also got to see the fact that in His hand was a seven-sealed book that was not only going to take care of everything going on now, but was going to bring on

everything to conclude this age. A book that was unique. A book that really can't be read. It had to be opened only by the Lamb of God, standing as if slain. When in the world did you ever see a slain lamb stand up? He's the resurrected Lord Jesus. That's who. The Lion who is going to conquer Satan like a lion, and the Lamb who conquered sin like a lamb comes forward, takes that book, and they say, "Oh, He's worthy. He's worthy." Why is He worthy? Because of what He did on this earth. Because He's the God-man. He's the one who started it all. He's the one who can bring it to a conclusion.

Folks, I hate to tell you this, if it bothers you, but He's in control of everything right now [see God's attribute "sovereign"] in . Whether you think so or not, He is in control. You think God can't get rid of me in a minute? You think that if He has an elder or anybody else in this church that's out of whack, you think He can't move him? If this is His place, He'll do what only He can do to make sure the people know that He's God. God is in control, folks. We don't live by faith. Oh no, we get a little committee and share our ignorance and then ask for the majority rule and then we think we've got it all figured out. No sir! Faith is bowing down and knowing He is in control. There are no "if's, and's or but's" about it. What He says, who He is and what He does is right, even if we don't understand it. That's faith.

Paul said to Timothy, "I am [mindful](#) of the [sincere faith](#)." That word "[mindful](#)" means "it comes back to my mind." "Timothy, I watched you, and I watched you live, and the way you live encourages me now as I face death in this prison." Isn't that exciting? The way Eddie and Michelle have walked this thing with us, they've encouraged all of our hearts to know if they could trust Him in what they've trusted Him in, we can trust Him in anything and walk through it. Whatever He does is right. Trusting in what He did.

You know, Habakkuk could teach us that lesson, couldn't he? He learned it. He learned that whatever God does is right. He came before God and said, "God, when are you going to do something? You know who I am. I'm the righteous prophet. And I've been praying, and You're not listening to me." And God said, "Oh, I'm listening to you. I'm doing something. But Habakkuk you couldn't handle it if I told you." Habakkuk said, "Oh come on. Tell me." He said, "I am [raising up the Chaldeans](#)" ([Hab 1:6](#)) The [Chaldeans](#)? You know we don't get a grasp for that.

Remember back when Khrushchev came over here? Remember when he got on television? Remember? He said, "We're going to bury you." Remember that? We hated the Russians didn't we? Of course, you know times change. God changes our heart, and we see a lot of things. But back then remember how that feeling was in people's minds? That's exactly the way it was when God mentioned the Chaldeans. God said, "I'm raising them up." Boy, Habakkuk didn't like that. He didn't understand that. Boy, he goes from being discouraged, to being distressed, to just being disgusted. He doesn't know what's going on. Finally God comforts him, and he comes out of it praising Him because whatever God did or whatever God will do was alright with Habakkuk. He said, "I'll praise Him if the fields are barren. I'll praise Him when the vine has no fruit. I will wait patiently upon the Lord." [[Hab 3:17-18](#)] He learned something about faith. What we think is good may not be what God thinks is good.

You see, faith is not trusting in what you think God ought to do. Faith is trusting in whatever He does, knowing that it's right.

FAITH IS NOT TRUSTING IN WHAT YOU THINK GOD OUGHT TO DO

FAITH IS TRUSTING IN WHATEVER HE DOES, KNOWING THAT IT'S RIGHT

Secondly, whatever He says you got, you got. When you walk by faith you trust whatever He says. He spoke to Abraham. He said, "Abraham, I want you to take Isaac up on a mountain, and I want you to kill him." ([Ge 22](#)) The Scripture says, "So Abraham got Isaac and went up on the mountain." I love what he said to his friends. He said, "[we will worship and return to you](#)" Hebrews says he believed that if God told him to kill him, God will raise him from the dead ([Heb 11:17-19](#) - notes). He knew whatever God said was true and whatever God said was right. You believe that if you walk by faith. You believe who He is.

