

Jesus our Foundation

Matthew 7:24-27 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.”

THE STORY OF TWO BUILDERS

Intro: The Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy is going to fall. In fact it should have toppled over by now. Scientists travel to the town of Pisa every year to measure the building's slow descent. They report that the 179-foot tower, which was built in 1173, moves about one-twentieth of an inch a year, and moved to 17 feet out of plumb before being partially repaired to being 12 feet off. It went from 5.5 to 4 degrees off plumb. These recent renovations may have saved the 844-year old tower and might still prevent it from collapsing. Quite significantly, the word “*pisa*” means “*marshy land*,” which gives some clue as to why the tower began to lean even before it was completed. Also, another issue is the fact that its foundation is only 10 feet deep! The reason the Leaning Tower of Pisa is leaning is because it is built on a weak or shifting foundation.

Many of you have worked in the various trades that involve construction. Some of us even built our own houses. I'm sure all of us have some common sense of how things work.... well, maybe most of us.

The passage we have read today is about two builders who built two houses on two different types of foundations with two different results. In this story Jesus teaches us that the foundation upon which we build the houses of our lives is vitally import. Let's look at some aspects of this parable that show why our foundations matter.

I. COMPARISONS

First of all let's look at several comparisons. This short parable appears to speak of two very different types of people. The two people Jesus pictures here have several important characteristics in common. Let me point them out. Now some of the thoughts have more significance than others so see what clicks in your mind.

- **Both Heard The Words Of Christ** - The two people in this parable both heard Jesus share His message of faith and repentance, **vv. 24, 26**. Thus, both people referenced in this parable knew the way of salvation. They both heard the Gospel and each one had a reaction to it. Those of us here have heard God's Word.
- **Both Built Houses** - Each of these people built a house based on their understanding of what Jesus said. The house in this parable is a picture of a life. That is, each man built a life based on how they interpreted the message of Jesus. This means that both people believed the

message to a certain point. They each applied the words of Jesus to their life as they saw fit. All of us decide how we want to live. So in that sense we all build our own house.

- **Both Built In The Same Location** - **Verse 27** describes a very severe storm. This storm affected both houses, so they must have been built in close proximity to one another. This reminds me a bit of the story of the wheat and the tares where there was significant co-mingling. Some people advocate living in seclusion but this parable might imply otherwise.
- **Both Built Similar Houses** - Nothing is said about their houses being different. They used similar materials, and most likely, a similar design. From the outside, these two home probably looked the same. In fact, they were so similar, you might not have been able to tell them apart. This reminds me of housing developments where each house is just like the house next door. The only differences are the color of the siding or the color of the shingles. They have the same shape, size, floor plan, etc. So there seems to be no significance in the type or characteristics of the houses. Here again, there is a great discussion as to conformity where things are neutral versus refusing to go along with wrong things but we won't go there today.

So this picture is one of people and how they respond differently to the Gospel message. Just to clarify, the Good news is simple. Let me summarize it with these several scriptures.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NIV)

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, That is the message that must be believed in order for a person to be saved.

Romans 10:9 (NIV)

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Again we read in Acts 2, **Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

So, while people hear that message, they react to it in different ways. Whether a person hears the gospel message or not they all build their lives based on some guiding philosophy. These people all build their houses in the same location. They weather the same storms, work the same jobs, do the same things, go to the same churches, hear the same preaching, and might live the same kind of lives. From the outside, maybe you really can't tell much difference between the two hearers.

Do you think the people pictured here are religious in their beliefs, serving in and supporting the church? They could both be responsible citizens. Perhaps both seem to believe similar things and live the same kind of lives. They have a lot in common, at least on the outside. 10:10

II. CONSIDER THE CONTRASTS

Matthew 7, the chapter our text comes from contains several other parables and analogies pointing to wide contrasts. Let's read through the other three:

The Narrow and Wide Gates

13 “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

True and False Prophets

15 “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

True and False Disciples

21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ 23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

So we have the Narrow & Wide gates, the True & False prophets, the True & False disciples all leading up to our Wise & Foolish builders. While there are several similarities, there is a major difference between these two types of people that is worth noting.

