

Be a Wise Builder
Luke 6:37-49
Key Verse: 6:47-48
by Dr. Helen Rarick

"I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. 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."

In the last passage Jesus chose his twelve disciples and began to train them. He taught them the right attitude of being his disciple. Jesus didn't want his disciples to become hypocrites like the Pharisees, but obey his words from the heart. In this passage Jesus gives more teachings that reveal God's holiness and truth. He concludes by telling a parable about two builders: a wise builder and a foolish builder. May God help us to be wise builders by hearing Jesus' words and putting them into practice.

1. Do not be hypocrites

First, do not judge. Look at verse 37a. "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned." What does it mean to judge and condemn others? There is a time to judge others, especially by calling sin what it is: sin. But, in this verse, judging and condemning means being critical of others, and finding fault with people one by one.

Why do we judge and condemn others? Some people judge others to avoid seeing their own weaknesses or to make themselves look better. Others judge because they only see outward appearances. The great evangelist Charles Spurgeon and his wife used to sell eggs that their chickens laid. They would not give the eggs away. They would not even give eggs to their close relatives, but made them buy the eggs. As a result some people said that the Spurgeons were greedy and selfish. They accepted the criticisms without defending themselves. When Mrs. Spurgeon died, the story was revealed. All the profits from the sale of the eggs went to support two poor elderly widows. People had judged and criticized them by outward appearance without knowing all the facts.

Who are we to judge others? We are all fallen sinners. The Bible says, "...there is no one righteous, not even one." (Ro 3:23, 3:10) Sadly, one who judges or condemns others will suffer condemnation in his own soul. And judging or condemning others closes the door to relationships with God and with people. If we do not judge or condemn others, then we will not be judged nor condemned by God or others.

Jesus did not judge or condemn others. Instead, he embraced all kinds of sinners with mercy. There was once a woman caught in adultery. The Pharisees brought her to Jesus to see what he would do. Jesus could have condemned her because he is the Righteous One without sin. But he said to her, "Then neither do I condemn you...Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:11b) That is why instead of negatively judging or condemning others, Jesus encourages us to do something positive. Look at verse 37b, "Forgive, and you will be forgiven." If we are of a forgiving spirit, we shall ourselves reap the benefit of it. If we forgive the injuries done to us by others, we will be forgiven. This is the mind and heart of Jesus.

Verse 38 continues, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Jesus was very generous. Jesus gave his life for sinners. If you give to others generously, God will not forget your generous heart, and will give back to you abundantly. There is a promise here, that we will receive back a good measure overflowing into our laps. With the measure we use to give, it will be given back to us. One missionary wondered why he never received gifts from people when they came to visit from overseas. Then he realized it was because he never gave any gifts to anyone. Once he started to send gifts to others overseas, then he finally received some gifts from others.

Look at verses 39-40. "He also told them this parable: 'Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.'" Jesus' disciples' present condition was not so great. Without proper training, they might become like the Pharisees who were blind guides leading people into pits. The disciples needed to humbly learn truth from Jesus so that their spiritual eyes would be opened. When they were fully trained by Jesus and his word of truth dwelt in their hearts, then they would become like their teacher, Jesus. Today so many follow their own truth or believe that every

way is OK. I went to a Christian rock concert with my kids last weekend. We heard bands that uplifted our hearts. But, I was surprised that after each band played, several hundred young kids lined up and wanted to get autographs. I asked one boy, "Why do you want their autographs?" He said, "Because they are famous." People follow famous people, but to be Jesus' disciples, we really need to make sure we follow Jesus and his words and become like him.

Second, take the plank out of your eye. Look at verses 41-42, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

These verses warn us against hypocrisy. There is a sinful tendency for us to look at others' small weaknesses, but pay no attention to the glaring sin problems we have. A speck of sawdust in one's eye is irritating and needs to be removed, but it is not fatal. On the other hand, a plank in one's eye is serious and would require immediate emergency care. One should be more concerned about a plank in his own eye than about a speck of sawdust in another's eye.

When a plank sticks out of a person's eye, then they can easily knock other people down by their critical nature. This can happen when people live together as roommates or as husband and wife. We tell our roommate, "Hey, let me take the speck out of your eye," or we tell our spouse, "Honey, let me take the speck out of your eye." But, we have a huge plank in our own eye. One Bible student told his wife, "Honey, you left the milk out once," when he himself always leaves his socks and all kinds of food all over the house all the time.

