

The Unshakable Foundation 5-23-04

Matthew 7:24-29 (NIV)

²⁴"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." ²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

"Therefore..." Every time you see a "therefore" go back and see what it is there for. I hope you don't get tired of me saying that. It is an important Bible study principle. The "therefore" connects today's topic of living what we hear with the whole sermon but especially with the last paragraph about wolves acting like sheep but having no real relationship with Jesus, never knowing Him. (Matthew 7:15-23)
So Jesus is continuing the thought of those who act like believers, even to the extent of the miraculous, yet they are serving themselves.

In our text for today, Jesus divides His hearers into two groups. There are those who hear and let the words become a part of their life. They allow the way they see the world to be changed by Jesus' eternal perspective. Jesus said that they put His words into practice. Luke records Jesus as saying, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." Luke 11:28 (NIV)
In John, Jesus says, "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." John 13:17 (NIV)
We see all through the Gospels that Jesus taught that it was one thing to hear, and another to put it into practice. It troubles me when I preach on a topic one week and see us refusing to put it into practice the next. On the other hand, I rejoice when something is taught from the Word of God and I see an attempt to really put it into our lives. I'm seeing more and more of that lately. That means the Lord is truly working in our midst. Surely Jesus felt this much more than I do. He realizes to the fullest extent the blessing to us who hear and obey, and the loss to those who only hear.

The other group Jesus spoke to in this passage includes anyone who hears and yet does not let it into their heart to change them. They refuse to put into practice the words they hear. When the Holy Spirit checks their spirit, they are either so calloused they do not sense it, or they purposely choose to go their own way, missing out on the blessing of obedience.

What does it mean to practice the teachings of Jesus? He said, "these words of mine." He is probably referring back over His whole message: the beatitudes, the law including what goes on in the heart, loving enemies, secret prayer, fasting and giving, refusal to worry, relying upon God, and having a personal relationship with Him. Did you notice that these are all inner things? They are all heart issues. This

Commented [notes1]: ¹⁵"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.
¹⁶By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?
¹⁷Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.
¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.
¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
²⁰Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.
²¹"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.
²²Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'
²³Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'
Matthew 7:15-23 (NIV)

sermon cannot be practiced like the Old Testament law with outward ritual. It requires a committed heart.

How do you practice that? Well, Jesus described it. Meet with Him for secret prayer. Give to the needy in secret. Have a different attitude about what is truly blessed. Love your enemies. Have faith in your Father's care and provision for your needs. Be forgiving and generous in your attitude toward others. As we go through these things, are you noticing that these are attitudes, a mindset, but certainly not the one we are born with? If you will practice these, if you will let Jesus' own Spirit direct your heart reaction to the things we face on a daily basis, then you will be salt and light in this world.

²⁴"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Your house will be on a solid, unshakable foundation.

What is your house? Jesus is referring to the net affect of your life. That net affect will follow you into eternity. The Apostle Paul put it this way,

¹⁰By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. ¹⁵If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 (NIV)

Paul is just repeating the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 6:25(NIV)

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"

Matthew 6:31-33 ³¹So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

This isn't easy! It is a life of faith. Focusing on the spiritual, putting into practice these sayings of Jesus that focus on the heart is building on a solid foundation.

We tend to think that savings in the bank, some investment property, and having your house paid off is security, a good foundation. It isn't that those things are evil; it is that you can't build anything lasting on those things. There is a storm coming! Like the people in Kansas found out two weeks ago, the material can be gone in an instant. That was a literal storm, but there are also spiritual and emotional storms.

(1 Peter 1:6-7) Your spouse can leave you or precede you in death. Your friends can turn their back on you. Your church might let you down. Those things don't make a good foundation. What did the Apostle say was the foundation he tried to lay?

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 3:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: ⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

⁷These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1 Peter 1:6-7 (NIV)

It is the only real foundation, Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 2:20) None other can withstand the storms of life. None other can withstand the final storm of judgment. (1 John 2:17)

Commented [notes3]: ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.
Ephesians 2:20 (NIV)

The Apostle said there is a grand finale storm coming. It is the storm that will test everything when we pass into His presence. Are our actions to earn the praise of men, or from a personal relationship with Jesus? It reminds me of the movie title, The Perfect Storm. That will be the storm of all storms. After the waves break, everything that was selfish, independent, fear motivated, and self-exalting will be gone. It is interesting that those things are most visible now, but the work of God in a life is mostly invisible. These qualities and attitudes in Jesus' sermon are expressed outwardly, but the greatest change is internal. (Romans 2:29)

Commented [notes4]: ¹⁷The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.
1 John 2:17 (NIV)