- **One Man Built His House On The Sand** - One man built his house with little preparation. He found a spot for his house and began to build. Sand is unstable, ever changing and moving. Sand offers no stability. Sand is not a good place to build a house. Sinking sand can never provide a firm foundation.

How can we tell if we are building on sand? Here are some ideas to think about. Perhaps I go too far or there can be other aspects I miss.

People build on the sands because it is easy. It requires little effort. Just a little change here, and a little change there, and they can fool themselves, and everyone around them into thinking they are right with the Lord. A life built on the sand requires no commitment, no sacrifice, and no faith. Do I take the easy route?

People who build on the sand hear the Gospel and choose to save themselves. They hear the Gospel, and believe its general message, but they choose to follow God on their own terms. Perhaps to them, His Word is open to interpretation. If He commands them to do something, they will obey if they choose to. If they don’t like it, they won’t do it. Do I try to obey God on my terms?

In this context, building on the sand speaks of people who hear the Gospel, but instead of believing the Gospel and coming to faith in Jesus, they believe they can build their lives on the

shifting sands of human philosophy, wisdom, opinion, and religious achievement. Maybe they are driven by outward, religious appearances and faith in themselves, rather than faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Do I rely on science or philosophy to be my foundation?

They could be building the house of their lives on self-will, self-fulfillment, self-sufficiency, self-satisfaction, and self-righteousness. Theirs is a works based religion that has the appearance of being right, but that lacks the power to save the soul. Paul describes that kind of person like this:

2 Tim. 3:5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

People who build on the sand believe they can pray a prayer, sign a card, join a church, and all will be well. People who build on the sand can turn it on and off like flipping a switch. Sand builders ultimately have their faith in themselves. Do I put confidence in rituals, does my faith come and go?

When God makes demands on sand-builders, and calls for total surrender to His will, they make excuses. Jesus encountered this very thing during His ministry. "Do I make excuses?"

If we build our lives on religion, self-righteousness, and false hope we can not properly serve God. If we will not sacrifice or if we think our salvation comes from those deeds, we may be sand builders. If we only prefer the easy path we may be sand builders. Many sand builders like instant results, rewards, satisfaction, and pleasure.

Since the original fall, mankind refers the darkness rather than the light for the light reveals man's true nature of sin and brings to his remembrance the need for a Savior.

What are some of the foundations men build upon?

- 1) Worldly Pleasure – only last for a season and then the pleasure is gone and we are left with the guilt of sin and shame for life. The end result is a life that comes crashing down around us and we will be left with nothing.
- 2) Wealth & Prosperity – where is your salvation, your foundation, when the stock market crashes or your money is stolen or disappears? What good will money, house, lands and property do for you when the world is on fire and it is all burned away?
- 3) People and Relationships – people are fickle and relationships are so very fragile. There are multitudes of examples of people who have based their whole meaning in life in the lives of other people. Children will one day leave, spouses can only be there for a time until life comes to its end, many won't even be faithful even for the short span of their lifetimes.
- 4) The Church – by this I mean a group of people who gather for religious reasons. Without the sure foundation of the Jesus, even a local church can fall. I've known of many places where a group disbanded and disappeared. You cannot place your trust in any religious group.
- 5) A Preacher – We should never place a man, no matter who he may be, whether Pope or pauper, on a pedestal and base our lives upon their teaching or preaching. No one is infallible except Christ! I want to expand a bit on this one since we have our current situation with Doug leaving. Most of us would not say we had our faith in Doug but think about that feeling of

uncertainty you may be experiencing. This is a good time to check ourselves. Our foundation must never be on either Doug or any other person standing up here.

6) The “Arm of the Flesh” or military might – even the great military power of the greatest empires of history and the modern power of our military will end. I will throw in with this the worry we might feel about our political situation. How can we trust in such weak things for our eternal foundation?

7) False Doctrines - 2 Peter 1:10, "... give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall:" - Philippians 2:12, "... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." We are instructed to be careful of the teaching we hear and to always compare it with the true Word of God. False doctrines abound in our day and Jesus even said that He would have to return in a timely fashion unless even those who are the “very elect” would be deceived.

Have you build your life on any of these sandy foundations?

