

24. How, in practice, can I trust God?

Matthew 7:24-27

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

My father-in-law is a geologist in New Zealand. The Australasian plate runs close to the country and there are active fault lines running through major cities. He has been involved in high profile controversies with building planners, warning them not to build on these fault lines.

Is my father-in-law trustworthy? He has all the credentials. History's on his side too: Wellington city centre is built on land that emerged from the sea in an earthquake only 150 years ago.

It's not hard to see what trust would mean for the planners. It means, don't build on the fault line.

Trusting God works in a very similar way. We must do what he tells us to do.

Today's passage comes at the end of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. We're told that the crowds were amazed at Jesus' teaching. But amazement is not trust. Trust is proved only by obedience.

The two men in the story had so much in common. Both built a house and both faced the same storm. They are like two people who go to the same church, hear all the same Bible teaching and experience the same sort of life, death and judgement. The one difference between them is that while both may assent intellectually to what they hear; while both may agree that what they hear is true; only one does what Jesus says.

To trust God means to hear what he says, to understand it and agree with it. But unless you also do it, there is no evidence that you believe it at all. You are like the man building on sand.

Jesus' brother, James, puts it memorably. "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a person who looks at his face in the mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like" (James 1:22-24).

In West Cumbria we have been shaken by a storm. We need to ensure that we are established on the Rock, who is Jesus. With that in mind, why not ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you need not just to listen, but to obey?