

ON LAYING FOUNDATIONS

NO. 1702

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings, and does them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man which built a house, and dug deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that hears, and does not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.”
Luke 6:46-49.

THESE parables describe two classes of hearers, but they say nothing of those who are *not* hearers. Their position and prospects we must infer from what is said of hearers. Our Lord Jesus Christ has come into the world to tell us of the Father's love. And never man spoke as He spoke and yet there are many who refuse to hear Him. I do not mean those who are far away, to whom the name of Jesus is well-near unknown, but I mean persons in this land and especially in this great and highly-favored city who willfully refuse to hear Him whom God has anointed to bring tidings of salvation! Our Lord Jesus is proclaimed, I was about to say, upon the housetops in this city, for even in their music halls and theaters, Christ is preached to the multitude! And at the corners of our streets His banner is lifted up—and yet there are tens of thousands to whom the preaching of the Gospel is as music in the ears of a corpse!

They shut their ears and will not hear, though the testimony is concerning God's own Son, eternal life and the way to escape from everlasting wrath! To their own best interests, to their eternal benefit, men are dead—nothing will secure their attention to their God. To what, then, are these men like? They may fitly be compared to the man who built no house whatever and remained homeless by day and without shelters by night. When worldly trouble comes like a storm, those persons who will not hear the Words of Jesus have no consolation to cheer them. When sickness comes, they have no joy of heart to sustain them under its pains. And when death, that most terrible of storms, beats upon them, they feel its full fury, but they cannot find a hiding place.

They neglect the housing of their *souls* and when the hurricane of Almighty Wrath shall break forth in the world to come they will have no place of refuge. In vain will they call upon the rocks to fall upon them and the mountains to cover them! They shall be, in that day, without a shelter from the righteous wrath of the Most High. Alas, that any being who wears the image of man should be found in such a plight! Homeless wanderers in the day of tempest! How my soul grieves for them! Yet, what excuse will those men invent who have refused, even, to *know* the way of salvation? What excuse can the most tender heart make for them?

Will they plead that they could not believe? Yet they may not say that they could not *hear*—and faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God! Oh my Friend, if the Word of God comes to you and you decline to hear it and, therefore, do not believe in Jesus, but die in your sins—what is this but soul-suicide? If a man dies of a disease when infallible medicine is to be had, must not his death lie at his own door? If a man perishes of hunger when bread is all around him and others feed to the full, but he will not have it, will any man pity him? Surely not a drop of pity will be yielded to a lost soul with which he may relieve the torment of his conscience, for all holy intelligences will perceive that the sinner chose his own destruction!

This shall ever press upon the condemned conscience, “You knew the Gospel, but you did not attend to it: you knew that there was salvation and that Christ was the Savior, and that pardon was proclaimed to guilty men, but you would not afford time from your farm and from your merchandise, from your pleasures and from your sins, to learn how you

could be saved. That which cost God so dearly, you treated as a trifle.” Ah, my dear Friends, may none of you belong to the non-hearing class!

It is not to such that I shall, this morning, address myself, and yet I could not enter upon my discourse without a word of loving exhortation with them. Let me part with them by quoting the warning Words of the Holy Spirit, “See that you refuse not Him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaks from Heaven.” Our earnest attention will now be given to those who are hearers of the Word of God and are somewhat affected by it. All hearers are builders of houses for their souls—they are, each one, doing something to set up a spiritual habitation.

Some of these go a considerable distance in this house-building and even crown the structure by publicly confessing Christ. They say unto Him, “Lord, Lord!” They meet with His followers and join with them in reverence to the Master’s name, but they do not *obey* the Lord. They hear Him, but they fail to do the things which He says. Therefore they are mistaken builders, who fail in the foundation, and make nothing sure except that their house will come down about their ears! Others there are, and we trust they will be found to be many among us, who are building rightly, building for eternity—constructing a dwelling place with a foundation of rock and walls of well-built stone—of which the Lord Christ is both Foundation and Cornerstone.

I am anxious to speak, at this time, to those who are just beginning to build for eternity. I am indeed happy to know that there are many such among us. May the Holy Spirit bless this sermon to them!

I. Our first subject will be A COMMON TEMPTATION WITH SPIRITUAL BUILDERS. A common temptation with hearers of the Word of God, according to the two parables before us, is to neglect foundation work—to get hurriedly over the first part of the business—and run up the building quickly. They are tempted to assume that all is done which is *said* to be done—to take it for granted that all is right which is *hoped* to be right and then to go on piling up the walls as rapidly as possible. The great temptation, I say, with young beginners in religious life, is to skimp on the foundation and treat those things lightly which are of the first importance.

The same temptation comes to us throughout the whole of life, but to young beginners it is especially perilous. Satan would have them neglect the fundamental principles upon which their future hope and character are to rest, so that in a future trying hour, from need of a solid foundation, they may yield to evil and lose the whole of their life building. This temptation is all the more dangerous, first, because these young beginners have no experience. Even the most experienced child of God is often deceived—how much more the pilgrim who has but just entered the wicket gate! The tried saint sometimes mistakes that for a virtue which is only a gilded fault and he fancies that to be genuine which is mere counterfeit! How, then, without any experience, whatever, can the mere babe in Grace escape deception unless he is graciously preserved?

Newly awakened and rendered serious, earnest hearts get to work in the Divine life with much hurry, seizing upon that which first comes to hand, building in heedless haste, without due care and examination. Something must be done and they do it without asking whether it is according to the teaching of the Lord. They call Jesus, “Lord,” but they do what *others* say, rather than what Jesus says. Satan is sure to be at hand at such times that he may lead the young convert to lay, in place of Gospel repentance, a repentance that needs to be repented of—and instead of the faith of God’s elect—a proud presumption or an idle dream. For that love of God which is the work of the Spirit of God, he brings mere natural affection for a minister and he says, “There, that will do! You must have a house for your soul to dwell in. There are the materials, pile them up.”

Like children at play upon the beach, the anxious heap up their sandcastles and please themselves with them, for they are ignorant of Satan’s devices. I am, for this reason, doubly anxious to save my beloved young friends from the Deceiver! The common temptation is, instead of really repenting, to *talk* about repentance. Instead of heartily believing, to say, “I believe,” *without* believing. Instead of truly loving, to talk of love, without loving! Instead of coming to Christ, to speak about coming to Christ, and profess to come to Christ, and yet not to come at all! The character of Talkative in Pilgrim’s Progress is ably drawn. I have met the gentleman many times and can bear witness that John Bunyan was a photographer before photography was invented!

Christian said of him “He talks of prayer, of repentance, of faith and of the new birth, but he knows but only to talk of them. I have been in his family and his house is as empty of religion as the white of an egg is of savor.” We have too

many such persons around us who are, as to what they say, everything that is to be desired and yet they are proven to be mere shams. As tradesmen place dummies in their shops, papered and labeled to look like goods, while yet they are nothing of the sort, so are these men marked and labeled as Christians, but the Grace of God is not in them! Oh that you young beginners may be on the alert, that you be not content with the form of godliness, but are made to feel the power of it!

There is this to help the temptation, too, that this plan for the present saves a great deal of trouble. Your mind is distressed and you need comfort—well, it will comfort you to say, “Lord, Lord,” though you *do not* the things that Christ says. If you admit the claims of Jesus to be Lord, even though you do not believe on Him for salvation and so neglect the main thing which He commands, you will find some ease in the admission. He bids you repent of sin, trust His blood, love His Word and seek after holiness—but it is much easier to admire these things without following after them in your life. To feign repentance and faith is not difficult, but genuine godliness is *heart* work and requires thought, care, sincerity, prayerfulness and watchfulness.

Believe me, real religion is no sport! He that would be saved will find it to be no jesting matter. “The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence,” and he that is easy about the thing, and thinks it is nothing more than the magician’s, “Heigh, presto, done,” has made a fatal mistake! “Strive,” says Christ, “to enter into the strait gate.” The Spirit strives in us mightily and often works us to an agony. The crown of eternal Glory is not won without fighting, nor the prize of our high calling received without running—yet, by just making a holy profession, and by practicing an outward form—a man imagines that the same result is produced as by seeking the Lord with his whole heart and believing in the Lord Jesus. If it were so, there would be a fine broad road to Heaven and Satan, himself, would turn pilgrim! Believe me, dear Hearers, this saving of trouble will turn out to be a *making* of trouble and, before matters end, the hardest way will turn out to be the easiest way!

