

**“A Map for Life”**

<sup>24</sup>"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. <sup>25</sup>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. <sup>26</sup>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. <sup>27</sup>The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Right now the real estate market is still going crazy. Just this past week there was the decision by the nation's largest title company to quit issuing title insurance for previously foreclosed homes in 23 states because of problems in documentation and the failure of lenders, sellers and buyers to sign documents in the presence of a notary. Even in this difficult market you may not be able to purchase or close on a home even if you have financing and the capacity to do so. People fear that the FED will soon increase interest rates and want to lock in a lower payment. Adding to all of this has been the wait and see attitude over the recession and seeking greater economic security. The great danger in all of this is that people will make some terrible rushed judgments and it will all come crashing down. Even if we make good plans with God's will in mind, as we shared last week, the execution of those plans could easily be thwarted by the unwillingness of others to follow the standard directions on the many transactions that are necessary in a modern

world. We need a map, a blueprint perhaps, to navigate the complexities of building our lives with a God Positioning System. Acknowledging the position of God, knowing the will of God, and submitting oneself to that will still requires a detailed map of tasks and actions.

Whenever I use my GPS system in my car, after I have programmed the destination I desire to go, the GPS then lays out a route and provides me with the route and detailed instructions to get there. Our scripture passage today sets the direction of our course in arriving where God would have us to be.

Jesus uses the parable building your house on the rock to talk about the fact that the many that are in the broad way will not enter the kingdom in that their lives are not built on the foundation of Christ and His Word. That is the map we must follow, God's word, not our education, though we'll use that education to understand it. We must have the map of God's word and not the directions of the culture, though we will traverse this life in culture. Jesus picks up the theme of humanity's own righteousness, the righteousness that is totally unacceptable to God and that will in no way qualify a person for His kingdom.

In the first illustration (vv. 21–23) we see a contrast between the true and false verbal professions of faith and good works. Here we see contrasts between obedient and disobedient hearers. Both groups hear God's true Word, but some hear and obey, and some hear and disobey; some turn their trust to God's righteousness, and some continue trusting in their own, though that does not become visible until the judgment.

The implication is that even those who disobey believe that they belong to Christ and

make a convincing profession of faith in Him. They hear God's Word and recognize it as God's Word, but wrongly believe that simply knowing and recognizing it are enough to please God and guarantee them a place in His kingdom. Like those who say, "Lord, Lord (Mt. 7:21)," and do amazing religious works but really "practice lawlessness," the false hearers build their religious house, but are self-deceived as to its viability.

In the illustration of those who make false professions, the true believers are mentioned only by implication ("not everyone who says to me," v. 21). In the illustration of the hearers and builders, however, both the true and the false believers are clearly described. In these two groups we see the similarity in the Outward Plan but the distinction is in the unwillingness to follow the map of scripture.

What is the outward plan? First of all, both builders have heard the gospel. Everyone then who hears these words of Mine applies both to the wise man (v. 24) and to the foolish man (v. 26). They both know the way of salvation. Second, they both proceed to build a house after they have heard the way of salvation. The wise man builds his house, which represents his life, on these words of Mine. The implication is that the foolish man, although he does not do/act upon Christ's words, thinks that his house is secure simply because he has heard and acknowledged the words. He believes the life he lives is Christian and therefore pleasing to God. He does not intentionally build a house he thinks is going to fall. Both builders have confidence their houses will stand; but one person's confidence is in the Lord and the other person's is in themselves. Jesus uses the parable building your house on the rock to talk about the fact that the many who are in the broad

way will not enter the kingdom in that their lives are not built on the foundation of Christ and His Word. That is the map we must follow, God's word, not our education, though we'll use that education to understand it. We must have the map of God's word and not the directions of the culture, though we will traverse this life in culture. Jesus picks up the theme of humanity's own righteousness, the righteousness that is totally unacceptable to God and that will in no way qualify a person for His kingdom. By the way the word translated "Foolish" here is the word from which we get our English word "moron." Those who reject the rock of Christ Jesus and only hear what He says and do not do what He says are called "morons" by Christ.

Third, both builders build their houses in the same general location, evidenced by their apparently being hit by the same storm. In other words, the outward circumstances of their lives were essentially the same. One had no advantage over the other. They lived in the same town and possibly attended the same church, heard the same preaching, went to the same Bible study, and fellowshiped with the same friends.

