

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past five months we've been traveling through the Gospel According to Matthew stopping to admire every parable and miracle of Jesus. The Sermon on the Mount is full of parables and word pictures, and today we're going to look at the final words of Jesus in this amazing sermon. In this message Jesus is going to tell you "How to Storm Proof your Life."

There are just some statements you never want to hear. Somebody sent me a funny email containing ten things you never want to hear during surgery:

10. Darn, there go the lights again.
9. Stand back everyone, I lost my contact lens!
8. Please hand me that...uh...thingy.
7. Would you stop that thing from beating? It's messing up my concentration.
6. Somebody take a picture. I've never seen anything like this before!
5. Uh oh. Page 24 is missing from the manual!
4. Wait a minute, if this is his spleen, then what is THAT?
3. Wow, that's cool. Can you make his leg twitch?
2. Sterile, schmerile, the floor is pretty clean so pick it up.
1. Here's your scalpel Dr. Kevorkian.

Fortunately, you don't usually hear anything during surgery. Having had two surgeries this year all I can say is "Thank God for anesthesiologists!"

In the last message we learned there really are seven words you really never want to hear from Jesus: Depart from me. I never knew you. According to Jesus, there will be many religious people who are expecting to enter heaven, but will be devastated to discover although they knew *about* Jesus, they never truly knew Jesus. To me, those seven words are the saddest words in the universe.

I mention this because that is the context for our text today. He starts the parable of the two people building houses with the word, "therefore." When you're reading the Bible, never start with a verse that says, "Therefore." Whenever you see it you must look back to see what the therefore is there for! So, with that explanation, let's read the words of Jesus found in Matthew 7:21-27.

"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. Many 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?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' 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. The 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. But 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. The rain came

down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Because I grew up just forty miles north of the Gulf Coast of Florida, I spent a lot of time around Panama City and Fort Walton. I've seen the results of hurricanes through the years. Years ago, most beach houses were so fragile none of them survived hurricanes—they were built so cheaply it was just a matter of building them again after every storm. But over the past twenty years, a new kind of beach house has appeared on the Gulf. These houses look like forts. The builder bores deeply into the sand and pours concrete pylons to form the foundation for the house. The frame is made of steel rather than wood, and the walls themselves are concrete. These new storm-proof homes are built with a low profile to prevent wind damage. In 2004, I was in Destin just a few days after Hurricane Ivan, a category 3 storm, devastated the area. As I walked down the beach, it was amazing to see entire beach houses shattered and scattered down the beach. But the newer storm-proof homes all survived the storm. Now, all new beachfront homes are built with storm-proofing. According to Jesus, you can storm-proof your life. Consider three important truths about how to build a storm-proof life.

## **1. EVERYONE ENCOUNTERS STORMS**

Jesus said storms are coming. He didn't say IF the storms comes, He said WHEN the storms come. You and I are going to be smacked in life by spiritual tornados: rains, winds and floods. He didn't sell His followers some of the health/wealth/and happiness garbage some preachers are peddling today. “You know, if you just love God and have enough faith you're gonna' be rich, you'll get a new car, and you'll never get a migraine!” Nope. Jesus told all of His followers to brace themselves for the storms that come. Let me mention two different kinds of storms.

### **(1) We experience a variety of troubles in this life**

Job knew something about facing personal storms, and he said, “Man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.” (Job 5:7) Weather conditions are a parable of life itself. There are times when life is pleasant and enjoyable just like a clear, calm day. But at other times, the atmosphere becomes agitated and disturbed and the wind kicks up, dark clouds roll in and the rain and lightning begins—and life is full of trouble and turmoil. We've all watched television as Doppler radar tracks an approaching thunderstorm. Well, God's forecast is that there is a 100% chance of storms for all of us.

There are financial storms when you don't know how you're going to pay your next bill, and then your car breaks down. There are health storms when suddenly you or someone you love receives a bad report from the doctor. There are relational storms when couples split up and children become the victims of moms and dads who can't get along. The list goes on and on. But these storms occur in this life—they're temporary. But there is a big, final storm to consider, too.

### **(2) We will face the final storm of God's judgment**

The Bible says, “Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement.” (Hebrews 9:27) For years when I read this passage I just thought Jesus was talking about the various storms that

come in life. I missed the point that He was talking about a final storm of God's judgment in which people who have no personal relationship with Him are banished from His presence. But, just before He talked about building a house on sand or on rock He spoke about people appearing before Him at a final judgment when they hear Him say, "Depart from me, I never knew you." Then He says, "Therefore..." That's what the therefore is there for—to warn us about one big final storm of eternal judgment.

