

"The Wise Builder"

When I was a child used to get two songs confused: The Itsy-Bitsy Spider and The Wise Man Built His House Upon The Rock. In the Sunday School song, the rain came down, and the floods came up. In the nursery song, down came the rain and washed the spider out. Both of them had cool hand gestures. Long before I learned the gestures for "YMCA", I loved both of them. As cute as they both are, one is fun but the other one, even though also fun, teaches us a powerful and important lesson. In all of life, from childhood through old age in the choices we make, we are building something. And we are building *on* something. Jesus says your life is like a house. You can build it on a strong foundation that will hold up well, or you can build on sand, and all will be lost. The Illustration he uses to drive this home is simple but powerful. Everyone present that day had, heard his words. Jesus says the thing that would distinguish the wise hearers from the foolish was whether, having listened to His words they acted on, what they had heard.

Those who hear Jesus' words and do them are like wise men.

The word "*wise*" here describes someone who thinks deeply about things. If your life is compared to a house, this is a person who thinks about the foundation.

The man who hears but never gets beyond hearing is like a foolish man who builds his house upon the sand. The foolishness is probably not that he chooses to build on a bad foundation, but that he really didn't give the foundations much thought. Maybe he only cared about the interior decorating, or the facade.

The result, for the fool, is tragic. Have you ever seen pictures of houses torn apart and all ruined from floodwaters or hurricanes? The windows are in fragments, the rugs are a mess of caked mud, with bits of sticks and stones and torn curtains and broken chairs all mixed up with overturned appliances. It is a terrible sight - a home destroyed.

Yet Jesus is talking about something more than the houses we live in as families. Jesus is wanting us to "see" in our imaginations, that our lives are like houses. If we don't have a good foundation when the storms come, we will be swept away.

First of all, we need to understand that ...

I. THE WORD OF GOD GIVES US THE ONLY SURE FOUNDATION FOR LIFE.

Verse 24 says, *“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”* Now Jesus is especially talking about his words in the Sermon on the Mount, but he says the same kind of thing about all of his teaching and, in fact, about the whole of Scripture. In **John 8:31-32**, *Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* As I said, Jesus, in many places, uses *his words* to affirm the inspiration and trustworthy authority of *all of Scripture*.

A. Jesus spoke of the Bible as God's Word.

In **Luke 11:28**, He called the Bible *“the word of God.”* He said, *“Blessed ... are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”* In **Matthew 4:4** Jesus says, *“Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”* Jesus said the written words of the Bible are words that come from God. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, He quoted the Bible. When he was challenged by the people, He quoted the Bible. When people asked questions, He answered with the Bible. For Jesus, whenever there is an intellectual issue or a practical concern for him, the ultimate and final authority is *“it is written.”* Jesus’ ultimate question was: *What does the Bible teach?”*

In **2 Peter 1:20-21**, the apostle Peter writes, *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

Peter acknowledges that people had a part in writing Scripture. He says, *“Men ... spoke.”* But what makes the Bible different from other books is that in their speaking (or writing), the men were moved by God. The Biblical writers wrote out of their experience. They used their own vocabulary. The literary style of their writings varies. They sometimes use sources. The books of the Bible were written by people who were very human. But the books of the Bible bear evidence of being something more than *merely human*. Peter says that these writers *“spoke from God”* and were *“moved by the Holy Spirit.”*

So it is essential to believe Jesus when he points you to the Bible.

B. And it is a tremendous blessing to have the words of Jesus and the words of God in the Bible. Be thankful.

How you think of the Bible matters. Do you think of it as a list of mandates that constricts your freedom or as a firm foundation to keep you safe? Jesus gives us this image of the Bible because how we picture his words and its words matters. Do you see it as a foundation for a stronger life? I heard one woman express that thought that she had a hard time reading and reflecting on the Bible regularly because, at one point in her life, it had been drilled into her as something she just had to do to be a good Christian. So she went at it like some daily slog on a treadmill or a difficult diet. She felt she just had to buckle down and do it. The result was that she didn't want to do it and she didn't stick with it. Don't see it like that.

Psalm 19 speaks about God's revelation first in creation but then in Scripture. In **verses 7-9**, there is a tightly packed, poetic description of the Word of God that becomes the heart and focus of the Psalm. In three verses, there are six lines of thought. Each line contains three elements: 1st.) A title for the Word of God. 2nd.) A characteristic of the Word of God 3rd.) A powerful benefit of the Word of God.

Title	Characteristic	Benefit
7 The law of the Lord the testimony of the Lord	is perfect, is sure,	reviving the soul; making wise the simple;
8 the precepts of the Lord the commandment of the Lord	are right, is pure,	rejoicing the heart; enlightening the eyes;
9 the fear of the Lord the rules of the Lord	is clean, are true,	enduring forever, and righteous altogether.

All of this leads up to **verses 10-11** *More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them, there is great reward.* Gold and honey are symbolic of what is valuable and pleasurable.

Here Jesus says this is your foundation. Be thankful for it. Love it.

C. The Bible's foundation is especially important in a storm,

Verse 25 *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.*

What are the storms and floods? Anything that tests us. Is it fair to say what we are all going through to some degree right now is a storm? I did an online search for “storms” this week. Listen to some of the articles titles I came across. The first article, which ran on several online outlets, was titled: *“U.S. faces a ‘Perfect Storm’ of Political Violence Heading Into November Election.”* Another article was titled, *“What the Pandemic Storm is Revealing And What Will Be Left In Its Wake.”* A third example was titled: *“Children in the Eye Of the Pandemic Storm.”* We are all going through a storm. The words of Jesus in Scripture and the words of Scripture affirmed by Jesus - that's got to be our foundation as a church and your foundation as an individual or you will not stand. More than your natural inclinations, preferred experts, or present feelings, this has to be your rock.

