

The Devastation of a Shaky Foundation

In this series of articles I'm seeking to answer the question, "Are you building your life on a solid foundation?" Our biblical text is Matthew 7:24-27. Last time I noted that it's pretty easy to think that we're basing our lives on a solid foundation when things are going reasonably well. But, when trials and suffering come we want our lives to be built on the proven foundation which the scriptures testify is Jesus Christ. Any Christian who's lived very long at all knows that life without suffering will not be our experience this side of heaven. The following story is an example of that truth.

In 1968, twenty year old David Koop, a junior at Dartmouth College, was on a springtime mountain climb in the beautiful mountains of New Hampshire. Part of the way up the mountain, as he drove his hammer into the rock to apply an anchor, a boulder was loosed above him and came crashing down onto him. In a matter of moments, David was dead. This young man was full of promise and greatly loved by his parents Dr. and Mrs. C. Everett Koop. Dr. Koop was once the Surgeon General during the Reagan administration. They were devastated by the loss of their son. As they were looking through the personal affects that David had left behind they discovered his Bible....carefully marked so that they knew the last verse that he had read before going on that mountain climb. "Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). Clearly, regular time spent in the Bible (along with many other things his parents could note) indicates that David's hope was on the solid rock foundation of Jesus Christ. That verse became a continuing source of comfort to his parents during the inevitable time of grieving the loss of their son. Our rock solid foundation in Jesus is meant to sustain us during the trials of this life. Let's move on from, the foundation of the wise man to...

—The Foundation of the Foolish Man:

Let's look at verses 26-27. "And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." As we look at this section of scripture as a whole, the obvious picture is of two houses or two lives that appear to be in close proximity to one other and therefore have some things in common. And yet, commentators have spoken of this parable in terms of, "two lives, two foundations and two destinies." Initially, we may note that both "hear" the words of Jesus. They may go through many of the same types of experiences. The picture, then, is of two people who each claim to have a right relationship with Jesus Christ—a right foundation. One commentator notes that this passage illustrates that, "...both are members of the visible Christian community. Both read the Bible, go to church, listen to sermons and buy Christian

literature.” And yet, their foundation is hidden from view. The one house is built on a shaky foundation of sand. This person is merely going through the motions of the Christian life. He has not yet experienced the fullness of a crushing burden of suffering.

It’s often the case that much of life can pass by before the truth of a shaky foundation shows up. The picture that Jesus seems to be painting in this parable points to the erosion, over time, of a life that’s built on a foundation of sand. Eventually, if left unchanged, it will collapse. Just as in the previous section of Jesus’ teaching, one of these persons is not prepared to meet Christ in the final judgment and will one day hear, “Depart from me, I never knew you” (7:23). Jesus calls all people to be sure of their foundation.

In addition to this, it’s right that we should look at this from the perspective of the Christian life. Although all Christians have a rock solid foundation ultimately, at any given time we can live our lives practically as if we’re building on the sand. In a moment of time we can place our trust in the wrong persons or things when we find ourselves going through difficulties. As I noted last time, if we’re resting in anything or anyone besides Jesus Christ—even in the moment—we’re standing on shaky ground. Rev. Dr. Steve Jones is the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church PCA in Paxton, Illinois.