

Build Your Life on a Firm Foundation

Matthew 7:15-29 (NIV)

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. 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!' ²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." ²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Foundations are critical. You saw what happened in the kids' message, how building a house with a foundation on sand meant that it was immediately swept away with water while the house with the brick foundation, the rock solid foundation, easily survived. Our construction up front was delayed for almost two months. Why? Because they had to make sure that the foundation was rock solid with enough rebar all the way through so that it would hold up the future walls and better support the roof overhang.

Everyone in construction knows that the foundation of the building is critical, and so does Jesus. Jesus tells us to practice wisdom by building our houses on the solid foundation of the rock. "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (verse 24) Now how do I do that? How do I build on that rock? Is it with what I do, the accomplishments of my life? How can I know that I built enough and with the right materials? I can build a fine house, a fine life, with lots of good works and kindness and charity, but how do I make sure that I have this solid foundation? Will I go through life, trying my best, working, sweating, doing all that I can do for God only to have him say to me in the end, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoer!" (verse 23) Will I get to the end and find out I had actually built my life on a foundation of sand?

This foundation of our lives is critical. We have got to get this right because Jesus will say to some people who prophesied in his name, who drove out demons in his name, who performed many miracles in his name, that he never knew them. These seem like premium building blocks on a solid foundation with God: to prophesy or preach in his name, drive out demons, and perform many – not just a few, but many – miracles. These have to be believers, don't they? These have to be people who went to church, did good works, people who built their houses on the rock, right? Wouldn't these things be doing the will of God the Father?

Jesus himself clarifies what doing the will of God is. It's actually not the things we do. At a different time people asked Jesus, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." (John 6:28-29) "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day." (John 6:40) To do the will of God is simply believing in God the Son, Jesus, the one the Father sent to save the world. To do the will of God is not preaching, not driving out demons, not doing miracles. It's not even a work. It's believing that God did it all for you, to believe that Jesus did it all for you.

This means that on that day when we want to enter the kingdom of heaven, when we meet God face to face, on the day we die or on the Last Day of the whole world, there is only one foundation that will support us to eternal life in heaven. It's not by doing, but by believing in Jesus, the Son of God, as our God and Savior. If, on that day we want to enter the kingdom of heaven, we tout before Jesus our Judge all our good works, all the times we preached in his name, all the times we did great and grand things in the name of God, then we will have been found to have built our lives on the foundation of sand, which will cause our whole lives to come crashing down because it's not built on the rock. All these items that these people will say to Jesus on the day they want to enter the kingdom of heaven – that we prophesied in your name, we drove out demons in your name, and we performed miracles in your name – these are all things that they have done. They built the foundation of their lives, their reason to enter the kingdom of heaven, on themselves. This is not doing the will of God the Father.

Are you a rock solid foundation? Are you 100% dependable? Have you ever have let anyone down at any time? Have you ever failed to keep a promise – even if it was outside of your control, that outside forces prevented you from keeping that promise? Have you ever, even once, failed to be there for someone when they needed you, failed to help when they asked? Are you strong enough to weather all the storms of life by yourself, by your own fortitude? Are you always able to stand up to every criticism, every second guess of your decisions, every insult and ridicule? Have the concerns and problems of life ever broken you down, even if just for a second? Have you ever been tired, worn out, weak, and unable to go on?

We know that we have not always 100% been dependable. We have let people down. We have failed to keep promises. We haven't helped everyone who has asked for it. We have been broken down. We have crumbled. We have been or are weak right now. We ourselves are a foundation of sand. Build on us and at some point, no matter how strong and dependable we try to be, we will fail to hold it all together in life. So, if we build on ourselves, on our personalities, on our accomplishments, we are the foolish people building our houses on a foundation of sand. The storms in life will come, and we will not be able to hold it together. Just as Jesus said, "The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and [the house built on sand] fell with a great crash." (verse 27)

Instead, a different foundation must be laid. That rock solid foundation is, as Jesus said, believing in him. This is a foundation apart from ourselves, a foundation given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe in him. This is a rock solid foundation because God never fails to keep a promise. He never lets anyone down. Outside forces never stop him from doing what he is going to do. No person or being on heaven or earth could stop Jesus from fulfilling his mission to be perfect for us and to suffer and die to pay for our sin, our weaknesses, our crumbling imperfection. He never grows tired or weary as God. People can criticize him as much as they want, but he will never crumble. He will not break down. He still stands. His Word and his promises still stand. He never let the false prophets change his message to hopefully avoid insults and persecution. He is 100% dependable all the time. He is the one who will weather us through all the storms of life. When he is our foundation, then this will be our lives: "The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against [the house built on the rock]; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock." (verse 25)

Jesus is the rock on which we must build – everything credited to him, everything done by him. When you build on God as your foundation, you will enter the kingdom of heaven. You will be the wise man who built his house on the rock.

How do we build on this foundation? Jesus says, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (verse 24) We build our lives on the rock solid foundation of Jesus when we believe in him as the Son of God, as God himself. We do this by being in his Word because these are the Scriptures that testify about him. God told the Old Testament believers, "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates." (Deuteronomy 11:18-20)

How can we do that? You are doing that right now by coming to worship him as we gather as a church, even over the summer. You build on the foundation of the rock when you come to Bible class and Sunday School. It is open for everyone. We want you to come and dive deeper into God's Word, to spend more time looking to God the Son and building upon him as your foundation. You do this when you discuss the sermon, Bible class or Sunday School lessons, hymns, prayers on your way home after worship. You do this when you take time outside of Sunday morning to read his Word or when you read your daily *Meditations* devotions or read the on-line devotions delivered to you by e-mail or watch *Your Time of Grace* videos on Facebook or Youtube. All of this is building on the foundation of the rock, building on Christ because all of this is looking to him as you God, the God who is solid for you.

As you look to Jesus, you will learn to stop looking to yourself as the foundation to get through the storms of life come and hold you up until you get to heaven. You will instead look to God. He will stand strong for you. He will be unshakable for you. He will see you through all the storms of life and welcome you into the kingdom of heaven – not because you stood strong, but because he was strong for you. He is your rock. He is your foundation. Build on him so that when the rain comes down, when the streams rise, and when the winds blow and beat against you, you will not fall because your foundation is on the Rock. Amen.