

The Sure Foundation

Matthew 7:24-29

Introduction

The theme of Jesus' great Sermon on Mount has been true righteousness. At the end of His sermon Jesus outlines three tests that prove the genuine righteous citizen and the counterfeit citizen in Christ's Kingdom. We have seen the test of self-denial (vv.13-14); the test of spiritual fruit (vv.15-23) and now the test of permanence or obedience (vv.24-29). Jesus speaks of two builders who represent two men in this life. They both use the same materials and the same plans and the world is hard pressed to tell the difference between the two. But a raging storm comes—the time of testing—and the house not found on the rock—the sure foundation crumbles and falls. One survives the great test. One fails and experiences utter ruin.

On June 16th 1965 a wall of water came crashing through Denver Colorado. The South Platte River was swollen and downtown Denver found itself under 15 feet of water. In June of that year the Front Range of Denver received 14 inches of water in less than 3 hours! The Front Range of Denver on average receives 14 inches of water in one year! The flood destroyed or damaged more than 5,000 home and trailers; farm buildings and about 6,700 small businesses. In 1965 that added up to about 543 million dollars in damages; about 4.1 billion dollars in today's currency. Imagine the shock as people watched their homes and business' disappear. The news camera's caught pictures of people; the pain, the devastation, the shock; watching their homes and photos; pictures of their life swept away. A decade later on August 1, 1976—on the one hundred year anniversary of the entrance of Colorado into the United States another flood hit—this time in the Big Thompson Valley—and it killed 140 Coloradans.

Storms sometimes come with warning.

Jesus has spoken of two roads; one broad one narrow; two trees; one fruitful and the other fruitless; and now two foundations; one will stand and the other collapse. You may hate categories. But Jesus divides and categorizes the world into sheep and goats; those with a wedding garment and without a garment. There are two kinds of lives—those prepared for the ultimate tests and those unprepared.

Two Builders.

Two Structures.

Two Foundations.

One Great Big Storm.

Two Builders and Two Foundations (vv.24-27)

Matthew 7:24–29 (NKJV)24“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:

The stress is on obedience. Jesus liken's the obedient hearer to a wise man.

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In the ancient world the Rabbi's debated the subject of hearing and doing! What did they conclude? Hearing seemed more important—since how could one obey if one did not hear? But even the Rabbi's conceded hearing and obeying were both important.

The wise builder selects the firm foundation. Paul uses this same metaphor to describe himself and ministry (1 Corinthians 3:10-11); "According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. (11) For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which Jesus Christ."

25and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

The Lord ends His Sermon with a familiar parable. Two builders, two structures, in roughly the same geographical area. We have every reason to believe they used the same building materials. They may have shared a common floor plan and for all intents and purposes both buildings look safe on the outside. The biggest difference in the building was the foundation. One dug his foundation deep. One shallow. One built on rock and the other sand. The one who built on sand seemed safe—the danger doesn't come until the storm comes.

Israel and Colorado share some features. Both have mountains and plains and deserts. Israel is a country filled with hard rock and hard clay deposits. In the summer with the heat of the sun pounding down on the surface of the sand, even the sandy and unstable dirt appears to be solid rock. The unsuspecting person might look at the hard clay deposits and assume its safe to build. **The true test doesn't come until the storm hits.** What happens when the rain comes?

The warning is obvious; be careful where you build. Build somewhere that won't disappoint. When it comes to your eternal dwelling place it makes sense to invest properly. Build on Christ.

Who are the ones who build on secure ground? The ones who hear and embrace and practice the teachings of Jesus. Jesus began His Sermon with a series of pictures about true and false righteousness; and true and false character; both sin and righteousness are inward (5:1-48). Jesus covered the great topics of worship (praying, giving, fasting); wealth and walk. Jesus has issued the tests; will I walk the narrow way (vv.13-14); what is the fruit of my life (vv.15-20) and I doing as well as saying (vv.21-29)? Be careful where you build. Who are the two builders? Both hear the Words of Jesus but only one decides to heed the Words of Jesus.

One fails the test. One survives the test. ". . .for it was founded on the rock".

