

J. W. Sperling-Tyler

Sermon preached by our Pastor

on Sunday Evening,

December 2, 1973.

Lesson. Ephesians 2.

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: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

Matthew 7. vv. 24 & 25.

Let us immediately enunciate the vital considerations which have brought us to the development of this subject which is of paramount importance on this holy Day; namely, the instability and insecurity of everything outside of Jesus Christ. I feel to refer to the truths named at the outset this morning. Why is it we are made so concerned, and desire to be increasingly concerned relative to a foundation and building on the wondrous Rock? Why?

The answer is two-fold, though both sections are interrelated. First, because we are immortal. When you stop to consider the profound truth, you are going to live for ever: there will never be an end to your existence. Immortal is your soul and person because there is a first resurrection of the just, and there will be a resurrection of the wicked. So stop to ponder as deeply as you find it possible in your capacity the contemplation of the Scriptural concept that we shall live for ever: we are immortal. After all, five years, ten years quickly pass. Look back to how long you have lived in a certain house, or town, or village and add it to your present age: you will soon be launching into a vast eternity, to live in bliss or everlasting misery. Man is immortal. So this contemplation of course, strikes me increasingly as I come to the latter stages of my ministry. It brings you right up to the matter of priorities. You will want to know you are built on, resting on a permanent foundation, the Rock; so with all the fluctuations of time and the incredible,

7

staggering changes in time, and the instability and insecurity in human nature you are resting on the eternal Rock. Am I right? You go home and think deeply; "I am going to live for ever. I need to know I have found the Rock and have built my house on it." After all, you have only got to look up into infinity, space, the firmament, to the heavenly bodies, to get an idea of the vastness of infinity, and you have got to launch into it. Don't you need a foundation? Don't you need to be permanently established on the Rock so you have eternal safety and stability? My spirit goes much to the celestial regions.

There is another consideration. It is not only what you need in the concept of immortality, your spirit is immortal; you need it for time. How could you live, go on, endure, bear your responsibilities, stand in your lot without establishment on a permanent base? How could a minister go into the pulpit without realising he has built his house and his ministry on the Rock? How could you live your lives, stand in your lot, occupy till He comes without resting solidly on this foundation? Take for example; a child of God has a cross, sorrows, difficulties; "Life with trials hard may press us." (971); how can we hope to go through unless we are permanently established on the Rock? You see, we could develop this theme from basic proofs in the Scriptures. Many religious people went a few miles with Christ and then went back. His dear people have final perseverance because they have found the Rock and built their house on it. Providence is involved. How can you hope to get through? Because the Lord has given you a promise. "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." (Luke 12.30), and you have built your house on that promise, or on God in the promise. Do you see? How can you hold on your way unless you have built your house on the Rock?

This subject has been wonderful to me to day: there are so many branches. It is an eternal subject because it will lead us back to the Being of God. In a special way Christ is the Rock of our salvation, but the Trinity is a Rock. Your salvation rests on the Trinity because the keystone in the arch is the electing love of the Father, so our Rock is God, the Trinity. Have you built your house there? I will give you a word of exhortation. Ask God to lead you for delight, stability, comfort, courage, preparation

for glory into the doctrine of the Trinity; to lead you into these foundation truths.

Let me make a point of trying to define some vital points in this matter of a foundation. The Trinity in unity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost our foundation. The electing love of the Father, the redeeming love of the Son, the sanctifying love of the Spirit: one love. Peter beautifully defines the bedrock the Church rests on. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1.2) The term 'sanctification of the Spirit' is comprehensive. It includes all the work of the Holy Ghost, His influences, operations, graces from the holy initial of regeneration to the finality of sealing. So this is the bedrock for the Church, the Trinity.

The foundation: in the Father, all the perfections of Deity, eternity, immutability, divine faithfulness, boundless love, Covenant mercy, omniscience, omnipresence, special presence.

Christ is the foundation of the Covenant of Grace because He is the Mediator of the New Covenant and His blood sealed it. The shedding of Christ's vital blood is the validity of the Covenant. Apart from this we could have no foundation there. He sealed it, - ordered in all things and sure. It is valid. Christ died voluntarily for us; He laid down His life for the sheep, sealed the Covenant, rose and ascended, so the virtue and validity of His sacrifice is demonstrated by His resurrection.