Jesus said in verse 42b, "You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Instead of looking at others' small weaknesses, we need to repent of our own sins. We should apply Jesus' teachings to ourselves first, and repent. This doesn't mean that we ignore others. After repenting our own sins, we can be useful to serve others as good shepherds for them.

How can we take the plank out of our eye? It is to daily remember what kind of sinners we are and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. St. Paul once wrote: "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst." (1 Ti 1:15) Paul always remembered what kind of sinner he was and the wonderful grace of Jesus. Through Jesus' grace, he could remove any planks in his eye, and then be a good shepherd to many kinds of people. Let us each remember the wonderful grace of Jesus given to us so we can see clearly to take care of those who need good shepherds.

Third, a tree and its fruit. Look at verses 43-45. "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks."

Jesus did not focus his effort on improving his disciples' appearances or their table manners. Jesus wanted to transform their hearts into good hearts. Good fruit comes from a good heart. Love does not come out of a hateful heart. Joy does not come out of a bitter heart. Peace does not come out of a vengeful heart. What Jesus' disciples need most is a good heart. Verse 45 says that a good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart. Storing up good things means spending our private time reading and memorizing God's word rather than reading useless or ungodly things on the Internet continuously. What we take in we will store into our hearts. Then out of the overflow of the heart we speak words of life or death.

Once, one family had guests over for dinner on a hot summer day. The mother asked her son to say something to the guests. The boy said, "But I don't know what to say!" The mother said, "Just say what you hear me say." Then, the boy said to the guests, "Oh Lord, why did we invite these people over on a hot day like this?" Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks so be careful what you store up in your hearts. How can we have good hearts? Jesus told his disciples, "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you." (Jn 15:3) He also prayed for them, "Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth." (Jn 17:17) When we study the word of God with sincere repentance, the word of God comes in, purifies us and creates in us a clean and good heart.

2. Be a Wise Builder

There were a lot of people hanging around Jesus who called him, "Lord, Lord," but did not do what he said. So Jesus said in verse 46, "Why do you call me, "Lord, Lord," but do not do what I say?" The people who called Jesus "Lord" with their lips, but did not obey him, were hypocrites. Jesus cannot be fooled. Jesus really wants his disciples to obey his words as of first importance. To help them, he tells a parable about two builders -- a wise builder and a foolish builder.

First, the wise builder. Look at verses 47-48. "I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. 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."

The disciples had just heard Jesus' words, "Do not judge," "Forgive", and "...first take the plank out of your eye..." But hearing was not enough. They needed to practice these teachings in their daily lives. This requires great effort. Look at verse 48a again. "He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock." Building a house and laying foundation on a rock is hard work. It requires digging down deep, spending much time and energy. When you dig deep, you have to get rid of a lot of useless dirt. If you don't hit rock right away, you have to keep digging deeper and deeper until you hit the rock. The wise builder has to get up early, sweat all day, and go to bed late. It requires a lot of hard work even though when the house is finished you never even see the foundation.

In the same way, Jesus wants us to build our lives on a solid foundation of rock, though it takes much time and effort. The solid foundation is Jesus Christ. He is our Rock. We should build our lives on Jesus our Rock, the solid foundation. According to verse 47, practically this means to spend much time with Jesus - to come to him, hear his words and let Jesus' words work in us deep within our hearts until we practice his words. It requires much struggle to dig and uproot innate pride and selfishness. It requires early morning, hidden prayer and meditating on Jesus' words until the Holy

Spirit convicts us of sin. It requires us to search our hearts in order to repent and come to the cross to receive forgiveness of our sins.

Building a foundation on the rock does not usually happen all at once. We may not see quick results. Real repentance takes an enormous struggle of faith. When we really repent of our sins through Jesus' blood, we depend on Jesus by faith and Jesus takes hold of us. Jesus, our foundation, is our support. We are brought into a vital union with the living Savior and there is a real work of deep grace in our hearts. But, this cannot happen if we do not come to Jesus daily, do not hear him, and do not practice his words. So many voices compete for our attention. If one is spending his time surfing the net, is on Facebook continuously, going to all the latest movies and late-night partying, he cannot build his house on the solid foundation of Jesus. If one is not studying the Bible deeply nor spending quiet time in prayer, then he cannot build his house on the solid foundation of Jesus.