Building On Christ The Solid Rock (vv.24-25)

I have met many people who have a fascination with the Bible. They earn degrees in Bible history; Bible language; Bible studies. They preach sermons; cast out demons; perform miracles but we have already learned these are not substitutes for obedience to Christ. Some of us hear

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God's Word but neglect to do God's Word. **When hearing results in doing we are laying the foundation for life that is pleasing to God. Certainly Jesus is the solid rock of our faith. I 1 Corinthians 3:9; "For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building".**

Remember a parable is word picture that illustrates truth. It is an earthly example of a heavenly reality. Here I believe the foundation is "obedience to God's Word". Obedience is the evidence of a saving faith (Wiersbe p. 31). Saving faith rests firmly and solely in the person of Jesus Christ—in what He has done for us.

The Lord Jesus wisely instructs where to build and what to build. Heaven's real estate is also about location, location, location.

The wise builder chooses the wise location and is able to face the storm. The wise builder is not exempt from the storm but protected in the storm. In fact—Jesus points out—the main reason for surviving the storm is not simply the construction materials—but the foundation's security. The Bible says it rains on the just and the unjust alike (Matt.5:45).

David Livingston once remarked; "He is the greatest Master I have ever known. If there is anyone greater, I do not know him. Jesus Christ is the only Master supremely worth serving. He is the only ideal that never loses inspiration. He is the only friend whose friendship meets every demand. He is the only Savior who can save the uttermost. We go forth in His name, in His power, and in His Spirit to serve Him" (Wiersbe & Wiersbe; *Making Sense of the Ministry*).

Building on the rock will take time and skill. Some will attempt to start the project but refuse to see the project to its end.

All of us are building our lives; living our lives; are we investing our lives or wasting our lives? How you build your life will determine what kind of a life you will have—now and forever. Jesus speaks in Luke's Gospel of a man who begins a project but does not see the project to completion (Luke14:28-30). Failure brings mockery and shame.

Building On Self And Sinking Sand (vv.26-29)

26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

The Lord Jesus likens the foolish builder to the one who hears these sayings of Jesus—and *does not do them.*

Think about what Jesus is saying! The foolish builder has received instructions from the Master Builder. The Master Builder says; "chose the right foundation". The foolish Builder says; "I'll make my own choice. I'll make the comfortable choice. I'll make the inexpensive choice. Or—

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I insist on living next to a flood plain—river—ocean. The foolish builder is foolish—not because he or she lacks mental means—but moral—fortitude. Imagine—you know how to build—you simply don't know where to build!

And so you choose sand. The sand—of material possessions and wealth; the sand of pleasure for a season; stimulation and temporary satisfaction. The sand of fame—recognition—and the pride that comes from knowing that everyone knows who you are! Why you have 5,000 friends on face-book! A life built on sand will collapse!

27and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

The foolish builder will not be able to stand in the day of trial, adversity, test. Why? The foolish builder was "listening" (but everyone who hears these sayings of Mine). The foolish person thought hearing was sufficient. Did you grow up hearing the Bible? Did you receive instructions? Did you have Christian parents? Did you go to children's church or Sunday School? Did you hear the sayings of Jesus growing up?

Did someone tell you; "He that trusts in riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch" (Pro.11:28)? Did anyone ever tell you; "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered" (Pro. 28:26)?

Did anyone ever dare—to say; "For you have trusted in your wickedness; You have said, 'No one sees me'; Your wisdom and your knowledge have warped you; And you said in your heart, 'I am and there is no one else besides me.' (11) Therefore evil shall come upon you; You shall not know from where it arises. And trouble shall fall upon you; and you shall not be able to put it off, and desolation shall come upon you suddenly, Which you shall not know" (Isaiah 47:10-11).

You may have thought it doesn't matter if I do right or wrong; no one is looking; no one cares; no one is paying attention. And then the rain comes and the floods come; and the winds howl and the hail rains down on the building.

The Lord Jesus describes two builders; one foolish and one wise.

William MacDonald writes; "If a person lives according to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, the world calls him a fool; Jesus calls him a wise man. The world considers a wise man to be someone who lives by sight, who lives for the present, and who lives for self; Jesus calls such a person a fool" (p.1230).

We build our lives on something or someone.

Both houses were subject to the storm. One stood the test. The other failed the test.

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The storm revealed the wise choice and the foolish choice; the sure foundation and the insecure foundation.

We live in a world of storms.

They can come at anytime.

The wise in heart receives instructions in the storm.