Take such a word as; "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deut.33.27) You see here is the character of God. He fills the foundation. I hope the Lord has given you an appetite for strong meat. The whole of the work of Christ, - what a foundation! What a foundation truth is the holy doctrine of the immaculate conception and the virgin birth. What a foundation for comfort and peace! Immanuel, God with us. If everything else was withered, dried and dead and you had that, that is all you need: God with us. Take the Name, Jesus, "a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." (Phil.2) The Lord gives His people skill in using the Name of Jesus affectionately and reverently with the Father. Do you know how to use

the Name of Jesus? Listen: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: This seems to me to be hell. Why is this a foundation truth? "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1.21) This is a foundation truth. Jesus saves. Are you on the Rock?

Let me continue. What a foundation for comfort, peace and salvation are His Suretyship, His priestly work of atonement, the perfection of His obedience placed to our account, His obedience to the law in every jot and tittle, paying our debt with His own life and blood, and by His obedience providing a wondrous robe for His Church. The righteousness of Christ, the victory of Christ is a foundation truth. The atonement, ascension, exaltation, mediation, intercession are foundation truths. Are you on the Rock? Can you say

"On Christ, the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand." ?

This is the ^{refrain to} every verse in the original wonderful hymn. Can you say from your soul; "I have ^{found} the Rock and built my house on it??"

Another wonderful manifestation of the foundation is the Holy Scriptures the infallible Word of God, the holy gospel. You have got here something that is solid and eternal. "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever." (1 Peter 1.24-25) What a foundation! If the Lord has spoken something of this to your soul and written it on the fleshy tables of your heart, and given you a promise that the word of the Lord endureth for ever, what a foundation! What a subject! The streams that flow from the Rock smitten, - Christ crucified, - flow in the gospel, and all the means of grace give the people of God a sense of intense satisfaction, joy that cannot cloy, peace passing understanding, rest that not all the powers of darkness can disturb. Do you know it? This the Rock.

I have said it sets forth permanent establishment on the Rock; resting on the Rock permanently. That is why I feel I should say to you, it is a mark of establishment when we are not so seriously affected by frames and feelings. I must say that. For instance, if I could elucidate the

point: if you know you have built your house on the Rock and have felt the salvation of your soul, your security and safety in Christ you can rest on in the dark as in the light. I have proved it. I have told of the season when I came back from London with a virus which turned to toxæmia of the blood stream and I thought I was dying. There was no panic about it. I knew unless the Lord intervened I should die, and I remember lying on my bed in my room in North Street, and trying to survey my spiritual state in view of eternity. I felt it could be near. I came to the conclusion,- it did not take long,- I have got no great enjoyment. I can stretch myself on Christ the solid Rock and I have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and I felt I could die like that. It is well for you if you beg of God to establish you so you are not violently affected by frames and feelings. If you are on the Rock you are on the Rock. It is not one day going to heaven and tomorrow to hell. You know where you have built your house. Tell the Lord you are going to rest on Him sink or swim, and see whether He honours your faith. That is how I go in the ministry. Take the word in our hymnal;

"Though with no sweet enjoyments blessed,
This covenant stands the same." (921)

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." (Heb. 13.8)
I spoke of permanent establishment on the Rock: this is what it means to build your house on the Rock. I gave a few words this afternoon on how to build your house. There is fusion; oneness with the foundation according to the activity of the spirit by three graces.

Let us take a further view. You are permanently established on the Rock and you feel to rest there. There is an element in the human race of panic. If you are permanently established on the Rock,

"Unmoved above the storm they lie;
They lodge in Jesus' breast." (137)

"We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved." (Heb. 12. 28) Paul said concerning what the Holy Ghost had told him; "None of these things move me. (Acts 20.24) because he was permanently established on the Rock. That is why I think it is serious when among those who profess to fear God

there is panic. Keep your eye fixed on Christ and go on undismayed. Watch the unfolding of the divine decrees of God and the fulfilling of His prophecies and purposes toward His people.

