

Storm-Proof Life

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon teaches that a storm-proof life is built on the solid foundation of Jesus' teachings through active obedience and faith.

Duration: 45:08

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-2, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:24-29, Luke 6:46-49, Luke 11:28, James 1:22

Topics: "Security"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:24-27. He emphasizes the importance of not only hearing the words of Jesus, but also putting them into practice. The preacher highlights the distinction between the wise and foolish builders, who may appear similar but are actually dissimilar in their actions. He warns the congregation that building their lives on the foundation of sand, which represents not obeying the words of Jesus, will ultimately lead to destruction. The sermon concludes with the crowd being amazed at Jesus' teaching, recognizing his authority and the need to heed his words.

Transcript

Let us prayerfully turn, in the word of scripture, to Matthew chapter 7, and to the words of our Lord that begin with verse 24. I think, since they are so important, that we should read them once again. And may the Lord, by His Spirit, imprint them deeply upon our memories.

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.

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowd were amazed at His teaching, because He taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law. Our subject, then, the storm-proof house. If the Beatitudes with which the Sermon on the Mount began were found to be challenging, and if the ensuing ethical demands were felt to be no less demanding, I have no doubt whatsoever but that all of us will find these concluding passages, particularly the one before us today, which is a climax to everything

else, we shall find this to be particularly exacting.

Jesus speaks frankly and authoritatively. He does not mince His words. He addresses the mind, the heart, the conscience, the will.

And He frankly tells His congregation that to listen to His words and not to obey them is to build on sand. And building on sand means that sooner or later the house of our lives will crash. We may feel at the moment that our strength is great.

We may be tempted to believe there is wisdom in the way we live. But sooner or later, unless we put into practice the words of God through Christ His Son, which we have heard, ours will be the situation of this house built on sand. So Jesus is very much addressing us personally today.

You see, we have heard His word. Most of us gathered here today can say very much like the early group of disciples who first heard the message, we too have heard, we too have read. And His message is known to us.

Most of us could now go and work our way through the Sermon on the Mount and tell others what it's all about. But if we can, if we are able to do that, we must be very careful that we now move forward and put these teachings into practice. Otherwise, our disaster will be great.

You see, our Lord Jesus is now turning away from false prophets, who by some nefarious means are able to divert people who make their way towards the narrow gate, the straight gate, in order to move on to the narrow way that leads to life. He turns away from the false prophets that divert people from the way of life and false pretenders who will say to Him, as He indicates here at the last day, Lord, Lord, haven't we prophesied in your name? And haven't we cast out demons in your name? And in your name done very many wonderful miraculous things. He turns away from such pretenders to whom He will have to say at last that He never knew them.

And He looks us straight in the eye and He touches us at the very raw spot of applying to our lives the word and the words which we acknowledge to have come from Him and from God through Him. I find this exceedingly challenging. You see, Jesus is not referring here to out-and-out profligates and saying that they are lost.

The New Testament would say that elsewhere, not here in this context. Jesus is not talking about murderers and adulterers and fornicators and the worst scum of human society, whoever they may be. I don't know.

But you know what He's saying? You may have heard my great sermon and you may believe that I have uttered in your presence the word of God and you may be able to repeat it all. You've grasped it intellectually. But I have to say to you that you're still building on sand and your house will fall unless the words that you have heard you will put into practice.

Now, as we all stand under the glare of this very challenging word this morning, may the Spirit of God help us. I do not want to lead anyone on a guilt trip that is not born of the Holy Spirit. But I do nevertheless invite every man and woman in our morning's congregation honestly and squarely to face up to this fact.

Now let's proceed then. And our message is very simple, though very, very personal. Note first an apparent similarity between people whom Jesus later distinguishes into the opposing categories of wise

and foolish builders.

So the first thing we're going to notice is the apparent similarity between people who are really not similar but dissimilar. There is a common denominator between the wise and the foolish here. If you've got your New Testament out, you can see what it is.

In verse 24, Jesus refers to one segment of the community that first heard these words, and he says to them, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice, so and so. Then in verse 26 he says the same thing. Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice, there are the two categories, those who put them into practice and those who do not.

But you see the common thread. You see the apparent similarity, the evident similarity. Both groups have heard.

So this morning we are not discussing the plight of those who have not heard the gospel. We are not thinking this morning of those who've never known the name of Jesus, never even heard it. But we're thinking this morning specifically of those who have heard, and who having heard have a grasp of it, but they've gone no further.

