

Sermon by Bob Brown on Sunday AM 9/14/08

Like a Rock

Text: Matthew 7:24-29

As we come to the end of the Sermon on the Mount, and therefore the end of this series on Kingdom Living, we see Jesus saying; "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". As students of the Bible, as people who follow Jesus, we want to have our houses built on the solid foundation of all the Father has to offer, and to live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we read closely we see that Jesus repeats Himself here as He talks of "these words of mine" (vv. 24, 26). Keep in mind that Jesus is not just talking of people sitting around listening to His words, but actually putting into practice what He has been teaching. The word practice is such an interesting choice of words; if we look up the word practice in the dictionary we see these definitions:

1. To make use of habitually
2. To apply in action
3. To do or perform repeatedly, in order to acquire proficiency

When we look at it like that, what Jesus is saying takes on a whole new meaning of radical obedience in the world we live in. Our foundation must not only sound good but be solid as well. It is in the context of the continual working out of the Word of God that Jesus now speaks of a choice of foundations in each of our lives. Again, we have a choice about how we will live, not just how we look or are perceived by others, but how we measure up according to God's holy standards of living.

It may not be immediately detected, but what we build our lives on, behind the scenes, will be exposed when the tough times come, and they will come. It is interesting that coinciding with this message, we are just now learning of the utter devastation in southeastern Texas. The warnings for hurricane Ike were given for over two weeks, especially to those who built houses and lived along the low-lying areas of Galveston, Texas. People choose to build close to the water, on the sand, because of the view and comfort, but when the storms come, if the house is on solid foundation, it can be repaired, but will sustain major damage.

Interestingly, thirty-five percent of the residents of Galveston chose to "hunker down" and ride out this killer storm. What made it a killer storm is the fact that so many people were so close to the water, and so close to sea level, that there was no where to escape the wrath that they knew was coming.

How appropriate this illustration is for those of us now reading these words of Jesus. We know that there is a way to escape the wrath of God; we have heard the warnings over and over. We know that to practice these words of Jesus, we need only to believe them, choose them and live in obedience to them. Many will say that these words of Jesus are in fact the way they have chosen, but our lives and what we have built them upon will be the true test, when the storms come upon us.

In just a few months time, from when Jesus spoke these words, His disciples will go through the biggest test of their lives, will they stick with Jesus through the storm of His being arrested, tried in a mock trial, sentenced and crucified, or will the sand that they have been building on be exposed? But it was not just these words, spoken at this time that Jesus and others would give us, but these words, other words of Jesus and the teachings of His followers that will help us in our time of need. Later, James, the brother of Jesus would write these words:

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." *James 1:22*

Later, Jesus Himself said, after He was given honor, "Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and obey it." *Luke 11: 28*

The apostle Paul, writing about the righteous judgment of God wrote to the Romans "For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but those who obey the law who will be declared righteous." *Romans 2: 13*

Also John writes to the church "Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as He is righteous." 1 John 3:7

The idea of being righteous is throughout Scripture. Each one of the four metaphors used by Jesus here brings out the same two main points that all of Scripture points to:

There are only two ways, our way and God's way, heaven and hell, the kingdom of God or the way of destruction. Just acknowledging that there

are two ways is not enough, we have to choose which way we want to walk in and live out.

The second choice is proven by our constant obedience to the words of Jesus. Literally, it is you and I living as Christ-like as possible, in a world that constantly presents to us everything ungodly.

After these forceful, yet graceful words of Jesus' teaching, we are told that the crowds were awed, amazed at His teaching. He taught with such authority, such love and compassion, not like those they were used to hearing teach about a sterile law that only the leaders seemed able to interpret, and no one could live out.

Could this be a major part of what Jesus wants us to learn about Him, that He is all authority, that His words really are the only way to get eternal life, and that everything else is smoke and spitting into the wind?

May we all, make the conscious decision to not only hear these words of Jesus but to put them into practice.

Father, as humble children we come to You, our Rock and final authority, to thank You for Your Word, and the gift of eternal life that is our in Christ Jesus. Forgive us for living in a house of cards, when you offer eternal security, give each of us the strength and power of Your Holy Spirit to live today and everyday on the Solid Rock You have provided, Amen.