## **2. A FOOLISH PERSON WON'T SURVIVE THE STORMS**

In this passage Jesus said it is a foolish person who builds his house (his life) on the sand. Jesus said in verse 26 that a fool is "anyone who hears these words of mine, but does not put them into practice." So God's definition of a fool is simple. A fool is someone who hears the words of Jesus but ignores Him. In the movie "Forrest Gump", he was often asked, "Are you stupid?" And Forrest always replied, "Stupid is as stupid does." I've often heard God can bless ignorance, but He cannot bless stupidity. Do you know the difference? Stupidity is informed ignorance that refuses to change. Jesus is talking about people who have been informed about God, but they simply ignore Him.

This reminds me of those homeowners in California who build \$3 million homes on the side of cliffs for the great view, but whenever there are heavy rains, those same houses go sliding down with the mud. Those elegant structures become mobile homes as they slide down the hill and crash into pieces—yet people keep building their homes there!

Look around our nation. Millions of Americans have been exposed to the Good News about Jesus Christ. There are churches and Bibles everywhere. But these people aren't in a church anywhere this morning. They have heard the truth, but they have decided it just isn't true for them. God calls that person as foolish as someone who builds a house on quicksand.

But many of these people seem happy and content. On the surface, it looks like their lives have stability, but it's only when a storm comes that everyone realizes there is no solid foundation. Imagine two houses in a neighborhood sitting side by side. To the untrained eye, they appear to be identical. But one is built on sand and one is built on rock. You can't see that because the foundation is below the surface. It's only when the storm comes—the true test—that you realize one house stands while the other falls apart.

One of these storms may be the tragic death of someone in their family. I've had Christians who go through the grief storm tell me many times, "Pastor, this is so hard. I just don't know how someone who doesn't know the Lord can survive a time like this." Well, actually they don't. Every pastor has had the sad duty of officiating at a funeral where everyone suspects the person in the casket had no relationship with God. And every pastor will tell you there is a agonizing, hopeless grief expressed at those services that is totally different than the grief expressed at a funeral service of a Christian. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 that we "do not grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope." That's the only way I can describe that kind of grief at those kinds of funerals; it's a hopeless kind of grief. There is no solid hope upon which to build their future without that person and they have no hope of ever seeing them again.

But this parable not only applies to people who own Bibles, or have heard Christian messages all their lives. It really applies to all of humanity, because the Bible teaches that everyone has been given a basic amount of truth about God, even if they've never read the Bible. What about a man who lives on a remote island in the South Pacific who has never read a Bible? He's never heard a Christian message. Even that man can gaze into the star-filled skies and just knows there is Someone with great intelligence who designed this world. He sees the regularity of the tides and the seasons, and knows deep down in his heart that Someone is making all this happen—and that Someone is Jesus. In John 1:9 Jesus is called "the true light that gives light to every man." Did you catch that? Jesus didn't come to just give light (truth) to a select few, but to EVERY man and woman, including that guy on the remote island in the South Pacific. If that man goes toward the light, the basic truth that God uses to reveal Himself, God will give him more and more light. But if he turns from that light, he goes deeper into darkness away from God. Like the foolish man in this parable, He receives the Word, but then doesn't respond to it. The Bible describes this foolish rejection in Romans 1: "The basic reality of God is plain enough. Open your eyes and there it is! By taking a long and thoughtful look at what God has created, people have always been able to see...the mystery of his divine being...People knew God perfectly well, but when they didn't treat him like God, refusing to worship him, they trivialized themselves into silliness and confusion. Although they claimed to be wise, THEY BECAME FOOLS." (Romans 1:18-22 *The Message*)

People who have rejected God's truth about Jesus think they are highly intelligent, but God's Word says they are fools who build their hope on the shifting sands of human speculation. And once your spiritual foundation starts crumbling, it can't be fixed. Regardless of what Nolan Ryan says, even Olsham can't fix a crumbling spiritual foundation. You need a new house!