After the perfect storm sweeps past those works motivated by the Spirit of God out of love and devotion for God, the lasting precious work will be cleared of all the clutter and stand out like amazing works of art. The storm only serves to set them off in their splendor. (1 Peter 1:7) They are the works of Christ in us, done through His Spirit. (Galatians 2:20)

Commented [notes5]: ²⁹No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.
Romans 2:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: ⁷These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.
1 Peter 1:7 (NIV)

Jesus told a story of two young men who both heard their father's instruction. One of them said he would do it but did nothing. The other told his father he wouldn't do what was asked, but he turned around and did it anyway. (Matthew 21:28-32) Jesus was using the parable to tell religious people that those they despised were going to enter heaven because they heard John the Baptist and acted on what they heard. Hearing is meaningless without obedience.

Commented [notes7]: ²⁰I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
Galatians 2:20 (NIV)

Twice in John 14 and twice again in John 15 Jesus related obedience to love. "If you love me, you will obey what I command," he said. John 14:15 (NIV) And so, we are back to the criteria that we read about last week. Do you know Him? Is He the One you are enamored with, the One you obey from the heart? That is building on the unshakable foundation. That is building on a footing that storms can only enhance.

Commented [notes8]: ²⁸"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'
²⁹"I will not," he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.
³⁰"Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go.
³¹"Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.
³²For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him. ... [1]

This life is full of storms. They are guaranteed. (John 16:33) They are coming because there is an enemy of your soul that seeks to destroy you. (John 10:10) They are coming because we live in a fallen world. What happens when they come depends on the foundation you have built upon. If it is obedience out of love, you will come out stronger. (Romans 5:3-5)

Commented [notes9]: ³³"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
John 16:33 (NIV)

In fact, Peter writes,

⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1 Peter 1:6-7 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.
John 10:10 (NIV)

If the foundation is on anything else, the storms will have the affect that the enemy of your soul desired. What happens when our house falls? In this life it can look like depression, a nervous breakdown, or addictions. Ultimately it can mean that we stand naked before God with nothing to show for His investment in our life.

Commented [notes11]: ³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;
⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ... [2]

²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Jesus didn't quote other authorities and opinions; He was the authority. He spoke authoritatively, because He lived everything He taught. If our words are to have impact, we need to back them up with our lives. Whenever we speak the words of Scripture we can know they carry an authoritative weight of their own. God's word does not return empty. It accomplishes the purpose for which God sends it. (Isaiah 55:11)

The teachers of the Law quoted the Law, but then added their opinion and backed that opinion up by quoting famous rabbi. (Matthew 23:2-3) They thought it added to the authority with which they spoke when actually it detracted. Jesus listened to the Father and spoke what He heard from the Father. (John 12:49) No wonder His words packed a punch. He wasn't relying upon men, but upon God. Our words will be affective as well when we speak at the prompting of the Holy Spirit. We all have our opinion, but when we simply quote a Scripture at the leading of the Spirit, or say what the Spirit of God is prompting us to say and leave it at that, they will have the greatest impact for good. (1 Peter 4:11)

I suppose those teachers of the Law would have said their life was built on the rock. When Jesus described the collapse of the house that was built on sand, I doubt any of them feared it applied to them, and yet, they should have. Their lives were built on the sand of religious traditions. (Mark 7:6-7) Jesus said in regards to them, "They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." Matthew 15:9 (NIV) Jesus' teachings about the heart were not put into practice. Even though they taught some of the same things, like secret giving and thinking the best about others, their hearts did not follow their teaching.

How does that happen? How do we hear Sunday after Sunday the Word of the Lord and yet allow our hearts not to be changed? Jesus gives us a clue in this passage from John, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." John 14:23 (NIV)

It is only love that can cause us to desire a heart change from selfishness to self-sacrifice. Any time there is no genuine love for God, the lips may say all the right words, but the heart will lead the life under other motives. How is your love for Jesus? Does it motivate you enough to take these sayings of Jesus and really put them into practice?

I hear some folks express a great commitment, but when we read the instruction of Jesus to fast in secret there is no soul searching, but only a desire to find an excuse. Love doesn't look for excuses. It looks for a way to enter into the request of the One it loves. Why should I seek the blessing of God by changing my attitude to match that of the beatitudes? Because I love Him. I love Him enough to mourn, to be insulted, misunderstood, and persecuted and consider it a blessing. I want that reward in heaven to lay at His feet in appreciation.

