

Series: *The Parables of Jesus*

The Parable of the Two Builders

Luke 6:46-49 (ESV)

46 *“Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you?*

47 *Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like:*

48 *he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.*

49 *But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.*

A House Without A Foundation?

If you were fortunate enough to have the funds to design and build the house of your dreams, it would be assumed that the house would include a concrete foundation. No one would dream of building a house without a foundation. At least that is if the house was expected to last very long.

It would be absolutely unthinkable to go to all the expense and effort of building the perfect house of your dreams (the one that you could live in until your dying days, the one that your grand kids would love to visit) only to fail to build that house on a solid foundation. Having a proper foundation for new home construction is so important that building codes mandate it. Why, because experience has taught us that houses without foundations fall down and people get hurt and some die?

Physical Home vs. Spiritual Home

We go to great expense to see that the foundation of the physical homes in which we live have a solid and lasting foundation. Yet how many people are there who are doing exactly the opposite with their spiritual homes? No one would purchase a house that has an unstable foundation and yet countless people all around us give little or no serious thought to the foundation upon which they are building their lives.

A Solid Foundation vs. No Foundation

The parable before us today is a call for that to change. In this parable Jesus compares two builders. One digs deep and builds the foundations of his house upon solid rock. The other avoids the hard work of digging deep and decides to build directly on the ground **without** a foundation. One man has a **solid** foundation. The other man has **no** foundation. This is the comparison of this parable.

Closing Illustration to Sermon on the Mount

Jesus uses this parable as the closing illustration of His most famous sermon. It is what we call the Sermon on the Mount. Luke records only a brief synopsis of the sermon, which spans 25 verses (Luke 6:20-45) while Matthew includes much more information spanning three chapters (5-7). The sermon is filled with wonderful and practical truth, it is theologically rich, and deeply instructive.

It's the kind of sermon that needed to be preached on more than one occasion and in more than one place. Its message needed to be heard in every town and no doubt Jesus preached it in several places. This is the most likely explanation for the subtle differences between the gospel authors' recollection of Jesus' teaching. Like any good speaker, certainly Jesus used slightly different turns of phrase to illustrate the same truth given the setting and audience to whom he spoke.

Matthew's version of this story notes the difference of location; one man building upon the rock while the other builds upon the sand. Matthew calls the man who built upon the rock a wise man and the man who built upon the sand with no foundation a foolish man (Matt 7:24-27).

Purpose and Audience

The purpose of the parable is to call the listeners to a response. Jesus preached the sermon to a mixed audience. The crowd included those who were His true disciples and those who were not. Some followed just to watch the miracles Jesus would perform. Many just wanted to be healed. Some were simply curious to hear this new teacher. There were hundreds and maybe even thousands of people following Him.

Luke 6:17-18 (ESV)

“And He came down with them [the twelve] and stood on a level place, with a great multitude of people from Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, 18 came to hear Him and be healed of their disease and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured.”

The Expectations of His Disciples

Jesus was at the beginning of His public ministry (perhaps only several months into it) and He had just chosen the twelve (Luke 6:12-16; Matt 4:18-22). After choosing the twelve, perhaps even on the same day (Luke 6:17), he looked at His disciples (Luke 6:20) and the multitudes following Him and He began teaching them what He expected of His disciples.

Following Only With Their Feet and Not With Their Heart

What was true then, is true today. There are many people in the crowd who literally followed Jesus (i.e. in the church, today), who *followed Him with their feet but who did not yet love Him in their hearts*. There were many who physically near Jesus but spiritually were far from Him.

It is these people whom Jesus has in mind as He brings His message to a close and calls for a decision. It was those superficial followers that Jesus looks at. No doubt He could see it in their eyes as He looked through the crowds. He brought the message to a particular point and then asked a pointed question. Look at verse 46.

Luke 6:46 (ESV)

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”

Jesus Expects to be Obeyed

The question cuts to the heart. Jesus will not allow His listeners to remain comfortably ambivalent. He forces His hearers to dig deep into their own motives for following Him. The implication is *if one will not obey Him one ought not call Him Lord*. **Jesus expected to be obeyed**. Only those who are willing to obey Him can rightly call Him Lord.

Lord, Lord

The term used here for 'Lord' is the Greek word *kurie* (Κυριε), which means "supreme in authority, the one who controls, or master."¹ In the context it brings to mind the teacher/student relationship. The doubling of the term intensifies the respect and honor shown to the master/teacher. At least it *appears* to honor and respect the master/teacher. I read this week that to this day it is the tradition of some African American churches to refer to Jesus as Master.²

However, mere verbal attribution of respect is pathetically empty when the teachings of the Teacher are not considered unworthy of obedience. The worth of the Teacher is only demonstrated when He is obeyed. Calling Him Lord while not obeying Him is meaningless since the use of the term 'Lord' naturally implies the responsibility of obedience.