- **One Man Built His House On The Rock** - I remember a friend many years ago was building a new house. He had to pay an extra 5K for his basement because blasting was necessary to break up the rocks below. That was one solid foundation! While one man built his house on the sand, the other dug deep. He dug until he reached the bedrock and built his house on the rock. The rock does not move. It is unchanging and stable. Rock makes a great foundation for a house.

Isaiah 28:16, So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic.

God has determined what will constitute a sure foundation. That foundation must be solid, unshakeable, perfect and without flaw. That foundation must be tried, tested and proven sure. That foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ and His death on the cross, His burial in a borrowed tomb, His resurrection from the dead in power; and His subsequent rise to Heaven. Building on the rock speaks of people who hear the Gospel and believe it to the point that they build their lives on it. The “**rock**” in these verses is the same “**rock**” mentioned in

Matt. 16:16-18 16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”17“Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Here “**rock**” refers to Peter’s profession of faith in the words of Jesus. In other words, it refers to faith in the Gospel.

They hear the truth about Jesus and they believe it. They embrace it. They yield to it. The message changes their lives.

What God tells them to do in His Word, they do. What God warns them not to do, they avoid. They pay any price, walk any path, and do anything the Lord tells them to do. The house built

on the rock is built by someone who realizes that God deserves the best. They sacrifice, they work, they do anything to honor the Lord. They love Him, honor Him, and obey Him. The rock builder's obedience to the Word of God proves they love the Lord, **John 14:15**. Rock builders hear the Word of God, the Gospel, and make it the foundation for their lives. Does this describe you, does it describe me?

By the way, this is how the redeemed know they are redeemed.

1 John 2:3–6. “3 We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. 4 Whoever says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, love for God^[a] is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did

So, there are two people who construct vastly different lives based on how they hear and respond to the Gospel. One house is built on a firm foundation of faith in the Gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ. The other is built on the shifting sand of religion, works, and self-righteousness. One of those houses describes the kind of life you are building right now. You are either a believer in the Gospel and in Jesus, or you have a false religion, and a false hope of salvation. Hear again the clear message of the Bible.

Acts 4:12. 12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

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Acts 16:31. 31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”

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1 Cor. 3:11. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Who, or what, is the foundation for your life? Who, or what, are you building on? Do you have the faith and do your works show that you have built your life on the solid rock of Jesus Christ or are you building your life on shifting sand?

III. CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES

This parable tells us that the rains came, the floods followed, and the winds of destruction blew. This image is not only about some storm in life. This includes the image of judgment. In the end, both houses were subjected to the terrible storm of judgment. One house stood, the other was totally destroyed.

- The house that was built on the sand could not face the righteous judgment of God, and it collapsed. Jesus said, “**and great was the fall of it.**” This means that the house was totally destroyed. There is coming a day of judgment. There is coming a day when every person will face God. People who are trusting religion, human philosophy, good works, some emotional

experience they had, or anything else that is NOT Jesus, will see the house they have built crumble and fall before the judgment of God.

The person who built his house on the sand did not intend for his house to fall. He thought he was doing the right thing-- that his house that would stand against anything that came. He had confidence but he was wrong. There was nothing wrong with his house. There was nothing wrong with the materials. The problem with his house was the foundation.

That's the lesson today. If you are building your house on anything but Jesus Christ, it will fall. It might look sturdy. The materials might be all right. It might be pleasing to the eye. Everyone else might think the house is fine. But, if it is built on the wrong foundation, it will fall. There can be no other foundation upon which to build our lives than belief and trust in the unshakeable foundation of the Jesus Christ. If we refuse to bow before the Lord our house will continue to be upon a foundation that will surely fail.

Conclusion:

Everybody in this auditorium is building a spiritual house. Every day you attach boards, drive nails, add on rooms, and try to improve your house. Regardless of what you do to the house you are building, what matters the most is the foundation. Be sure you are building on Jesus Christ.

Christ is our head-- our faith, hope and love are in Him. Christ is who we obey. Christ should be up front every Sunday and in our minds every day. Christ is whom we point people to and who is the center. Christ is what should keep us coming back each week, not a preacher.

When the storms of life come, as they surely will, our foundation must be set upon a sure place. Jesus is the Rock. He is the only solid foundation for life.

There is a storm coming, and your house is right in its path. When that storm comes, the only ones that will stand are those built on the solid foundation of the Word of God.