

Hearing And Obeying

Ryan Goodwin

Matthew 7:24-27 is one of the most helpful parables when discussing how necessary it is for us to hear and obey the word of God. It is about two men who each had the same opportunity to build a house. One of them uses his head and makes a good choice. The other stubbornly ignored the evidence and made a bad choice. *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine..."* Jesus is indicating that the parable is about hearing and obeying, not building houses.

"...And acts upon them..." It is not enough to simply hear the message and do nothing. Hearing by itself never helped anybody! Similarly, reading a warning label on a medicine bottle is not enough to prevent an abuse of that product, for we must also heed the directions for how much and how often the medicine is to be administered. I cannot possibly pass a class if I hear the directions of the teacher but decide to follow my own educational course. I cannot please my boss if I hear him assign me a task, but then tailor the job to my own desires. We must hear and act, friends! *"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was"* (James 1:22-25). How ridiculous would it be to forget the details of your own face? Yet this is such an appropriate analogy for the person who hears and does not act. *"James was clarifying the point that mere listening to the Word of God was not sufficient to fulfill the believer's obligation. It is possible to attend a worship service where the Scripture is read and suppose one's responsibilities have all been met.. The term 'hearer' has been found outside the New Testament of an attendant at a lecture but distinguished from a disciple. It suggests, therefore, a more casual listener or auditor. Unless the hearer of the Word responds with appropriate deeds, he is deceiving himself. He has deluded himself into thinking he has received the Word, when all he has done is let himself have a superficial encounter"* (Faith That Works, Kent, 66).

"...May be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock." The effectual doer of the word is just like a wise man who did all the things necessary to ensure the safety and stability of his house. The question that we must ask ourselves, therefore, is on what kind of foundation have we been building? To hear the Gospel is to come in contact with the very Word of the Lord – the written scriptures that lead us to Heaven, and instruct us in every good work (2 Peter 1:3). If we take these words and use them, and truly make them a part of our souls – doing and teaching all the things found in the wonderful Gospel – we have been intelligent and wise and built our souls upon a solid foundation. *"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock."* No matter what life throws at us, God will pull us through if we trust His Word and obey it. After all, the Gospel *"is the power of God unto salvation"* (Romans 1:16), so there is no other source of wisdom, no other collection of poems, no other book in the world that can possibly be as spiritually beneficial as the Bible.

"And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them..." First, notice that those to whom the Bible applies are clearly defined as *"everyone."*

There is not a single person in this world who is not obligated to hear the Gospel and act upon it. *“Having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent...”* (Acts 17:30). Second, we have free will when it comes to acting upon the Gospel. We are not forced into salvation, but are given a willing opportunity to accept the gift of God. In the same way that the wise man acted prudently in building his house upon the rock, the foolish man has just as much choice about his foundation. So he chooses the sand! *“...Will be compared to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand.”* Sand may seem like an appropriate foundation at first – it is, after all, much easier to transport, to dig up, and to shape. One can very quickly plant the feet of a house into an area of loose sand. *“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall.”* The easier it is to plant a foundation, though, the easier it is to uproot it!

These two men both heard the word. They both had the same opportunities to act upon that message. They both had the same building supplies. They both experienced the same catastrophe. The difference between the two of them, though, is that while one man planted himself in the shifting sands of self-righteousness, stubbornness, and sin, the other was grounded firmly in the Gospel which was both heard and heeded.