

The Only Sure Foundation

Call to Worship: Psalm 31:1-3

1st Scripture: Matthew 7:13-23

2nd Scripture: Matthew 7:24-29

Introduction

We've been working toward the conclusion of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, addressing the closing four warnings. Of these four, we have considered the first, "to beware of entering into the wide gate," the second, "to beware of false prophets," and the third, "to beware of having a false conversion." This morning, we conclude these warnings, and the Sermon on the Mount as a whole, by considering the final warning, "to beware of being a mere *hearer* of Christ's words and not a *doer* of them."

And as we have seen, these warnings have tended to flow, from one warning right into the next, showing that they do share a common thread. And all in all, friends, we would do well to give heed to them, especially since all four are generally ignored by many churches in our day and age. All of that said, as we would expect, the last of these warnings then, provides us with a sober warning, calling us to reflect wisely, carefully and honestly, upon all that our Lord has taught throughout the entirety of this Sermon. There is, perhaps, no better and more thorough description of the essential character that must and will define all who are truly in union with Christ, and therefore, part of His Kingdom, than all that we have looked at in this Sermon.

I. Two Foundations

Leaving us with a perfect capstone and conclusion to His Sermon on the Mount, our Lord presents us with a parable, so as to provide us with a simplistic illustration (a picture) that could effectively describe the difference between those who simply "*hear* His teaching," and those who "*hear and actually do, obey and reflect (by example)* all that He has taught."

Notice then, again, He begins with the word, "Therefore...", connecting this final warning to what He has just revealed about a large group of individuals who will be turned away (and condemned) at the final judgment, because although they call Him, "Lord," they do not really

know Him. And as we have seen last time, the evidence of their hypocritical, shallow and empty faith, is discovered by the fact that they do not do the will of God and are lawless, because they do not obey the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. And that is why, He bridges into this final warning with the word, “Therefore.” It is in light of what He has just said, with all sobriety and severity, that He comes now to bring forth this final summary warning.

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, *and does them...*” As our Lord prepares first to *positively* address, by well of illustration, those who are faithful and truly part of His kingdom, we note right from the outset, the identifying virtue of these individuals whom He is about to illustrate. They are those who both hear *and do* the sayings of the Lord, summed up in the Sermon on the Mount. And, once again, as we have seen last time, this is absolutely critical to providing the distinguishing mark between the true and false convert. One may *hear* all of our Lord’s sayings (just like the multitude who heard them on the mountain), and one may even memorize His sayings, both of which, are important. However, unless one *does* (that is applies and sincerely lives out what our Lord has spoken there on the mountain), they have no warrant to assume that they know, or are known by, the Lord Jesus Christ. And again, they might call Him, “Lord, Lord,” but mere *words* of subjection are empty and vain, if the words are not accompanied by *actions* that authenticate the use of the words. And the authenticating actions are actions that exhibit obedience to the One whom they call “Lord.”

And so, by way of illustration, *positively*, our Lord moves on to state, “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, *I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 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.*”

And so, our Lord likens the one who hears and does what He says, to a “wise man,” who, building his house, first lays a proper foundation of rock, upon which he can build it, so that the house will be protected against all severe inclement weather that should come against it. Now, think about the illustration for a moment. Spending the time building a foundation adds additional labor and strain to the overall building project, doesn’t it? But, the wiseman knows that while leaving out a foundation can shorten and decrease his labor time, it is necessary to lay such a foundation (and especially a solid one), so as to protect the house (and his investment in

the long run). I'm sure that we have all experienced the dreaded consequences of taking some short cuts in life, where we had to learn the hard way that it would have been wiser to invest more (be it time, energy or quality of materials) into accomplishing whatever it was we were trying to accomplish. And, in fact, sometimes, the damage caused was greater in its scope, setting us further back than where we were at the beginning. [III. Certain short cuts that were taken in our home, which have led to serious mold problems and having to rebuild from scratch, certain rooms].

Well, here, the wise man wisely invests time, finances and energy into laying a proper, solid, rock foundation, upon which he can build his house. And as time moves on, the man finds out that the care he took in properly building his home, really paid off. When the rain had come down hard (softening the soil), and the floods came, and the heavy winds blew against and beat his house, it was able to remain standing; it was able to endure and resist the abuse, because it was founded on the rock. In other words, the foundation ultimately preserved the man's house. Jesus likens this man to those who hear and do what He says.

Now, before we further open up this illustration, let us hear what He says about the *foolish* man who builds his house, not on the rock, but on the sand, likening the individual who hears what Jesus says but does *not do what He says*, to this man.

"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."

