

The Builders

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is nearly complete. In this last section (Vs. 13-27) Jesus has used a series of couplets- [contrasts and comparisons]

:13-14 -- Salvation

- Narrow and wide gates
- Narrow and broad ways/paths
- Life or destruction.

The narrow gate and road that lead to life is Christ, all other paths lead to destruction.

:15-20 -- False Prophets

Illustrations:

- Wolves and sheep
- Fruit: good or bad
- Trees: good or bad

False prophets twist Scripture and lead people away from Christ. "He is one of many ways to God," they say.

21-23 – Final judgment

- Ministry of externals doesn't stand the test.
- Judgment of internals: Did they know Christ and live for Him?

The final judgment seems to be, "Did He know them?"

24-27 – Responding to Jesus' teaching: "Hearing the Word and Acting upon it"

- Those who hear and do; (obedience)
The wise builder: House with a foundation
- Those who hear without doing – (No obedience)
The foolish builder: House without a foundation

The final section of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is a parable of two builders.

²⁴"Therefore

everyone who hears these words of Mine,
and acts upon them,

may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock.

²⁵And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew,
and burst against that house;

and yet it did not fall,

for it had been founded upon the rock.

²⁶And everyone who hears these words of Mine,
 and does not act upon them,
 will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.
²⁷And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew,
 and burst against that house;
 and it fell,
 and great was its fall.”

(Matt. 7:24-27).

I. Two Houses

Therefore...

The first word refers back to the previous section was contrasting those who were ‘saying’ and ‘doing’

Here the contrast is between those who hear and do [respond in obedience] and those who hear without obedience.

Neither intellectual knowledge nor verbal profession, though essential in themselves, can ever be a substitute for obedience.

On the day of judgment Jesus will condemn those who were confessing Him as Lord but had not done His will.

It is therefore very foolish to hear Jesus’ words and not obey them.

Then Jesus gave them the parable of the wise and foolish builders.

In Luke’s gospel the same parable is given, only with this introduction,
⁴⁶“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I say?”

Immediately, we see that Jesus illustrates the same point of calling Jesus Lord, without obedience; and hearing Jesus’ words without following through on what is heard. Then Jesus gives the parable of a house without a foundation.

⁴⁷“Everyone who comes to Me, and hears My words,
 and acts upon them, I will show you whom he is like:
⁴⁸he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation upon the rock; and when a flood rose, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.

⁴⁹But the one who has heard, and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house upon the ground without any foundation, and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.”

(Luke 6:46-49).

Those who put Jesus' words into action are wise.

Those who don't Jesus' words into action are fools.

Two Builders: wise and foolish

Two houses: with foundation and without

Two endings: Well built house that was unshakable

Poorly built house that was in total ruin after a storm.

Just as the storm revealed the true condition of the houses, so the Day of Judgment will reveal the true condition of men's hearts.

II. The Storm

One thing we can count on in this life is storms.

A house without a foundation will not last, so our faith will without action, will collapse when the storms of life come. Jesus spoke of this in His parable of the Sower, referring to the shallow hearted individual, who was without depth.

“And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.” (Matt. 13:20-21).

Having ***no firm root in himself*** is the equivalent of having no ***foundation***. When problems and trials come they lose their faith. Luke says, “...these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.” (Luke 8:13).

The storm in the story battered both houses with great ferocity –

rain on the roof, flood on the foundation, and wind on the walls. Storms affect every area of a house – finding the failings.

As the storm continued it revealed which of the houses had a solid foundation. The one without foundation collapsed in irreparable ruin. Both houses looked good on the outside until the storm revealed the fatal flaw.

Professing Christian (both the genuine and the false) are indistinguishable. Stott writes,

“So both are members of the visible Christian Community. Both read the Bible, go to church, listen to sermons and buy Christian Literature. The reason you often cannot tell the difference between them is that the deep foundations of their lives are hidden from view.”¹

❖ Storms Reveal

When the storm comes it reveals the truth about someone’s life.

Salvation is only by grace through faith and not of works.

However, true faith will always result in obedience to Jesus.

In the same way that storms reveal a faith founded on Christ,
-so obedience is a display of faith.

John writes,

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie... He who says, ‘I know Him’ but disobeys His commandments is a liar.” (1 John 1:6; 2:4)

James also speaks of the perils of intellectual faith,

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves...

Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.”

(James 1:22; 2:17)

III. Foundations

There is a profound question we must ask, “What is your foundation?”

Will it be adequate to survive the storms of this life?

Including the final storm of the judgment to come?

¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, (Downers Grove, Ill: Inter Varsity Press, 1978), p. 209.

Our faith must be built on the solid foundation of Christ, and Christ alone; for He is the Rock of our salvation.

At this point someone might be saying,

“I believe that what Jesus says is true.
Jesus’ words are the key to morality...

...I’ll just go out and try harder!”

That’s not what Jesus is talking about. He says,

“I’m not asking you to go out and try harder, You’ll never be able to do it. To go out and try harder and to try to construct that kind of character in your own strength is like trying to build a mansion upon sand. Actually, you will only achieve that kind of character when you build on Me.”

❖ Because Jesus is the foundation we must build our lives upon Him.

The Hymn writer wrote

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.
On Christ the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.
All other ground is sinking sand.

“A life built upon Jesus Christ will stand. It will stand even in the midst of the tribulations of this life or the judgments of eternity.”²

Christians may ask, “What are we building?”

Your foundation is right; Christ is your Savior, but do you know that it is possible to go through life building things that are worthless and will not remain as fruit for eternity even though you will be saved personally?

² James Montgomery Boice, *The Sermon on the Mount*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), pp. 309.

Paul writes on this very thing:

“Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” (1 Cor. 3:12-15)

1. No Foundation

It is possible for someone to say that they don’t need Christ as their foundation, that they would rather just let life happen- drift through life.

In the end there is only judgment ...and hell to pay.

2. Poor building on a good foundation.

It is also possible to build wrongly on the foundation. There are some who live for thrills, dazzle, passing entertainment. What will Jesus say when He asks if you did His will, or your own?

There is a legendary Persian king named Ozymandias about whom Percy Shelley wrote a poem. According to Shelley, the colossal statue of Ozymandias lay prone in the desert in the midst of thousands of square miles of rolling sand.

The inscription said,

“Look at my works, ye mighty, and despair.”

Though someone’s work may be inspiring and great in the eyes of the whole world, unless it is built on Christ it will not pass the test of time and eternity.

Dr. Boice offers these challenges,

What are you building upon the foundation that is given you by God?
Are you living for yourself? It is entirely possible for Christians to do that.
Or are you living for Him?³

³ Boice, p. 311.

Quite a few years ago William Borden went to Yale University as an undergraduate and afterwards became a missionary candidate planning to work in China. When he made his decision to invest his life in this service, many of his friends thought him foolish. *“Why are you going to throw away your life in some foreign country,”* they asked, *“When you can have such an enjoyable and worthwhile life here?”* But William Borden of Yale had heard the call of God. While in Egypt, on the way to China and even before he had much of a chance to do anything, he became sick. Soon it was evident to everyone including himself that he would die. At this point Borden could have said to himself, *“What a waste, my friends were right. I could have stayed in New Haven.”*

But Borden did not think this way. As he lay on his death bed in Egypt, he scribbled a farewell note to his friends that was in sense his epitaph. The note said, “No reserve, no retreat, and no regrets.”⁴

How could Borden of Yale write such a statement? Simply, he had been building on a firm foundation. He was ready to leave here to be with Christ where he would hear the words,

“Well done, good and faithful servant...Enter into the joy of your master.”
(Matt. 25:21).

⁴ Ibid.