

BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION ROCK

Matthew 7:15, 26

By Raymond White

At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about two kinds of false disciples: false teachers and false hearers.

Matthew 7:15 *Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their works.*

These are the false teachers. They have a lot to say, but they are lying. Their message is wrong. Their intent is wrong. Their words are wrong.

But besides false teachers, there are also false hearers.

Matthew 7:26 *Everyone that heareth these things of mine and doeth them not shall be like unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand.*

These are false hearers who hear and pretend to listen to the true message but are not listening. Or they are hearing the false message. Either way, their hearts are wrong.

Teachers and students have one thing in common: their genuineness, or lack of it, is known by only one thing: continuing obedience to the word. Whether they speak it or hear it, do they do it? That alone validates their salvation. Here's a short list that makes the point clear.

1 Corinthians 15:2 *By which also are ye saved if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you.*

John 8:31 *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples in deed.*

Colossians 1:21 *...now hath he reconciled...if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled.*

1 John 2:3 *And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*

Notice that these verses have two things in common: (1) present tense reality, and (2) future tense condition. Let's go through it again so you see the implication clearly.

1. *ARE saved...IF ye keep...*
2. *ARE my disciple...IF ye continue*
3. *NOW reconciled...IF ye continue*
4. *We know him [now]...IF we keep*

These verses are clear enough: by keeping his word in the future, we don't *become* his disciples, we *are* his disciples, *now*.

But how can that be? It's like cause and effect backwards, the effect before the cause which is absurd. How can something in the future cause something to happen now? Can't. Then what are these words really saying?

There are two things these verses are not saying. (1) They are not saying you are a Christian without conditions. Clearly there are conditions; namely, future obedience. And (2) They are not saying that your current Christianity is caused by your future obedience which simply cannot be. What these verses are saying is that if you are a Christian now, that necessarily causes you to continue in obedience. That you continue is the proof that you are in Christ. That's the only way to make sense of it.

The perfect illustration of this is Jesus' picture of a man building a house either on rock or on sand. When the house is finished, the foundation is invisible, below the surface. But even so, out of sight, out of mind, the foundation is what it is, either firmly rooted in rock or precariously rooted in sand, and you can't tell by looking how the house is rooted. But the storm knows. The steadiness or the flimsiness of the house is revealed when, and only when, the storm hits, when the house on the rock will stand and the house on the sand collapses.

Here's the point: that hidden foundation was built *before* the storm, not *during* the storm.

Too many Christians think that they are not yet rooted in Christ because the storm hasn't blown their way yet. That may or may not be. But either way, it's not the storm that makes them what they are, the storm only exposes what they are: rock Christians or sand Christians. Whichever they are, they are that *now*. If you're a rock Christian, you're fine. If you're a sand Christian, well, you might think about rebuilding.

Final note: Who is that rock?

Psalms 18:2 The Lord is my rock and my fortress...

1 Corinthians 10:4 They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

In the hymn "The Solid Rock" by Baptist minister Edward Mote are found these words:

*When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.
On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.*