### **3. A WISE PERSON NOT ONLY SURVIVES BUT THRIVES IN THE STORMS**

There was also a wise person who built their house (their life) upon the rock, and when the storms came, it stood solid. This always reminds me of a funny story that a childhood friend of mine used to tell. When he was a kid, Steve loved to go to the beach with his family. And his favorite activity was building sand castles. One day he spent several hours building a beautiful sand structure. As he stood back to admire it, a big bully walked up and kicked the castle down until there was only a lump of sand remaining. He laughed at Steve and then continued down the beach. Steve built another sand castle the next day and the same bully came by and kicked it down again. But Steve wouldn't give up. On the third day he built another sand castle. And right on cue, the same older boy walked by, shot an evil look at Steve and started kicking down the sand castle again, but this time, the bully started hollering and grabbed his foot. He didn't know Steve had placed a cinder block under his sand castle, then he built the castle on the block! He said the bully never kicked down his sand castles again! I think the devil wants to try to kick down our houses too, and when you have Jesus as your foundation the old devil is in for a surprise!

When Jesus spoke of building a house on a rock He wasn't talking about construction practices, God's definition of a wise person is someone who hears the words of Jesus and obeys Him. He was talking about life principles. Those who have built their life on the rock-solid foundation of Jesus Christ will weather the storm.

Consider the same example I used for the foolish person. Christians also face the storm of pain and grief. I have stood beside hundreds of heart-broken Christians who survive the terrible storm of grief because they receive and obey the Words of Jesus. Jesus said, "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me." (John 14:1) These dear people grieve, but it's not a bottomless grief. There is a solid foundation of HOPE beneath their grief.

But Christians don't just survive the storms, we can thrive through the storms; they make us stronger. In the early 1990s, Biosphere 2 was built near Tucson, Arizona. It was a closed-environment in which plants and animals were to live together separate from the earth's environment. The experiment was basically a failure and it's now more of a tourist attraction. Every weather condition could be reproduced except one: wind. The researchers discovered the trees bent over and soon snapped from their own weight because there was no wind resistance to make the roots of the trees stronger—they didn't have a good foundation. When you see trees bending in the storm, they're just getting stronger. We're the same way. God knows when we survive the various storms of life, it only makes us stronger too.

I love the eighth chapter of Romans. Paul had just written about the painful storms God's children face. He mentions things like trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, and even death by the sword. But can these things cause us to despair? Paul answers that question as he exclaims, "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:37-39)

Not only does Jesus provide the stability we need to survive the temporary storms of this life, He is the Rock who will shelter us from the storm of God's final judgment. There's an old hymn that contains some great theology. It says, "Rock of Ages cleft for me;" that's referring to the rock Moses struck in the desert and water that came from the rock, but it's also a reference to the suffering of Jesus on the cross when His side was split open by the Roman's soldier's spear. "Rock of Ages cleft for me; let me hide myself in thee." That's a powerful picture of a shallow cave in a cliff where you can find safety during a storm. "Let the water and the blood from thy wounded side which flowed; be for sin the double cure;" (in other words there is a double blessing in salvation): "Save from wrath (that's the shelter from the final storm of judgment); and make me pure. Rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee."

### **PERSONAL APPLICATION: IS MY LIFE BUILT UPON THE ROCK?**

So what are you building your life upon? If your life some kind of tornado-magnet-trailer-park shack just waiting for the next storm to rip it away from the ground? Or is your life built upon the rock of Jesus Christ?

I love taking groups of travelers to a place called Caesarea Philippi, or Baniyas, where Jesus spoke the familiar words we read in Matthew 16. As He spoke these words, He was standing in front of a massive rock cliff that rises hundreds of feet into the sky. There is an open mouth of a cave where a river used to gush forth and pagan people would sacrifice children. It became known as

the gate of hell or Hades. It was in this very place where Jesus talked about a rock. Jesus said: "You are Peter (he used the word *petros*, which means a pebble), and on this rock (he used the word *petra*, which means a massive rock formation) I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." (Matthew 16:18) Some people think Jesus was saying He would build His church upon Peter, but that's not what He was saying at all. He was saying He would build His church upon Himself: He is the rock. Don't build your life upon Peter or even upon the church. Build your life upon Jesus. Peter was there when Jesus talked about the rock and he knew Jesus was the rock because later he wrote, "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." (1 Peter 2:6) That's Jesus. So when you build your life upon Jesus and His Word, you have a good foundation for this life and for eternity.

## CONCLUSION

If your life is built upon Jesus, you will be safe when the final storm of God's judgment breaks on sinful humanity. But there WILL be a judgment of Christians based upon HOW we built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. If you will build your life upon the foundation of Jesus and His Word, when the storms of this life come Jesus will be the Rock to keep you stable. And when the final storm of judgment comes, He will be your Rock of Ages who will keep you safe!

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"Man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward." *Job 5:7*

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes