

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS

XLV. The Sermon On The Mount: False And True Righteousness

K. Christ's Instruction To Those Who Enter His Kingdom

5. Christ's True Versus The False Foundation For Righteousness

(Matthew 7:24-8:1; Luke 6:46-49)

I. Introduction

- A. After critiquing the Pharisees' false righteousness, Christ addressed those who desired to enter His Kingdom in Matthew 7:7-29 (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 186).
- B. Matthew 7:24-8:1 [and Luke 6:46-49] is part of that address, and it contrasts Christ's true versus the false foundation for righteousness. We view this passage for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Christ's True Versus The False Foundation For Righteousness, Matthew 7:24-8:1; Luke 6:46-49.

- A. In Matthew 7:13-29, Jesus taught "two ways (13-14), two trees (15-20), two professions (21-23) and two builders (24-29). The 'two ways' was a common teaching method in Judaism and Greco-Roman philosophy" (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Matthew 7:13-29).
- B. To understand Christ's reference to the "two builders" who built with *different foundations* in Matthew 7:24-29, we note significant parallels in the teachings of Judaism in Christ's era (as follows):
 1. Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 1972, I, 540, related how one Rabbinic writing taught that "the man who has good works, and learns much in the Law, is likened to one, who in building his house lays stones first, and on them bricks, so that when the flood cometh the house is not destroyed; while he who has not good work, yet busies himself much with the Law, is like one who puts bricks below and stones above which are swept away by the waters."
 2. Another illustration held that "the former is like one who puts mortar between the bricks, fastening them one to the other; and the other to one who merely puts mortar outside, which the rain dissolves . . ." (Ibid.)
 3. In a third illustration, "the man whose wisdom exceeds his works is compared to a tree whose branches are many, but its roots few, and which is thus easily upturned by the wind; while he whose works exceed his wisdom is likened to a tree, whose branches are few, and its roots many, against which all the winds in the world would strive in vain" (Ibid.)
- C. We note that in each of these illustrations, the **priority** is placed on *works* of the **Law** rather than learning the Law or being wise, but Jesus contrasted that priority with the **priority** of *hearing* and *doing His Words*, that is, by *trusting in Him* for *blessing*, Matthew 7:24-29:
 1. Christ did **not** describe *how* one was to **build** his house, but rather the importance of the *right foundation upon which* he built, the *foundation* of the *rock* of *heeding Christ's words* and being wise, Matt. 7:24-25.
 2. The man whose house fell in Christ's illustration was one who heard Christ's words but did not act upon it, thus being likened to one who built his house on the *foundation* of *sand*, that when the rain fell, the floods came and the winds blew, his house fell with a great fall, Matthew 7:26-27.
 3. To **clarify**, Christ's *teaching* had established that the righteousness of his hearers needed to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees or they would not enter into God's kingdom, Matthew 5:20. Salvation was **not** by trying to keep the works of the Law, for as Romans 3:20 teaches, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in (God's) sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."
 4. Rather, salvation was by accepting Christ's word and trusting in Him, what would stand up against every test since it was on the secure foundation of Christ's death for sin. As Paul wrote, "(T)he righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Romans 3:21-22).
- D. In summary, what one's trying to keep the Law could not achieve in that he is weak in his sin nature so that he cannot obey God's laws, Christ accomplished by His substitutionary death for sin, that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in those who believe in Christ and rely on the Holy Spirit, Romans 8:3-4.

Lesson: *Trying to construct one's life on good works performed by his sin nature is a disastrous route to take, for life's trials will cause one's efforts to be destroyed where constructing one's life on the sure foundation of Christ's salvation and provisions for Christian living in the Holy Spirit will withstand life's trials.*

Application: *May we watch what foundation we use upon which to build our lives, that we not make our efforts depend on our sin natures, but on the foundation of Christ's salvation by grace and a life of reliance on Him.*