

Bessels Green Baptist Church evotional

1 Corinthians 13:13

Trust Steadily

The audio recording of this sermon can be found here: <http://bgbc.co.uk/sermons/trust-steadily/>

1 Corinthians 13:13 - New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

In his translation of the bible, ‘The Message’, Eugene Peterson translates 1 Corinthians 13:13 as Trust Steadily, Hope Unswervingly and Love Extravagantly - why? Why replace the word Faith with Trust? Could he have used another word, for example ‘belief’? Many of us think that belief is the same faith.

It seems to me that some outspoken critics of Christianity think that all faith can be reduced to a formula: Strength of faith = difficulty of belief x level of certainty. It is as if faith were a psychological trick we try to play on ourselves in order to try to convince us of the impossible, a little like Peter Pan in JM Barrie’s novel. When Tinker Bell has died, the only way she can be revived is if all the children can conjure up enough faith – I do believe in fairies – I do, I do!

Sadly some Christians seem to have a similar view of faith; it’s a psychological mind game we play in order to become more certain and eradicate doubt.



Some even seem to imagine God up in heaven measuring our faith on some kind of faith-o-meter and only granting our wishes if we can generate enough certainty.

As you can probably tell, I don’t think Faith is synonymous with belief, I think faith is better thought of as trust for (at least) 2 reasons...

1. Trust is applied belief

- i. Who believes I can catch them if they fall backwards?
- ii. Who is prepared to trust that I will catch them when they fall backwards?

It is possible to believe something in abstraction, but to trust yourself to something is to test out your belief. I can believe that a boat floats but I trust it to carry me across the water.

2. Trust (when used biblically) is relational

We place our trust in God. A biblical image is that of a marriage. In a marriage relationship the couple trust themselves to one another, trusting for better or worse, richer or poorer.



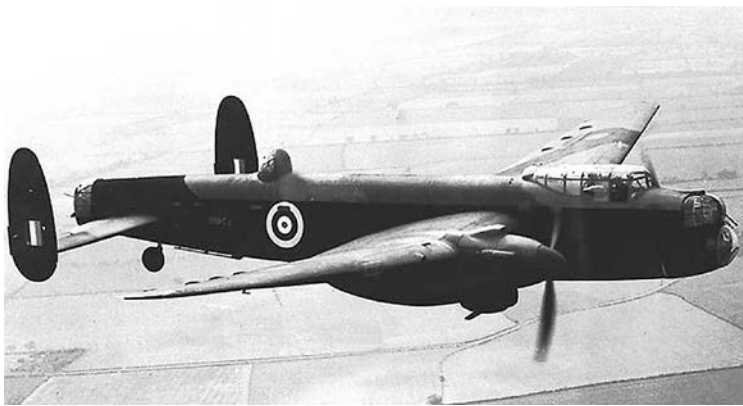
Finally when talking of Faith – a little goes a long way.

Some of us imagine a God in heaven waving a critical finger at our lack of faith. Rather, I believe in a God who is delighted with the little faith we are able to practice.

Consider Matthew 17:20 “Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

We often misunderstand this metaphor, by taking it too literally. We start trying to identify our mountains. It could be a healing we long for, a job, etc... Then, when God doesn't give us what we want, we think it's because we lacked even the little faith required.

That is to misunderstand the metaphor. Rather Jesus is saying; you have a little faith, but don't worry a little goes a long way – start where you are, offer what you have and see what happens.



During the Second World War planes would take off from bases in England, fly to Germany, drop their bombs and fly home. These bombers had escorts, spitfires that were there to protect them. On the way over, the German planes would take to the sky and try to stop them and the famous 'Battle of Britain' took place. There was this one mission. The planes had flown over

to Germany, dropped their bombs and were flying home. However one plane got lost in the clouds, separated from the others. And when they came out of the clouds they found themselves face to face with several German fighters. They knew they were dead, they were done for, and they saw the flashes of fire as the German planes opened fire. They heard the bullets hit their plane and they waited to go down, they were hit five times, but nothing happened – they looked at the fuselage and saw fuel leaking, but they were still in the air. They managed to limp the plane back home and land. The next morning one of the mechanics was examining the plane, and in the side of the plane he found five unexploded shells. The Germans had invented a new shell. Normally the casing stays in the Gun and the bullet is fired into the enemy. However the Germans had developed munitions that fried the whole casing and a bullet that exploded once it pierced the enemy. But on this occasion, the shell casings were in the plane and hadn't exploded.

So they took the unexploded casings and began to examine them, and inside each shell where the power should have been they found a rolled up piece of paper, written in polish.

It said, “We are 5 polish prisoners of war, we make ammunition for the Germans, when they are not looking we do not put powder in the bullets, it's not much but it's all we can do.”

Isn't that amazing, they never knew the effect of the little thing that they were doing. They never knew the result, they never knew the difference they were making. The lives they actually saved.

Reflection Questions

1. Discuss the your understanding of the relationship between faith, belief and trust
2. What are you certain of? Does certainty leave any room for faith?
3. Who do you trust?
4. Does faith come easily to you or do you find it a daily challenge?
5. In what little ways could you practise faith (trust) in God this week?