

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

Part LCVI

“A Tale of Two Houses”

I. Introduction

A. Review

1. We have come to the end of the Sermon on the Mount, the greatest sermon ever preached by the greatest Preacher who ever lived.

2. We have spent the entire year in a verse by verse study of the “normal Christian life”, the Lord’s perfect picture of what it means to be a believer.

3. The formal part of the Sermon concluded with the Golden Rule in Matthew 7:12.

4. The last 15 verses of the Sermon are a series of *warnings*:

- **Beware of a false Gospel (7:13-14)**
- **Beware of false Prophets (7:15-20)**
- **Beware of false professions (7:21-23)**

5. This 3rd warning contains “the scariest words ever heard”:

- V.21 Not everyone who calls Jesus Lord will enter the Kingdom of Heaven; but only those who “do the will of the Father” (v.21)
- **V.22** On Judgment Day, “many” who call Jesus “Lord”, even those who prophesy, work miracles, and cast out demons in His name will be rejected on Judgment Day! (V.22)
- To these He will say, “I never knew you”; not “I once knew you but now I don’t” or “I used to know you”, but “I never knew you”. This means these will not be saved people who fell away; they were self-deceived churchgoers who were never saved in the first place! Of these there are “*Many*”!

- Then He says, “Depart from me you who practice *lawlessness*”; these talked the talk but never walked the walk; their fruit proved they had no root in the Lord. All the time they were prophesying, casting out devils and working miracles, they were practicing lawlessness.

6. So now we come to the last 4 verses of the Sermon. They begin with the word, “Therefore...”

**“When you read a ‘therefore’ in the Bible, find out what it’s there for.”
Derek Prince**

7. When Jesus begins today’s lesson with ‘Therefore’ in verse 24, it means that He is adding on to what He just said; He is still on the same subject; a warning to those who say they belong to Him but don’t; those who say He is Lord but He isn’t; those who think they are going to heaven but they aren’t!

8. And He closes this great Sermon with a parable we are calling...

II. A Tale of Two Houses

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. 25 "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. 26 "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. 27 "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."

Matthew 7:24-27 NASB

A. Unpacking the Parable

1. Notice the simplicity of the parable:

**There are 2 MEN: 1 wise, 1 foolish
Both men are building a HOUSE
Both houses suffer TESTS: rains, winds and floods
But one house STANDS while the other house FALLS...
The difference is the FOUNDATION**

2. I first learned about foundations in 1971.

Elizabeth and I had just bought our first house. It was a brick home built on a slab. But there was a problem. We noticed there was a crack creeping up the mortar of the brick wall on the west side of the house. We were told us there was a problem with the foundation. It wasn't like the house was going to fall down overnight. But we realized that unless we repaired the foundation, all the other improvements we were planning wouldn't make much difference in the long run. So we had to stop everything else until we could fix the foundation.

- I remember how I hated the idea of spending money to fix something that no one was ever going to see! There were so many other improvements we wanted to make to the house-things that would make it look better-but foundations are below the surface and out of sight. But we took the time and spent the money to fix the foundation because we knew that in the end, it had to be right or else nothing else mattered.

a. *And so it is with religion.* There are many things we can do on the surface of our lives that make us seem to be Christian. We can join a church, attend services, or even work signs and wonders like those Jesus mentioned in the previous verses and still be building on sand.

b. The 2 houses in the parable looked the same on the surface.

3. The parable here teaches that we live our lives building a house for eternity and that the final judgment will reveal the foundation; whether rock or sand. But if we wait until then to know it will be too late! The time to examine our lives is *now*!

Examine yourselves to be sure you are in the faith.

2 Corinthians 13:5

a. The Apostle Paul wrote these words to the Church at Corinth; a church he had founded; a spirit filled church that Paul said came behind in no spiritual gift. (1 Corinthians 1:7); yet he still says, "Examine yourselves."

b. Remember Jesus' warning here in the Sermon on the Mount is addressed to all His disciples; He warns us to be sure our house is built on the right foundation *before* the judgment day arrives. So how can we know if our house will stand?

B. We Can Do A Foundation Inspection Right Now

1. I am so glad that Jesus doesn't leave us to wonder whether we belong to Him or not! Our blessed Lord states the case quite clearly....

Everyone who hears these sayings of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon a rock.

Matthew 7:24 ESV

“...everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice...”

Matthew 7:24 NIV

2. We can know right now if our foundation will stand by asking ourselves one question: Am I hearing and *doing* the words of Jesus? Is my heart set so much on loving Him that I truly want to keep His commandments? Or am I like the other man?

"But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

Matthew 7:26 NKJV

a. If I hear and do the word of the Lord I'm building on rock; if I only hear and don't do, I'm building on sand; I am not saved, even though I think I am.

b. The Apostle James was the ½ brother of the Lord Jesus; a few years after the resurrection, he wrote...