Fourth, the implication is that they built the same kind of house. Outwardly their houses were very much alike. From all appearances the foolish man lived much in the same way as the wise man. We might say they were both religious, theologically orthodox, moral, served in the church, supported it financially, and were responsible citizens of the community. They seemed to believe alike and live alike.

It is quite possible for (someone) to have heard all Jesus' teachings and to have said, "It is true. These are great sayings. They are the key to morality. I'll just go out and try a bit harder." But if you are thinking that way, you have missed the whole point of what Jesus is

saying. He says, “I am not asking you to go out and try harder. You will never be able to do it. To go out and try harder and to try to construct that kind of character in your own strength is like trying to build a mansion upon sand. Actually, you will only achieve that kind of character when you build on me.”

We have seen the similarity in the outward plan, but now the distinction in the inward specs, the real map of our lives. The differences between the two builders and the two houses they built were not noticeable from the outside. But they were immeasurably more important than the similarities. The key is to understand that one does act upon God’s Word (obedience) and the other does not do/act upon His Word (disobedience). One builds using the divine specifications, the other uses their own. By far the greatest difference between the specifications of these builders and the way they build is in the foundations they laid. The wise man ... built his house upon the rock, whereas the foolish man ... built his house upon the sand.

The scribes and Pharisees had a complex and involved set of religious traditions which they regarded as having great value before God, but all those traditions were external, superficial, and unstable. They had no spiritual or moral substance or stability. They were shifting sand, composed entirely of the opinions, speculations, and human standards. Those who created and followed them took no account of obedience to God’s Word, purity of the heart, spirituality of the soul, or integrity of behavior. Their only concern was for appearance, the compelling desire to be seen and “honored by others” (Matt. 6:2).

That is the true sense of Christ's teaching. He is saying, "If you want a true map, a solid construction that will last for this life and for eternity, build on me." Remember the classic old hymn that went like this: My hope is built on nothing less, Than Jesus' blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand." The mark of true discipleship is not simply hearing and believing, but believing and doing.

John Declares: 1 John 2:3-6 [3]And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. [4]Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, [5]but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: [6]whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (ESV)

Paul powerfully and convincingly asserts the same thing: Titus 1:15-16 [15]To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. [16]They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. (ESV)

- To profess knowledge of God and His truth but not follow God obediently and live His truth is to be deceived. It is to have entered by the wide gate and to be walking on the broad way that leads to destruction. It is to have a house built upon the sand.
- The only validation we can ever have of salvation is a life of obedience. That is the only proof Scripture mentions of our being under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Obedience is the sine qua non, the indispensable and essential action, condition, or ingredient of salvation.

The house built on the rock is the life of obedience. In order to get where you are going, you have to follow the instructions given by your GPS. Our spiritual GPS system is the life that has a scriptural view of itself, as described in the Beatitudes. It is the life that has a scriptural view of the world, and sees itself as God's means for preserving and enlightening the world while not being a part of it. It is the life that has the divine view of Scripture and that determines not to alter God's Word in the slightest degree. It is a life that is concerned about internal righteousness rather than external form. It is a life that has a godly attitude toward what is said and what is done, toward motives, things, money, and other people. It is a life of genuineness rather than hypocrisy, and of God's righteousness rather than self-righteousness.

The house built on the rock is the life that empties itself of self-righteousness and pride, that is overwhelmed by and mourns over its own sin, that makes the maximum effort to enter the narrow gate and be faithful in the narrow way of Christ and His Word. Such a builder does not build their life or place their hope on ceremony, ritual, visions, experiences, feelings, or miracles but on the Word of God and that alone.

The sand is composed of human opinions, attitudes, and wills, which are always shifting and always unstable. To build on sand is to build on self-will, self-fulfillment, self-purpose, self-sufficiency, self-satisfaction, and self-righteousness. To build on sand is to be: as Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:7 always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. (ESV)

Whether one's professed faith is true or false, one day it is going to be tried. And that trial will prove with absolute finality what is wheat and what is chaff, who are sheep and

who are goats, who have entered by the narrow gate to walk the narrow way and who have entered by the wide gate to walk the broad way. The most tragic difference between the builders is in their final destinies. Jesus' unequaled and unparalleled sermon masterpiece ends with a devastating warning of judgment. Its final words are: and great was the fall of it (Matthew 7:27). The bottom line of the gospel for those who reject Christ is not that they forfeit a great deal of blessing or even that they forfeit a life of eternal bliss with God in heaven—though those things are absolutely true. The bottom line for those who reject Christ is that they are destined for everlasting torment, destruction that keeps on destroying forever. Where are you building? Whose map are you following?