Here, we have a foolish man, who, not wanting to take the time to lay a foundation (one who is caught up in the immediate gratification of getting things done, without thinking about what might be coming up ahead), simply builds his house right on top of the sand. And in the immediate sense, this man may seem successful. The house looks good. It seems to be standing firm. He probably saved some money on resources, and certainly time and energy. But, what has this man neglected to do? He neglected to think long term, and of the very likely reality that his house would, at some time, have to endure severe inclement weather. And so, when the rains pour down, the floods come and the winds blow and beat against his house, having no solid foundation, the house comes crashing down. And furthermore, our Lord adds, "and great was its

fall,” indicating that the destruction of the house involved more than negating all of the work that the man had done in building the home. Remember, a home is built to be lived in. And so, we can assume that he and his family were greatly affected by this fall, perhaps sustaining some form of severe injury or even death itself. In other words, the ruin runs deeper than the loss of the mere asset of the house, touching upon the lives of those who lived in it.

Having looked at the two illustrations, let us now ask and answer the question, “How do these illustrations serve to illustrate the difference between those who *merely hear* the sayings of Jesus, and those who hear *and do* the sayings of Jesus. Well, we begin by considering the obvious major difference between the two examples, provided by the illustration. You will notice that in both cases, the men build a house, and yet, one man’s house withstands the severe weather, while the others does not. To this end, there are two different consequences because of one simple fact. One man built his house on the rock foundation, while the other man built his house on the sand. And so, obviously, building on the right foundation is the great emphasis of this illustration.

What then is our Lord’s main point here? Well, in a very real sense, you can say that we all build our entire lives on foundational principles, which set the pattern and tone for all that we do in this life. And there are two major “foundation categories,” within which, everyone in this entire world is building upon. Just like the earlier warning, where our Lord spoke of two gates, a broad and easy gate, and a narrow and difficult gate, there are likewise only two foundations which everyone builds upon. We either build our lives upon (and are governed by) the teachings and commands of Christ, or we build them upon (and are governed by) some other man-made teachings and principles. Everyone is driven by something. But ultimately, if you are not driven by the authority of Christ, then you are the one who is described as the foolish man in our Lord’s illustration here. There is no third option. There is no in-between option either, for that matter. You are either with Christ, on the whole, or you are against Him. You either gather with Him in His Kingdom, or you scatter.

But, here is the main point of the illustration. The Lord wants all of us to see the big picture here. Again, remember, at the outset, and maybe for a significant period of time, the foolish man could have had a beautiful looking house with all of the bells and whistles. From

the standpoint of the naked eye, his house could have looked as secure (or perhaps even more secure) than the wise man's house. You can't see the foundation. Only the storm brings out what is truly there. And so, he wants us to think big picture and long term. At some point, all that we have built in this life; all that we have worked for; all that has driven us, will be revealed for what it is. [A similar Illustration: Reaping whatever we sow... can't see the seeds once they have been sown, but in harvest time, the crop will tell the truth, won't it?]

Well, in the end, the foundation will be revealed. And we can look at this in two ways, the second, being the most significant. First, if we are building our foundation on anything else but following, serving and obeying Christ, when times of difficulty come in this life, we will find ourselves utterly bankrupt of any hope that the living God is for and with us through it all. We will be void of the comfort of knowing and resting in the fact that He is accomplishing His good will, in and by us, in all that we go through. And we will be utterly shattered. But then, secondly, and more significantly, when we come to the end of this short life, and stand before God in the judgment, everything that we have invested our entire lives in, will be found to be empty and vain, and it will collapse into the abyss of vanity, while we ourselves are cast into eternal torments and outer darkness forever. It will all come down in the end, having served no purpose, but to temporarily tickle the desires of the flesh for such a short, short time, while incurring a far greater judgment and condemnation. Such is the case for all who build their lives on anything else, but the foundation of Christ and His teachings.

But for those who, trusting in Christ, hear and do what the Good Shepherd says, grace, comfort and strength, will be provided for every trial that they face in this life (they will endure to the end, as God is with them), and they will be divinely led into eternal bliss and joy in glory! They are building their lives on a sure foundation; indeed, the *only* sure foundation, which will stand firm to the end. All in all they strive to keep the big picture in mind, willing to deny the power of their physical senses and the sway of the world, clinging wholly to the Word of God, given in Christ, knowing that, in the end, they will not be put to shame. They will stand at the final judgment. They will come into their glorious inheritance, and every trial, sorrow and difficulty that comes their way in this life, all of it (individually and combined), will ultimately only serve to prepare them for the glory that is already theirs in Christ. And they have this

certainty because they have invested all of their hope in Christ. And this investment is certified and affirmed by the fact that they hear *and do* what the Lord commands.