It Is Right To Call Him Lord

Jesus is not at all embarrassed to be called 'Lord.' He is not correcting His listeners by telling them that they have given Him an incorrect title. They have not wrongly referred to Him as 'Lord.' Jesus is calling for a response which accords with the title He's been given. They have the right title but the wrong response. It is right to call Him Lord. On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus told the twelve,

John 13:13 (ESV)

You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.

A Call To Deeper Discipleship

Jesus is Lord and Master and the use of this parable was a staggering call to rightly respond to His teaching. Jesus is not making discipleship easier for the masses. He's making it more difficult. He's not softening the His teaching to gain more followers. He is intensifying the call in order to build deeper followers. Jesus is clearly teaching that becoming the kind of disciple that He was calling for, involved much more than a mere outward (i.e. verbal) confession of Him as 'Lord,' no matter how accurate and right it was to do so.

Matthew 7:21 (ESV)

21 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'

23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Notice this. There are those, 'many' (v.22) in fact, who appear to be true disciples, who take the name of Jesus on their lips, calling Him 'Lord, Lord,' and who do many amazing and miraculous things who will **not** enter the kingdom of heaven. This decision will be made "**on that day**," that is on the judgment day.

¹ Strong's Greek Bible Dictionary.

² Marvin Olasky, "The Life of a Slave," *World Magazine*, 13 February 2010, 25.

Not Everyone Is Going to Heaven

Everybody is **not** going to heaven! Yet this is the message of the ‘prophets’ of our day today! It is common in our culture today to think that God will not exclude anyone from entering into the kingdom of heaven. However, this is **not** what Jesus taught.

Jesus clearly taught that in order to enter the kingdom one must ‘*do the will of the Father,*’ and there will be many who **appear** to do it who will **not** be admitted into heaven. The doctrine of universal salvation is in the cultural air we breathe yet it was *not* a doctrine taught by Jesus.

Prophecy in Jesus’ name, casting out demons in His name, and doing mighty works in His name does not **fully** express what Jesus means by “doing the will of the Father.” It certainly was **part** of it, for even Jesus did those things, but it is not **all** of what it means to do the Father’s will. These people were doing some incredible things, good, laudable things but ultimately *those ‘doings’* were **not** the kind of ‘doing’ that the Father requires for entrance into the kingdom.

Miraculous “Doings” Not Required

Jesus said those who **do** enter the kingdom are the ones who “*do the will of My Father in heaven.*” Yet despite all that those not allowed to enter the kingdom *did* do, there was still something very significant that they did **NOT** do. Evidently, prophesying, exorcising demons, and performing miracles are **not** required for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

So what else is implied in saying to Jesus ‘Lord, Lord?’ What else, besides doing miraculous wonders, does Jesus want His disciples to do? **Jesus wants His disciples to obey Him.** Remember to get at the meaning of a parable you must focus in on what is being compared. Jesus now compares two responses to His teachings. He compares a man who **does** obey His word with the one who **does not** obey Him.

Luke 6:47-48 (ESV)

47 *Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like:*

48 *he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.*

Everyone Who Hears My Words and Does Them

Jesus begins by first using a positive example. At the heart of this parable is the response to the word of Jesus. What will the hearer do with His word, His teaching? Will Jesus’ words be received and obeyed? Or will they be ignored and disobeyed?

Everyone who hears and obeys His word is likened to a man building a house whom dug deep and laid the foundation of the house upon rock. When the storms come the house will survive because it has been well built, i.e. it has a solid foundation, built upon rock.

Building a House

Both of the men in this parable are described as building a house. We pass over this metaphor³ too easily. Even in our day building a house is a lengthy and involved process, but the process today

³ A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.

involves little of the depth of work that was required for a first century builder. “The time and energy required to build a house in ancient times was beyond anything builders in developed countries today have experienced for centuries.”⁴

Last year our neighbors tore down their old house and built a new one (approx. 3,000 sq. ft.). It took them about five months to complete. The Temple Solomon built was about 1,800 sq. ft.⁵ and it took him seven years to build (1 Kgs 6:28). Keep in mind King David had already spent years in preparing to have it built. King Herod spent 46 years building the temple that Jesus taught in (John 2:20).

Contemporary Construction

When we want to “dig deep” and build a foundation we hire a construction crew with a backhoe who arrives and completes the work in a couple of days. We then have the luxury of building our own rock by pouring concrete into frames that allow us to construct adequate foundation. We dig one day, pour concrete the next day, and then wait a week for the concrete to cure and building can then continue.

