

May 25, 2008  
Pentecost 2

*"Faith on the Rock"*

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### **MATTHEW 7:15-29**

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**W**atch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. <sup>16</sup> By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. <sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' <sup>24</sup> "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. <sup>25</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." <sup>28</sup> When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, <sup>29</sup> because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

It is called "phishing" not the kind of fishing you do with a rod and reel in Lake Cachuma, but "phishing" spelled with a "ph" instead of an "f." You receive an alarming email that says your bank account at Wells Fargo is ready to close. The message looks like an official notice from Wells Fargo and it takes you to a page that asks you to send in secure information such as your credit card number, driver's license number and even Social Security number. If you fall for this phishing scam you risk losing your identity to thieves who want to access your bank account and credit card. Weekly I receive dozens of e-mails from people in places like Nigeria asking me to help them with their financial problems. They offer to give me a large sum of money if I send money to help them access their Swiss bank account.

Satan never stops trying to scam Christians into thinking they must add something to what Jesus has done to be a true believer. In your lowest moments of life he will tell you that you can never be good enough for your God to love you. In your better moments, he will try to convince you that the material things in this life are far more valuable than the blessings you have in Jesus. He can make you believe that satisfying yourself with something sinful and contrary to God is OK for a while and it won't hurt. He will do everything to take you away from Jesus the solid rock of faith and convince you it is better to build your life on sinking sand. Today we want to look close at these words of Jesus about faith on the rock, not faith on sand.

**Watch out for false prophets**

Our Lord Jesus ends his famous sermon on the mount by warning us against false prophets who can lead us back to the sinking sand of trusting in ourselves. "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves." False prophets never come up to with a badge or t-shirt that says, "False Prophet." Nor do they present themselves as evil people out to get us and destroy us. False prophets are generally nice people who appear to want the best for you. They look and sound like the sheep that follow Jesus and listen to his voice. What they say sounds so good at first, but when you analyze their words carefully you discover that they are teaching a way of salvation that is different from what Jesus taught us. Always the false prophet wants to require that you do something to contribute to your salvation. They add to what God's Word says in the Bible.

One of the marks or signs that we are living in the last times is the many false prophets that go out into the world. In Matthew 24 when Jesus spoke of the last days he warned, "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name claiming, 'I am the Christ.'" In these last days we see how many have been deceived by false prophets such as Joseph Smith and Mohammed. These religions have something in common. They claim that Jesus is a prophet, but they do not accept the death and resurrection of Jesus as the only source of salvation and peace with God.

Jesus tells us more about the danger of being misled by false prophets. He says, "By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?" I am holding in my hand leaves from a grape vine in my yard and a fig tree. We don't look for grapes on a thorn bush nor do we look for figs from a thistle plant. So it is with false teachers. We cannot judge them by their sincerity, but we do need to judge them by the words they say or the fruit they produce. If the words are contrary to the Bible then we have every right to say that's a thorn or thistle. That's false teaching. Jesus says, "By their fruit you will know them." If a tree bears bad fruit you need to get rid of it and throw it into the fire. The person who teaches God's Word incorrectly needs to be rejected just as you might pull a weed from the garden and throw it into the trash.

An elderly man once told me how much he liked a certain charismatic spell binding television preacher. When I asked how he knew he was telling the truth, he said, "I can see the tears in his eyes when he is preaching." Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice and they follow me." We never want to listen to the voice of someone who conflicts with what Jesus has told us here in his Word even if they sound so sincere and convincing and speak with tears in their eyes.

It is scary to think that even some people who use the name of Jesus so sincerely could possibly lead people astray with false teaching. Listen more to what our Savior says about false teaching. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven but only he who does the will of my Father in heaven.'" Even people who claim to perform miracles in the name of Jesus can be false teachers if what they teach does not line up with God's Word.

God wants us to do his will. His will and his desire for all people is that they come to know and accept what he has planned from all eternity to save them. God's plan was to take the whole problem of your sin and mine into his hands because he saw that we would totally blow every opportunity to live the perfect life he demands of us. He took our problem and

put it into the hands of Jesus his Son. He gave Jesus the job of taking sin upon himself and becoming sin for us, and then paying for it completely. God's will is that all be saved through his plan for our lives. "God will have all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." "God is not willing that any should perish but that all come to repentance."

I am holding in my hand a bottle of water that I trust is pure. I would not think of opening up the water and adding some water from sewer plant. God's will and God's plan is to have Jesus accomplish everything necessary to save me. It is not his plan or his will to have me say, "I will trust in Jesus for part of the plan to be rescued, and then do part of it on my own." That would be like adding sewer water to this clean water. That is a formula for disaster and eternal death and punishment. Paul wrote these strong words in Galatians, "If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted let him be eternally condemned." To those who do not follow God's will and plan for their lives Jesus says, "Then I will tell them plainly, 'Depart from me you evildoers.'"

### **Listen build on the words of Jesus**

To show that He is the Rock upon which we must build our lives, Jesus uses a story about a man who built his house upon the rock and another man who built his house on sand. "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. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against the house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock." When homes are built in this area the soil is compacted and then a foundation is dug. I have known people who build their homes on the side of a hill and drill holes into the ground until they reach the solid rock. The rains can come and the mud can slide, but the home that is built on the rock survives.

You have your life built on Jesus. Romans 3 describes a righteousness apart from the law that we have in Jesus that is rock solid and secure. "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the law and the prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe." If I build my life on my own righteousness, it is like building on sinking sand. If I build my life on Jesus and his righteousness then nothing can separate me from his love. When judgment day comes, and it will, I can survive the judgment because my life is built on what Christ has done for me. The same is also true for you in your lives.

How different is the person who builds his life on sand. "But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against the house, and it fell with a great crash." The problem with people is that they are born into this world with a natural inclination to think they can build their lives on how well they can do. Remember the old county fairs where you had to take a big wooden hammer and see if you could ring the bell at the top of the pole. I remember how my dad would tell a story of strong guys swinging the hammer as hard as they could and it would only go up the pole half way. Then this little fellow came and swung the hammer and it went all the way to the top and rang the bell. The person who could hit the center was better than the person who was off the mark. When it comes to salvation, none of us can ring the bell. The mark is set too high. We all fall short of God's glory. It takes the Holy Spirit to convince me that I need to Jesus, and I need to build my life on him.

This past week I visited an elderly woman in a nursing home. She has a large picture of Jesus hanging in her room. I talked to her about the Holy Spirit and read from Romans 8 about the blessings of the Holy Spirit in our lives. She confessed how she had a bad day and said something nasty to one of the caregivers who had come to help her. But then even as she spoke these bad words she looked up and saw the picture of Jesus hanging in her room. She felt awful for what she had done. She said it was the Holy Spirit who was telling her that what she did was wrong. Yes, the Holy Spirit does convict us and the Holy Spirit does help us see that building our lives on ourselves is like building our lives on sinking sand. What a privilege it was to remind her that the Holy Spirit not only convicts us of our sin, but also directs our eyes to Jesus as the Rock upon whom our hope of forgiveness, salvation and eternal life is built.

When Jesus finished speaking, the people were amazed at Jesus teaching because he spoke with such authority and conviction. Today Jesus speaks to you and to me with authority and conviction that he is the rock upon whom we can build our hope. As he told Peter, the gates of hell will not prevail against us. As we sing in the hymn, "On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand." Amen.