

THE TWO BUILDERS

Please direct your attention to an illustration given by Jesus which was so appropriate for its occasion. Jesus was just finishing what we call The Sermon on the Mount, and the multitudes sat transfixed by the message (verse 28); but Jesus, knowing their hearts (John 2:25), recognized many would be satisfied with merely hearing, that is, hearing without complying to what they heard. So He chose to conclude His sermon with the illustration of The Two Builders in which He taught His audience that His words are truly powerful only when they're obeyed.

The illustration had real life meaning to His audience. The region of Palistine was subject to sudden and violent storms. The Jordan river would swell annually with rain water and overflow its banks. The current would become rapid and furious. The bank hill streams which laid dry during part of the year would suddenly fill with torrents of rushing water, and everything in its path would be swept away. Even houses erected within reach of these flash floods, and especially those on weak foundations, would crumble under the pressure of the storm. The illustration of The Two Builders was powerful because it was real to life in that region (Matthew 7:24-27).

With this background, consider the three primary components of this illustration and how it applies to us today.

Consider the two builders.

All men are builders. Willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, we're builders in our lives on Earth. Day after day, we lay stone upon stone in the structure of our characters.

There are only two types of builders. Jesus pictured two builders who were similar except for one profound difference which made one wise and the other foolish.

The foolish builder "heard" the words of Jesus, but "didn't act on them" (verse 26). Note that he didn't neglect religion completely. He took time to hear the Master speak (verse 26). He may have even marveled at the grandeur of His doctrine and praised its value (verse 28). He may have preferred the principles of Jesus over those of most men, and may have been inclined to practice them from time to time. Nevertheless, he simply left undone the one thing which really counted—living the sermon. It's said that someone asked, "Is the sermon done?" to a saintly old lady who had retired from the service before the closing hymn. "No," was her prompt reply, "it has been preached, but it remains to be done." This is what Jesus taught about His words: they remain to be done.

The wise builder "heard" the words of Jesus, and he "acted on them" (verse 24).

- *The wise builder was a practical man.* He knew the words of Jesus had no value unless they touched his life. He wasn't satisfied with the inspiration which came by hearing them or by the knowledge which came by studying them. He wanted to see the words of Jesus change his life! We must have a practical perspective about the words of Jesus as well. We must not be content to be merely emotionally moved by them or to be intellectually stimulated by them—we must not be content until they change us! They only have power to change us when we obey them.
- *The wise builder was a diligent man.* Luke 6:48 adds, "He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on a rock." Applying scriptural truth to our lives isn't easy—it requires diligence and digging. We must diligently dig deep into the Word. We must diligently dig deep into our souls to uncover areas of spiritual weakness, and examine ourselves (Second Corinthians 13:5).

Consider the two foundations.

The foundation is the most important part of the house. The purpose of a house is to provide protection and security from the elements, so if a house can't provide protection and security, it has little or no

value. The condition of the foundation, above all else, will determine the strength of the house itself: if the foundation is weak, the house has little value as a shelter.

A brother was once called to determine the problem with another brother's house. When he arrived, finding the walls were pulling away from one another, he discovered that the problem wasn't in the walls at all, but in the foundation. It was cracked and falling. He had to build up and strengthen the foundation in order to save the rest of the house. Imagine a beautiful mansion filled with expensive furniture and adorned with the finest materials, but it has no foundation—it was just built on the sand; as beautiful and as expensive as it is, it has no ability to withstand the elements, and it has no value to protect its occupants and fine ornaments. Likewise, our life-foundation is comprised of the principles which determine our actions. Our life-foundation is not made up of Jesus' words unless His words determine our actions! Our life-foundation is not comprised of our Christian beliefs unless those beliefs determine our actions!

There are only two foundations to choose from. Jesus visualized for us in the two foundations the obvious difference between the temporary and the permanent. *What's more temporary as a foundation than sand? It's moved from its place by the softest breeze; in fact, it's so transient that it can't even be considered a foundation (Luke 6:49). So Jesus was teaching that to build on the sand—that which is temporary—is the same as to build on nothing. *What's more permanent than bedrock? It can't be moved because it's anchored in the heart of the earth (Luke 6:48). So Jesus was teaching that to build on bedrock—that which is permanent—is the same as to build on that which is eternal—His words.

The house of the mere hearer is destined to destruction because, like the house without a foundation, it's founded on nothing. Some examples of a foundation on nothing are doctrines of men, peer pressure, and carnal desires. These foundations pass away with time, and they're nothing. The house of the doer is destined to endure because, like the house built on bedrock, it's founded on the eternal Word of God. The Word of God is secure because it will never pass away; it's a sure foundation (Mark 13:31 & First Peter 1:24-25). When we comply with the Word, making it a part of our lives, the eternal truth of Jesus gives our lives stability and eternal security.

Each man must choose the foundation of his life. The choice is clear: we either choose to endure for a moment or for eternity. The choice is ours to make. (See Luke 6:46.)

Consider the storm.

The storm was impartial. The same storm beat on both houses—both were exposed to the same peril, and both received the same abuse and wear. Likewise, the storms of life are impartial. All men are tested; trials are inevitable in life, and the Christian is not exempt from trials. In this statement Jesus destroys the "wealth and health of the Gospel" or the "prosperity doctrine" at its roots.

The storm was severe. The foolish builder didn't foresee the storm's severity: he had built his house only for fair weather. It was powerful enough to destroy the house. Imagine the scene: The torrential rain descended. The terrific winds blew. The mighty floods swept against the foundation. There's a period of dense darkness, and we're held in breathless suspense, but the storm spends its force and dies away. We then look on the place where the two houses were built, but alas, only one house now stands.

The storm revealed the foundations. In fair weather, the lives of the wise and foolish builders may have appeared similar in ways. Both may have appeared moral, helpful, friendly, dedicated, and as upstanding citizens. The difference is that the wise man lived daily in obedience to the teachings of Jesus, while the foolish man practiced the same teachings only when it was convenient, if then. There are many so-called "good, moral people" who appear to be every bit the Christian, but they're really "fools" (verse 26); the houses of their lives may appear to be beautiful, but they have no foundation, and the storms of life reveal this fact.

Conclusion

The house that endures is the house which has worth. After all, what's the purpose of a house but to endure the elements and to protect its occupants? The house that does this has value. A life of obedience to Jesus produces the kind of life which can endure trials with confidence and will finally realize the hope of Heaven; Christians have confidence in trials because they have the promise of the Lord's aid in whom they trust (Hebrews 13:5b-6).

In this life the Christian enjoys the fulfillment of the hopes which drew him to Jesus: the realization of peace, purpose, and joy; in the last day, as he stands before the judgment seat of Christ, the expectation of eternal life in God's presence to Christians will be fully realized (Second Corinthians 5:10 & Second Timothy 1:12).

[Leland Byars, 1990.]

[Adapted/Revised by Tony Denton, Nov. 1993.]