

The Two Builders

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[0 : 0 0] So when you have emigrated to Great Britain from wherever it may be from, and you like it here, that you like the people, you like the country, and you want to live here permanently, you can apply to become a British citizen. Now I don't fully understand the process you have to go through in order to become a British citizen, and I understand it's quite complicated, and it's quite long, and there's a lot of paperwork involved, and you have to go and do classes and examinations and all this stuff, and you'll probably have to answer questions that none of us could ever answer, and things like that. But once you've been accepted, once you've crossed that threshold, once you have been accepted, you are then asked to go and swear to the oath of allegiance, and you're also asked to make a pledge. And these are the words that you're asked to say if you want to become a British citizen. The oath of allegiance says, I swear by Almighty God on becoming a British citizen, I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs, her successors, according to law. So that's the oath of allegiance you're asked to say. And the second thing you're asked to say is a pledge. And the pledge reads like this, it says, I will give my loyalty to the

United Kingdom to respect its rights and freedoms, and I will uphold its democratic values. I will observe its laws faithfully and fulfill my duties and obligations as a British citizen.

So really here you're being asked to make two kinds of promises. You're being asked to make a promise of loyalty, in this case to the Queen, as the head of state. And you're also being asked to make a promise of obedience, that you will obey the laws of the land. And when you join a church, you're asked to make a similar vow. We recognize that Christ is our King, that He is the head of the church, and that we are to obey Him and obey His church. Last week we looked at the parable of the workers in the vineyard. We saw how the landowner, who was symbolizing God, went out, chose his workers. We saw how he hired them all throughout the day, and how even at the very last minute, he went out to hire new workers, and they were paid a full day's wage. If God has called you to be one of His children, this is a great and a wonderful thing. But there is something that is required of us once we are accepted into His family. We are required to obey. It's one thing to call yourself a Christian, to say that you love Jesus, to say that you want to follow Him, but it's a completely different thing to actually go and do it. To actually love Jesus, to actually follow Him, to actually obey Him, and to serve Him is a key part of the Christian life. The parable of the two builders is a very well-known one. You probably know the other version slightly better than Luke's one. After all, it's the one that the children tend to learn. We already talked about the nice little catchy song that kids have to learn to help them understand the parable.

It's a parable that we know very well, I'm sure. It's one that we're very familiar with. But have we really considered it in any great depth, or have we looked at it outside of what we learned about it in Sunday school? This is what I hope we will achieve today.

The parable's main overarching theme is that of obedience. When J.C. Ryle was writing on this parable, he said, what an old and common sin is profession without practice.

[4 : 1 9] It's a problem the church has faced throughout all of its existence, from the very beginning to today. And that is really what this parable is all about.

It is a warning. It's a warning to us not to have an empty faith. And it's a warning of having a profession of faith without a practice.

So there are three things we're going to look at this parable under. This morning we're going to look at Lord, we're going to look at listen, and we're going to look at life. So firstly then, we'll consider the theme Lord.

Luke's account of this parable that we read just now, along with some of the extra parts of the chapter, comes at the end of Luke's telling on the Sermon on the Mount.

So Jesus has been teaching the people. We read some of it. He has been giving them lots of instructions, lots of ways to live. But when he's finished, when he's done with his main teaching about how you are to live, he doesn't just finish and leave.

[5 : 30] He follows up with one final bit of teaching on teaching itself, more specifically on the ones who are being taught. And he begins this teaching with a very hard-to-hear statement.

He says there in verse 46, Why do you call me? We can only guess at the size of the crowd who heard the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew's much longer account simply tells us that there were crowds who were gathered there. I think it's safe to say that it would have been a large gathering of people that as it went on, even more and more would have come to listen to Jesus' teaching.

You need to only look at other examples of Jesus' ministry to see the size of the crowds who had gathered to hear him. We have the great crowd of 5,000 plus who were miraculously fed. We have the multitudes who gathered to greet him as he entered Jerusalem.

We have the people who stuffed that house in Capernaum so full that they had to make a hole in the roof to lower down the paralytic to be healed. We have the great crowd of people who had gathered here.

[6 : 43] We have the great crowd of people who had gathered here. We have the great crowd of people who had gathered here. It wouldn't have been hard to fill a seat in a stadium if Jesus was talking. So I think it's safe to say that a lot of people came to hear him on that day too.

And Jesus sees these big crowds. He sees these multiples of people. He sees those who come to hear him. And he undoubtedly hears people telling him, Lord.

