

Building on Solid Rock **Matthew 7:24-27 • Panha M. Doeung**

INTRODUCTION

In 1173 the Italian architect Bonnano Pisano built what is now the famous Leaning Tower of Pisa. This eight-story building is a bell tower for the cathedral of the city of Pisa. Shortly after they started building, they discovered that the soil was much softer than they had anticipated. The tower began to lean because of a poorly laid foundation.

It took 177 years to build the Tower of Pisa and during that time many things were done to try and compensate for the "tilt." Foundation was shored up; the upper levels were even built at an angle to try to make the top of the tower look straight. But nothing worked. The tower has stood for over 800 years, but it leans 18 feet away from where it should be. Experts say that one day it will fall...all because it wasn't built on the right foundation.

In the news in recent years we all have seen plenty of pictures of houses that collapsed because they were built in the wrong place. They were either too close to a river, at the bottom of a sandy hill, or at the edge of a cliff. They were built on the wrong foundation.

In Matthew chapter 7 Jesus tells the story about the importance of having the right foundation. Look with me beginning in v. 24:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock."

"Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell--and great was its fall."

When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

LESSON

Many of Jesus' teachings are in parable. Parable is simply an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. It is usually a brief and succinct story to teach or illustrate a moral or religious lesson.

When you look closely at this passage, you get two parables in one...the foolish builder and the wise builder. Jesus tells this story to conclude his Sermon on the Mount and to drive home what it means to live out the Kingdom of God.

In this passage, we see that these two builders had several things in common:

- They heard the same message...the words of Jesus.
- They built the same house or type of house.
- And they faced the same storm.

The only difference was the foundation on which they built their house on. One built on rock, the other built on sand.

There are several truths that we can learn from this passage. First of all, we see that...

1. Both houses are hit by a storm.

The storm is inevitable. Troubles and problems will come. In fact, Jesus said in Matthew 5:45, "he causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." No one is exempt from the storms. We all experience tragedy in our lives; we all experience sorrow and pain. No one is immune. We can't avoid it, but we can certainly prepare for it.

Notice how Jesus describes the storm.

- A. "The rains fell" is pressure from above.
- B. "The floods came" is pressure from below.
- C. "The winds blew" is pressure from all around.

We will face problems from all sides. And whether we stand or fall depends on how we build our house. Jesus only uses a house as a metaphor to building our lives.

Some of you here may be sitting in the midst of the storm right now. You're going through some tests and trials. Maybe the burden and stress of work is getting you down. Maybe there are financial pressures, family issues, or relationship problems. Some of you go from one trial to another...one bad thing to another.

Often time people associate problems and bad things to something bad or something wrong they've done. People like Job's friends always want to debate or argue the cause of the storm. Jesus does not tell us why there are storms. All He wanted us to see is the kind of foundation on which we build our lives on. This is a parable about foundations, not the cause of the storm or how to avoid the storm. We don't always understand the cause and we don't have to. All that we need to know is that God will see us through if we just hold on to Him and keep His Word.

So the storm will come. We can't avoid it. We're not immune to it. And the purpose of the storm is to disrupt our progress toward the wonderful plan God has for us. But the storms and problems don't have to destroy us. That's the second truth.

2. The storms don't have to destroy us.

The wise man and the foolish man experienced the same storm, but with different results. The wise man's house didn't come crashing to the ground. It stood firm, even in the face of the storm. Storms don't have to destroy you.

Some of you may be scared and nervous. Scared about what will happen to the economy. There's a report that we may be heading for a recession and the Fed is manipulating the interest rate again. Retailers are starting to offer early Christmas discounts and we're barely in November. The oil price is reaching a record high and gas price is steadily going back up. The holiday season is approaching with the stress and loneliness kicking in. Maybe you're scared about what will happen to your job. Your security. Your family.

We don't know what the future holds, but we do know this: no storm can destroy the people of God. We can continue to stand, even when the rains come...even when the winds blow.

Proverbs 10:25 says, "When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever."

You don't have to fear any storm that comes your way. You can endure it. You can stand it.

And where do you get the strength to stand and endure the storms of life? The answer is found in the words of Jesus. Look in verse 24. "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice." And that's the third truth.

3. The strength to weather the storms of life is found in obedience to God's Word.

That means putting the words of Jesus into practice in our daily lives. The key to weathering the storms of life is what we do with God's Word. Jesus says it clearly, "anyone who hears these words of mine and does what it says." It is being obedient. It is putting into practice and applying what you've heard and learned.