The foundation is a sweet resting place: it is that which you rest on and in. You rest; there is repose there. This is the key to peace. If you are resting, what is the state of rest? In your body and mind you know what it is to have a beautiful sleep and you feel repose in your mind. You rest. If you know what it is to rest on and in the foundation how beautiful that rest is! It is a state of placid composure, serenity, tranquility. Let your whole weight go down on this foundation for time and eternity and all you carry: rest it all there, - your trials, difficulties, troubles, expectations, promises, comfort, joy and peace; rest it there. This is a resting place. How wonderful! The angry waves dash and die on the shore. The Rock, the house stands. The foundation is solid, immutable, eternal, glorious. Think of it! The very nature of it is solidity, beauty, glory, majesty. Rest on it. What a foundation! So when this passing world is o'er and all is completed in the purposes of God this foundation the saints will rest eternally on; united to Him for ever. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1Peter.2.5) It is not just now; it is for heaven.

"May I be found a living stone,
In Salem's streets above." (215)

Look at the foundation; the majesty and glory of it! The foundation is the lowest part of the building. I cannot now dilate on this. Christ is the foundation, the headstone, the chief corner stone. How He went to the lowest part!

"When that great God to whom I go
For help, amazed I view,
By sin and sorrow sunk as low
As I, and lower too." (105)

He went right to the bottom. See how low He went to conquer death and hell! This is brought out in the epistle to the Ephesians (4.9 & 10)

"He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth. He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." See how ^{low} the Lord sunk to be your foundation, to lay the foundation for you to build your heavenly hopes upon, to conquer death and the devil. See how low He came. This will help you.

I must fulfil my pledge which is implicit as I read two verses. You have built your house on the Rock, your soul, your person, your all; your hopes prospects, expectations. The next verse describes the severe test that comes to the building, - the house, and to the builder. You have built your house on the Rock and the test comes to you. I will just say before I pass, one of the great reasons you want to know with assurance that you have built your house on the Rock is the complete sense of instability and insecurity in the earth and the flesh. My mind went to what most rely on, - earthly substance, riches, though few of the people of God know much of riches on earth. They have the riches of grace and heaven. "Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." (Prov. 23.4&5) What a word concerning earthly riches! and we are seeing this throughout the world. A business, a great organisation prospers one half of the year; the next it is in liquidation. "For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." So what have you got? Insecurity, instability in everything on earth. O this Rock! this foundation! I feel I would like to add a postscript to what I quoted from Proverbs. I believe if the Lord enables us to honour Him with the firstfruits of all our increase we shall see Him honour us. "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." (Prov. 3.10) I had to name this because it came spontaneously to me, and it is current and it has affected some of us nearly.

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." You will not escape, child of God. It will take place: you will never escape. The language is symbolic. "The rain descended" appears to be in the Song of Solomon. "My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love,

my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone." This seems to indicate dispensations of affliction, trial, adversity from the hand of God. Things go on for a while fairly smoothly, then the rain descends; affliction, trial, adversity, sorrow. There is a season. "Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud." (Prov. 37, 11) - It will take a long time to weary some of our thick clouds. "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew." It occurred to me in relation to the floods that these include floods of persecution and distress, but I will single out one of them, - the floods of corruption from within you. This will be a test. Who knows the plague of the heart, who knows what a wicked and deceitful heart is, like those who know the forgiveness of sin? Floods of corruption come against you from within. You say to yourself; "I never thought I should pass through such things, to know things rising in me to such a volume." It is a flood that is all too base to name, - a flood of infidelity. You know what a flood is like, - as if it would sweep everything before it.

"And the winds blew." This is a symbol indicative of the work of the adversary: Satan in all his spite and malice and subtlety; chiefly his spite and malice. All three converge. The rain, - trials and afflictions come. Poor dear Job knew what it was for the floods to come. His wife said, "Curse God, and die." and you have got that in you. If you can understand some are not able to. - this is where I think we shall know of escaping by the skin of our teeth. (Job 19.20) I do not mean there is any insecurity concerning the people of God as to their salvation or ^{the} stability of the Covenant, but in day to day experience you wonder whether the floods will gush out of your lips.

"And the winds blew, and beat upon that house." What is the issue? "It fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." This will highlight those words used by the apostle Paul when he said; "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day." (Acts 26.22) With all the rain, the floods and the wind I have obtained help of God. Stand you do and will to the glory of His Name for ever. Amen.