"But be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only, *deceiving your own selves.*"

James 1:22

3. Here's the difference between the wise man and the foolish man; the true believer and the hypocrite; the one who knows God and the one who only *thinks* he knows God: *one is a doer of what he hears, the other only hears, but does not do.*

a. It's possible to *look* like a Christian and *think* you are one but still not be one.

Talking about Christ, his righteousness, merits, and atonement, while the person is not conformed to his word and spirit, is nothing but solemn self-deception.

Adam Clarke

4. Those who hear the word and don't do the word are the "many" who say "Lord, Lord" but are sent away on Judgment Day.

5. Many are in deadly deception and don't know it because the difference between a Christian and a counterfeit Christian is often very *subtle*!

"subtle"

Difficult to perceive (Webster's)

A distinction so slight as to be difficult to analyze (Oxford)

Not immediately obvious (Cambridge)

C. The Subtle Similarities of True and False

1. This parable proves that it is not immediately obvious as to who is a real believer and who is not.

"We cling to the notion that the difference between the true Christian and the pseudo-Christian is obvious. Our Lord's whole point, however, is that this is a most subtle matter. It is not obvious either in the case of the men or the houses."

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

2. The 2 houses looked the same on the surface. So it is with people who claim to be Christian.

"There was no evident difference between Judas Iscariot and the eleven other disciples, though he was 'the son of perdition'."

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

a. Counterfeit money looks like real money! The difference is so subtle that at first glance, you can't tell the difference.

"Sincere trust in Christ is counterfeited in a thousand ways, and often imitated so accurately that only by rigid self-examination shall you discover the cheat."

Charles Spurgeon

b. We are not in danger from what is obvious. There are no counterfeit 3-dollar bills; deception is only possible when a thing looks real but isn't.

“Our Lord emphasizes this element of subtlety everywhere. It was there in the first picture of the men in sheep's clothing-the false prophets. It was precisely the same in that second picture: (those who say “Lord, Lord”) and it is so here also. The difference is not obvious; it is very subtle.”

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

3. The lesson here is that we can know *right now* if our foundation is on the rock by examining ourselves: are we hearing and doing the sayings of Jesus?

4. Eventually, foundations are revealed by...

3 Kinds of Storms

“Rain”-Refers to things that God allows into our lives

“Winds” refers to satanic attacks from the “prince of the power of the air”

“Floods” refers to attacks from the world

And the house built on the rock will stand!

5. On Judgment Day it will be too late to rebuild. Foundation work is done in the beginning! Now is the time to judge ourselves. How?

D. Guidelines

1. Jesus began the chapter warning us not sit in judgment of others. But He clearly expects us to examine ourselves.

"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

John 7:24 NASB

Look beneath the surface so you can judge correctly."

John 7:24 NLT

2. We make a mistake when we judge others only by appearance. The foundation is all that matters.

“Outward appearance is everything with men, but nothing with God. The essential difference between the true child of God and the mere professor is not readily to be discovered, even by spiritual minds, but the Lord sees it.”

Charles Spurgeon

III. Conclusion

A. How This Sermon Leaves Me

“I tremble for our churches now that false doctrine is rife, because I fear that many are not established in the truth.”

Charles Spurgeon

1. The only foundation that will pass the test on Judgment Day will be the Rock that is Christ, and our relationship to Him.

According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:10-11 NASB

2. After nearly 50 years of walking with the Lord, I have to say I believe my foundation is sure. But I never take God for granted. This Sermon on the Mount holds me ever accountable!

- The Beatitudes
- The righteousness God requires, greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees
- The strait gate and the narrow way
- The many dangers: false teaching, false prophets and false professions
- And this last one...knowing one day my life will stand exposed before the One who really knows me!

“The true test of a life comes at the final judgment when the foundation is revealed; obedience unto salvation or disobedience unto destruction.”

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

3. Our modern ears may well wonder why Jesus would end His magnificent sermon on such a somber note; the house built on sand will suffer a great fall, the

worse fall of all. But what better way to waken us to the seriousness of the whole subject!

“This parable teaches us that the only way to make sure our souls for eternity is, to *hear and do the sayings of the Lord Jesus, these sayings of his in this sermon upon the mount, which is wholly practical; some of them seem hard sayings to flesh and blood, but they must be done; and thus, as we read in 1 Timothy 6:19, ‘we lay up in store a good foundation for the time to come.’*”
Matthew Henry

4. My earnest prayer is that the words of this Sermon be our ever present picture of what the real Christianity is and what the “normal Christian life” looks like. May we hear it and do it.

COMMUNION

Let us examine ourselves:
What am I building my life upon?