II. SINCE THE WORD OF GOD GIVES US LIFE'S ONLY SURE FOUNDATION, WE NEED TO BUILD OUR LIVES ON IT.

When Jesus calls the Bible the foundation for life, he is telling us you have to put the whole house on it. Put everything on it.

A. To build your life on the Bible means you not only believe it, you do it.

Look again at **Matthew 7:24**. Jesus says: *“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. Now look at **verse 26**, 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.* The wise man and the fool both hear the word, but only the wise man actually does it. So, where do you see yourself in this picture?

We could apply this to many teachings in the Bible, but it is especially appropriate to apply it to the teaching Jesus is concluding: *The Sermon on the Mount*. Just look at the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said blessed are the peacemakers, and when in conflict, we are to take the log out of our own eye before we try to correct others. So are you building your relational style and your online engagement on that foundation? If not, you may be contributing to the dismal flood that threatens all of us. Jesus told us to pray, offering forgiveness for those who sin against us, to turn the other cheek, and go the extra mile.

In one of his great summary statements in The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, *let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.* This week I read where Paul applies this in ways that fit our current situation well. He is going to lead up to the part about letting our light shine but listen to the lead up! **Philippians 2:14-15** *Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.* We live in a culture of grumbling and disputing, behind your back critics and trash talkers. The beauty of Jesus' teaching is that he lifts us up and sets us on the rock to build our lives on a higher, purer, and firmer foundation.

He calls us to believe we have a Father in Heaven who knows our needs and hears our prayers and gives good gifts, and therefore we can shed our anxious fears and embrace faith, and do for others what we wish they would do for us. This is a tremendously positive passage. Jesus doesn't promise a life free from storms and floods, but he does promise that we can stand in it – our house – our lives can withstand the storms and floods.

There's one more thing, and it is essential.

B. To build your life on the Words of Christ ultimately means you build your life on a relationship with Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:11 says, *For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* This is not a contradiction but a complimentary truth. In **Ephesians 2:20**, Paul says the church is built *on the foundation of the apostles and prophets*, meaning the inspired men through whom God gave us the Bible but then he adds, *Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.* One of the more frequent names used to describe Jesus in the Bible is the cornerstone.¹

Today cornerstones are almost decorations, but in the days of the Bible, the cornerstone was the big stone off which everything else in the foundation was built. The cornerstone was the key to the whole thing. If the Word of God is the foundation for life, what is the cornerstone? The cornerstone is not a moral precept or a truth principle but a real person: The Lord, our Savior, Jesus. No matter how much you study the precepts of the Bible and live by its principles, if Jesus Christ is not the cornerstone of your life, you are missing what is more important.

What does it mean for Christ to be your cornerstone in life? First **1. For Christ to be your cornerstone in life means that He and he alone has to be your Savior.** You have to personally turn to Christ as your Lord and receive Him as your Savior, believing that He died for your sins and rose again for your salvation. Salvation is never something we deserve or earn. It's God's gift of grace given to those who turn to Christ and receive Him as their Lord and Savior by faith. If you have never received Him received Him your Savior and Lord turn to Him and trust in Him.

If He is your Lord and Savior understand this, **2. For Christ to be the cornerstone of your life, you have to make him your focal point as you build your life on God's Word.** What is it that functions as a sort of cornerstone that you are building your life around? Would you think about that? Look at what unsettles you the most or excites you the most. It may be that's what you have made the cornerstone of your life. When Christ Himself is your cornerstone, his support and acceptance, His guidance and grace, His presence in your life becomes your source of significance and security. Build your life on your relationship to him

CONCLUSION

I often see people shrug their shoulders at what they perceive to be difficult Scriptures and excuse themselves and others from obedience to the one they say is Lord and in whom they claim to believe. They go with their feelings or their favorite political pundits or just choose the culturally acceptable status quo of the culture for the power of a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

Almost every week, I see other people who bow their knees and say; *"Lord, you've saved my soul, You have redeemed my life, I believe in your love, I trust in your will, and by your grace, I will obey your word even when it's hard to do. I can't do it on my own or by myself, but Lord, I am going to keep repenting and believing and coming to you for strength as I put your words into practice in my life."* Those are the people who are building on the rock and on Jesus. Do that – be that.

Amen

Confession

Almighty God, Forgive the many ways we neglect the rich goodness of the relationship we have been given with you, by grace, in Jesus, through faith. Forgive us for being so willing to hear the words of Jesus and then neglect to do them. Forgive the many ways we revert to building on sand instead of on the rock. Heal us with your grace and teach us your ways. Forgive and renew us by your lavish mercy and restore us to our holy calling for your glory. Amen

Assurance

Father in heaven, thank you that we have union with you through the Christ and the gospel and live in communion with you through prayer and your presence. Thank you that you secure our eternal salvation through the cross of Jesus and enable us to sustain our daily relationship with you through confession of sin. As your servant, John writes: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9)

¹ Jesus used it in all of the gospels (Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17). Peter used it in the first sermon ever preached in Acts 4:11; Paul uses it in Ephesians 2:20, and Peter uses it again in 1 Peter 2:6-7