But what does he tell them? Why do you call me Lord, Lord, when you do not do what I tell you?

Why do you call me Lord when you don't listen to me?

Why do you call me Lord when you do not do what I've asked you to do? What use is it of having a Lord if you do not truly follow him and obey his commands?

There's no use. Remember as well, that at many times throughout his ministry, Jesus displayed his supernatural ability to look into people's hearts and to see their true feelings, their true intentions, and what was in their mind.

[7 : 51] He knew when faith was a genuine one. All throughout the Bible, from the beginning onwards, we see the same sin.

We see people claiming that God is their Lord, that promising to obey him, promising to follow him, only to go off and leave him and go their own way very, very quickly.

Remember the incident with the golden calf, or the whole saga of the judges and beyond. Ezekiel speaks of this very problem too.

In Ezekiel 33, he says, And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say, but they will not do it.

For with lustful talk in their mouths they act, and their heart is set on their gain. It's often said that people will do anything for an easy life.

[8 : 52] You just have to look at supermarket car parks to see that, and how many people cram as close to the door as possible, even taking disabled spaces and the like, rather than having to walk a few extra meters and parking further away.

Remember the parable of the persistent widow. Maybe you've been speaking about the gospel with somebody for ages and ages, for years and years, and then they get so fed up that they'll say anything just to get you to leave them alone.

They say, fine, I'll come to church. And, you know, even they may make a false profession just to get you to leave them alone. And making a false profession, I think, is very dangerous.

It's very dangerous. I think it's also quite a grievous sin. Perhaps even more dangerously, in some parts of the church, people are deceived into thinking that they are genuine Christians, that they are believers, when in fact, they're really not.

These people go through their lives, living as they had always lived, not making any changes, because they believed they were saved, because at some event, or at some camp, or at something, they were told that if they prayed this prayer, or if they went forward, or they did, they would be a Christian, and they would be saved.

[10 : 22] And that's all they had to do. The hard truth is that to call Jesus Lord demands something from us.

Simply calling Jesus Lord is not enough. It's not enough. Jesus himself says that in Matthew's account of this event. He says in Matthew 7, 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. On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, cast out demons, do mighty works in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. Words, even actions, are no substitute for obedience. If you took that citizenship vow that we mentioned at the beginning, and then instantly went to try and work to overthrow the queen, or to break the law in some fashion, then the words that you'd said meant absolutely nothing. [11 : 37] nothing. Your citizenship would not be genuine, because the vow that you made wasn't a genuine one either. It'd simply be a fraud.

We must both be hearers, confessors, and doers of the word. James says that in James chapter one. He says, Be doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. To be a Christian means to have the Holy Spirit himself dwelling within you. And to have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you means that you should never be content to just sit still and do nothing. But rather, you should be driven to display the work of Christ in your lives and in your work, and to serve him for the glory of his kingdom. We need to confess that Jesus is Lord. We need to do that. But we also need to mean it. Because when Jesus talks with us, he meant it. [12 : 47] the repetition of the address, Lord, Lord. This is a Hebrew method used to communicate something of importance or to communicate intimacy or affection.

Remember, we looked at the call of Samuel last week. Peter named Samuel, Samuel, because of that affection, that intimacy. It highlights attachment. So to call Jesus Lord, Lord suggests that same intimacy, that same affection for him. And if that intimacy is not present, if that affection isn't real, then our admission is a false one. Remember what else Jesus said, whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.

If we love Jesus, if he is our Lord truly, then we will obey what he says. [13 : 50] But to do that, we also need to listen. That leads us to our second heading then of listening. Remember, way back Sunday here, we discussed the importance of having ears to hear. Again, it comes up because it's so important that we have ears to hear and that we are listening. The short parable Jesus tells here shows us the importance that listening has on our lives. We're given the story of two builders building houses. We all need a place to live. This isn't unusual. There are houses being built all over the place. Having a home is an important part of our lives, of our identities, all those good things. Not having a home or losing a home can cause many issues or many problems for us. Not having a home is an anchor. You lose that place where you belong, the place where the things you love are. Our homes are important. They're important to our very selves. Choosing where you make your home is key. When you go and buy a house, you make sure the place the house is, is good, that you like it, that you'll be happy there. [15 : 16] And when you build a home, it's even more important. You want to make sure the land is good, that it's not going to flood every year when the rains come, that the soil will be good, you'll be able to plant your garden and it won't die, and all those things.

