

Two Builders and Two Foundations

Matthew 7:24-27

**A sermon preached by Dr. Calvin Warpula
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A Dallas homebuilder was a Christian who tried to make his faith effective in his business. It was important to him to build good houses with solid foundations, sturdy walls, and good insulation. He paid attention to details the buyer couldn't see. Other builders, however, were more concerned with getting business than with building quality homes. The Christian homebuilder was losing to this competition. The competitors knew that the couples buying the homes were primarily concerned with appearance—bric-a-brac and decorations. This placed an honest builder at a disadvantage. If he gave attention to the foundation and insulation of the walls and attic, he didn't have money for many decorative touches. If he put in the decorations, he had to raise his prices. What bothered him most was that the folks buying the homes didn't care about what was hidden. They only expected to live in the houses a couple of years, so appearance meant more to them than quality.

The Christian builder finally got out of the residential building business and entered into commercial property. Buyers there were more interested in what was put into the foundation, the walls, and the roof.

After several years, the area in Dallas where the Christian had been forced out of the market by his competitors looked like a slum. The cheap building flaws once hidden were now being revealed and the houses were showing it. [This story is told by a friend of that builder, Haddon W. Robinson, in his book, The Solid Rock Construction Company: How to Build Your Life on the Right Foundation. Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1989, p. 138].

In our story today, Jesus expressed a concern over good housing. This is only natural because Jesus had spent years and years of his early life as a carpenter. Jesus knew the difference between a solid building and a shoddy one. This carpenter now turned preacher is qualified professionally to talk about a wise builder versus a foolish builder.

This is the closing paragraph of the most famous sermon ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus talks about what we will do with what we have heard in this sermon. In the previous paragraph, Jesus contrasted those who **say**, "Lord,

Lord,” and those who **do** what the Lord says. In this paragraph, Jesus contrasts those who only **hear** what the Lord says versus those who **do** what the Lord says.

The important thing to see is that Jesus is not interested in mere profession but true obedience. “Obey” seems to be a dirty, four-letter word today. However, Jesus says that our survival in this life and our happiness in eternity depend upon our complete surrender to the will of God. It is not enough to say, “Lord, Lord,” or to merely hear the words of Jesus but we must do the will of the Father who is in heaven.

The Two Builders and the Two Foundations

This is a story of two builders and two foundations.

First, let’s look at the builders. There are many similarities in the two builders. Both of them wanted to build a house. Both of them built their houses in the same general vicinity because they face the same rain, floods and windstorms. Both of them evidently built the same kind of house and the same style of house. Probably from the exterior view, these houses may have looked identical.

Now, notice the only difference in the houses: the foundations. The wise builder built his house upon the rock; the foolish builder built his house upon the sand. The foundation of any house or building is the most important part of the entire house or building. The tallest skyscraper in Texas is in downtown Houston. What kind of massive foundation do you think it must have in order to stand the hurricane winds that blow through here every year or so? Some houses, costing several hundred thousand dollars, have to be demolished because the foundations are faulty. Other houses have cracking walls and falling roofs that must be repaired if the house is to be livable.

Probably none of us, except the architects and engineers among us, think much of a foundation. After all, foundations are buried deep in the heart of the earth. They are unseen. They are not talked about and pictured on the front cover of the latest home design magazines. I’ve never seen an issue of Better Homes and Gardens or landscaping and decorating magazines dedicated to the foundations. Once the house or building is constructed, the only time we think about the foundation is when there is a problem with them.

It takes hard work to dig a good foundation. It is the least glamorous part of any construction job. It will soon be buried and unseen but the foundation is so important because everything else hinges on it. The entire structure will collapse unless the foundation is secure.

In the Gospel of Luke, in Luke’s account of this teaching of Jesus, Jesus says that the wise builder “dug deep” to lay the foundation (Luke 6:48). This

means that the work of foundation laying takes time, money, and lots of hard work. It is not an easy job to get a good, permanent foundation. It is so much easier to just start building and forget these “minor” details. The foolish builder just jumped right into putting up his house. He may have said, “Foundations? Oh, they are a waste of time. Who needs a foundation? I’d much rather enjoy my house than worry about all those details.” The foolish builder may have had his house built and living in it before the wise builder ever finished his foundation. The wise builder knows that it is worth all the time and work necessary in order to lay a foundation that will support his house for his lifetime. You can easily replace a roof, carpet, paint, or change out the appliances but the foundation is deep and buried and difficult and expensive to change, and maybe impossible to change, once the structure is built on top of it.

The foolish man does not have time to lay a foundation. He wants his house and he wants it NOW! He cannot be patient to dig deep he must begin constructing his dream home now. But a house cheaply built whose builder has taken these shortcuts will end up losing his entire investment. Patience, planning, preparation and hard work are necessary if a person is building something that will stand the tests of time.

The Meaning of the Story

Jesus interprets the story for us: the wise builder on the rock is the one who hears the word of God and obeys it. The foolish builder on the sand is the one who hears the word of God but does not obey it.

The wise builder listens to God’s word. He ingests it carefully and thoughtfully. It stirs his hearts and his soul. He lets that word transform his thinking and his heart and it begins to bear fruit in his life. He acts upon what he knows is right. He does not let the word of God remain void in his life. That word changes him from the inside out. He begins to live the life the Lord described in this sermon. He lets the power of God’s Spirit working through the divine words of Jesus make him poor in Spirit, mourn over his sins, meek and gentle, merciful, peacemaking, pure and focused in his affections, and hunger and thirst after doing God’s will. This person does not just hear the word. Sermon listening, book reading, and church attending are not enough for him. No, he lets that word transform his life. Through God’s help, he becomes what Jesus describes in this sermon. His life, thoughts, affections and ambitions are controlled by the teachings of Jesus. The word is not dormant, but living and alive in his personality. He is building on the rock.