At the end of the day, friends, it all comes down to this. Putting it in the simplest of terms: If your life is not marked by a consistent pattern (imperfect, but consistent, nonetheless) of hearing and obeying Christ (which evidences a genuine faith in Christ) then you are on a path that will ultimately lead to eternal condemnation and damnation. It's that simple. You will not enjoy the aid and comfort of God's help during this world's trials, and in the end, you will not stand in the judgment. Everything you have invested this short life into, will collapse. And that collapse will be devastating and eternal in duration. Such is the sober warning given by our Lord here, at the end of His Sermon on the Mount. Take it to heart now, before it is too late! Think of the big picture. Consider your end, now. Build your life on the only sure foundation!

II. The Authority of Christ

Finally then, Matthew records the response of the multitude, to the teaching of Jesus on the mount. "And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The direct, adamant and fervent teaching of the Lord really amazed His listeners. Jesus spoke with an heir of authority which the people were not used to. There was no wish-washy, sugarcoated, veiled through a bright and white, shiny-tooth smile, message, used by Jesus. He was not like the phony scribes and religious leaders, who were more concerned with lining their own pockets and obtaining the praises of men. He told it like it was, easing nothing from anything necessary that might be hard to swallow.

Why did our Lord speak with such authority? Let me leave you with at least these two reasons:

1) Never-dying souls were at stake. The Lord was about the true business of rescuing sinners from hell (indeed, He came to die for that very purpose), and He would rather put a true and sincere fear into His audience (risking their disapproval of Him) than sugar coat their path to hell. And so, He spoke with such authority because what He said was true, and the condition of His audience was dire. And even His Apostles, who were the primary audience of this sermon,

needed the sobering reminder of the diligence they needed to exercise in working out their salvation with fear and trembling. God would be with them and accomplish all of His good pleasure in and by them. But, it wouldn't be a picnic. It would be a battle, daily... and especially against the flesh. This sermon would provide the much needed reminder for them, exhorting them to think big picture, clinging to the teachings of Christ, in every circumstance that would come their way.

2) The Lord's authority was so profound because He Himself was God. He was the God-Man, and as such, He spoke like no other, ever. Whereas, even the greatest of prophets could only say, "Thus saith the Lord," He could say, "But, *I* say to you." He could say, "Whoever hears and does what *I* say, will lay an eternal foundation unto eternal life." He could put forth Himself as the very determining factor of every single human beings eternal destiny. He had the full authority of God upon Him, because He was truly "the only begotten Son." And He would win the full authority as man's representative, following His victory on the cross. And so, as God, and as the Last Adam, Jesus could speak with such authority. He only spoke out of the resources of who He truly was.

And so, by way of His commitment to the truth and His concern for mankind, and by way of the very essence of who He was, Jesus spoke with such authority. And the multitudes were therefore astonished by what they heard.

III. Concluding Charge

By way of conclusion then, both to this text and the entire sermon, the question is begged for each and everyone of us, hearing these words, this morning. What foundation are you building *your* life upon? What is it that primarily drives the way you think, act and speak, daily? At the very basic level, do you even *hear* the voice of Christ from His Word? If you are not in the Word, continuously (daily), then how can you possibly *do* what He says? You're not even hearing Him.

But, if you do hear Him, know that that is not enough. Having the Word of Christ go into your ears, and even into your memory bank is not enough. Are you doing what He commands? Do you evidence the work of the Spirit in your heart, having a sincere desire to hear and do what

the Good Shepherd says? Are you one of His sheep, in truth? Only if you are hearing and following the Shepherd. Note again the distinguishing marks between true and false converts. False converts enter the wide gate; the common and easier gate, but true converts enter into the narrow gate, which is Christ Himself and Christ alone. False converts may have a profession of faith but they do not bear fruit. They do not do the will of God, and they are lawless because they do not obey the Son. True converts bear fruit. They live in obedience to the will of God, keeping His Law, evidencing the true nature of their faith. False converts may call Jesus “Lord,” but they don’t do what He says. They ultimately build their lives on another foundation, other than Christ and His teachings. Their lips say one thing, but their lives speak a totally different message. Their hearts and their lips are not in accord. True converts build their very lives; their thoughts, words and actions are driven, daily, by a conscious consideration of the will and desire of Christ, as put forth by His Word.

You see, friends, there is no such thing as a “Sunday only” Christian. When you are in Christ, you are in another Kingdom, altogether. That is, you are living out of obedience to King Jesus, now in the present, and that drives every area of your life, now, in the present. The Christian faith is a “radical” faith; it is a “born again” faith, clinging to a biblical worldview, which shapes and molds the entirety of your life. It shapes your thinking and acting, how you relate to others in all spheres of life (work, home, family, church...etc), driving you to live in such a way that the reality of God’s constant presence and will are ever before you. It is to state with the utmost sincerity, “Christ died for Me, and I now live for Him!” “I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me!” His will is my life mission! May we honestly assess if we can say that our lives are being built on that “sure foundation!”

[Note: To the unsaved, things may seem smooth right now, but your time will come!]

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25