



How Firm is Your Foundation?

Matthew 7:24-27

TO: LEGISLATORS / ELECTED OFFICIALS**FROM: TIM PAULEY****DATE: August 11, 2009**

We often speak of various aspects of our lives in terms of constructing a house or a building. We point to a successful businessman and say “he built his business from the ground up”. We describe a couple faithfully married for years as having “built a wonderful life together”. We portray a leader in government as someone who has “built a political career”. In the closing words of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus describes building something of infinitely greater importance – our spiritual lives.

In His conclusion (Matthew 7:13-27), Jesus has been informing the crowd how they must respond to the truth He has presented. He advises them they must “enter through the narrow gate” speaking of Himself and the righteousness that can be found only through Him. He warns them of false prophets who would point to some other way to be right with God. He urges them to make sure they are not false professors who claim to follow God but have no real relationship with Him. Now He closes with the essential requirement that those who would be part of God’s kingdom must listen to and obey His words. In so doing, He tells us how we can “build” our Christian lives upon a foundation that will stand against the trials of this life and the judgment which each of us must one day face.

24“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. **25**“And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. **26**“Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. **27**“The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.” **Matthew 7:24-27**

Jesus is talking about those who are seeking to follow God and to be right with Him. The “therefore” in verse 24 refers back to the verses immediately preceding. In verses 21-23 He speaks of those who have deceived themselves into thinking they are right with God. He gives this illustration to warn us to make sure we are not among those who would say, “Lord, Lord”, yet find the spiritual houses we have built washed away because we have not built on the right foundation. Let us take a closer look at this powerful

illustration and in so doing, make sure we are building our spiritual houses on the rock that will stand.

TWO BUILDERS

Jesus describes two builders. The “wise man” and the “foolish man” correspond to the previous illustrations Jesus uses in His conclusion. The wise man is one who enters at the narrow gate, and follows the narrow way. It is the wise individual who ignores the false prophets and makes sure he is not merely making a verbal profession of faith in Christ but is actually doing the will of the Father. This is the man who is building on a solid foundation. On the contrary, the foolish man follows the crowd through the wide gate and the broad way to destruction. He listens to the false prophets pointing to other ways of salvation. He speaks of knowing God while not surrendering to His will. This person is building their spiritual house on sand and it will not stand.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WISE MAN

In the parallel passage found in Luke 6:47-49, Luke adds an additional detail noting that the wise man “dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock”. The wise man carefully chooses His building site. He works hard and digs deep to assure His house is built upon a firm foundation. He carefully listens to and seeks to obey God’s Word, which we will see shortly, is the evidence of genuine spiritual life.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOOLISH MAN

The foolish man, on the other hand is in a hurry. He wants things quick and easy without any struggle or discomfort. He fails to follow the instructions on how to build a sound structure. He desires to do things his own way, despite those who may try to warn or instruct him. This certainly describes many today who seek to come to God their own way without carefully considering what God’s Word has to say about how we must do to be right with Him.

TWO HOUSES

The houses represent all we might do in our spiritual lives. As such, genuine believers and false professors may look quite similar in their outward activities. Going to church, teaching classes, praying, giving to the needy, all such things might make up the actions of both groups. As Jesus made it

Interim Bible Study

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11 8:00 A.M.**SENATE PRESIDENT’S CONFERENCE. ROOM (M219)**

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clear throughout His sermon, God’s standard of righteousness & goodness goes far beyond these externals. He is looking for the inner character expressed in the Beatitudes. He is looking for true righteousness and purity in heart, not just outward actions. He commands us to love and forgive our enemies. As we review the Sermon on the Mount we see Jesus is calling us to obey the all challenging words He has laid out for us here and elsewhere.

ONE FOUNDATION

What is the rock, the solid foundation of which Jesus speaks? Many immediately say it is Christ Himself. Acts 4:11 and 2 Peter 2:5-7 (quoting Isaiah 28 and Psalm 118) refer to Christ as the cornerstone and foundation of our faith. This is certainly true. However, in the context of our passage Christ is talking about the testing of all those who claim to be part of the kingdom, of those who say they are followers of God. In this context Jesus makes it clear; it is **obedience to His words** that is the foundation of genuine spiritual life. It is the one who “hears these words of Mine and acts on them” who is compared to a wise man building his house on the rock. This does not mean we earn or merit salvation by what we do. Genuine salvation through repentance and faith in Christ is demonstrated by our obedience to God and His word.

This truth is one proclaimed throughout all of Scripture. In the Old Testament we see God desired obedience to His Word rather than the practice of outward religious activities: **“Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.” (1 Samuel 15:22)**

OBEDIENCE AND GOOD WORKS ARE THE EVIDENCES OF THE GENUINNESS OF OUR FAITH.

Jesus spoke later of the importance of following His Word when He told those who believed in Him, **“If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine...” (John 8:31)**. He went on to tell His closest disciples, **“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. (John 14:15)** and again **“He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” (John 14:21)** John repeated this and commented on it in his first letter: **By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and**

does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him...” 1 John 2:3-5

Perhaps the greatest commentary on this we find in the book of James.

22But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely bearers who delude themselves. 23For if anyone is a bearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. James 1:22-25

THE STORMS OF TRIALS AND JUDGMENT

The storms can represent the trials we all will face in this life which will demonstrate whether we have genuine faith. In His Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-12), Jesus described four different kinds of people who initially outwardly responded to the truths of God’s Word. In one group, the seed took root, grew, and bore fruit. In the others, the “worries of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things” entered in and choked the Word, so that it became unfruitful. Jesus indicates these were never genuine believers and this was demonstrated when they faced the trials and temptations of life. The rain, flood, and wind also represent the time of judgment each person will face, when their profession of faith is tested by the Lord. At this time, the spiritual house which may have been so carefully and intricately constructed upon the wrong foundation will fall. Then Jesus, Who knows the heart of every person, will say to those who are professors in word only, “Depart from Me”

CONCLUSION

When we comprehend the standard laid out for us in the Sermon on the Mount, we quickly realize how far we fall short in obeying His word. How can our righteousness surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees? (5:20) How can we hope to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect? (5:48) The rest of Scripture goes on to teach us that Christ did perfectly obey God’s standard. As a result, He could bear the punishment for our sin when He suffered and died for us. When we repent and place our faith in Him, our sin is placed on His account, and His righteousness is credited to ours. This results in a changed heart and life that seeks to hear and obey His Word. This is the foundation upon which we build a spiritual life which will stand in the Capitol and in eternity.