And actually you notice we have a contextual illustration of the principle to which I'm referring. Look at the picture. Do you remember how this sermon on the mount began? Well, let Matthew remind you.

In verses 1 and 2, those who first heard Jesus' words were the 12 disciples. Let me read verses 1 and 2. Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountain side and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying, and the sermon began.

So you see, there's a little circle around our Lord. If we can for a moment imagine our Lord in this pulpit, there's a little circle around him. And the circle around him that he has called apart from everybody else is the circle of his 12 disciples.

Jesus had apparently tried to get away from the crowd that was then pursuing him. You remember at this point in our Lord's ministry, he was quite popular. There came a time when he became very unpopular, but now at this point he was popular, and the crowds were following him.

And Matthew tells us that they had come from as far afield as Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and the region across the Jordan. That's Matthew 4.25, the end of chapter 4. It would seem then, you see, it would seem that the intention of our Lord in climbing up the mountain side with his 12 was to get away from the crowd. Because his message was going to be particularly relevant to his disciples.

He wanted to teach his disciples. But now you remember how the sermon closed. You remember how Matthew's record goes.

Chapter 7, verses 28 and 29, concluding his record of the sermon, Matthew tells us, when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds, aha, the crowds were amazed at his teaching. Because he taught as one who had authority and not as the teachers of the law. So you see, something has happened in the course of the preaching of this sermon.

The congregation that began as a little nucleus of disciples, gradually got bigger and bigger. And the crowds that Jesus had left at the bottom of the mountain have gradually come up, one a few at a time, a

group at a time probably, or all together, I don't know, but they've arrived. And there they are, behind these few disciples.

So that now, what you have, now let me ask you, if you had passed that way that day, and if you had looked down and seen Jesus teaching that group, what would you have said about them? Would you not have said something like this? If someone asked you, who are they? Would you not have been tempted to say, oh they are the followers of Jesus of Nazareth? Seems like it, doesn't it? It seems that they're all one. They're all listening to him. And the sermon goes on, it's quite a long sermon.

And as the sermon goes on, apparently no one no one leaves. So there they are, you see, they're all with their eyes fixed upon him and their ears open, and they all hear. And we who can only judge superficially at best would be tempted to say they're all one.

They're all his disciples. They're all wise builders. And of course, it would be the same if someone were to ask an onlooker as we go out of church this morning, oh who are these people? I guess it could be said, oh well, these are Christians.

These are the people who've been worshipping God. These are the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. These are the people who've been hearing his word.

You know, it's not necessarily true. This first congregation was divided. Some were building on rock.

Others were building on sand. And it could very well be the case that right here in this lovely old edifice this morning, there is the same division. Some of us building on sand whilst others are building on rock.

An apparent similarity. Not next to the unfolding tragedy foreseen of course and foretold only by the discerning Son of God. The similarity to which we've noted is only apparent and utterly superficial.

All were privileged to hear, but not all are building in the same way. Now, I want you to look particularly now at the analogy used by Jesus. It's a very forceful one when we come to think of it.

It's an analogy. It's a metaphor. It's a parable that would be meaningful in almost every part of the world.

There's no difficulty anywhere in understanding what Jesus is saying here. He speaks pictorially and he speaks parabolically as he proceeds to compare and contrast these two groups as builders of a house. Now, look at verses 24 and 26 again and you see this coming out.

Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house. That's the metaphor. That's the picture.

And again in verse 26 of the other type. Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house. The disciples close to Jesus and the crowd around the disciples were that day all of them involved in the business of building the house of their lives.

The business of building the house of their lives. Just as all of us in this building this morning are involved in the same affair. Life is a serious and an ongoing business.

There are no pauses. You may sit down and I may sit down but life goes on by day and by night from day to day and week to week and month to month and year to year. You and I are engaged in a very serious business.

We're building the house of our life. Jesus refers to these two groups then who are superficially similar as being actually and fundamentally different. Some are wise, some are foolish.

Some are building on rock, some are still building on sand. They're utterly different. And though there may be differences in the superstructure that they build, in the material they put in, etc.

etc. Jesus points to something which is more fundamental even than that. He says that the main, the most fundamental distinction is this.

Some of these builders have never really got onto a rock which they may have as a firm foundation for their lives. They're building on something that is superficial, on the sand. They haven't dug down.