For some of you it is raining right now. Tell me about your storm. Sickness? Sorrow? Stress?

For many people their lives is a constant parade ruined by storms. Sin—suffering—poverty; pain, rejection, accidents, handicaps, complaints—and then the flood—mistreatment, pressure, doubt, hospitalization, temptation, abuse, loss!

William MacDonald: “It is legitimate to use the wise and foolish builders to illustrate the gospel. The wise man puts his full confidence in the Rock, Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. The foolish man refuses to repent and rejects Jesus as his only hope of salvation. But the interpretation of the parable actually carries us beyond salvation to its practical outworking in the Christian life” (p.1230).

In what way? For the Christian we live a life of storms. The unbeliever and the believer both face trials and storms. Earthly storms are temporary.

The Bible speaks of an ultimate storm—a Judgment—that will descend upon the whole earth.

“. . .and it (the house) fell—and great was its fall”. Jonathan Edwards the last Puritan preacher wrote; “You have been warned today, while the door of the ark stands open. You have, as it were, once again heard the knocks of the hammer and axe in the building of the ark, to put you in mind that a flood is approaching. Take heed therefore that you do not still stop your ears, treat these warnings with a regardless heart, and still neglect the great work which you have to do, lest the flood of wrath suddenly come upon you, sweep you away, and there be no remedy.”

A terrible is coming. It is unavoidable. It will come. You will be prepared or remain unprepared. The terrible storm is death and judgment—a storm which is unavoidable **unless—you are undergirded by Jesus Christ. Are you held up by Christ? (see Joel 2:31; Matt. 24:51; 25:30, 46).**

What is your life’s foundation? For the true follower of Jesus Christ it is the humble acceptance of Christ’s Word; the Gospel and faithful obedience to the Word of God. On what basis will you be judged? Did you hear the words of Jesus and practice the words of Jesus? Then you have dug deep—so that in the storms of opposition your strong foundation remains intact. The man who hears and does not practice the Divine truth—experiences the storm—the test—the building collapses as the uncertain ground liquifies.

28And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching,

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In this passage Matthew records the effect the Sermon had on its listeners. But it also gives us a clue as to what constituted the teachings or sayings of Jesus—and the authority given to his teachings. We cannot in good conscience separate the claims (teachings) of Jesus from the person of Jesus.

The passage reads; “. . .that the people were astonished” (*ekplesso*) *ek—out of—plesso—strike—struck out of their minds with amazement—we would say ‘blown away’ or ‘it blew my mind’.*

John Blanchard wrote; “Christ’s statements are either cosmic or comic”.

The sayings of Jesus, the words of Jesus, the instructions of Jesus determine our lives and our destiny!

How in the world can a mere man claim to be the Judge of all mankind and separate them at the Judgment and call one foolish and one wise and make both wisdom and foolishness founded in His sayings (claims)?

The unbeliever and the make-believer have read the Sermon on the Mount and are struck by its revolutionary character. Is it possible to read it, study it, and fail to grasp its true significance?

29for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

The people recognized that Jesus’ teaching was different—divine—the scribes teachings were pointless and powerless! Someone said—“His was a voice; there’s was an echo”; Jamieson, Faussett and Brown; “The consciousness of divine authority, as Lawgiver, Expounder and Judge, so beamed through His teaching, that the scribes teaching could not but appear driveling is such a light”.

What do Jesus and His teachings have in common? What traits do they share? Both Jesus and His teachings share authority and perfection. Like Jesus the Bible is both human and divine.

Those who knew and loved Jesus in the flesh were impressed by his real humanity but would eventually be convinced of His real divinity.

Theologians have long wrestled with the idea of where did Jesus’ humanity begin and end and his divinity begin and end. The early church Father’s concluded that Jesus was not half human and half God—but rather fully human and fully God. Jesus is one person with two natures.

Conclusion

Clearly both built a house. Tell me about your house.

Clearly both chose a foundation. Tell me about your foundation.

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Clearly both heard instructions and both experienced the storm.

One experienced a great deliverance; the other experienced a great fall.

Have you built wisely or foolishly?

Sand cannot stand—serious storms.

There's still time to build. Build while you can.

Thomas Brooks: "Christ is a jewel more worth than a thousand worlds, as all know who have him. Get him, and get all; miss him and miss all."