This kind of building without a foundation has this advantage to back up the temptation—it enables a man to run up a religion very quickly. He makes splendid progress! While the anxious heart is searching after the Truth of God in the inward parts and begging to be renewed by Grace, his exulting friend is as happy as he can be in a peace which he has suddenly obtained without question or examination. This rapid grower never asks, “Has my religion changed my conduct? Is my faith attended by a new nature? Does the Spirit of God dwell in me? Am I really what I profess to be, or am I but a bastard professor, after all?” No, he puts aside all enquiry as a temptation of the devil! He takes every good thing for granted and votes that all is gold which glitters!

Look how fast he goes! The fog is dense, but he steams through it, heedless of danger! He has joined the Church—he has commenced work for God! He is boasting of his own attainments—he hints that he is perfect! But is this mushroom building safe? Will it pass muster in the last, great survey? Will it stand should a tempest happen? The chimney shaft is tall, but is it safe? Yes, there’s the rub! This is the question which makes an end of much of the boasting which is all around us. It is better to tremble at God’s Word than boldly to presume. It is better to be fearful, lest, after all, we may be castaways, than to harden one’s forehead with vain confidence. When a man travels upon a wrong road, the faster he runs, the further he will go astray.

Remember the advice to go slowly and the old proverb which says, “The more haste the less speed.” If you build quickly because you build without a foundation, your time and toil are thrown away. How common, how deceptive is this temptation! The young beginner, the man who is just awakened to seek the Lord, will find a great many to help him in his mistake, should he neglect the foundation. Kind, good, Christian friends often, without a thought of doing so, help to mislead seeking souls. “Yes,” they say, “you are converted,” and so, perhaps, the person would be if all he said were true! But it is said without feeling; it comes from the lips, only, and does not come from the heart! And, therefore, it is ruinous to encourage him. A kindly assurance from a Christian friend may breed false confidence if that assurance was mistakenly given.

In these days, we do not meet with many Christians who err by dealing too severely with converts—the shot strikes the other target. Our forefathers were possibly too suspicious and jealous, but nowadays we nearly all err in the opposite direction—we are so anxious to see everybody brought to Christ that our wish may tend to delude us into the belief that it is so. We are so willing to cheer and comfort those who seek the Lord, that we may fall into the habit of prophesying smooth things and thus shun everything which tends to probe and test, lest it should also discourage. Let us beware lest

we cry, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace! It will be a sad thing to breed hypocrites when we were looking for converts.

I have heard of one who had been into the Enquiry Room a dozen times and when, on another occasion, she was invited to go there, she said, "I really do not know why I should go, for I have been told that I was saved 12 times, already, and I am not a bit better than before they told me so." It would be better to send some home weeping rather than rejoicing! Many a wound needs the knife more than the plaster. You may be comforted by well-meant assurances of tender friends and yet that comfort may be all a lie! I therefore warn you against any peace except that which comes from doing that which Jesus commands, or, in other words, against any confidence except that which rests in only Jesus and is attended with repentance, faith and a life of obedience to your Lord.

No doubt man are encouraged in slight building by the fact that so many professors are making a fair show and yet their building is without foundation. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that in all Churches there are persons who have no depth of spiritual root and, we are afraid, no real spiritual life. We cannot root them up, though we fear that they are tares, for we are assured that we would unavoidably root up the wheat with them—and this our Master forbids. There is nothing about their outward conduct which we could lay hold upon as a proof of their being deceivers, and yet a cold chill runs through us when we talk with them, for they have no warmth, no life and nothing of the Lord about them.

We miss in their conversation that sweet spirituality, that holy unction, that blessed humility which are sure to be present when men are truly familiar with the Lord and have entered into living union with Him. People of this order mix up with us in our holy convocations—and when they come across the newly-awakened ones—they talk of Divine things in such an off-hand and flippant manner that they do serious mischief. They speak about conversion as if it were a mere trifle, a matter as easy as kissing your hand—and those who are hopeful, and over whom our hearts are yearning—are turned aside by them. Young people are apt to think, "So-and-So is a member of the Church and he is never very precise. If a lukewarm profession satisfies him, why should it not satisfy me!"

Ah, my dear Friends, you would not say so in business! If you knew a man was trading without capital and likely to come to bankruptcy, you would not say, "I may do the same." If you saw a man venturing into deep water who could not swim, and you felt sure that he would ultimately drown, you would not follow his example and drown, too. No, no! Do not let these frothy professors be beacons to you. Get away from Mr. Talkative, lest he make you as hollow a drum as he is! Beware of loose professors who are as wreckers' lights that lure men upon the rocks. Make sure work for eternity and bid triflers be gone.

Again, there is always, at the back of all this, an inducement to build without a foundation because it will not be known and possibly may not be found out for years. Foundation work is quite out of sight—and the house can be built up and be very useful in a great many ways—and it may stand a good while without the underground work, for houses without foundations do not tumble down at once—they will stand for years. Nobody knows how long they may stay up. Perhaps they may even be inhabited with comfort till the last great flood. Death, alone, will discover some impostors. Therefore, because the ill-founded house will do for the present—and can be used and may bring immediate comfort—many people consider it economical to leave out the foundation as a needless superfluity.

If they are questioned as to their vital godliness, they grow angry—"What business have you to enter into my private business? Why should you meddle with the secrets of my soul?" Ah, dear Friend, if we were cruel to you and wished you to be deceived, we would hold our tongues, or speak to you with the voice of flattery! But as we love you and as we hope to be blessed, in years to come, through your true and holy consecration to Christ, we are intensely earnest that you should begin aright. We would have you build that which will not need to be pulled down, again—work that will stand when the waters are out and the stream beats vehemently upon it! I dread that any man should perish without religion, but I dread far more that any man should perish *with* it, finding his faith to have been false, after all!

If you build, build what is worth building! If you must be builders for your souls, and surely you must, or else be shelterless, then take heed on what foundation you build and be careful what you build, lest, after all, you suffer the loss of all your labor in that last tremendous day! How sad it will seem to dwell near the gates of Heaven—and spend your lives among those who are to be its future inhabitants—and then for lack of sincerity and truth, to be shut out of the Celestial City! How terrible to find out by experience that there is a back way to the gates of Hell even from the gates of Heaven! God grant it be not so with one of us here present.

O you builders, care not merely for the present, but build for death, judgment and eternity! This part of our discourse is not only for young people, but for us all—for old as well as young. Depend upon it, there is not one man among us but what has need to search himself and see whether the foundation of his faith has been truly laid or not.

II. So I advance to the second step, where we will consider—A WISE PRECAUTION WHICH SAFE BUILDERS NEVER FORGET. They dig deep and never rest till they have a good substantial foundation—they are glad to get to the bottom of all the loose earth and to build on the rock. Let me commend this wise precaution to all of you. Follow the text and learn to see to your sincerity. The Lord Jesus says, “Why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” May the Holy Spirit make you true to the core. Be afraid to say a word more than you feel. Never permit yourself to speak as if you had an experience of which you have only read. Let not your outward worship go a step beyond the inward emotion of your soul. If Christ is truly your Lord, you will obey Him—if He is not your Lord, do not call Him so.

It is a great point in all your religious thoughts, beliefs, words and acts to have the heart moving in all. It is an awful thing to make a high profession of sanctity and yet live in the indulgence of secret vice. Such persons will listen to my observation and commend me for my faithfulness and yet continue in their hypocrisy! This is most painful. These men can speak the Jew’s language and yet the tongue of Babylon is more natural to them—they follow Christ, but their hearts are with Belial. Ah, me! My soul is sick at the thought of them. Be true! Be true! If truth will carry you no further than despair, better that you stop in despair than gain a hope by a lie! Do not live on fiction, profession, presumption. Eat that which is good and feed only upon the Truth of God. Remember that when you build with wood, hay and stubble of mere notion, you are only gathering materials for your own funeral pile in that day when the fire shall devour all lovers and makers of a lie. Be true as steel! Every wise builder for his soul must mind that.

The next thing is thoroughness. For observe, according to our Lord, the wise builder dug deep. You cannot do a right thing too well. Dig deep if you dig a foundation. If it is repentance, let it be an intensely earnest repentance, including a vehement hatred of every form of sin. If you make confession before God, confess with your very soul and not only with your lips—lay bare your spirit before the glance of Deity. If it is faith that you talk of, believe right up to the hilt. Do not go in for that kind of skeptical believing which is so common, nowadays. If you believe, believe! If you repent, repent! In the purging of the soul, there is nothing like sweeping out every particle of the old leaven of falsehood. And in bringing in the good things into the heart, there is nothing like bringing in everything that Christ prescribes—so that of His fullness we may receive not only Grace, but Grace for Grace, Grace upon Grace, all the Grace that is needed!

Be downright in everything. The wise builder dug through the earth and continued his digging till he reached rock. And then he dug into the rock and struck out a trench in which he might lay his foundation, for he could not be content unless he made sure and thorough work of it. Sincerity and thoroughness are fine building materials! Next to that add self-renunciation, for that is in the parable. When a man digs a deep foundation, he has much earth to throw out. So he that builds for eternity has a great deal to get rid of. Self-trust must go at the beginning! Love of sin must follow—worldliness, pride, self-seeking, all sorts of iniquity—these must be cast aside. There is very much rubbish and the rubbish must go! You cannot make sure work for eternity without clearing away much which flesh and blood would like to retain. See to this and count the cost.

Then must come solid principle. The man who is determined that if he does build, he will build securely, digs down to the rock. He says, “I believe in God, He is my Helper. I believe in Christ Jesus and on His atoning sacrifice and living intercession I build my eternal hopes. I also build on the Doctrine of Grace, for the Lord has said it—By Grace are you saved, through faith. I build on Scripture—nothing but the warrant of the Word of God will do for me.” What God has said is a rock—what man teaches is mere shifting sand! What a blessed thing it is to get down to the eternal principles of Divine Truth! You that pick up your religion from your mothers and fathers—you that follow it because it happened to be in the family—what are you worth in the day of trouble? You are blown down like a booth, or a hut of twigs!

But you that know *what* you believe and *why* you believe it—you who, when you put your foot down, know what you are standing upon and are persuaded that you have firm rock beneath you—you are the men and women who will stand fast when mere pretenders are burlled out of their place! Oh, my dear seeking Friends, fix upon true principles and be not content with lies! These truthful principles must be firmly adhered to. Bind your building to the rock. A house will not stand merely because it is on the rock—you must get its *foundation* into the rock. The house must take a grip of

the rock and the rock must grasp the house. The more you can get the house to be a bit of the rock and the rock, as it were, to grow up into the house, the more secure you are.

It is of no use saying, “Yes, I confide in Christ, in Grace, in Revelation,” unless your very life enters into these things and they enter into you! Hypocrites, Job says, are stolen away in the night. They are easily removed. The inventor of some new notion comes along, cracks up his novel wares, and silly souls are at once taken in by him. Christ may go, Grace may go and the Bible may go, too—their new master has them wholly in his power. We do not need such unsubstantial men! We care not for these speculating builders whose carcasses are all around us! We have had enough of castles in the air—we need true men who will stand fast like the mountains—while errors, like clouds, blow over them! Remember the huge shaft at Bradford and how many were slain by its fall? Let it teach you to hold hard to foundation Truths of God and never depart from them.

The man in the second parable did not build as he should. What may I say of him? I will say three words. First, he was a man who had nothing out of sight—you could see all his house when you looked at it. If you can see all a man’s religion at a glance, he has no religion worth having! Godliness lies most in secret prayer, private devotion and inward Grace. The wise builder had the most costly part of his house buried in the ground, but the other man showed all that *he* had *above* ground. He is a poor tradesman who has no stock but that which he puts into the window. He will not last long who has no capital. He cannot long stand who has no backbone within. Beware of a religion of show!

Next, this man had nothing to hold to. He built a house, but it stood upon the loose soil. He easily dug into that and stuck up his house but his walls had no holdfast. Beware of a religion without holdfasts! “But if I get a grip upon a doctrine, they call me a bigot” you say. Let them do so! Bigotry is a hateful thing and yet that which is now abused as bigotry is a great virtue and greatly needed in these frivolous times! I have been inclined, lately, to start a new denomination, and call it, “the Church of the Bigoted.” Everybody is getting to be so oily, so plastic, so untrue, that we need a race of hard-shells to teach us how to believe!

Those old-fashioned people who, in former ages, believed something and thought the opposite of it to be false, were truer folk than the present time-servers. I should like to ask the divines of the broad school whether *any* doctrine is worth a man’s dying for it. They would have to reply, “Well, of course, if a man had to go to the stake or change his opinions, the proper way would be to state them with much diffidence and to be extremely respectful to the opposite school.” But suppose he is required to deny the Truth of God? “Well, there is much to be said on each side, and probably the negative may have a measure of truth in it as well as the positive. At any rate, it cannot be a prudent thing to incur the odium of being burned, and so it might be preferable to leave the matter an open question for the time being.”

Yes, and as these gentlemen always find it unpleasant to be unpopular, they soften down the hard threats of Scripture as to the world to come and put a color upon every doctrine to which worldly-wise men object! The teachers of doubt are very doubtful teachers! A man must have something to hold to, or he will neither bless himself or others. Bring all the ships into the pool but do not moor or anchor one of them—let each one be free! Wait for a stormy night and they will dash against each other—and great mischief will come of this freedom! Perfect love and charity will not come through our being all unmoored, but by each having his proper moorings and keeping to them in the name of God. You must have something to hold to!

But the builder in the parable had not, and so he perished. The foolish builder had nothing to resist outward circumstances. On summer days his house was a favorite resort and was considered to be quite as good as his neighbor’s in all respects. Frequently he rubbed his hands and said, “I do not see but what my house is quite as good as his and perhaps a little better! The fact is, I had a few pounds to spare which I did not bury in the ground, as he did, and with it I have bought many a little ornament, so that my habitation has a finer look than his building.” So it seemed—but when the torrent came raging down the mountain side, his building, having nothing with which to resist the violence of the flood, fell down at once—and not a trace of it remained when the storm had ceased. Thus do men fail because they offer no resistance to forces which drive them into sin—the great current of evil finds in them *victims*—not opponents.

III. Thirdly, we will now gather from our text A SET OF ARGUMENTS URGING US TO TAKE CARE OF THE FOUNDATION. I will glance over these arguments, wishing much that I had time to enforce them. The first is this. We ought to build with a good foundation at the beginning, because otherwise we shall not build well in any other part of the house. Bad work in the foundation influences all the rest of the courses. In the Revised Version, at the end of the 48th

verse, instead of, “For it was founded upon a rock,” we read, “Because it had been well built.” The house was built well at the bottom and that led the workman to put in good work all the way up, so that all through, “it had been well built.”

The other man built badly underground and did the same up to the roof! When you get into the habit of slovenly work in secret, the tendency is to be slovenly in public, too. If the underground part of our religion is not firmly laid upon Christ, then in the upper part there will be rotten work, half-baked bricks, mud instead of mortar and a general skimping of everything. When a great Grecian artist was fashioning an image for the temple, he was diligently carving the back part of the goddess, and one said to him, “You need not finish that part of the statue, because it is to be built into the wall.” He replied, “The gods can see in the wall.” He had a right idea of what is due to God! That part of my religion which no man can see should be as perfect as if it were to be observed by all. The Day shall declare it! When Christ shall come, everything shall be made known and published before the universe. Therefore see to it that it is fit to be thus made known.

See, again, that we ought to have good foundations when we look at the situation where the house is to be built. It is clear from this parable that both these houses were built in places not far from a river, or where streams might be expected to come. Certain parts of the South of France are marvelously like Palestine and, perhaps at the present moment, they are more like what the Holy Land was in Christ’s day than the Holy Land is now. When I reached Cannes, last year, I found that there had been a flood in the town. This flood did not come by reason of a river being swollen, but through a deluge of rain. A waterspout seems to have burst upon the hillside tearing up earth, rocks, stones and then hurrying down to the sea. It rushed across the railway station and poured down the street which led to it, drowning several persons in its progress.

When I was there a large hotel—I should think five stories high—was shored up with timber and was evidently doomed, for when this stream rushed down the narrow street it undermined the lower courses of the building and, as there were no foundations at all able to bear such a test, the whole structure was rendered unsafe. The Savior had some such case in His mind’s eye. A torrent of water would come tearing down the side of the mountain—and if a house were built on the mere earth, it would be carried away—but if it were fastened into the rock so that it became part and parcel of it, then the flood might rush all around it, but it would not shake the walls.

Beloved builder of a house for your soul, your house is so situated that one of these days there must come great pressure upon it. “How do you know?” Well, I know that the house in which *my* soul lives is pitched just where winds blow, waves rise and storms beat. Where is yours? Do you live in a snug corner? Yes, but one of these times you will find that the snug corner will be no more shielded than the open riverside, for God so orders Providence that every man has his test sooner or later! It may be that you think yourself past temptation, but the idea is a delusion, as time will show! Perhaps from the very fact that you seem quite out of the way, a peculiar temptation may befall you. Therefore, I pray you, because of the exposed condition of your life’s building, build upon a good foundation!

