

## BUILT TO LAST Matthew 7:24-27

My father was a story-telling preacher. He would typically end his sermons with a summarizing illustration, which he would introduce by saying: "If you miss my message, keep my story." This catchphrase meant that to get the point of the illustration was to get the point of the message. This is the way Jesus preached. The Gospels record more than thirty parables Jesus told to illustrate the point of his message. In many instances, the parable was the message. Jesus would toss a common experience alongside a spiritual reality to reveal truth to believers and conceal truth from unbelievers at the same time. Matthew 7:24-27 is one of the great parables of Jesus. It is not as famous as THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN or as beloved as THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON. But this simple parable has great significance because of its strategic location.

This PARABLE OF THE TWO BUILDERS is the conclusion of the Lord's SERMON ON THE MOUNT recorded in Matthew 5-7. The theme of this discourse is stated in Matthew 5:20, where Jesus declares, *"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."* This was startling news to this large crowd. In their minds, no one was more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees, because they misunderstood what true righteousness is. Romans 10:3 says, *"For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness."* In THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, Jesus confronts them with the righteousness standard of the kingdom of heaven. Then he ends the sermon by saying, as it were, "If you miss my message, keep my story."

**My father would retell the parable this way: One day, two men struck up a conversation while standing in line to get building permits. As they talked, they discovered they were going to be neighbors. They began their building projects approximately the same time. One man immediately began laying his foundation. The other man took his shovel and began digging. Sometime later, the first man began erecting the frame of his house. The other man just kept digging. The first man put up his walls and his roof. The other man kept digging. One day, the wife of the man with the shovel made her daily trip to bring him lunch. But she informed him that it would be her last. "This is embarrassing," she complained. "That family across the street is having a house warming party tonight. And you're still in this hole digging." As she was leaving, her husband hit something hard. "Baby, wait!" he said. "I think I found what I was looking for!" Having established a firm foundation, he finally built his house. On his first night in his new home, a terrible storm arose. The rains fell. The floods rose. The winds blew. But he slept peacefully through it all, until his wife woke him up. "Honey, look!" she said. "That house across the street is toppling over. But he never got out of bed. He was too tired. He just slept right through the storm."**

This is the story Jesus tells to warn his hearers that it is dangerous to hear his word without doing what it says. The life that lasts is built on the word of the Lord. This PARABLE OF THE TWO BUILDERS teaches us three facts about the life that lasts.

## **I. THE LIFE THAT LASTS IS BUILT ON A FIRM FOUNDATION.**

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO BUILDERS is about hearing and doing the word of God. The emphasis is on obedience. But hearing is important. Romans 10:14 asks, *“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?”* Hearing is essential to saving faith and Christian growth. But we must not stop with hearing. James 1:22 says, *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”* Hearing and doing must go together. MATTHEW HENRY said, *“Knowledge, not improved and well employed, will only increase our condemnation.”* In our text, Jesus describes the relationship between hearing and doing in terms of two men who built two houses on two different foundations.

### **A. WISE PEOPLE BUILD THEIR LIVES ON THE ROCK.**

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.”* In this verse, Jesus describes how wise people live. He does not identify wise people by what they know. Instead, Jesus teaches that wisdom is what you do with what you know. More specifically, wisdom is determined by how you respond to what he calls “these words of mine.” This phrase directly applies to THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT. It also applies to all of the teachings of Jesus. Ultimately, it applies to all scripture. The Bible is a Jesus-centered book. John 5:39-40 says, *“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.”*

Jesus says that everyone who hears the word and does what it says is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 1 Corinthians 3:11 says, *“For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* But here, Jesus does not point to himself as the foundation upon which one must build. He declares that his word is that rock. But this is no contradiction. The teachings of Christ are inseparable from Christ himself. To build on the word is to build on Christ.

In Luke 6:46, Jesus says, *“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you.”* Then in verses 47-48, Jesus says, *“Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.”* This is what it means to be a wise person. CHARLES SWINDOLL writes: *“Wisdom is the God-given ability to see life with rare objectivity and to handle life with rare stability.”* God gives this ability to those who hear and obey the word. Romans 2:13 says, *“For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.”* Wise people build their lives on the rock.

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### **B. FOOLISH PEOPLE BUILD THEIR LIVES ON THE SAND.**

Verse 26 says, *“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.”* These two houses apparently had much in common. They may have been similar in size and structure and material. You may not have been able to tell the difference between the two of them. But underneath the surface there was a great difference between the two houses. One house was built on the sand. Jesus has to be exaggerating to make a point. No one would build a house on sand. Have you ever stood in sand? It is a highly unstable surface that moves under your feet as you stand in it. Who in his right mind would build a house on sand? No wonder Jesus says the man who builds his house on the sand is *foolish*.

The references to wisdom and foolishness are not intellectual. They are moral, ethical, and spiritual. Proverbs 1:7 says, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”* This is the problem with society we live in. Fools despise the wisdom and instruction of the Lord. Some people think they can build their lives without any foundations. Others think they can build on any foundation. Both are wrong. You are inevitably building your life on something, be it money, education, family, work, or success. Will it stand? Only the word of God can stand the storms of life.