you want to make sure it won't fall down after a couple of years, because there's a river running underneath it that will worm your foundations away. Jesus is equating this home, building these houses, with building our lives. Our life. Anyone who builds a house or from the blocks that I had in front of me earlier on knows that if the foundations are not secure, if you're trying to build a house on a bouncy ball rather than on a flat, nice surface, it's just not going to work. Maybe if I tried harder with the ball, I may have been able to balance it perfectly on top of it, so it might look alright for a minute or two and then it will start to wobble and then collapse. A house may look good on the outside for a short time, but will it withstand the test of time? The Romans were master builders. [16 : 42] They had the technique perfectly nailed down. The Romans invented concrete so much earlier than the rest of civilization.

In fact, once Rome fell, the recipe for concrete was lost for centuries, and it's only recently that we really started using it again, but even still, our concrete that we make today in the 21st century is vastly inferior to the concrete that the Romans made.

So many of their buildings and monuments are still standing, or at least partially standing, even today, 2,000 years later. Compare them to their contemporaries, you know, the Celts and the Germans who built of wood and straw and all these things, their buildings have long since gone. There's maybe a slight bit of evidence left in the ground that they were there, but they've all but disappeared. These buildings had good foundations, and we need our lives to have good foundations too, and as we saw with the Bible earlier, that foundation is Jesus and his teaching. We need our lives to be built on Jesus who is the cornerstone. He is our rock. He is our redeemer. He is the one who gives us faith and sustains that faith and brings it through to its completion. [18:12] He is the son of God himself who died for you. But building a house with proper foundations takes a lot of work.

It can take a long time. It can take a lot of blood and sweat and tears to dig those foundations out and to properly build them, make sure they're secure, that everything is the way it needs to be before you even start building the walls and the roof and all that stuff.

It's the same with our lives, isn't it? It can be hard to clear out the rubbish in our lives. Focusing on Jesus is hard.

There's so many things that distract us, that pull our attention away, that we want more because it's more attractive at that time. It's hard to put aside pride, to put aside self-reliance, to put aside self-righteousness, putting aside even self-confidence is hard because we're taught by the world that from the earliest age that these things are all good, that being proud of your achievements is good, that being self-sufficient is good, that having confidence in ourselves is good.

But these foundations are all very weak. They're very loose. They will not stand up against the floods and the earthquakes that life throws at us.

[19:44] One of the key parts of the Christian life is self-denial, something we're commanded to do. Jesus says in Matthew 16, when Jesus told his disciples, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever will lose his life for my sake will find it. Jesus says earlier in Matthew's Gospel, in chapter 10, whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

These are hard words. They are. Building your life on Jesus is hard, but we need to do it because Jesus is the only firm foundation we can have because then when the trials do come, when the rains fall, when the earth shakes, when the stream breaks its bank, when evil comes to destroy it, and finally when Christ returns in all his glory and judgment comes, the house will not fall, but will stand firm.

In order to build our lives on Jesus, in order to have good solid foundations, we need to listen. We need to listen to what Jesus says.

We need to hear his words that we can read in the Bible. We don't have the privilege today being able to hear Jesus talk in person. We cannot go and sit and listen to the Sermon on the Mount.

[21:28] We cannot sit under his physical teaching. And while we think we may miss out, I think we actually have a greater privilege because we have God's word here for us.

We have his inspired word, his inerrant word that we can read every day. If you have been to a lecture or a class or any of these things, you may take notes, you may remember some of what was said, but over time your memory fades or you mix things up, you get confused, you can't remember exactly what was taught or maybe you misunderstand or you misremember what was said.

We don't have that problem because we have the teachings written down for us to always refer to. We're also given the Holy Spirit which can help us understand what is being written. We also have the privilege of generations who have come before us, who have studied the word, who have written on it, who have preached it, who have taught it.

We're very privileged here. Obedience is also a gift. Listening is a gift.

[22:44] Our foundation is a gift. It's hard, but it's also free. That's what makes it so great. It's great because we do not have to rely on ourselves.

We do not have to rely on our own abilities, our own strength to build that house. The work is hard, but when the profession is real, when it's accompanied with listening to Jesus, others, and obeying

his commands, he helps us in the building of that house so that it will not fall, and so that we will live, which brings us to our final heading then, that of life.

if we don't listen, if we don't obey, then our foundation is lonely. If it's only saying but no doing, then our foundations are not just weak, but they're non-existent.