Notice that Jesus does not say that the wise builder builds his house on a rock, but on **the** rock. **The** rock. Not just any rock, but the rock. The definite article “the” is in the original Greek texts. The rock. Who or what is that rock? The only other time in the Bible that Jesus talked about “rocks” is later on in Matthew, chapter 16. Here Jesus responded to Peter’s confession of him as the Christ, the Son of God, by saying, “Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18). The rock is Jesus himself. He is the foundation on which we build our lives. We, the church, are built on Jesus. The Bible says, “There can be no other foundation than the one already laid: I mean Jesus Christ himself” (I Cor. 3:11, REB). And again in Ephesians, “You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the corner-stone” (Eph. 2:20, REB).

The wise builder then builds on Jesus. Our forgiveness in the past, our power in the present, and our hope for the future is totally based on Jesus.

The foolish builder builds his house on the sand. The hard, sun-baked ground seems secure from outward appearances. Everything looks fine. A house built on the sand will stand for a while, until the storm hits. But when it does, all is lost.

The foolish builder, Jesus says, is the one who hears his words but does not obey them. Jesus is not talking about a person who has never heard of Jesus or who has never heard of the teachings of Jesus. This person, Jesus says, “hears these sayings of mine and does not act on them.” This person is well acquainted with Jesus and his sayings. He listens to sermons, hears the Bible read, and attends church services. He may even admire the teachings of Jesus, agree with them, and memorize them. But the word never changes his life. Intellectual knowledge, verbal profession, or even saying nice, polite, enthusiastic, orthodox things about Jesus are no substitute for obedience to Jesus. Our minds can be stuffed with the teachings of Jesus but if we do not do what he says, we are headed for a great crash. This person lives the way he wants to live without regard to what Jesus says. He hears the truth but never obeys it. Merely hearing and knowing what Jesus said do not change our lives. It is doing what Jesus said that makes believers look like God’s man or God’s woman.

The Storms of Life Come Against Everyone

Both houses stood side by side for a while. Everything was all right, until the storms came.

When the rain began to fall, the floods came, and the winds blew, the house built on the rock stood solid and firm because it was founded on the rock. The

same storm hit the house on the sand. The rain and floods washed away the sandy soil and weakened the house. These, along with the howling winds, caused the house on the sand to crumble and crash.

What are these storms? I think they represent problems, temptations, evil influences, diseases, injuries, family and financial crises, and even death that come to all of us in life. The same storms hit the house on the rock as the house on the sand. Both those who do the will of God and those who ignore it suffer the storms of life.

God never promised that his people would be protected against life's crises, tragedies and death. The person who promises "health, wealth and happiness" to all those who follow Christ is a false prophet. Jesus suffered, the apostles suffered, the early Christians suffered, and all the saints in Old and New Testament times suffered. The Bible says that "all those who would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). But the apostle Paul boldly proclaimed that not even "affliction, hardship, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, or sword" can separate us from the love of Christ in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35-39).

Every life suffers, but those who live with Christ have inward fortifications and a foundation that gives them internal, spiritual strength to survive and even conquer. Those without Christ have nothing to lean on or held them up in times of trouble.

The greatest storm that is eventually coming to every person is the judgment of God. At that time, God will separate those that have followed Jesus from those that have not. Popular theology today does not like the doctrine of hell. Time magazine/s cover story for April 25 of this year was, "What If There's No Hell? A popular pastor's best-selling book has stirred fierce debate about sin, salvation and judgment." I don't like hell either, but my liking it or not liking it will not change the truth of it. Did you know that Jesus talked more about hell than anybody else in the Bible? In v. 14 Jesus has just told us that the broad way leads to destruction. In v. 20, Jesus says that the false prophets, like dead branches, will be gathered up and cast into the fire. In chapter five, Jesus talked about hell and compared it to Gehenna, the garbage dump outside Jerusalem. He said that hell is the garbage dump of the universe. Jesus is deadly serious with sobering teaching about the future of those who die without God. Jesus says that the choices we make and the foundation on which we build has eternal implications.

The Most Important Thing Today

The most important thing for anyone of us to do today is to make sure that we just don't hear the words of Jesus, but that we obey them. Jesus just told us in verse 21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my heavenly Father" (REB).

Today Jesus is talking to everyone of us. First, he is speaking to those who hear the words of Jesus and obey them. They will stand in all the storms of life and judgment. Second, Jesus is speaking to those who hear these words but do not obey them. They are in for a great crash in this life and at the judgment.

Which group are you? Do you hear the word and obey the truth you know? Do you want more and more of God in your life? When you understand more of what the Lord wants from you, do you do it? Or, are the words of Jesus just passing through your ears and are soon forgotten? Are you doing what you know to do or are you putting it off and ignoring it? It is worse to know the truth and not obey it than to never know it at all.

Jesus is for real. He speaks plainly and directly to our hearts. He challenges our wills. Most preachers like to leave their sermons with a positive note, with something sweet and pleasant that leaves a good taste in the mouth of the hearers as they leave. But in this, the most famous sermon in the world, Jesus does not do that. His final words are a warning, a negative. Hear him, "and it fell with a great crash." This, once more, leaves us with the thought of judgment and a wasted, ruined life.

What will you do today with these words of Jesus? Will you say, "Ho hum, another sermon, another day," and let the words of Jesus fall to the ground? Or, will you act on the truth you know and begin to obey what Jesus said? It's up to you. What you do with Jesus now will determine what Jesus will do with you on the Day of Judgment. We want to help you obey the truth you know. If you are ready to be baptized into Christ, or have other spiritual needs where we can assist you, come now, while we stand and sing.

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