



“The Wise and the Foolish Man”
(Matthew 7:24-27)

Introduction: Jesus now concludes His great Sermon which He preached so many years ago to His disciples on the Mount. And as He concludes it, we can see by what he says that it is His desire that His words would not be forgotten. This is why He has been enforcing them with such serious warnings. He told us of the narrow gate and the absolute necessity of entering in that way, and the broad road, which we are by all means to avoid. He told us of false prophets and teachers who will seek to lead us astray by teaching us things which are contrary to what He said. And He told us of the last judgment, that it is those who actually do the will of God from the heart who will enter His kingdom, not those who either don't do it or who do it for their own glory. If we are eventually to enter into heaven, we must not only seek out Christ's will in His word, listen to it, and not allow anyone to deceive us, we must also do what it says out of love for Him.

But Jesus isn't finished yet. Before He closes, He gives us one last admonition, one last analogy to keep our eyes looking straight ahead. He shows us how two men built their houses, one in wisdom and the other foolishly, to show us how we should build our lives. And through this He tells us that

Only those who are wise enough to listen to Christ's words and do them shall be able to stand firm in the faith to the end.

I. First, let's look at what Jesus says about the wise man.

- A. He says, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock” (v. 24).
 - 1. It is clear from what Jesus says here that there are two things which make a man wise: he listens to the words of Christ, and he does them.
 - a. Certainly, a man must listen to wise instruction before he can truly be wise.
 - (i) This is why Solomon, the wisest king who ever lived, wrote the book of Proverbs. He wanted his sons, as well as others, to learn wisdom. He writes, “The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to discern the sayings of understanding, to receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity; to give prudence to the naive, to the youth knowledge and discretion, a wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:1-7).
 - (ii) Now notice two things here. The first is that Solomon realized that the time of one's youth is the best time to learn wisdom. This is why he wrote down these words and taught them to his sons. If you can learn how to avoid the pitfalls of sin and walk in the right ways of the Lord early, then you will have a more blessed life than you otherwise would have had.
 - (iii) Parents, if you love your children, this is certainly what you want for them. Now is the time to be diligent in teaching them the same kind of godly wisdom that Solomon taught his children. And so take whatever pains are necessary to learn this wisdom yourself and to teach it to them.
 - (iv) And children, if you really want to make the most of your lives, if you want to be wise and live a life pleasing to the Lord, then listen to your parents as they teach you and submit to their instruction, for they are the ones whom the Lord has appointed to watch over your souls, and one day they must give an account to the Lord for this. They want you to succeed. They want you to love and follow Jesus, for they know that this will be best for you. And so listen to them. Only fools don't listen to instruction.
 - (v) We must all learn to listen to godly instruction, to that teaching which comes from God's word, for this is the first step of wise.