Do you believe in His character? Do you want to walk by faith? Do you believe God would allow everything to fall on its face just because you have people that are imperfect? I love Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They were told to bow down to the false god, and they said, "No sir! We will not. We believe our God is able to rescue us. [see note] We believe He's able. But whether He does or He doesn't that doesn't bother us because whatever He does is right. We will not bow down to this false god." ([Da 3:15-18](#)) Now folks, that's faith. That's faith, believing in who He is, believing in what He does and believing in what He's says as a lifestyle day by day by day. Living by faith is not a spur of the moment decision. It's a lifestyle.

I want to share something about Eddie and Michelle. All of us know this, but I'm going to tell you again. They didn't start trusting God when she was diagnosed with cancer. They were trusting God a long time before that. So when the time came to face cancer, that was just another chapter in the book of learning how to walk by faith. That's all it was. In the book of Jeremiah the prophet

says, "You have not yet learned how to contend, how to run with the footmen, what are you going to do when the chariots come?" You know, folks, I think we need to be challenged by this. How do we face a crisis in our life? Do we trust God if He does what we want Him to do or do we just trust God? Whatever He does is right. Whatever He says is true. His character is pure.

Remember that song that says, "*When you can't see His hand, trust His heart*?" That's what faith does, always, always. How's your faith-walk? How are you handling pressure? Listen to what you're saying. Listen to it. Do you really believe God is in control? Or do you think that you've got a better idea? I tell you what, I can't point a finger at you, because I have tried it so many times the other way. It just doesn't work, folks. Back in December I ended up with an ulcer and gallstones. Where did they come from? I was told I was as close to burnout as anybody. You know what? I had regressed from walking by faith to starting to walk by sight. When you start trying to figure it out folks, it just doesn't work. Thank God for what He's done in Eddie's and Michelle's life. Thank God for a couple that's been willing to walk by faith, trust what He does, trust who He is, trust what He says. We are grateful that it came out like it did. I wonder where we would be if it hadn't. Could we still praise Him? That's faith.

EPHESIANS 1:15-16:

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF REAL FAITH, PART 2

by Dr. Wayne Barber

Turn with me to Ephesians 1. We're going to continue in verse 15.

[For this reason](#) I too, [having heard](#) ([AAPMSN](#)) of the [faith](#) in the [Lord Jesus](#) which *exists* among you and your [love](#) for [all](#) the [saints](#),

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." ([Lk 17:5](#))

A soldier came to Him one day and said, "Lord, I [believe](#). Will You [help](#) me in my [unbelief](#)?" ([Mk 9:24](#))

Remember Jabez from the Old Testament? He said, "Lord, enlarge my boundaries. Enlarge my coasts." ([1Chr 4:9-10](#))

In other words, "Lord, expand me. Help me to trust you even more."

Faith 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." -- Spurgeon

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](#) ([AAPMSN](#)) of the [faith](#) in the [Lord Jesus](#) which *exists* among you and your [love](#) for [all](#) the [saints](#),

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](#) (He to whom a person or thing belongs, the owner, one who has control over w/ the power of deciding) [Jesus](#) which exists [among](#) you and your [love](#) for [all](#) the [saints](#)

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 [Jer 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 Ro 8:28 (note) says, "causes all things to work together for **good**." ["*Good*" is] 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.

**God provides "multi-colored" grace
For "multi-colored" trials.**

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 [Js 1:2](#).

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter (fall into so as to be encompassed by) various (variegated, varied in "color") 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 1Pet 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 [see God's Attribute "good"]. I can trust His motive.

God provides "high places"
for our "low places"

For every "low place" that I go through I've got a "high place". Habakkuk said,

"The Lord GOD is my strength and He has made my feet like hinds' feet and makes me walk on my high places." [Hab 3:19](#)

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* (word study). 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 Gal 5:22 (notes) 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"

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 are those who daily place themselves in God's hands, and they don't make demands upon Him. It's their lifestyle...the way they live. They trust His motive in the difficult times. They know that God loves them, and whatever He does is right. They experience His working in them which is evidenced by their unconditional (*agape* - word study) 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 & YOUR CHILDREN KNOW THAT YOU ARE

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