

What Is Your Foundation?

Gregory Lawhorn

Matthew / Matthew 7:24–29

What Is Your Foundation?

INTRODUCTION

Jesus brings the Sermon on the Mount to a close by challenging us to take everything He said very, very seriously. A few years ago a pastor of a very large church made this statement: “If you obey what Jesus commanded, you’ll be better at life, and have a better life. You might even get saved.”

But Jesus did not teach the Sermon on the Mount so that condemned people could have a little nicer experience on earth before judgment. He taught these things so that we know what the Kingdom of Heaven is, and what it means to be in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The high standards of the Sermon on the Mount are out of our reach. If we don’t understand that, then we don’t understand anything. The point of this is not to rob us of hope, but to give us hope. If hope is based on our ability to please God according to His holiness, then there is no hope for any of us. But if hope is based on our faith in Jesus

Christ and the Gospel, then there is hope enough to last for all eternity.

There is no question that Jesus teaches us what we need to know and do in these chapters, but He also entered into our world and lived the life He calls us to live, fulfilling His own commands for us. Before we look at the Sermon on the Mount and think, “This is what I must DO,” we must look to Jesus Christ and say, “This is what He HAS DONE for me.”

Does that mean that the commands of the Sermon on the Mount are there just for show? No, not at all. We are truly meant to live this way. But before we can live this way, we must be born again by the Spirit of God. When the Holy Spirit gives us a new nature, He also teaches and empowers us to live in that new nature. We experience conversion and transformation. When the Father promised the New Covenant in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, He said this:

Ezekiel 36:24–27 2016 ESV

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

So the person who claims to be a Christian, but still has the same life, the same sins, the same rebellion against God, the same inability to obey Him, is not a Christian.

Perhaps we can summarize it this way: obeying Jesus Christ is not what we do in order to BE saved, it is what we do because we HAVE BEEN saved.

TRANSITION: As the Sermon draws to a close, Jesus divides up His hearers in two broad groups: the person who does what He teaches, and the person who doesn't. They have some things in common; let's talk about those first.

What They Have In Common

The first thing they have in common is hearing the words of Jesus. There are two kinds of people in the world; those who have not heard Jesus' words, and those who have.

Hearing is not understanding. Some things in Scripture are clearer than others. Some people have a greater ability to understand, while others have a lesser ability. But on the other hand, the things that need to be known and believed and obeyed for salvation are sufficiently clear in Scripture that even a small child can understand them, and those who hear the Gospel are accountable for what they have heard.

These people have heard the Gospel. But hearing the Gospel is not enough, is it? Otherwise there wouldn't be two groups.

And the second thing they have in common is facing the judgment of God.

This is what Jesus means by “and the rains fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house.” He isn't talking about the difficulties and trials of life. He's talking about final judgment, and describing it as a storm.

Because all people are sinners – we are born into rebellion against the Creator and violate His holiness every opportunity we get – we all face His judgment. The judgment of God is not coming upon the really bad people; it's coming upon everyone. That's not because the Lord is going to be unfair toward good people; it's because there ARE no good people. We live, we die, and then comes

judgment.

Are Christians judged?

Yes, no, and yes.

Yes – we were not born under a different set of rules. Christians are not those who are born right with God, but those who are made right with God through Jesus Christ.

No – Jesus bore God’s judgment against us on His cross, and He completely satisfied God’s righteousness judgment against us. We will not ever again face judgment regarding salvation.

And yes – we will have our works in Jesus Christ judged, and be rewarded accordingly. The judgment of our works will not change our eternal destiny; it will determine the rewards we receive from the Lord.

TRANSITION: So, the people who do what Jesus teaches, and the people who don’t, have two things in common: they hear the words of Jesus, and they face the judgment of God. Let’s talk about how they differ.

Where They Differ

First, the wise do what Jesus taught; the foolish do not do what Jesus taught.

The wise build their house on the rock. The word “rock” here does not simply mean a rock, or a piece of rock, or using rocks to build a foundation. It means rock itself as a substance, bedrock, solid rock. This is rock like El Capitan in Yosemite National Park, 3,000 feet tall. This is rock like Ayers’ Rock in Australia, 1,142 feet tall. This is rock like Gibraltar, 1,400 feet tall. Solid rock all the way through.

Jesus compares His words to solid rock: a permanent, unyielding foundation for life. The wise live according to the Word of God.

In contrast, the foolish build their house on the sand. Sand is not solid. It shifts, collapses, and moves. I learned on my first kayaking trip that you can’t stand on sand in a flowing river; you sink, especially as you move. There’s no more unstable surface than sand. Well, there are people who hear the words of Jesus – the Word of God – and then reject it for a different foundation for life. The sand is a picture of everything other than what the Word of God teaches. The world is full of people who have heard enough of the Gospel to repent and believe, yet ignore the Word and instead try to live according to their own ideas, opinions, values, desires, and so on.

And second, those who do what Jesus commands will survive judgment; those who ignore His commands will not.

Jesus describes judgment as a sudden, fierce, torrential storm, like storms in the desert and dry places can be. Judgment is inescapable. It is inevitable.