Dig Deep with Shovels

The comparative ease of mind associated with our idea of rapid construction accomplished by heavy equipment and power tools does not come close to state of mind of a first century builder who would have had to do the entire job by hand with shovels not knowing how deep they would have to go down to get to bedrock. And if you wanted a solid foundation, then you had to keep digging (by hand with shovels) until you reached the bedrock. That alone could take months (if you were alone and could only work on it after coming in from the field).

Summer Sun Followed by Fall Rains

That is a lot of grueling, backbreaking, muscle-stretching, blister-creating, sweaty, hard work. The work had to be done in the summer. You can’t dig when the ground is frozen! You had to work in the summer sun. Yet you had to do the hard work if you wanted your house to last. You had to do the hard work so your work would not be in vain. Because you wanted the house to remain standing when the rainy season came. And come it most certainly would.

The House With A Foundation Will Stand: Not Even Shaken

Jesus said the house whose foundation was on rock would survive the stormy rainy season. The floods will come. The ground will become saturated and the streams and rivers will overflow their banks and the floodwaters will crash against the house. But the house **with** a foundation on the rock will not so much as even be shaken, because it has been well built (being founded upon rock).

What Does the House Represent?

The house represents a person’s life. Obeying Jesus words is like building a house that will last. Obeying Jesus’ teaching is building a solid foundation for your life. Incredibly, Jesus is claiming that **His teaching is the ONLY foundation for your life**. Obedience to His teaching is the rock that will sustain life through the storms. The wise builder is the man who hears Jesus’ words and then goes away and does them. He obeys them. This describes the builder who hears and obeys.

⁴ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2008) p. 323.

⁵ *The ESV Study Bible*, (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008) p. 605.

But what about the man who hears and does not obey? What happens to that man and what he built?

Luke 6:49 (ESV)

49 *But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great*

The second builder hears the words of Jesus but he does **not** do them. He does not obey Jesus' teaching. He hears the words but he does not act upon them. He hears Jesus' words, but does nothing with them. They go in one ear and out the other. Jesus says this man is like a man who has **no** foundation. It's not just a weak foundation. There's **no** foundation!

Quick & Easy: No Foundation!

This builder did not dig deep. He was unwilling to do the hard work. He was unwilling to spend the time, effort, and money to dig down to the rock. In stead, this builder went for the quick option. He looked at the hard-packed, sun-baked summer soil and he said, "This ground is hard! If I skip the foundation part I can have a house up in half the time! And think how much money I will save!!! Oh, what I could do with the money I would save. And I won't have the sore muscles, the blistered hands, and sweaty brow. I can have a house up in no time!" And **so he built his house on the ground with NO foundation.**

He Failed to Consider the Future

He forgot about the rainy season. He neglected to think about what would happen when the end of the year came and brought the rains. He forgot about the storms that would come. He failed to consider what happens to the ground when the soil becomes saturated with water.

The Rains Will Come



On 10 August 2009 typhoon Morakot hit Taipei, Taiwan dumping 80 inches of rain and causing breathtaking mudslides. Watch what happens when the rains came and the waters broke against a hotel (www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGxgHENyltM).

On August 28, 1991 in the Jerusalem suburb of Talpiot, one third of an apartment complex collapsed forcing the evacuation of 28 families.⁶ An investigation revealed that a leaking sewer line was partially to blame. That collapsed portion of the apartment complex had been built on "loose soil" rather than on bedrock, which was the "accepted practice." As the leaking sewer pipe saturated the soil beneath the unsupported apartment it could no longer support the weight of the building and simply gave way.

Whether it's a torrential rain or tiny leak the result is the same. If there is no foundation, the house will not stand. The rainy season will come.

Immediate Fall & Great Ruin (v.49)

When the stream broke against the house without a foundation, Jesus said, "*immediately it fell and the ruin of that house was great*" (v.49). What's Jesus talking about? The ruin of that house is great?

⁶ Bailey, p. 324.

This is serious language. This message is serious. In this parable, Jesus is saying, “If you do not do My words, your house will be ruined.” This is sobering.

The Tornado in 1995

He’s talking about more than a physical building. If in a storm you lose your house but your life is saved, then at least you’re still alive. You can build another house! In 1995 my mother and father-in-law’s house was destroyed in a tornado. It was hard, but “the ruin of that house was not great!” They simply built another one. Jesus is talking about much more than physical dwellings.

More Than A Nor’easter

The storm Jesus is talking about is not a physical storm. He is warning about something greater than a Nor’easter. He is teaching a spiritual lesson. The storm is the final judgment of our souls. Jesus is not lecturing the local homebuilders association. He is teaching **any who will hear** how to save their souls.