Obedience is hard to do. By nature, we are not obedient people. We have to be taught to obey. That's why we have rules, laws and regulations to keep us in line. My little baby Catherine likes to do the things we tell her not to do. So we have to teach her to obey. Even dogs have obedient school. Is there an obedient class for men, ladies?

God's people, if you want to find God's favor, enjoy His blessings, and live the abundant life that He's given you, you must build your life on a foundation of obedience to Jesus Christ. Put his words into practice in your life.

There is nothing more important...nothing more crucial...and nothing more urgent...than obeying the Word of God. When we chose to be Christ's followers, God called us to live a life of obedience and submission. Jesus came to bring the Kingdom of God to earth. The Kingdom of God means that God wants to rule and reign in our hearts. And that means we are obedient and submissive to His Word and will. And obedience has to be 100%. 99% obedience like King Saul is not obedience. It is still disobedience. Throughout Scripture, we see how God called his people to obey him. When they obeyed, they were blessed.

APPLICATION

You're probably asking, "Pastor, what it mean to obey God's Word? How do I do that?"

Let me help you connect this to real life. When you look at Jesus' sermon in Matthew 5-7, he covers all sorts of topics about living out the Kingdom of God. Here's a quick summary of the sermon and how we can put into practice:

- Instead of murder and hate, Jesus said, "build your life on forgiveness."
- Instead of revenge and getting even, build your life on reconciliation.
- Instead of being consumed by lust and adultery, build your life on respect and honoring.
- Instead of divorcing for non-Biblical reasons and splitting up the family, build your life on faithfulness and love.
- Instead of being evasive and deceptive, be forth telling with the truth.
- Instead of hating your enemies, build your life on prayer for them.
- Instead of just being outwardly religious, build your life on secret acts of kindness and worship.
- Instead of dedicating your entire life to the accumulation of personal wealth, build eternal values into the hearts of your children.
- Instead of worrying your way through life, build your life on a firm trust in the caring hand of God.
- Instead of always judging and being suspicious of others, build your relationships on loving acceptance.

God's Word is not limited to the Sermon on the Mount. God's Word also commands us to:

- Love one another (John 13:34)
- Serve one another (Gal. 5:13)
- Submit to one another (Eph. 5:21)
- Be devoted to one another (Rom. 12:10)
- Live in harmony with one another (Rom. 12:16)
- Accept one another (Rom. 15:7)
- Encourage one another and build each other up (1 Thess. 5:11)
- Have fellowship with one another (1 John 1:7)
- Be at peace with one another (Mark 9:50)

If we begin to do what God's Word says, our church is going to take off. Exciting days are ahead, but it starts with us deepening our walk with God and learning to live by His Word.

Jesus says, "if you put my words into practice, you are building your life on a rock. But if you ignore my words, you are building your life on sand."

CONCLUSION

He's saying that your life is built either on obedience or disobedience. The more you obey him, the stronger the foundation of your life becomes, and the more capable you become of weathering the storms of life.

The process of building the "house" of our lives is different than the building of a typical house. Usually, one builds the foundation first and builds the house on top of that.

In our case, the building of the foundation of our lives is an ongoing process. Every time you put the words of Jesus into practice in your life, you strengthen your foundation. You're making a deposit. Every time you neglect to do what he has told you to do, you weaken the foundation. You're making a withdrawal. It's that simple.

If you're withdrawing more than you deposit, today you can begin to get on the positive by learning to obey God's Word.

All of us are laying a foundation with every decision we make. When you act on what you have heard, you are laying the proper foundation. James says to "prove yourselves doers of the Word and not just hearer who delude themselves."
(James 1:22)

When Joshua assumes the leadership after the death of Moses, God spoke to Joshua, the son of Nun. He said, "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success." (Joshua 1:7-8)

God told Joshua if he will do whatever God tells him to do, he will be blessed. He will be able to stand against anything that comes his way.

I believe God wants to do the same for you. But it starts with living in obedience to God's Word. When you hear God's Word, it produces faith. And the evidence of faith is what you do with what you've heard. When you apply God's word to your daily life, you are building on Jesus Christ, the solid rock.

Do you want to weather the storms of life and stand tall and firm? Put God's Word into practice! Do what it says!

Would you pray with me?

Jesus was an example of obedience. "He was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. And God exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2)

Some of you today may need to take a step of faith and make Jesus your rock. If you have never accepted Jesus into your life, would you do so today? Don't wait. Begin a wonderful journey of learning to walk with God.