They're building on things as they find them and they've never really dug through in order to come to the rock underneath. Now against this background our Lord tells us of the impending tragedy that he foresees and herefore tells. The house that is built on sand is destined to crash and to crumble.

It's not, it's not, not a nice story. It's not a pleasant thing to tell. No preacher can take, can find great joy in announcing to people that they're destined to crash, to ruin.

But if it is true it has to be told. Jesus, the Son of God, and here of course we're back with a question of his authority. Who was he? What authority did he have to say this kind of thing? Was he a false prophet or a true? Was he misleading or was he really the mouthpiece of God? Jesus foresees a time of testing in which the realities of the two situations will be clearly revealed.

He says there's a storm coming that will test both houses. Those of you who are Christian this morning, those of you who are believers in our Lord Jesus and are building on the rock, let's be clear about this. We're all going to be tested.

We're all going to pass through storms, every one of us present today. Sooner or later the clouds will gather around our lives and there will be storms. And the storm is going to show up whether or not we are built upon the rock.

Now whether Jesus is referring to the storms of this present life, of which there are many, and we all have to share in them, or whether he's referring to the ultimate storm of the final judgment, I don't know. He may be referring to both. But the fact of the matter is this.

Sooner or later, whether you and I are building on the rock as our foundation or building on the sand, it's going to be made evident. And if we're still building on sand that final day of testing, it'll be too late to gather the pieces together. Oh let me not miss this.

Both buildings are to be tested. Let me read again verse 25 about the one. The rain came down, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat against that house.

It did not fall because it had its foundation on the rock at one. But look at verse 27. Exactly the same words.

The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house. And it fell with a great crash. In his commentary on the synoptic gospels, the late Dr. A. B. Bruce, you don't need anyone to tell you where he's from, he very picturesquely describes this storm.

Some people do have insights, don't they? What all of us have read we might never have seen, but he sees the three dimensions of it, and he expresses it. He concentrates first of all on the rain coming down on the roof. Some of you have been having trouble with roofs of late, I know that.

It's a bad sign when rain's coming through the roof. But there's a storm coming ahead of us when it'll be difficult to keep the rain out of the roof of the house that is not built upon the rock. The rain comes down upon the roof, but notice the rivers are in spate, and the tides and the current are high, and the water of the rivers are seeping into the houses and into the foundations, and they're digging at the foundations of the houses.

So as well as the rain coming down on the roof, there is the water seeping at the foundation to see if it'll stand. And then says Dr. A. B. Bruce, the wind is howling like a mad gale upon the walls. There's a storm for you.

There's no getting away from this. It's coming from above, and it's coming from beneath, and it's coming all around. You're in the hands of God the judge, and so am I. And the house built on sand will not stand that test.

I find this very challenging. I've said that once or twice before. You see, simply to know the Sermon on the Mount, simply to have an intellectual grasp of the teaching of the Gospels, simply to be able to repeat the main doctrines of Scripture, simply to know them and even to be able to correct others because we know them.

See, all that makes sand, nothing more than sand, until the teaching is put into practice. And the moment you begin to put into practice the Word that you've received, that moment the sand becomes rock. Not until then.

This is what James meant, of course, when he said that faith without works is dead. When faith directed toward Christ rests in him for salvation, that same faith sets the wheels of life going in obedience to his teaching. That's saving faith.

We are not saved by good works, but we are saved for good works. And the Savior who saves us without good works, working his salvation in us, makes us work well. You see, the more we know of the truth of the Gospel, the more tragic our situation, according to Jesus.

So an apparent similarity and identity is proved to be unreal and false, and the solemn tragedy overtakes the largest section of that community before Jesus as he uttered the Sermon on the Mount. Now that leaves us with one other matter, the one urgent and paramount necessity to avoid such a disaster. At the last judgment, when the last great storm breaks loose, if not before, the reality or unreality of our profession will be exposed.

A whole passage before us is based on that assumption, even though so many of our intellectuals today are so adamant that this is just nonsensical, and you cannot believe this kind of thing. It just doesn't make sense. Jesus says so.

And those of us who accept the divinity of the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and see what marks and evidences there are of the fact that he was and is indeed the eternal Son of God, we must take these words seriously. What then can we do to avoid the kind of tragedy that he foretells? One thing, and one alone, will suffice. Oh, I'm repeating myself, but I hope no one will say that it is in vain.

