

Reading: Matthew 7:13-29

Theme: Building on the Firm Foundation.

As we come to the end of the Sermon on the Mount we are to note that Jesus has been warning us not to be those who only heard His words and did nothing about them – as we will see again in v24-27. Jesus already warned of making the wrong choice of direction, of wrong influences upon and in our lives and here He warns of the choice of the wrong foundation for our lives.

We say “Appearances can be deceiving”. Yet we live in a culture that most often goes only by appearances - “*Beauty is only skin*”. Jesus has warned we are not to be fooled by appearances - the wide gate and the broad road seems so great and grand; false prophets seemed so appealing, great and grand; people can appear successful and grand. A house with wrong foundations can seem great and grand. Yet the wide gate and the broad road leads to destruction; false prophets are burned with fire; successful ones can be fooled, deceived self-deluded and are put away from Jesus forever; the house with no foundation collapses with a great crash. We are not to be fooled or deceived; nor are we to fool or deceive ourselves about our state before God.

In v24-27 Jesus uses an illustration which again gives a solemn warning to us all. We need to listen to what He is saying to see if we are building our lives on the right foundation – Jesus’ words as the foundation for our lives and we are not just into Christian things because it helps us in some way, makes us feel good, eases our heartaches or loneliness lifts our spirits and yet, if we are honest, we have no real time for God, His commands and word or what it says. I want us to see 3 things from v24-27:

1. The Builders and Their Houses.

These 2 men have good desires to build nice houses, homes to live in. The fashion, the structure and materials use would have been similar, if not identical. On the surface they appear to build the same type of house in the same way. Although their aim was the same, they began building in different ways. If we had gone to their building sites we would have seen very similar houses being built and when complete there would be no noticeable difference. To see the important difference, we would have needed to be there when the foundations were put in place - at the beginning of the building process. To all appearances the men had the same aim and seem to achieve the same end. Yet the way they began and continued was so different.

The foolish man has no time, he is wanting to build ASAP, wanting to see results, wanting to be settled in, have his wife cooking tea in the new kitchen, being able to sit on the new patio in the evening supping a drink. He gets on, ignores the rules of safe building, feeling such things aren't necessary for him. Up go the walls and roof, everything seems so good and nice. We may have looked at him and thought "*Yes, he's a much better worker than that man over there – who has hardly done anything at all!*" The wise man also wants to build, but he wants his house to last and endure for a long, long time. He sorts out what is needed, he plans ahead, he realises that wind, rain, storms and floods come. He knows the house will need to be built on something solid. While on the surface both houses look very similar, but there was a hidden fault in one that would one day show itself.

In our lives, on the spiritual level (*which will affect our whole lives*), there are those who are like the foolish builder - we may call them pseudo-Christians - as they seem like Christians, seem to be doing and saying all the right things. Our Christian forefathers spoke and wrote of such people - who looked, sounded,

acted like real Christians and yet were not! They, like real believers are found in churches, saying, wanting, desiring the same things and yet are not truly trusting the Lord Jesus. They may like the company, the calming, soothing effect of the services, they may even desire to live a good life and help others also. Their morals, ideals and standards are magnificent. Yet they are pseudo-believers – look like believers, but not true believers.

In reality they live for self - to please self, or are in a hurry for results, success and do things their own way with little or no consulting of God, His word or ways. Indeed, to many of them, God's word seems as a restriction and they will not come under its full teaching. While they may not say so, there are parts of God's word they do not like and they miss out those bits. Basically, they want God's blessing and benefits, but not God and His demands. There is no true hungering and thirsting after God's righteousness and His righteous ways. Why is this? Because they began building their lives on the wrong basis, they did things from the wrong principles and did not build their lives on the word of God - which is what Jesus' words are. Moving on we see:

2. The Foundations.

The foolish man built his house on sand. It was easy to clear a space, to mark out and quickly the results are seen as the walls go up, the roof goes on and in he moved. He had no thought for the future and anything it may bring. In contrast to this, the wise man wanted something solid and lasting and knew he needed a solid foundation. He built on the rock. Luke's record of this event (Luke 6:46-49) records Jesus saying that the wise man "*dug and went down deep and laid a foundation upon the rock;*". This would have to be done, down to rock level or rocks sought, put in, compacted, interlocked together. This house was going to rest on something secure and it needed time to make sure the foundation

was done properly. This man was aware of what could happen and he prepared wisely, built accordingly upon the solid foundation.

What are we building our lives on? Are we building on our strength, our morality, our abilities, our health and strength, our own innate goodness? Are we like so many who feel that they will be able to sort things out from their own inner power and strength, by what they are able to do and achieve? Some feel they are OK building on their morality, their niceness, their religiosity, building on their relationships or their kindness or that they help other people or the fact that relatives are Christians..

Perhaps they, you may have seen and heard some people speaking of the hard slog of seeking God or feeling of one's own sinfulness, of the need to be saved by Jesus. Maybe you think that is too much, such things are for the weak, the needy, the extremists and fanatics even! Perhaps, to your mind Christianity is go to church, do good, be good as far as you can be and God will see you OK.

I ask you to rethink things about your life, especially for your soul's sake. Just as the wise man built on a solid foundation, so we must build our lives on the Rock – the Rock of Ages. The Bible tells us there is only one certain foundation upon which we can build and that is the Lord Jesus Christ - all He is, has done and taught. It is hearing what Jesus says, the demands that He makes on our lives and putting such things into practice in our own lives.