The next argument is, build deep, because of the ruin which will result from a bad foundation. The foolish builder’s house was without a foundation. Notice that word, “without a foundation.” Write down the expression and see whether they apply to you or not. What happened to this house without a foundation? The stream beat vehemently on it! The river’s bed had long been dry, but suddenly it was flooded and the torrent rolled with tremendous power. Perhaps it was persecution. Perhaps it was prosperity. Perhaps it was trouble, or temptation. Perhaps it was prevalent skepticism or death, but, whatever—the flood beat vehemently upon that house!

And now we read the next word—“And immediately it fell.” It did not stand a prolonged assault! It was captured at once. “Immediately it fell.” What? In a minute all that fair profession gone? “Immediately it fell.” Why, that is the man I shook hands with the other Sunday and called him, “Brother,” and he has been seen drunk! Or he has been in the frivolous assembly, using unhallowed language! Or he has become an utter doubter all on a sudden! It is sorrowful work burying our friends, but it is much more sorrowful work to lose them in this fashion—and yet so they vanish. They are gone! Even as Job says “the east wind carries him away and he departs.” “Immediately” they fall and yet we thought so highly of them—and they thought so highly of themselves. “Immediately it fell”—their profession could not endure trial—and all because it had no foundation!

Then it is added, “And the ruin of that house was great.” The house came down with a crash and it was all the man had. The man was an eminent professor and, therefore, his ruin was all the more notable. It was a great fall because it could never be built up, again. When a man dies a hypocrite, certainly there is no hope of restitution for him. By the stream the very debris of the ruined house was swept away. Nothing was left. Oh, men, if you lose a battle, you may fight, again, and win another. If you fail in business you may start, again, in trade and realize a fortune. But if you lose your *souls*, the loss is irretrievable! Once lost, forever lost! There will be no second opportunity! Do not deceive yourselves about that. Therefore, dig deep and lay every stone most firmly upon the foundation of rock.

For lastly, and perhaps this will be the best argument, observe the effect of this good, sure building—this deep building. We read that when the flood beat upon the wise man’s house, “it could not shake it.” That is very beautiful. Not only could it not carry it away, but, “it could not shake it.” I see the man—he lost his money and became poor, but he did not give up his faith—“It could not shake it.” He was ridiculed and slandered. And many of his former friends gave him the cold shoulder—but, “It could not shake it.” He went to Jesus under his great trial and he was sustained—“It could not shake it.” He was very sick and his spirit was depressed within him, but he still held to his confidence in Christ—“It could not shake it.”

He was near to death. He knew that he must soon depart out of this world, but all the pains of death and the certainty of dissolution could not shake him. He died as he lived—firm as a rock, rejoicing as much as ever, nay—rejoicing *more* because he was nearer to the Kingdom and to the fruition of all his hopes! “It could not shake it.” It is a grand thing to have a faith which cannot be shaken! I saw, one day, a number of beech trees which had formed a small forest—they had all fallen to the ground through a storm. The fact was they leaned upon one another, to a great extent, and the thickness of the forest prevented each tree from getting a firm hold of the soil. They kept each other up and also forced each other to grow up tall and thin, to the neglect of a strong root growth. When the storm forced down the first few trees, the others readily followed one after the other.

Close to that same spot, I saw another tree in the open, bravely defying the blast, in solitary strength. The hurricane had beaten upon it, but it had endured all its force unsheltered! That lone, brave tree seemed to be better rooted than before the storm. I thought, “Is it not so with professors?” They often hold together and help each other to grow up, but if they have not firm *personal* roothold, when a storm arises they fall in rows. A minister dies, or certain leaders are taken away—and over go the members by departure from the faith and from holiness! I would have you be self-contained, growing, each man, into Christ for himself, rooted and grounded in love and faith and every holy Grace. Then when the worse storm that ever blew on mortal man shall come, it will be said of your faith, “It could not shake it.”

I beseech you who are now seeking Christ to take care that you build well, that you may stand long in our Zion, steadfast and unmovable. God grant it for Christ’s sake. Amen.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307