- b. But Jesus reminds us that if you truly want to be wise, it is not enough merely to hear what wisdom says, as we have already seen, you must also do it.
 - (i) Remember what Jesus said last week, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but *he who does the will of My Father* who is in heaven” (v. 21).
 - (ii) Jesus is saying the same thing again now. He says, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and *acts upon them*, may be likened to a wise man” (v. 24). In the Greek, the idea is that the wise constantly hear and constantly *do* what they hear as the pattern of their lives.
 - (iii) James writes, “But prove yourselves *doers* of the word, and *not merely hearers* who delude themselves” (1:22). Paul writes, “For not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the *doers* of the Law will be justified” (Rom. 2:13). John writes, “Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who *practices* righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous” (1 John 3:7). And Jesus, when someone remarked that His mother was surely blessed because she raised Him, replied, “On the contrary, blessed are those who *hear* the word of God, and *observe* it” (Luke 11:28).
 - (iv) Parents, your children won’t take seriously what you are teaching them about Christ, unless they see you doing these things. Strive then to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Make no provision for your flesh, with regard to its lusts.
 - (v) And children, remember that it’s not enough to know the right thing to do. You must also do it. This is what is pleasing the Lord.
 - (vi) And let us all remember that simply doing the things which God commands is not enough. We must do them because we love God. We must do them for His glory and not our own. And we must do them in complete reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His mediation, if they are to be acceptable to God.
 - 2. Jesus says that if we do this, we will truly be wise, and will be building our lives upon a sure foundation.
 - a. Our roots will be deep and strong. Paul tells us that we should strive for this. He writes, “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk in Him, having been firmly rooted *and now* being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, *and* overflowing with gratitude” (Col. 2:6-7).
 - b. As we have received the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, let us now walk as He walked. This is the best and only way to become firmly established and built up in the faith.
- B. Now what are the benefits of living this way, and why is this the way that the truly wise man will choose?
- 1. Jesus says, “And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock” (v. 25).
 - 2. Jesus tells us here that if we listen to His words and obey them, then there is nothing which will ultimately be able to harm us.
 - a. Let’s face it, we live in a world which is full of uncertainty. There is danger on every side, and you need to realize this.
 - b. The devil wants you to fall, and he may use almost anything in the world to bring this about. He has very shrewdly laid snares in all the places where he knows we are sure to come sooner or later.
 - c. And as if this wasn’t enough, he has a very powerful ally, one that we have to live with every day of our lives: ourselves! There is enough sin within our own souls to tempt, mislead and deceive us a thousand times over.
 - d. But yet the Lord tells us here that if we will do these two things -- listen to what He says and do it --, then these dangers will not be able to destroy us. We will overcome them. The Lord will bless whatever trials we must face to our growth in grace, so that when we are tempted and overcome it, or when we fall and get up again, we will become stronger and more useful to Him.
 - e. Our houses, our lives, will never fall completely, but stand! not only through the trials of this

life, but also on the day of judgment, which is the most crucial time of all. What could possibly be more important to any man, woman or child on earth than to know now that when you stand before the Lord on that great and terrible day, that your life is hidden in Christ, and that you will pass His judgment because you are in Christ? The only way that you can know this with any certainty is that you are listening to Christ's words and doing them. It's as simply as that.

- f. You see, Christianity isn't all that complicated. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. And you will know that you have been saved, when you love Christ and show that you do by listening to His Word and obeying it. This is true wisdom. This is the way of the wise.

II. Secondly now, let's look at the foolish man.

A. Jesus says, "And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and *does not act* upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand" (v. 26).

1. Notice here that which marks the foolish man: he hears the words of Christ, but he doesn't do them.
 - a. He is like the wise man, in that he hears. He sits under the preaching and teaching of God's Word and even understands what it means. There were many who were listening to this sermon of Christ's, when He first preached it. There are many who hear the truth today being preached week after week.
 - b. But he is not like the wise man, in that he does not do what he hears. He does not put what he knows into practice. How many of those who heard Christ's words then, did them? Very few stood with Him in the days of His suffering and death. How many today obey Him? The answer is the same: very few.
 - c. Jesus says that to hear and not obey is the height of foolishness. The word He uses in the Greek is *mwro',j*, from which we get the word moron. Those who hear Christ's words, but refuse to do them are fools.
2. Why? Jesus says because they are building their houses upon the sand.
 - a. Sand does not make a very good foundation for a house. Ask Levon Melkonian. His house in San Francisco was built in the early 1900's when most houses in that area were built on a foundation of sand. As the years went by the sand settled and shifted and was partly washed away by the rain. As a result, his house began to lean, so that they had to jack it up, and pump concrete under it to strengthen its foundation.
 - b. The same is true of those who know what Jesus wants, but don't do it. They are building their lives on a shifting foundation which will not be able to stand up against the things they will encounter in this world.