Did you forget these last few months requests from the lips of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount? Love should motivate us to remember them and do everything we

Commented [notes12]: ¹¹so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.
Isaiah 55:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: ²The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.
³So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.
Matthew 23:2-3 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: ⁴⁹For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.
John 12:49 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: ¹¹If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.
1 Peter 4:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: ⁶He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.
⁷They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men."
Mark 7:6-7 (NIV)

can to live them. When we hear His words and reasons for not judging one another, does love motivate us to truly practice that? Then you can know your house is built on a rock. But if His words aren't changing your heart so that you pray in secret, give in secret, love your enemies, worship instead of worrying and the other instructions from Jesus' lips, we have to consider the possibility that our house may be built upon sand. We don't love Him enough to act on what He has taught for our good. (1 Thessalonians 5:20-21)

Commented [notes17]: ²⁰do not treat prophecies with contempt.
²¹Test everything. Hold on to the good.
1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 (NIV)

You might think I'm being harsh, but if your child were headed into traffic on his bicycle would you try to soften your words? This is what Jesus is warning us in this passage. If love hasn't motivated us to remember the teachings of this sermon to put them into practice, we may love ourselves enough to ask for heaven but not love Him enough to obey His words. How will your heart ever be changed to live these sayings if you don't remember them let alone endeavor to see your heart changed by them? (Colossians 3:16)

Commented [notes18]: ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.
Colossians 3:16 (NIV)

The other side of this coin is the assurance that if you are clinging to Jesus' teaching, endeavoring to see your heart conform to what He is saying by the power of His life in you, you can know that your life is built on the rock. Know that whatever storms come, your house will stand. You can face anything because you are not facing it alone. The living Lord Jesus is resident within you seeing you through. (Matthew 28:20) I've heard testimonies from within this congregation of people who take home Jesus' teaching and remind each other to put them into practice. Why? Because they love the Lord and want to obey. Love motivates them. (1 John 5:3)

Commented [notes19]: ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
Matthew 28:20 (NIV)

The love that would cling to His words and let them change the heart is your assurance that you are building on the rock. (John 14:23) If you don't have that kind of love, you can ask for it. (Matthew 7:7-8) Jesus wants to enter into that kind of relationship with you. Everything then becomes a heart matter, because your relationship comes from the heart. Do you love Him? Is it a real love that puts into practice what is heard? (John 14:15)

Commented [notes20]: ³This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,
1 John 5:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: ²³Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."
John 14:23 (NIV)

The following story is taken from *Reaching Toward the Heights* by Richard Wurmbrand.

Russians packed the theater in Moscow. It was a premiere of a new play, "Christ in a Fur." Alexander Rostovtsev, a convinced Marxist who moved among the highest circles of Soviet life, was to play Jesus Christ.

Commented [notes22]: ⁷"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.
⁸For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.
Matthew 7:7-8 (NIV)

A mockery of an altar occupied center stage. The cross on it was constructed of wine and beer bottles. Full glasses surrounded it. Fat "clergymen" said a drunken "liturgy" consisting of blasphemous formulas. In this sham of a church, "nuns" played cards, drank and made ugly jokes while the "religious service" went on.

Commented [notes23]: ¹⁵"If you love me, you will obey what I command."
John 14:15 (NIV)

Then Rostovtsev appeared as Christ, dressed in a robe. He had the New Testament in his hands. He was supposed to read two verses from the Sermon on the Mount, then throw away the book in disgust and shout, "Give me my fur and my hat! I prefer a simple proletarian life."

But something unexpected happened. The actor did not stop after two verses. Instead, he continued reading. "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth..." On and on he read through the Sermon while the prompter tried in vain to get him to stop.

Finally he came to the last sentence: "The result was that when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching." Rostovtsev then made the sign of the cross in the Orthodox manner and said in a loud but humble way, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." With that, he left the stage, never to be seen again. The Communists disposed of him.

Rostovtsev must have had a chance to read bits and pieces of the Sermon on the Mount during his practices. That opening night he had to make a decision. Would he build his house on sand or on the rock? He made his choice. He asked for the ultimate gift. He determined to seek after righteousness. He turned from communism and the position and power it offered him to knock on the door of heaven. What about you? If you make it your reason for living to seek His kingdom and His righteousness, you won't be torn between two masters. There is only one Master that is worth investing your life in, only One that becomes the unshakable foundation for life, only One that is worthy.

Page 3: [1] Commented [notes8] notes

²⁸"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'

²⁹"I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

³⁰"Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go.

³¹"Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.

³²For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

Matthew 21:28-32 (NIV)

Page 3: [2] Commented [notes11] notes

³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;

⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope.

⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Romans 5:3-5 (NIV)