This means we will take seriously what He says - we are to build our lives on His teaching - here in the Sermon on the Mount, in the NT, indeed throughout the OT as well - as His teaching agrees with what that said. We are to see these as the foundation on which we will build our lives i.e. the way we will live our lives. We realise that He is the Rock of Ages and when we trust Him as our

Saviour we begin to build our lives upon Him. Jesus uses many word pictures to describe living the Christian life, but it is a wonderful life and is not just a cold literal building with things in our lives, for we have the life of God in us, helping us to grow and develop our lives and we realise it is about growing in a personal love relationship with God as our Father, the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and the Holy Spirit as the one who will help us day by day.

Not only that, this is evidenced by an outworking, a demonstration of this faith by works of faith - by doing the will of our Father in heaven. It is a practical and not just a theoretical faith which is set aside in a nice watertight faith compartment. This living faith is to influence the whole of our lives, affect our attitudes in, through and to all things we encounter in life.

Is our life built on the solid rock of the Lord Jesus or built on uncertain shifting sands of the latest idea, philosophy or notion that has become fashionable? Yes, our lives may look fine, may even do so for many years, but the wise man built aware of the storms etc. that would come. Now see:

3. The Tests.

The Bible gives a surprising amount of time and space to warnings, especially in NT. It warns against false hope, of a faith in “faith”; of vague feelings which may or may not be linked to spiritual things or even to things mentioned in the Bible. The passage we read earlier from v13 has a number of warnings - the warning of destruction for all who are on the broad road; the warning of being cast into the fire if we are a false prophet; the warning of being put away from Jesus. Here is a warning of the great crash and fall of the house (i.e. the life) not built on the sure and certain foundation - Jesus.

The focus of this little section, this parable, is that of judgement. False religion, no matter how nice, appealing, sincerely held, is sincerely wrong, truly useless and of no value at all. The wrong foundation is useless, dangerous as well – for it is of no help and will fail. If we do not have a solid foundation, what are we going to do when the storms of life come upon us? There are storms that come upon us all - sickness, bereavement, sorrows, depressions, sudden trials of our strength and abilities, disappointments, financial losses, theft, accidents etc. We would avoid such if we could, but they sweep in, batter us and how will we cope?

We see some people and they seem to cope fine as they appear to have a natural resilience, stubbornness - bordering even on a pig-headedness. We are all able to cope with some things better than others. Some people appear to go through life and avoid such storms for much, perhaps even all of their life and secretly that is what we would like! Yet for us all, the storm of old age will surprise us as it comes upon us - it seems to be creeping up and before we realise it is there! Along with it there often comes many sorts of frailties. This and everything else seem to be a storm that beats in upon us.

There may be the storm of temptations - the successes which come to us which cause our heads and hearts to be giddy with them and it tests the foundation on which our lives are – will we stand or fall? We may have temptations from the devil as he assaults us in sudden or subtle ways. What will keep us in the storm then?

There is also the storm of storms to come – the storm of death - our death. We may bypass many other storms, ride them out, but we must all encounter the storm of death. It may come upon us gradually or it may crash in upon us suddenly, but we all have to

meet it. What then will happen to our foundation and our lives we built on such? Where will the foundations of our intellect, our philosophies, wealth, power, family, relations, influence, strength, good works, religiousness, niceness, morality be then? These will be swept aside with contempt by death as it will sweep in like the resistless tide, as a mighty tidal wave and we are swept from the scene of time into eternity.

Many other foundations help us ride out storms in life, but on the day when the storm of death sweeps in upon us, there will only be one foundation secure and certain and that is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Incredibly He will be with His people even as they go into the storm of death, as they pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death. Be assured He will be there, His rod and staff will comfort His people. If we have Him as our Saviour, even as we go into such the storm of our own death, He will be with us and we will know His help and comfort. No believer has ever died alone. Even if they died without human company, their Saviour was with them, angels too - they carried those believers home to heaven. In such an hour will your foundation stand secure or will you be swept away into hell?

At such a time, as in every storm, we will find the Saviour near us, caring for us as His child. Whatever is causing us as believers pain or hurt at this moment, then we are to realise He is near us. We may not be aware of such, but He is, for He has promised never to leave or forsake those who are His.

Without a true faith in Christ, our foundation will be shown to be useless when the storm of death sweeps in upon us and it will wash away and crumble to dust so readily. The warning is given so that we can be warned and choose to build now on the right foundation - no matter whether we are younger or older. It is not too soon and

not late for us here. Realise we are to start to build our lives on Jesus now. Pay attention to what the Lord Jesus says to us.

In the last two verses of the reading, we note that His 1st hearers were amazed for He had an authority they had never known before. That same authoritative Jesus speaks to us at this moment, through a preacher who may mangle his words, but the Lord Jesus calls us to hear and obey what He says. I urge us all to hear, to listen and put such things into practice. Be those who hear His words and puts them into practice - **firstly** by trusting the Lord Jesus as your own Saviour and **then by living your lives** as He says. As we do so we will find we have a rock-solid foundation for our lives that can help us stand in all the trials of life, but most of all we'll be building our life on the Rock of ages and have a life that will go on for eternity and we will know joys and wonders we never even began to imagine or think of at this moment.