Jesus says foolish people refuse to hear and obey the word. And he is not talking to or about nonreligious people. He is talking to people who think they are citizens of the kingdom of heaven. They hear the word. But they do not obey it. Jesus calls them foolish people who are building their lives on the sand. The word of God is the only foundation that will withstand the storms of life. One day a crowd of over 5,000 men began to follow Jesus. By the end of the day, only the twelve disciples remained. In John 6:67, Jesus says, *“Do you want to go away as well?”* Peter answered, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God”* (vv. 68-69). These are good reasons for sticking with Jesus. He alone has the words of eternal life. Jesus Christ is the Holy One of God.

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## **II. THE LIFE THAT LASTS IS TESTED BY SEVERE STORMS.**

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO BUILDERS contrasts the wise and the foolish. But there is a parallel experience that both share. While built on different foundations, both houses were severely assaulted by a great storm. In regard to both houses, Jesus says, *“And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house.”* This parallel experience teaches three facts about the storms of life.

### **A. THE STORMS OF LIFE ARE *INEVITABLE*.**

Two men built houses on different foundations – one on the rock and the other on the sand. The rains fell on both houses. The floods rose against both houses. The winds beat upon both houses. The fact that these two houses faced the same

storm teaches us that the storms of life are inevitable, inescapable, and unavoidable. You can be righteous or wicked. You can be wise or foolish. You can build on the rock or on the sand. The storms of life will still come. This clearly debunks the popular myth that Christian people are exempt from the storms of life. Job 5:7 says, *“But man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.”* Job 14:1 says, *“Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble.”* This is the fact of life. Storms will come. Your faith in God will not prevent the storms of life. To the contrary, there are some storms you will face as a direct result of faith in God.

In Mark 4:35, Jesus said to his disciples, *“Let us go across to the other side.”* They got in a boat and began to sail across the Sea of Galilee. As they traveled, a storm erupted on the sea. But the disciples were not in a storm because they were disobedient. They were doing what the Lord told them to do. And Jesus was on the ship with them. Yet they still found themselves in a storm. Likewise, your spiritual devotion will not keep you out of a storm. Please do not ignore this reality because the sun is shining in your life. You are either in a storm, coming out of a storm, or heading into storm. The storms of life are inevitable. DR. H. BEECHER HICKS wrote a little book entitled, *Preaching Through A Storm*, about an extended season of conflict in his church. The storm subsided and peace restored. But the final chapter of the book is entitled, *“Storms Keep Coming.”* That’s the truth. Just because you have come out of a storm does not mean you can put away your storm gear, alert system, or emergency equipment. Storms keep coming.

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## **B. THE STORMS OF LIFE ARE OVERWHELMING.**

You have heard the axiom, “In every life, some rain must fall.” That statement, though true, is not the whole truth. The whole truth is recorded here in verses 25 and 27: *“And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house.”* The definite article, *“the rain,”* suggests that this was no passing shower. It was a torrential downpour. But it did not stop there. As the rainwaters fell, the floodwaters rose. The dry ground became the riverbed of a growing stream. But it did not stop there. As the rain fell and the floods rose, hurricane-force winds swept in and beat upon these houses. Any one of these elements was enough to destroy these houses. But all three of these nasty elements hit at the same time.

There are fair-weather Christians who act like they are going through a major storm the moment they feel a couple of raindrops. When multiple storm elements strike, they feel as if God has forsaken them. The fact is that there are times when life dumps one thing after another on you. And it seems that you are going to be swept away by your circumstances. But when the rains fall and the winds blow and the floods rise, God still has everything under control. The Lord uses storms to teach you to trust and obey him.

**A certain woman was robbed, kidnapped, and raped. When her assailants finished with her, the tied her up in duct tape, took her to a remote location, and dumped her in a ditch. When she came to, she found herself tied up in a ditch. But she trusted God to get her out, until the rain started to fall. This was too much for her. She said, “Lord,**

**you have allowed all of this to happen to me. And now you are going to let me die out here in a storm!" But as the rain fell, it began to loosen the duct tape. And she was able to wiggle her way to freedom. She later said, "God had to send the rain to set me free." That's how God works. He sends the storm to set you free.**

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### **C. THE STORMS OF LIFE ARE REVEALING.**

There is a sense in which the storms of life develop us. But they first reveal. The parable depicts a wise man who built his house on the rock and a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The emphasis is on the different foundations. No details are given about the structures that were erected. The inference is that the two houses had a lot in common, except for their foundations. They may have used the same materials. They may have been similar in size. They may have been comparable in worth. They may have looked alike. They may have even been built very close to one another, as they were both hit by the same storms. But there was one all-important difference. One was built on the rock, the other on the sand. This essential difference would have been very hard to recognize, because the uninformed observer could only see what stood above ground. The only way to clearly distinguish between these two houses was to hit them hard with a big storm.