Hearing God's truth as revealed in his Son must be transposed into obedience to God's truth as revealed in his Son. We must begin to believe in such a way that we begin to obey. Now, what does that mean? Is there a way of spelling it out so that we make no mistake here? How do we build such a firm foundation as will not crumble? Oh, brothers and sisters, the Bible is a wonderful book, and here it tells you and tells me exactly what we need to do.

There's no need to ask questions to which there are no answers. First of all, we must learn to dig deep in order to lay a firm foundation on the rock. Now, we began this sermon by stressing the apparent similarity and unity of all those who heard our Lord's words originally.

What actually happened to divide and distinguish those building on sand from those building on rock? What was it? What actually happened? Now, if you turn to Luke's Gospel, Luke tells us that Jesus preached this sermon probably more than... I mean, I shouldn't have put it like that. Luke doesn't specifically say this, but I think Luke's implication is that Jesus preached this sermon, or parts of it, more than once, and he did not always use exactly the same words. And so, when he's referring to what it is necessary for us to do to find the true foundation, Luke says something that Matthew doesn't, and he gives us a clue.

Let me read to you from Luke 7, verses 47 and 48. I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my word and puts them into practice. What's he like? Well, Luke says, quoting Jesus, he is like a man building a house who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock.

When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it because it was well built. Now there you have it. Dig down deep.

I wonder whether Jesus is quoting Jeremiah here. Jeremiah had a lot to say about dwelling deep in God. What have we got here? What does this imply? Though ostensibly building on the same site or location, generally speaking, and possibly using much of the same materials, some of the builders, not others, some of the builders had dug deep down and laid the foundation on rock.

Now that is but another way of saying that some builders were not content simply to hear our Lord's great teaching. They did something about it. They began to dig.

They listened to it, and they considered it, and as they did, they recognized the divinity, the deity of the preacher and his authority. And recognizing his authority, they began to feel that they must not only believe but do what he bade them. And this is Jesus' way of saying how they came to build upon the rock.

They dug down deep. In other words, my friends, they came to commit themselves to the Christ, to preach the sermon, not just to believe his words but to obey him in his words. Because the obedience is a personal one to the preacher, to the Lord, and to the God whom he represents.

And that is what happens here, you see. To lay the foundation on a rock is to hear the word of God coming through his Son and to give my commitment, to make my covenant with him who thus speaks, to trust and obey. Scripture is very fond, you may remember, of reminding us of the fact that the one who was to come into the world, the Messiah, would be called also the rock.

I can't pursue that thread this morning. Some of you can do so, but let me remind you, or let me give you a good place to start from if you want to. You can work back from the New Testament.

Start from 1 Corinthians 10 verse 4, where the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians that the rock in the wilderness that followed the children of Israel was Christ. That strikes, doesn't it? That's strange. Well, you find it out.

The rock was Christ. And so Paul is able to tell the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 3.11, no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, the rock. And that is Jesus Christ.

Yes, Jesus is the rock in a weary land. Jesus is the only firm foundation to build the superstructure of our life upon. But now we've got to go further.

Not only must we dig deep, but we must build well. You say, what do you mean by that? Let me explain. At least two things.

We must build our house from a basic and underlying union with Christ, the foundation. You see, we do not just build on Christ. How can I illustrate that? Let's say that this marvelous slab of wood, making the pulpit base this morning, right here.

Let's say that this is rock. Let's say that this represents my house. Now, it isn't adequate just to put my house on the rock like that.

The gale may be strong enough to blow it off. You see the point? I must not only build on Christ, I must build into Christ. The superstructure of my house must be integrated with the foundation.

There must be a living link that binds my soul to the Christ of God, so that the superstructure that I build with my life is one with Him. Now, you remember, last time we were considering, though we didn't dwell upon it, and we've made reference to it today in our readings, there will be folk who will come to our Lord at the last day and will say to Him, Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name? And didn't we cast our demons in your name, and in your name done many miraculous things? And I will have to tell them that day, He says, away from me, you workers of iniquity. I never knew you.

That verb to know is used in many ways in the Bible, and it is used for one thing of the most intimate relationship between two people. Of course, Jesus knew them all. He was their creator.

He made all things, and without Him, nothing was made that was made. He knows all about us in that sort of a way. But spiritually, though they've prophesied in my name and cast out demons in my name and brought miracles in my name, I have to say to them spiritually, you're strangers to me.

