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CHRISTIAN BUILDING.

Matt. 7:24-29.

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock." Matt. 7:24.

Every man is building his house somewhere. The question is not whether you are building a house, but where? You do not choose to build, but only the place. The destiny of that house is shaped by the life we live here. If you build a house of wood or brick or stone, you live in it only a short time. If you find you do not like it, you may sell it or exchange it for another. You may live here in a house that some else built. But the house eternal will be of your own building. And it will last forever.

It is true that a man can, if he finds that his house is built on hollow empty ground, tear it down and build it over. But this is a hard job, as every one will testify who has tried it. And he may find, after it is too late, that his house is built on shifting sands. The time in which we have to build is so short, and once that time is past its destiny is fixed forever.

You notice that Christ lays emphasis on the foundation of the house. He says nothing of its architecture. The construction of this house is of less importance than its locality. If all the building lots on the way of life were good solid ground this would not be the case. Christ's greatest fear seemed to be that men would build on loose shifting sands.

Maybe this arises partly from the fact that there is a possibility of improving the house in another world, if its foundation is laid on good solid rock that will not fail us in the great disolution. Life is so short, and most of us spend a good part of that building on a sand bank. We find when our time is almost up that we have wasted our labor. Sometimes we do not make this discovery till the evening of life is upon us. Then we must tear it down to the ground and build in another place. Before we have hardly begun the grim reaper comes and we are finished. Or have we finished? I am sure it will be finished for those who have built on the sand. But I am not so sure about those who have built on a rock. I would hate to think that some good men and women will have to spend eternity in the dark little house they have built for themselves here. The close little rooms they have shut themselves up in, with only a little square hole for a window, will be very uncomfortable to live in forever. Here they refuse all fellowship with all who do not subscribe to all their little narrow creed. I do not believe all these have built on shifting sands. Some of them have, but not all. Some have chosen good solid rock for their lives. But they have built it too small and narrow. They are going to have to enlarge them, or they will be mighty uncomfortable in that world where all God's children live like one family. It would be far better to build our house commodius and beautiful here. But we need not despair if honest ignorance causes us some mistakes. Only be sure your house

is built on good solid rock. Christ said this was most important. O God, help us to build on solid rock that will not fail us in that grim hour.

There are shifting sand banks on the way of life plainly marked, "Danger, do not build your house here!" Yet men will take a chance and build even here. With all the tragic ends of a drink ridden life crying, "Beware!" men will build their lives on this accursed spot. With the frowning doors of prison staring them in the face men will steal. Several years ago they found a man on the roadside dead over in Mississippi. In his pocket there was a half emptied bottle of denatured alcohol. It was plainly marked, "Poison," and, for the benefit of those who could not read, there was the grisly sign of the skull and cross bone. With that sinister figure staring him in the face he drank and died. He might have called that taking a chance. But he was walking into the jaws of death with his eyes wide open. You cannot mark the pitfalls of life so plainly that some will not disregard the warning.

But there are other sand banks of life not so plainly marked. They look like good solid ground. But they are not resting on solid rock. How many men build their house on material possessions. There is no appearance of danger here. The place looks safe. But what a shifting sand bank it turns out to be when a man reaches the end of his life. When a man spends his whole life gathering possessions what a desert faces him when he comes to die.'

There are more men who build on this foundation than any other. With what zeal men devote their lives to this one end. As if there were nothing else worth living for. They know that many are hungry and many are cold. They know that many are sinking in despair. But they have no time to give to works of mercy or love. They are too busy gathering leaves and trash to heed the cry of an immortal spirit. A man who builds his eternal house on these things is just as surely building on sand as the outcasts of men. Some day he will see the foundations of his house slipping from under him.

Christ tell us of one poor fellow who built his house here. He thought he was on good solid ground. How secure he felt when he said, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But when God called to him in the small hours of the night, "Thy soul is required of thee," He heard the beams of his house cracking over his head, as the sands gave way. He found, when it was too late, he had built his house on the sand.

