

Are You Building on a Solid Foundation?

In his autobiography, 19th century English preacher Dr. Joseph Parker tells of a time when he gave too much attention to the modern theories of his day. At that time, men were undervaluing the Word of God, and as he read their books and mingled in their meetings, he found himself losing his grip on the foundational doctrine of salvation through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ.

It was at this time that a great sorrow came into Dr. Parker's life. His wife, whom he loved deeply, became sick and died within a few hours. He found that he was unable to share his grief with others. Walking through the empty rooms of his home with a breaking heart, he sought some footing in the unbiblical theories of his day, but he found none.

After some time had passed and he was able to address his congregation, he spoke these words: "And then, my brethren, in those hours of darkness, in those hours of my soul's anguish, when filled with doubt and trembling with fear, I bethought myself of the old gospel of redemption alone through the blood of Christ, the gospel that I had preached in those earlier days, and I put my foot down on that, and ... I found firm standing. I stand there today and I shall die resting upon that blessed glorious truth of salvation alone through the precious blood of Christ." In this series of articles I want my readers to ponder the following questions: "Where am I placing my trust? In what or whom is my foundation for all of life?"

If the answer to those questions is found in my job, my marriage, my family, my bank account, or my retirement plan — as helpful as each of those may be — if that is our foundation, I want to suggest that we're standing on shaky ground. Our passage for this series comes from Jesus' teaching in Matthew's gospel called "The Sermon on the Mount." We'll be looking at 7:24-27. I want to follow the text as it's given and begin under the heading ...

The Foundation of the Wise Man: To set these verses in context we can say, initially, that Jesus gives us a summary and application of the teaching in verses 21-23 where he taught his followers of the danger of being self-deceived. But we could also say that verses 24-27 give a summary and application of the entire sermon. With that in our minds, look with me at verses 24-25: "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock."

We're given a clue that this section is directly connected to the previous section by the use of the Greek conjunction translated, "therefore," or in the ESV, "then." In verses 21-23, Jesus taught that there's a direct connection between "saying" and "doing." In this section there's a connection between "hearing" and "doing." The "wise" person is prudent and discerning. This person hears the truth and, by grace, wisely responds to that truth. We see this same type of thing in Matthew 24:45-46, where Jesus is speaking of the need to be prepared for his second coming: "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household to give

them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant who his master will find so doing when he comes.” This wise man, because he is a true servant of his Master, is properly involved in the service that he’s been given as he awaits his Master’s return.

As we seek to grasp the wisdom in the parable that’s before us, the imagery of the house is analogous to our life. A house, just like a life, may look good on the outside. It may even hold together as long as things are going reasonably well. But if we’re to avoid coming unraveled during the storms of life, our lives must be built on the Rock, which is Jesus Christ. The fires of trial and suffering can be relentless — loss of a job and the ability to care for our family; severe illness or even the unexpected death of a loved one. Any number of desperate situations can overtake us without warning.

Like Dr. Parker who, sadly, lost his loving wife, we can’t escape the difficulties of life in a broken world, but, by grace, we can have a solid foundation in Jesus.