Rather than taking the time, rather than working hard, rather than relying on the strength and power of God through the Holy Spirit to build a house with proper firm foundations, we instead find ourselves cutting corners, we find ourselves rushing, we end up being careless, because we think, these two builders that we have in this story, one with firm foundations, the other with none, they may look no different from the outside these houses and these builders.

Both these builders may worship together in the same church, both may even be elders, some may teach, they may even learn the services. from the outside, they look the same, from the outside, the two houses too will look the same, but it's only after close examination time, the cracks will appear.

[24 : 56] When trials come, you will find that only one house will stand and the other will fall. Ryle says again, the Christianity which consists of merely hearing religion taught without doing anything is a building which must finally fall and great indeed will be the ruin.

There is no loss like the loss of a soul. The sad truth is that there is no life for those whose foundations are not in Jesus.

It's a sad truth that they are lost. this parable again, one that we are all so familiar with, one that children will happily find out, is really quite a solemn one.

It's really quite a bit gloomy because it reminds us of the fate of those who do not follow Jesus. It reminds us of the fate of those who claim to follow him and yet do not the most for because they should know better.

They have heard his voice but haven't listened. I find ignorance is often easier to correct than error. Someone who knows nothing of Christianity who's never opened a Bible or heard a Bible story in their life will be more open to teaching than those who have grown up, who have been taught wrong things, who have believed wrong things, who have fallen into cults, people like Mormons or JWs or progressive Christianity as it's so called, cultural Christians, all these kind of groups.

[26 : 46] These people will need a lot more work to correct their errors than those who have no prior belief at all. So we do have a work cut out for us.

In that regard, this parable is hard because it clearly demonstrates to us the world in which we live. Everywhere we go, we see countless houses that are built with no foundations.

We see countless houses that are just waiting for the storm to come and blow them over. We see countless people who are lost.

that is what makes our mission so crucial. Because so many are resting on a false assumption of safety.

But Jesus' words cannot be more clear. The person who hears Christ, who obeys what he hears, the one who does it, becomes like that person who builds his house on the rock, and they are always secure.

[27 : 52] and those who don't are washed away in the storm. How thankful we are then that God gives us life through his Son.

How thankful that only through his Son, only with him as our foundation can we have life everlasting. Only with Jesus as our rock can we truly live.

Because there will come a time in all our lives when the rains do come, when the rivers will burst, its banks, when our house will be assaulted by the rivers. So when it comes, we better make sure that we have a firm, strong, and indestructible foundations in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whose love for you brought him to earth to live as one of us and yet to be without sin. Jesus Christ who lived that perfect life for you so he could be that perfect sacrifice for the sins of you.

Jesus Christ whose love for you cost him his own in the most horrendous, horrific way possible on that cross. One of the worst ways to die ever been devised by man and yet he went to it willingly.

[29 : 17] Jesus Christ whose power rose him from the dead showing us that there is hope for us all, that there is life to be found. Jesus Christ who ascended into heaven to be the Father's right hand so he could intercede on your behalf because of his great love for you.

Jesus Christ who has promised that he will return, that he will make things new and perfect forever. Jesus Christ who is your Lord, who is your Savior.

So make sure friends that he is your foundation today. Make sure that your lives are built upon him and not upon the ground that will crumble and if you do that, you will find life much abundantly. you will find wonderful, glorious life by his side. So make sure today that your house will not fall. Amen. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the solemn words of this parable that remind us of the danger of not having you as our foundation.

[30 : 40] these rather gloomy words that remind us of the fate of those who do not believe or who falsely believe, those who profess you to be Lord and yet do not follow that profession through with their lives.

Oh Lord, how we pray for them today. We may know someone like that, we may love somebody like that. We all love and care for people who are lost.

oh how we pray for them today, oh Lord. How we pray that your Holy Spirit would convict them and lead them to repentance of faith. How we pray that you would intercede on their behalf today and you would grant them a Savior, that you would grant them Jesus as their foundation.

Oh Lord, how we pray that our world and all those in it who are tottering on the edge of destruction would look to you for life everlasting today.

Help us never to give up in our prayers. Help us never to give up in our evangelism, in our witness, in our mission to greet the Lord. Help us to have the strength that comes only from you to build our houses properly with hard work based on your Son and on his word and on your many wonderful promises to us that will never be broken, your word which will never fail, your love which is steadfast.

[32 : 18] Let's go. Hold us tightly in your hands and care for us because we are your children and we need the love and support of our heavenly Father today.

Forgive us Lord and bless us. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.