There's no fellowship. There's no real link of spirit. There's no binding.

You and I are not one. Brothers and sisters, we must dig deep until we know that we have touched reality. That our faith has fused us to Christ, and like the branches of the vine, we are one with Him, and we drink of His Spirit, and we feed upon His breasts.

I'm changing the metaphors, but the truth is the same. You see, the house must be built on the foundation so that the foundation and the house belong the one to the other. Indeed, and this is the other thing, the superstructure built upon the foundation must be of the same character as the foundation itself.

Having a foundation like this, you and I must have a superstructure of life that is consistent with the foundation, if the house is to stand. And of course, that's what the Sermon on the Mount is all about. That's what it's all about.

Building out of union with Christ, we must by His grace begin by forming a character that is consistent with the Beatitudes. Having the elements of sorrow for sin, meekness, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, being merciful, purity of heart, being peacemakers, reckoning that suffering for Christ's sake is blessed. These qualities must more and more mark our lives.

You see, the character of the superstructure on the foundation must match the foundation in quality, if the house and the foundation are to stand as one in the day of the storm. Not only must we have a character that matches the Beatitudes, but we must have a conduct that matches the character, and that's what the rest of the ethical teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is about. It tells us the ethical norms required of us that we must operate upon.

It tells us we must be salt and light in a depraved and dark world. We must not only refrain from murder, but also from such words and attitudes as can lead to murder. We must not look lustfully at anyone, let alone commit adultery.

We must diligently respect the commitment which is marriage. Our very words must be our bond. Yet your yea be yea and your nay nay.

There should be no need for anything more than that, says Jesus. Your word should be your bond. And on a person-to-person level we must not resist evil, but love our enemies.

And in all our acts of righteousness, as Jesus calls them, giving to the needy, praying to the Father, and fasting. These are the three things he mentions. We must have our eyes squarely fixed first of all on pleasing God, not advertising what we're doing as the hypocrites did, not calling attention to the fact that we are men and women of prayer, that we give our tithes or we give towards the poor.

Not at all. Let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing, says Jesus. Do it unto the Lord.

That's how Jesus did. And this we must do out of faith in God as our Father. We must lay up treasures in heaven, not upon earth, and doing it all out of confidence that God is our Father and will remain our Father.

Even the birds are telling us that, but over and above what the birds say, Jesus says it. You may come and you may pray to him, our Father who art in heaven, and you may ask him to give you your daily bread as well as daily forgiveness. And his is the power and the kingdom and the glory forever and ever, and he's your heavenly Father.

Now that's what it is to build on the rock. That house will never fall, never fall, never fall. There is no storm that even God himself can unleash which will bring that house down, because Christ, who is God, is its foundation.

And the Spirit of God, the Father and of his Son, is in the superstructure, and it is according to his Word, and therefore it must stand. God could not demolish that house without contradicting himself. How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is found for your faith in his excellent Word.

And brothers and sisters, are we on the rock or on the sand? I am therefore not asking you as we conclude whether you are familiar with the Sermon on the Mount, but what I am asking for the last time this morning, are you quite sure that you are not simply depending upon your familiarity with the truth, and that you have dug deep and you've touched the reality who is Christ, crucified, risen, reigning, the giver of

the Holy Spirit, and the Father in Christ. If you have not, I ask you where you sit this morning, by the grace of God, to make this your moment of covenant, your moment of commitment, your day when you say, by the grace of God, I will dig deep, I will dig down until I get to that firm foundation and nothing will satisfy me, all that I might know him, nothing will satisfy me less than the knowledge of God in Christ his Son. Let us pray.

Lord God, most high and glorious, O how we thank you for your grace. We stand this morning in the glare of this word of yours, and it may well be that all of us have a trembling heart. Some of us have.

Draw us, our Father, closer to yourself. Draw us into that union with you in Christ, that it may be said of us, as Paul told the Colossian believers, that our life is hid with Christ in God. O Lord, impart to us of the strength and solidity of your own character, that we may live in hope and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, rather than dread the ruin of our house.

O grace of God, pursue us then as we go our homeward way, and so deal with us and so bless us, that we may be wise builders, building the house of our life upon the foundation of rock. Christ Jesus, your Son, our Lord, we ask it in his holy name. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/4/SID4634.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-glyn-owen/storm-proof-life/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net