B. And this brings us to the next point. What are the consequences of having this kind of foundation for your life?

1. Jesus says, "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and it burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall" (v. 27). Adam Clarke, a biblical commentator of the last century, wrote, "A fine illustration of this may be seen in the case of the fishermen in Bengal, who, in the dry season, build their huts on the beds of sand from which the rivers had retired: but when the rain sets in suddenly; as it often does, accompanied with violent northwest winds, and the waters pour down in torrents from the mountains; in one night, multitudes of these buildings are swept away, and the place where they stood is on the next morning undiscoverable."
2. A foundation of sand is not able to stand up against the abuse of the elements. Likewise, Jesus says, a life built on a foundation of disobedience will not be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, his snares in this world, nor against the corruptions of the human heart. That life will be overcome and crumble to pieces.
3. But notice that Jesus said that this house did more than simply fall. He said that its fall was *great*.
 - a. Whenever we want to say that something is really big, we call it mega, like mega-church, or

- mega-bucks. This is the same word Jesus uses here. He says that its fall was a mega-fall!
- b. What made its fall so great? Jesus already told us that this man didn't do what he heard. But the fact that he *heard* and didn't do made him even more blameworthy.
 - c. The Lord tells us that the more light we have and sin against, the greater our punishment will be. He says in Matthew 11:23-24, "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you." He also says in Luke 12:47-48, "That slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in according with his will, shall receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone *who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.*"
 - d. The more you know and don't do, the greater will be the destruction of your life in this world. But more importantly, the more you know and don't do in this life, the greater will be your destruction in the world to come!
 - e. How much more then should we who have been entrusted with such a wealth of biblical knowledge seek to put this knowledge into practice and bring forth the good fruit which Jesus requires? We should labor with all the zeal and diligence that something this important demands: with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

III. The last thing I would draw your attention to in this passage are the circumstances under which the real foundation of our lives are revealed: it is during trials and tribulations.

- A. It is very easy to profess Christ and to look as though you are a faithful Christian when things are going well. But it is much more difficult when things are hard.
 1. Jesus tells us here of two houses which were built by two men. As long as the weather was fair, both lived comfortably in them. At this point, the foundation didn't matter that much.
 2. But it was when a storm came that the difference was discovered. The house with the strong foundation stood firm, while the house built on sand crumbled.
 - a. In the parable of the sower, the rocky soil also looked promising at first. The seed sown sprung up immediately. But when the sun rose, it couldn't endure the heat of the day, and because it didn't have a firm root, it withered away (Matt. 13:20-21).
 - b. Jesus said that when the heat of persecution and affliction arise because of the Word, if you don't have a firm root or a strong foundation in obedience to the commandments of God, you too will wither away, and it will be revealed that you were not truly His.
- B. Only those who have built their lives upon a true and living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, a faith evidenced by a sincere obedience, will be able to endure.
 1. If you don't have this, when tribulation comes -- and it will come --, you will fall. The Lord sends tribulations for two reasons: to further sanctify His saints, and to reveal who the wheat is and who is the chaff.
 2. If His trials have revealed that you are chaff and not wheat, if your life is a series of falls and defeats, if there is no victory over temptation and no growth in obedience in your life, then come to Christ now. Ask Him to remove your foundation of sand -- a life spent hearing and not doing -- and to put concrete in its place -- the desire to obey as well as to hear. Christ can do this for you. But you must come to Him and ask.
 3. And for those of you who do listen and obey, seek that you might obey more. Every time you yield yourself to God's will, your foundation grows stronger, you grow stronger, and you become less likely to fall. And the more your strength grows, the more your assurance also grows. The evidence of Christ's working in you become more and more apparent, the more you grow in holiness, the more you grow into His image. And the more this grows, the more you can be sure that your house will not collapse on the day of judgment, when you stand to give an account of your life to Christ.
 4. Jesus tells us that if we want to be wise, we will listen and act upon His Word. Let us be wise then and not foolish. Let us not replace the wisdom of the Lord with our own wisdom, or His

words with our own. Let us instead pay close attention to what He says and do our best, with His gracious help, to submit to it. John wrote, “The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:17). If you live like this world and for it, you will perish with the world. But if you live for Christ and like Him, you will endure forever. May the Lord grant that we all may. Amen.