

### **Building on the Rock**

As those who have been “bought with the price of Jesus’ precious blood” we are no longer our own. We therefore now make it our ambition in life to glorify God in everything we do (**1 Cor. 6:19-20**). Another way of describing our discipleship is that since Jesus died for us, His love now constrains us that we might no longer live for ourselves but for him who for our sake died and was raised (**2 Cor. 5:14-15**). A disciple, by the example of the apostles, is one who leaves everything and follows Jesus (**Luke 5:11**). While this may not take the form of completely leaving behind our vocations, as it did for the apostles, it certainly means that when we are united to Jesus Christ through faith, our goals, convictions, and behavior are transformed by His Kingdom and His righteousness to take on a higher purpose and ethic for our lives. Very simply we are called by Jesus to die to our old lives and be raised in Him for an entirely new life He has come to give us – we are new creatures, new creations, and our old life has now passed away. Jesus describes this transition in our lives as “denying ourselves, taking up our crosses, and following Jesus wherever He now chooses to lead us (cf. **Luke 9:23**). Paul expresses this new calling upon our lives beautifully to the Philippians:

**Philippians 3:12-14** Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

It is this pressing on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus that now defines our every motive, goal, and ambition in our lives. Jesus describes his calling of us in our passage this morning as a man who builds his life on the firm foundation of the rock (**READ vv. 46-49**). The rock here is clearly Jesus and more particularly His teachings (**vv. 46-47**). God has sovereignly united us to Christ and by His Spirit He is now making you willing to be conformed to the glorious image of His Son, Jesus, by obeying all He has commanded. The great commission spells this out formally:

**Matthew 28:18-20** <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

To follow Jesus means that we are eager to observe ALL that He has commanded us with the assurance that by His Spirit, He is with us to the end of this age. When we do so, we are like the man who dug down deep to the foundation of rock to build the house of his life upon Christ. When the storms and floods break out against the house, it will not be shaken or moved because it is built on something firmer than what this world has to offer. When your life is built on Christ though you may be afflicted in every way, you will not be crushed; though you may be perplexed, you will not be driven to despair; though you may be persecuted, you will not be forsaken; and though you may be stuck down, you will not be destroyed. Why? Because the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is hidden within you so that you know that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to you (cf. **2 Cor. 4:6-9**).

Those who choose to build their lives on merely human knowledge are like blind men leading blind men who together will fall into a pit (**Luke 6:39**). They build their lives on what they know, on human intuition, human philosophy, ethics, traditions which are all like the shifting sands of this world with no true foundation. When the storms come and beat against his house, immediately it falls and the ruin to his house is great (**Luke 6:49**).

Jesus further describes the man or woman who is united to Christ and, as His disciple, chooses to live by Jesus' words as a "good tree" who bears "good fruit" (**6:43-45**).

So what teachings is Jesus talking about? Well, the context provides us with the answer. Look back at v. **20** where Jesus begins to address His disciples. Jesus is describing those who are willing to be poor, hungry, and mournful in the things of this world knowing that they are living for an eternal kingdom, which will never pass away. They are looking to the heavenly kingdom and the new creation for when they will be filled and be ultimately joyful. They are willing to be hated, excluded, reviled, and their name spurned as evil for the sake of the Son of man knowing that great is their reward in heaven (**6:20-23**). In contrast, those who choose their kingdoms now, in this world, are those who build their lives on shifting sands. They want their reward now, their consolation now. They want to be rich in the things of this world, to be well fed in the pleasures which are immediately before their eyes and therefore to be filled with joy in the earthly treasures whose glory is quickly fading away (**vv. 24-26**).

Because Jesus' disciples are willing to give up what is temporary to gain what is permanent, they will often be cursed, abused, and hated by those who want to live for immediate satisfaction in this world. After all, Jesus was hated long before you were. Jesus warned us:

**John 15:18-21** "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. <sup>21</sup> But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

Jesus knows that when this happens you will be tempted over and over again to resist what Jesus is teaching you. Our old habits of sin are hard to break especially when we find ourselves being threatened by others. When we are cursed, abused, and hated for the sake of Jesus and His life in us we are tempted to respond in like kind, even if Jesus left us a contrary example:

**1 Peter 2:21-23** <sup>21</sup> For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup> He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. <sup>23</sup> When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

As Jesus' disciples we are called to walk before those who hate us the way He walked before those who hated Him. What does that look like? Practically it means that you are to love your enemies – those who hate you, who curse you, and who abuse you for the sake of the Son of Man. Rather than hate them back, you will do good to them; rather than curse them back, you will bless them, and rather than abuse them back, you will pray for them (**Luke 6:27-30**). What does it look like? It looks like the cross of Jesus. In essence, you will be merciful to all others in the same way that your Father is merciful towards you. This is how you build your life on the rock of Jesus Christ.

Further, rather than judging and condemning those who spitefully use and abuse you, you will forgive them and give to them all you have (**6:37-38**) knowing that you have for yourself a "better possession and an abiding one" in Jesus Christ (**cf. Heb. 10:34**).

But you may say this morning: but you don't know what my mother is like! You don't understand what my father did to me. Or, you don't know what it's like to live with my wife, or you can't possibly understand how difficult it is to love the husband I have to live with. But Jesus is not telling you to live this way out of ignorance of what it is like to be abused by others. The author of Hebrews assures you:

**Hebrews 4:14-16** Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do

not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus knows full well what it is like to be abused, hated, and cursed by others so that He can fully sympathize with your weaknesses. And the good news for you this morning is that He is not standing aloof from you in commanding you to be loving toward your enemies, to be merciful, and to forgive rather than condemn. No! He promises to be with you by His Spirit through to the end. He is with you, ready to provide His power to be loving toward your enemy, to be merciful to those who abuse you, and to forgive those who hate you. In every step, you can boldly draw near to His throne of grace to receive mercy and find His grace to help in your time of need.

Beloved do not be afraid to bear the “good fruit” of loving your enemy, being merciful, and forgiving rather than condemning. The Father and the Son have poured out the “life-giving Spirit” upon you to be with you at every step you take to the very end. Your Triune God loves you and He is with you through it all. He will never leave you nor forsake you in this. Jesus is the good tree; abide in Him as He abides in you. Apart from Him you can do nothing, but united to Jesus Christ you are enabled by His Spirit to produce much good fruit for the Kingdom of God. And the evidence that you are united to Jesus Christ is that you love all others as He has loved you and by this the world will know that you belong to Him if you love as He loved you (**John 13:34-35**).

**John 15:8-12** <sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. <sup>12</sup> ¶ "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Build your life on this ROCK and you will never be disappointed.

**Amen!**

**-SDG-**