Then, where must a man build his house? How shall we know when we are building on solid rock? On what rock shall a man build his house eternal? This house is to be our home forever. O God, help us to build it on good solid ground. The only enduring rock is Christ. But has not this been said so often that it has become, to many, simply a platitude, a truism without a meaning? We all know that

Jesus is the great Rock. But how is a man to know when he is building on Christ? There are thousands who assent that Christ is the only sure foundation, yet they build their lives on the same shifting sands that have been the ruin of millions. How are we to know when we are building on Christ?

No man is building his house on Christ till he lays the foundation on the same solid rock on which Christ built His. Granting that Christ was divine, that He was the true and only Son of God the Father, that He had all power in heaven and earth, we also know the He was also very much a man. His life here on earth was the most human life ever lived. He had to choose the foundations for that life. At what time He made His choice and chose the ends for which He would live we do not know. Neither does it matter. We know that, at some time in His great human life, He chose to live for man's redemption. He looked on the harvest fields of the world, saw they were ripe for the reaping, and bowed His sacred head to the great task. Whether He knew at the time that this would cost Him His life or learned the fact later we know that He did see before the end that his choice would cost Him His life. When He found that this way would lead to a shameful death He neither flinched nor faltered. In that day He chose to live and die for man's redemption. Then Christ's life was grounded on love for His neighbor-- a deep undying love that did not shrink even from death. No matter

what creed a man may hold, nor how much light he may claim to have, if his religion is not grounded on an undying love for men and women, His house is not built on Christ.

We also know that, at some time in Christ's human life He chose to do the will of the Heavenly Father. In the garden of Gethsemane, when He was about to drink the bitterest cup any man ever raised to his lips, we hear him say, "Not my will, but thine, be done!" But we know this was not the first time He said it. In the day that He chose the foundation for His life on earth, He said, "Not my will, but thine, be done!" It was then that He chose to make His life subject to a greater will than His own. The foundation of all true religion is a desire to please God. Go to the houses of shame, the prisons, the gallows, and the electric chair, and look on the wrecks of humanity there. These are the men and women who chose to live as they pleased. A man who fears no God will obey not law. If a man's will is not subject to One greater than himself his house is not built on Christ.

We know that, at some time in Christ's human life, He believed God's great promise. No man ever looked on a more hopeless spectacle than Christ saw in the nations in the days of Augustus Caesar. It was a sight that would make the heart sick. Grim despair or triumphant hatred was written on the faces of all men. But the Father had promised that these kingdoms would become the kingdom of God. And Christ believed Him. In the face of these staggering dif-

difficulties He believed that a love like His would conquer these wicked nations. The world has never yet accepted the faith and vision of Christ for what it really was. We have attached too much importance to His great power and not enough to a single faith that bridged such unbelievable gulfs. He did not use His great power to conquer the kingdoms of this world. When James and John asked Him to call down fire from heaven to punish His enemies, He said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." When Peter drew the sword to defend Him in His weakest hour He made him put it up. The only power Christ ever used to conquer men's hearts was the power of His great love.

And that love was subject to the same bitter disappointments that ours is. Even His great love often failed to conquer the hearts of men. How many times His only reward was hatred and envy. And still He believed.

How often we hear the sad complaint that a life of self-denial and devotion is a failure. How the faith of men have been tried in the last few troubled years. Yet the outlook is no darker today than at the close of His own great life. Viewed by faltering human faith, His life too, ended in failure. Viewed by pure human faith it was the most tragic failure of all ages. For His devotion to men He was paid in stripes and bruises. Some of the sublimest thoughts He ever brought to men were received with scorn and mockery. Even His friends often

tried His patience with their stupidity and indifference. When He tried to turn their thoughts to divine things they would be thinking only of fish and bread. Finally he came to the end---the most tragic and shameful end that ever closed a human life. As he hung on the cross what did he have to support a single hope? Nothing but the promise of God. He had no more than we have. And still He believed.

Has His love failed? Today, after nearly two thousand years, it is the mightiest force on earth. On whom are the eyes of the nations turned today, but to Him? The cry of the war-ridden, heart-broken world today is, "Tell us of the Man of Gallilee." If a man's life is not grounded in a great faith it is not laid in Christ. In this troubled day how we need to hear His cheerful reassuring voice, "Fear not, little flock. It is the Father's own good pleasure to give you the kingdom."