What happens when we struggle to have even one word of Jesus in our deep hearts? It will cost more, but it will be worth the cost because we can overcome the torrents of life. Look at verse 48b, "When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built." The torrent of a flood will surely come. Perhaps a torrent takes away your job, or you lose a good friend because of misunderstanding or your child is sick or rebellious. The worst torrent to come might be death. But, according to verse 48b, the torrent that struck could not shake that house because it was well-built. When Dr. Jim and Jennifer Rabchuk's first baby Joey was born, he had a severe heart problem. For one month, he was in intensive care at the hospital because the baby's heart raced to 200 beats per minute. They found out that the electrical conduction of the heart was overactive and they gave him medication. But, because Jesus was their foundation, they withstood this storm for several years. They took care of God's sheep wholeheartedly and Dr. Jim went to Russia to serve the Russian conferences. God blessed them to bear great fruit like Samantha Siy, David Hull, and others. Eventually Joey was healed through heart surgery as a toddler. We can withstand any storm of life because our lives are firmly rooted on the solid rock, Jesus himself. Nothing, even death, can shake us.

I have learned in my life that building a house on the foundation of Jesus can only happen when we struggle to put Jesus' words into practice. In my college years, I had a huge sin problem. I had strong woman's cursed desires for men. I liked to flirt and gain every man's attention. Through Bible study,

I met Jesus as my Savior, but I couldn't escape the grip of this sin easily. But, slowly and steadily, I began to dig deep and lay the foundation of my life on Jesus. I laid the foundation of Jesus by preparing Bible studies, going to early morning 6am daily bread, writing testimonies and sharing each Friday, and taking care of his sheep. It took five long years of struggle of repentance and it was like dying. But, God helped me to hold onto one word, Matthew 6:33, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." I could have superficially tried to follow Jesus' words or pretend to do so, but I knew I couldn't fool Jesus. I struggled to seek Jesus first so that Jesus became my husband. Then, I could give my marriage to God and marry a man of God by faith. After marriage I could give my husband to God, not demanding love from him. We have weathered several storms in our marriage, such as my six miscarriages, but God has helped us to stand strong in marriage for 20 years with two beautiful children. Through this passage, I realized that I should not take shortcuts in building my foundation in life because I cannot fool Jesus. I repent that I surf the Internet too much and when I am tired or busy I skip writing testimonies. I could see that even after so many years, I must still keep digging deep to build my life on Jesus' foundation. May God help each of us to dig deep and build the foundation on Jesus every day of our lives.

Second, the foolish builder. Look at verse 49, "But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete." Those who hear Jesus' words and do not put them into practice are like those who built a house on the ground without a foundation. This foolish builder neglected foundation work, working only on the part of the house one can see. The house built without a foundation perhaps looked the same outwardly as the one built on the foundation. Surely, it cost less and there was a lot less work involved. The foolish builder finished his house early and could relax on his deck and throw a lot of parties. He laughed at the one building on the foundation, saying, "Look at me enjoying life while you are still working on that foundation."

According to verse 49, the foolish builder is one who hears Jesus' words, but does not put them into practice. He does not obey Jesus' teachings at all. He has superficial Bible study and doesn't bother to get up early to pray. He barely reads his Bible nor writes testimonies. He just shows up to church on Sunday and hangs out with his friends, but there is no struggle to really

repent from his heart. He never accepts one word of Jesus deeply into his heart nor puts Jesus' word into practice with his own personal faith. He is building a house, but it is without a foundation. Perhaps the house can last for a while, looking good on the outside. Perhaps no one can tell there is something wrong with the house. But, he cannot fool God. The Lord sees that there is no foundation.

What happened to the foolish builder's house? Look at verse 49b. "The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete." The flood eventually comes to the foolish builder's house, but there is no foundation to hold it firm against the flood. His house collapsed quickly and was swept away by the torrents and completely destroyed. The foolish builder could not withstand the destructive torrents of life or the final torrent of death and God's judgment.

There is a famous movie star who looks like he has a well-built house. He has money, fame, a beautiful wife and six kids. But, recently, when he was asked by a reporter if he believed in God, he replied, "No, no, no!" I'm probably 20 per cent atheist and 80 per cent agnostic. I don't think anyone really knows. You'll either find out or not when you get there, until then there's no point thinking about it." Sadly, with this view, his house will crash and be completely destroyed someday by a torrent, perhaps by falling into a big pit.

From the parable of the wise and foolish builders, Jesus teaches that only when we build our lives on the foundation of Jesus, we can stand the storms of life and even God's judgment. Are you a wise builder or a foolish builder? Jesus wants us to be wise builders, not foolish builders. From today's passage we could see that Jesus is focused on our hearts, whether our hearts are right with him. Then, we can hear Jesus' words and put them into practice. May God help us to be wise builders who lay on the foundation of Jesus the Rock so that we can hear Jesus' words and obey them from our hearts.