A house falling down in a storm is not the kind of ruin that Jesus is seeking to avoid. He is warning against the tragedy of failing to have a foundation for your life. He is laying before the crowds a message that if obeyed, would save them from eternal separation from God in hell. Certainly the gospel is a message that will sustain us through the storms of this temporal life. But greatest ruin of all would be to fail to consider the foundation of your soul!

“At the level of application one may undoubtedly appeal to this narrative to encourage preparation for numerous types of crises, but in his original preaching Jesus almost certainly had in mind the climactic end of the age.”⁷

Jesus may be drawing upon some imagery from the Old Testament.⁸

Ezekiel 13:10-16

10 *Precisely because they have misled my people, saying, Peace, when there is no peace, and because, when the people build a wall, these prophets smear it with whitewash,*
11 *say to those who smear it with whitewash that it shall fall! There will be a deluge of rain, and you, O great hailstones, will fall, and a stormy wind break out.*
12 *And when the wall falls, will it not be said to you, Where is the coating with which you smeared it?*
13 *Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I will make a stormy wind break out in my wrath, and there shall be a deluge of rain in my anger, and great hailstones in wrath to make a full end.*
14 *And I will break down the wall that you have smeared with whitewash, and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation will be laid bare. When it falls, you shall perish in the midst of it, and you shall know that I am the LORD.*
15 *Thus will I spend my wrath upon the wall and upon those who have smeared it with whitewash, and I will say to you, The wall is no more, nor those who smeared it,*
16 *the prophets of Israel who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for her, when there was no peace, declares the Lord GOD.*

⁷ Craig Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1990) p. 259.

⁸ See also Isaiah 28:16-17.

Satan has so twisted the good and wonderful doctrine of the love of God that there is no longer any room in the American consciousness for the wrath of God. The prophets of today are busy crying, 'Peace, peace' when apart from reconciliation with God through the atoning blood of Jesus, there is no eternal peace with God.

Heb 9:27

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes the judgment.

The final judgment of our souls will **lay bear** (i.e. reveal) the foundation of our lives. In this parable, Jesus is saying, that a life built upon obeying His words is like a life built upon rock. It will survive the coming storm of judgment and it will **not even be shaken**. However, *anyone who refuses to obey the words of Jesus is like a life that has NO foundation*. It will immediately fall and its ruin will be tragic.

If you call Jesus Lord, is your life marked by obedience to His commands? If so, then you will stand during the storms of this life and you will stand on the last day. If you do not call Jesus your Lord, then you will stand neither in the storms of *this* life, nor in the judgment of the next.

Falling in the storms of this life is NOTHING in comparison to falling during the judgment of the next. Without Jesus as the foundation of your life, you will immediately buckle under the stormy pressures of this life, but greater than that will terrible judgment of Jesus (see 2 Cor 5:10) that awaits all those who refuse to obey Him!!!

2 Thessalonians 1:7b

... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels & in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might.

Christian, our God is a consuming fire who graciously came to us in the humble form of a Servant Son named Jesus. His first coming will not be like His second coming. In His first coming He came as a lamb. In His second coming He will be like a lion.

Do Not Forget Nadab & Abihu

If we call Him Lord, we cannot be indifferent to obeying Him. Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1-3) disobeyed Him and they died in the pulpit as it were. Is this a message for us? Yes.

1 Peter 4:17

For it is time for the judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?

It is not a small thing to Him Lord. Let's return to Matt 7.

Matthew 7:21 (ESV)

21 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

What is 'the will of the Father' that we must do in order to enter the kingdom of heaven? Jesus answers for us.

John 6:40

“For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

It is the will of the Father that we look to Jesus and believe in Him. It is the will of the Father that we look to Jesus and see in Him all the righteousness of perfect, sinless obedience. It is the will of the Father that we look to Jesus and see in Him all the wickedness of our sins paid for completely by His sacrificial death. It is the will of the Father that we look to Jesus and see in Him LIFE. He rose from the dead. Those in Jesus are no longer under condemnation. He is the source of our life.

1 Cor 3:11

For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the only foundation that will bring life. A life built on anything other than Jesus and the truth that He taught has NO foundation at all.

Conclusion

- Jesus expects us to obey him. If we call Him Lord, then we must obey Him. He is Lord and Master and we are His servants.
- Doing His word means believing and trusting in Him for ALL of our righteousness. It means having faith in His works and no confidence in our own.
- If you obey His word and put your faith in Him, then your soul will be saved. If you do not obey His word and put your faith in Him, then you will be destroyed.
- If Jesus' teaching is not the foundation of your life, then there is **NO** foundation for your life.

We each one,
Are like the builders two.

What will we with
The words of Jesus do.

The same storm
Will hit us all.

Only one foundation
Will keep us from the fall.