Ezekiel 30:3 2016 ESV

For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.

Joel 1:15 2016 ESV

Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 2016 ESV

For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

What Happens On Judgment

Day?

The Wise: Those who heard the words of Jesus, the Gospel, and believed it, and lived according to it; those who were born again by the Spirit of God, and were converted; those whose lives became testimonies of God's power to change sinners; they will be untouched by the Day of Judgment. Jesus already bore the judgment against His people. He satisfied the Father's wrath. Just as God's judgment against Egypt passed over the Hebrews because of the blood of the lamb that was smeared on the doorways of their houses, the judgment of God will pass over those who are in Jesus, because His blood has been shed for them.

The Foolish: But those who are foolish – those who hear the Gospel and ignore it, or redefine it to suit themselves, or who shrug their shoulders at it – will be destroyed. The full weight of the judgment of God will fall on them. They will be helpless before His throne. Their excuses will have no effect on His wrath. Right before this passage Jesus speaks about those who will point to their good religious activities; Jesus will respond to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.” The best “good works” are works of sin when done apart from faith in Jesus Christ. Like houses built on sand crumble when the storm hits, those who heard the Gospel but rejected it

will be utterly destroyed by the judgment to come.

There is no person so righteous that they can survive judgment apart from Jesus Christ.

There is no person so wicked that Jesus Christ cannot save them.

Bringing It Home

What's your foundation?

This is a hard question, especially for people who are moral or religious.

I know people who have heard the Gospel presented clearly, and yet who are convinced that their own goodness is what will matter on the Day of Judgment. Maybe they decided for themselves, or maybe some church told them that being personally good is all that matters. They have built their lives on the shifting sand of self-righteousness. They encourage others to do the same. They don't understand that righteousness and goodness are the **results** of salvation, and never the **causes** of salvation. They might even nod their head at the truth that Jesus died for sinners, but then will say, "I just hope what I've done is enough to get me in." If this is you, then let me

tell you bluntly: what you've done is not enough. It will never be enough. It wouldn't be enough if you had a million years to work on it. This is true because you have a sin nature; your works are a result of your nature, and therefore are unacceptable to God. And this is true because we require a Savior; salvation is not a do-it-yourself project. Those who say "I'll do it myself" insult Jesus in the most serious way. They believe that He didn't need to die, at least for them. They wrongly magnify their own goodness, and wrongly diminish His sacrifice.

But if your life is focused on doing what Jesus says – believing the Gospel, being born again so that you can obey Him – then you have nothing to fear from the Day of Judgment. The storm of judgment meant for you was poured out on the Lord Jesus on His cross. Rather than hearing the terrifying sound of judgment, you will hear the gracious words, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

Studying this passage reminded me of being asked, years ago, why I was constantly evangelizing. There are several reasons.

One reason is that the Gospel is not just the doorway into eternal life; it is the foundation of eternal life. The Gospel is Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ is the Gospel. I needed the Gospel when He called me to salvation. I need the Gospel today. I'll need the Gospel until the day He calls me

home, and I stand before Him glorified, made exactly like Him in His resurrected glory.

Another reason is that we are surrounded by people who are lost in their sins. Some of them have no religious understanding. Others have a religious faith, but not one that can save them. We need to be reminded that being good or sincere doesn't save anyone. The hardest evangelistic conversations are not with atheists, but with religious people who are convinced they are right with God. I preach the Gospel constantly to equip you to take the Gospel to those people as the Lord brings them across your path.

And I preach the Gospel on a constantly basis because being in this room at this time of the week doesn't mean that everyone here actually knows the Lord. Many Christians once thought they were Christians, and only realized that they weren't because they were in a church where the Gospel continues to be proclaimed. I know that some people are insulted if you are concerned about their salvation, and that is worrying to me. The kindest and most loving thing you can want for anyone is to want them to be right with God, to have eternal life, to look forward to eternal love and joy and peace, instead of torment and agony in hell. The kindest and most loving thing you can do is make sure that they understand the Gospel, especially when it's clear that their lives and their words

don't match up. Sadly, the people that I've known who have been insulted at being given the Gospel did not have lives that matched what a faithful Christian life is supposed to be.

So, one of these applies to you.

I pray that you're a Christian who needs the Gospel every day, because it is life and joy and peace to us, and in addition needs to hear it throughout the Scriptures to be equipped to share it with others.

But it's possible that you only think that you are saved, and that you really need to abandon your attempts at saving yourself, or abandon hope that some church in some place had the power to make you right with God. If that is the case, I can only plead with you to repent of your self-sufficiency and pride, and turn to Jesus Christ.

It is my deep and abiding hope that everyone I preach to will be untouched by the storm of judgment, because they have built their house on the solid rock of Jesus Christ; that they will know the Lord, trust in Him daily, lean on Him in the pains and agonies of life, and be granted an abundant entrance into His Kingdom. Perhaps on that Day we will all stand together, and rejoice in the Lord and what He did in and among us, feeble and frail as we are. What a shame it would be for someone to be missing because they

assumed they were right with God, and we didn't give them any reason to think differently.