

STUDY ON THE PARABLES OF WISDOM

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders

Read Luke 6:46-49

This is perhaps the summary of what we would learn through this parable: "Obedience to Christ is not optional because it is at the very foundation of the Christian life."

I have never met anyone who built a structure of lasting worth without a foundation, and I suppose that is only natural since to do that would be the height of folly. Yet it is strange that so many people build their spiritual lives without foundations and are, therefore, carried away by the first strong winds of adversity or susceptible to teachings based on false doctrines.

Our Lord must have seen many such people in His day, even among those who were apparently quite religious. They followed Him around, listening to His teachings, and when they addressed Him, they said, "Lord, Lord...." But they did not do what He said, and for that fatal failure, Jesus compared them to people who were building without a foundation.

In a similar passage at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, *"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: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."* (**Matthew 7:26-27**).

It is important to see that those words were not spoken of people who rebelled against Christ's teachings at all, but to people who listened to them and made profession of faith. Their folly is of a different order than that of mere unbelievers. It is the folly of people who have heard what is right, have acknowledged that it is right, and profess to be following it, but who do not put Christ's teachings into practice.

THE FOOLISH BUILDER

We need to think about those foundation-less builders. We need to begin by realizing that on the surface everything seems to be quite well with them. They profess all the right things. They associate with true believers. As long as life goes smoothly, it is difficult to distinguish them from the wise who have built on a firm foundation. Many people are like that. Their lives present a magnificent display, which is sometimes the object of admiration of other people. But they do not have the foundation of the practice of Christ's teaching.

THE WISE BUILDER

In contrast to the foolish man who built his house on the sand, the Lord also speaks of a wise man who built on rock. In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord says of such a man, *"and 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."* (**Matthew 7:25**).

What does it mean to build your house on the rock or to dig deeply and lay a foundation? In each of those versions of the parable, Jesus is talking about His teaching, but that does not mean simply that we are to go out and try to be a bit more moral. It is a matter of building on Jesus Himself. Clearly, to practice His words means, in the first instance, to believe that He is who He says He is and to turn from sin to faith in Him as the way of salvation. Moreover, that is the most important meaning of the word "rock" or "foundation" in Scripture. Characteristically, God or His Anointed One, the Messiah, is the Rock. Examples include:

Isaiah writes, "Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily." (**Isaiah 28: 16**). Paul declares, "Now, therefore, you are... built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone," (**Ephesians 2:19- 20**). Shortly after the resurrection, Peter told the Sanhedrin concerning Jesus, "This is the 'stone, which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'" (**Acts 4:11**). He wrote in his first letter, "Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,"" (**1 Peter 2:6--7**).

We have guarded against one error in interpreting Christ's parable: to think that we can have Christ's teachings without Christ. But we need to guard against the opposite error also: to think that we can have Christ without Christ teachings. That is what Jesus is particularly warning against in Luke's version of the parable, for it is a reaction to those who, as He says, "call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (**Luke 6:46**). According to Jesus, we cannot have His ethics without Himself, but neither can we have Him without His ethics. We must build on both.

THE PARABLE KEY LESSONS

Jesus here shows three reasons why obedience to Him as Lord is not optional:

1. **Because it is the true test of professing Christ (6:46)**

If we call Him our Lord, we prove it by doing what He tells us to do in His Word. Thus, obedience to Jesus as Lord is not just an option for some who want to be more committed. It is part and parcel of the Christian life. Those who do not submit to the lordship of Jesus have good cause to question whether they are truly Christians.

Jesus' warning in this parable is addressed to most of us. Most of us here would say, "Yes, I'm a Christian. Jesus is my Lord and Saviour." But Jesus is saying, "Examine your heart! Do you really seek to obey Me, beginning on the thought level? Do you judge your sin in the light of My Word? Or, could you be fooling yourself? Are you excusing your disobedience by claiming to be under grace? Are you justifying yourself by thinking, 'Everyone does this?'" Obedience to Jesus on the heart level is not optional, just for the super-committed. It is the true test of whether your faith in Christ is genuine or counterfeit.