It is the same way in our lives. Jesus affirmed this in the parable by saying that both the wise and foolish man heard his word. That is, both men appeared to be wise. They went to the same church, gave their tithes, served in ministry, lived morally, and claimed to love the Lord. If you had known them, you would have assumed they were both righteous. But they were two very different men. One was wise, the other foolish. One was saved; the other was not. One was righteous; the other was wicked. But nobody knew the difference until the storm hit. It is easy to fool the pastor, our family, friends, and associates, and even ourselves. But the storms of life will reveal what you are really made of. It is easy to claim faith when the sky is blue, the sun is shining, and the weather is fair.

- **You do not know what you believe until you go through a storm.**
- **You do not know how strong your anchor is until there is a tempest at sea.**
- **You do not know how deep your roots are until the wind starts blowing.**
- **You do not know how real your faith is until you have to trust God in a storm.**

True faith is ambidextrous. It can receive blessings with one hand and trouble with the other hand, trusting that both come from a good, wise, and sovereign God.

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### **III. THE LIFE THAT LASTS IS SECURE FROM FINAL DISASTER.**

Two men built two houses – one on the rock, the other on the sand. Both houses were assaulted by a cataclysmic storm. The rains fell, the winds blew, and the floods rose. But at some point, the storm ceased. This is good news: Trouble does not last always! The rain can only fall for so long. The winds can only blow so

hard. And the floods can only rise so high. Psalm 30:5 says, *“For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes with the morning.”* But the point is not how long the storm will endure. It is how long you will endure. This parable of Jesus affirms THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS, which teaches that those justified by faith in Christ will endure until the end. **The faith that fizzles before the finish had a fatal flaw from the first.** But those who have saving faith will endure, no matter how fierce the storms. That is the bottom-line of this parable.

#### **A. THOSE WHO BUILD ON THE WORD WILL STAND.**

Verses 24-25 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. 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.”* The house of the wise man stood because it was founded on a rock. The fact that it stood had nothing to do with the wise man. It had nothing to do with the house he built. It may have been an expert design that was well built with quality materials. But that is not the reason why it stood. It stood because it was founded on the rock.

This tells us something about the nature of scripture. The word of God is indestructible. Psalm 119:89 says, *“Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.”* Isaiah 40:8 says, *“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.”* In Matthew 24:35, Jesus said, *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”* God’s word is indestructible. It cannot fail. It will not be defeated. It stands forever. This text also tells us something about those build on the word. They will endure the storms of life. Proverbs 10:25 says, *“When the tempest passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous is established forever.”* This does not mean your life will not be shaken. I have a book, entitled, *“God Has Never Failed Me, But He’s Sure Scared Me To Death A Few Times.”* The tempest may shake you up. But you will be established forever.

**A ship was wrecked in a furious storm and the only survivor was a little boy who was swept by the waves unto a rock. He sat there all night long, until he was spotted and rescued the next morning. “Did you tremble while you were on the rock during the night?” someone asked. “Yes,” said the boy. “I trembled all night. But the rock didn’t move. So it is with all who cling to the word of God!**

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#### **B. THOSE WHO DO NOT BUILD ON THE WORD WILL FALL.**

Verse 26-27 says, *“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.”* This is a clear warning of divine judgment that speaks of both time and eternity. If you do not build your life on the word of God, the storms of life will bring you down. The storms may undermine your goals, deteriorate your



health, divide your family, devour your finances, ruin your career, or overthrow your success. Your seemingly stable life can come crashing down if you do not obey the word of God. Proverbs 14:12 says, *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.”* Without God, you are doomed to fail miserably or succeed miserably. Even if the storms do not catch you in this life, there is an ultimate storm you will have to face. D.A. CARSON comments: “Indeed, Jesus’ teaching says important things about race relations, social justice, and personal integrity; but it cannot be fairly reduced to the temporary concerns of my lifetime here. There is a heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned.” Your only hope for eternal life is to repent of your sins, run to the cross, and trust and obey the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

There is bad news and good news. The bad news is that you are the foolish man who built his house on the sand. All of us have failed to build on the rock. You have disobeyed the word of God. You have rejected the authority of Christ. You have grieved the work of the Spirit. You have failed to do what you knew was right. All of us have played the fool. But the good news is you can begin again! Luke 12:13-21 records THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL. He received a great harvest. In his arrogant self-sufficiency, he determined what he would do with his surplus. He would tear down his barns and build bigger ones. But God checked him out of here that very night. His motives were wrong, but not his methods. If there is something that is not in line with the word of God, tear it down and build it again!

In Acts 27, Paul is on a ship to Rome that is caught in a storm. They did not listen to him when he told them not to set sail. In the midst of the storm, Paul told them what the Lord revealed to him in a vision. Paul would make it safely to Rome. The ship would be destroyed. But there would be no loss of life. In Acts 27:25, Paul says, *“So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.”* This is our hope. God will do just what he said. His word will not fail. The Lord will keep his promises.

**STANDING ON THE PROMISE OF CHRIST MY KING  
THROUGH ETERNAL AGES LET HIS PRAISES RING  
GLORY IN THE HIGHEST I WILL SHOUT AND SING  
STANDING ON THE PROMISE OF GOD**