

THE KEY TO SURVIVAL

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Text: Matthew 7:24-27

What does it take to be a survivor in life? According to the world's philosophy, it takes someone who is crafty, manipulative and willing to look out for number one above all else. This is the world's wisdom.

However, Jesus tells us about another kind of wisdom—wisdom from above—the kind mentioned in James 3:14-17. James writes, “*But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.*”

In our text, Jesus says in verse 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.” (Bold italics added)

In this chapter, Jesus continues to point out inconsistencies in human behavior.

- There are those who want to correct others while in need of correction themselves (vv.1-5).
- There are those who will provide for their own children but doubt that God will provide for His children (vv.7-11).
- There are those who talk a good talk but do not walk a good walk (vv.15-23).
- And now in vv.24-27 Jesus again points out the error of those who expend great effort to build and yet make the most basic mistake by not starting out right.

In (v. 24) the two positions can be likened to two builders and their houses. Each house looks secure in good weather. But Palestine is known for torrential rains that can turn dry land into raging torrents. Only storms reveal the quality of the work of the two builders.

Note two important *truths* about the storms of life.

I. THERE IS EQUALITY IN THE STORMS AND TRIALS OF LIFE (v. 24 & v. 27).

A. Storms know no boundaries and play no favorites.

Notice the *similarities* in what happened to both men.

- The rains came
- The streams rose
- The winds blew

B. The storms were neither a source of justification or condemnation.

We want to make the trials of life one of two predictors, either something that proves that we are living for God or something that proves that someone else is not living for God. And many times we miss the whole point.

People want to debate the cause of the storm; but all Jesus wants us to see is the kind of foundation on which these two lives are built. **Why?**

II. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE IN THE WAY PEOPLE PREPARE FOR STORMS AND TRIALS.

A. Storms reveal only the depth of our preparation.

“A wise person represents those who put Jesus' words into practice; they too are building to withstand anything. Those who pretend to have faith, who have a merely intellectual commitment, or who enjoy Jesus in small doses are foolish builders. When the storms of life come, their structures fall no one, above all not God.”

Ravi Zacharias tells the following story, “A few weeks ago, I did a lectureship at Ohio State University. As I was being driven to the lecture, we passed the new Wexner Art Center. The driver said, "This is a new art building for the university. It is a fascinating building designed in the post-modernist view of reality."

The building has no pattern. Staircases go nowhere. Pillars support nothing. The architect designed the building to reflect life. It went nowhere and was mindless and senseless.

I turned to the man describing it and asked, "Did they do the same thing with the foundation?" He laughed. You can't do that with a foundation. You can get away with the infrastructure. You can get away with random thoughts that sound good in defense of a world view that ultimately doesn't make sense. Once you start tampering with the foundations, you begin to see the serious effects. Yet the foundations are in jeopardy; the foundations of our culture do not provide coherent sets of answers any more.”

-- Ravi Zacharias, "If the Foundations Be Destroyed," Preaching Today, Tape No. 142.

B. What we chose to build on will determine IF we will remain standing after the storm.

In order to reiterate the truth of this passage let's look at it one more time.

- The house is representative of our lives.
- The foundation speaks of our choices.
- The storms are the tests that come our way.
- And the key to survival is found in verse 24 when Jesus says, “Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice...”

Gregory Elder tells a funny story about the importance of a strong foundation. He writes, “Growing up on the Atlantic Coast, I spent long hours working on intricate sand castles; whole cities would appear beneath my hands. One year, for several days in a row, I was accosted by bullies who smashed my creations. Finally I tried an experiment: I placed cinder blocks, rocks, and chunks of concrete in the base of my castles. Then I built the sand kingdoms on top of the rocks. When the local toughs appeared (and I disappeared), their bare feet suddenly met their match. Many people see the church in grave peril from a variety of dangers: secularism, politics, heresies, or plain old sin. They forget that the church is built upon a Rock (Mt. 16:16), over which the gates of hell itself shall not prevail.”

-- Gregory P. Elder, Del Mar, California. Leadership, Vol. 6, no. 2.

CONCLUSION

In his sermon, "The Foolish and the Wise" Earl Palmer related this truth about the importance of foundations. “Let me tell you something about earthquakes. When the Coalinga quake occurred a couple of years ago, a lot of things were discovered. Houses that were built and were bolted to their foundation withstood that 8.2-on-the-Richter-Scale quake. The structure would go like this, but if it was bolted to the foundation, it withstood.

Now on the other hand, the houses that were built in a period when they did not bolt them to the foundation—again, a perfectly good house—when the horizontal earth movement occurred, the house moved maybe six or seven inches off its foundation. And that's what caused the house to collapse.

And so that was a great discovery made at Coalinga: Houses should be bolted to their foundation. It's not only on the foundation, but if you're going to add horizontal earth movement to this terrifying portrayal that we all face, then you need to have the house bolted into its foundation. Sort of a living relationship with the foundation—into it as well as on it.”

-- Earl Palmer, "The Foolish and the Wise," Preaching Today, Tape No. 54.