2. **Because it is the foundation that will withstand the tests of time and eternity (6:47-48)**

The first homebuilder represents the man who not only hears, but acts upon, Jesus' words. He goes to the trouble of digging deep into the soil until he hits bedrock. He anchors his foundation to the bedrock, so that his house rests on a solid foundation. When the storm hit and the flash flood burst against that house, it stood firm because it was well built.

The house represents our lives. We are all building a house. The question is, are we building our lives on the sure foundation of obedience to Jesus or are we building it on the sand of empty profession? To build a house involves a lot of time and expense. It is not like throwing up a shed, where you don't plan to spend much time inside and it isn't expected to last.

The flood refers both to the trials of this life as well as to the flood of future judgment when we all must stand before God. The context in Matthew emphasizes more the future judgment, while Luke focuses more on the trials of life. But neither passage refers exclusively to one or the other. The person who has built his life on obedience to Jesus Christ has a solid foundation that will carry him through both the floods of this life and the future judgment. The person who professes to know Christ, but who is not

walking in obedience, will be wiped out when trials hit in this life. And he will be totally ruined when he stands before God at the judgment. There are only two final results: the one house stands, while the other house falls. There is no middle possibility of sustaining just a bit of damage. This points to the fact that there are two and only two final destinies, heaven, and hell. Those who truly believe in Jesus as revealed by their obedience to Him will be in heaven. Those who profess to believe in Jesus but deny Him by their disobedient life will go to hell (Titus 1:16).

The point is, if you are not establishing the habit of obedience to Jesus every day, taking every thought captive to Him, confessing and forsaking all known sin, you are building your life on sand. When these inevitable temptations come, they will sweep away any profession of faith that you have made. Of course, the final trial we all must face is to die and stand before God.

3. *Because those who do not obey Christ face sudden and final destruction (6:49).*

As you consider the man who built his house without a foundation, you must ask, “Why would he do such a dumb thing?” There could be several reasons. First, it involved a lot of time and hard work to dig by hand down to the bedrock and the foolish man was lazy. It was much easier to throw up the house without all the hassle of putting in a proper foundation. So, he followed the path of least resistance etc.

There is a spiritual parallel. Disobedience is usually much easier than obedience, and it seems at the time like it will get you where you want to go more quickly than the more difficult path of obedience. The guy who threw up his house without a foundation was sitting inside sipping lemonade while his neighbour was out in the hot sun dripping with sweat as he dug his foundation. You young men see a guy who is living with his beautiful girl friend, enjoying all the pleasures of sex with seemingly no consequences. Meanwhile, you are in the trenches battling for moral purity in obedience to Jesus, and you wonder, “Why am I digging this foundation while that guy sits in his comfortable house with his girlfriend on his lap?” Wait till the flood hits and you will know the reason!

Spiritually, a lot of people come to Jesus for the benefits He offers. Seemingly, they are instantly enjoying the blessings of salvation even though they have never repented of sin and they are not daily judging their sin by His Word. They enjoy the good feelings of singing praise songs and swaying with the music. They like the love and fellowship of the body. But in their private lives, they are not digging the foundation of obedience to God’s Word. The flood will hit, and their spiritual house will come crashing down.

Another reason this guy did not bother to put in a foundation is that he was short-sighted. He was living for the here and now, without thought for the future. It wasn’t raining when he threw up his house. The riverbed was dry. Flood? What flood? A flood was not in his thinking. He just wanted to get inside his new house and enjoy the comforts it provided. Spiritually, we are fools if we do not live-in light of death and the judgment to follow. This very day your soul may be required of you, and then where will you be? If you profess to be a Christian, but you have been living all these years for self, with no regard for furthering the kingdom of God, your life is built on sand. It will collapse when the flood of God’s judgment hits.

CONCLUSION

Remember the following:

- First, you must come to Jesus. This implies a personal, one-to-one relationship between Jesus and you.

- Second, you must hear Jesus' words. This implies growing in your knowledge and understanding of His teaching as revealed in the Bible.
- Third, Jesus says that you must act upon His words. This implies soul-searching obedience, down to our very thoughts, motives, and attitudes. It means continually examining ourselves in light of Scripture.

