

FIVE TRUTHS FOR BUILDERS IN 2009

Last Sunday we were in Chelyabinsk, Russia, singing Christmas songs and telling those dear folks about the miracle of Christmas and celebrating the new year with them. Tonight in the service I want to share a few stories and show you some pictures of our trip.

This morning I want to talk with you about building. We are building a house you know. I've watched as we've rebuilt the church and I've seen houses being built, but I've never watched with the same interest or intensity as we've watched over the past four months. I've seen the importance of building on a proper foundation. I've seen the importance of building with the right material and with the right workers, with the right skill and ability. As important as those things are when you are building a home, they are even more important when you are talking about building a life. I've shared these thoughts in a variety of ways over the years and preached a similar message in 2003 if you keep notes from sermons, but I felt we were to look at some truths concerning how we build our lives. I'm concerned about the foundation so many of us are building on. It is absolutely essential that we build our lives upon a solid foundation and that we build with the right material. Don't you want to build a life that will have meaning and purpose? Don't you want to build a life that will have a positive and lasting effect upon others? Don't you want to build and live a life of character, a life of integrity, a life that will count for eternity? I want to build a life that matters.

The bible tells us that we are all builders. We are all building a life one block and one board at a time based upon the choices and decisions we make. And it's important that you understand this: **The life we are living today is a consequence and product of the choices we made yesterday.** Stop and think about that for a moment and then consider: **What kind of tomorrow am I building today?** The choices you are making in your life - how you are living your life today - that determines your future. And let me ask you another question: **Upon what kind of foundation are you building your life?** Everyone chooses to build their house on a solid foundation, but what kind of foundation have you chosen for your life? "I've never stopped to think about it. It's just my life. I just get up in the morning and get through it the best I can. I don't know what kind of foundation I'm building my life upon." It's time you did some thinking about

your life – the life you are building, the life you are living, the life you are going to live, the life you are going to have to live with, and ultimately the life you are going to leave behind.

Even if you haven't given much thought to it, you are building your life upon some kind of foundation. We are building our lives upon certain core values and beliefs. If you believe that nothing really matters for here or eternity - we are all just here by accident and we are victims of our circumstances - that is a core belief and you will build your life accordingly. You'll probably have little regard for others, little motivation to change your circumstances because, after all, what difference could it make. If you believe there is no life after death - that is a core belief and you will build your life accordingly. I assume you will live your life as you choose because you believe there are no eternal or lasting consequences. No life beyond this, no heaven or hell.

But most of you believe the bible to be God's word of truth to us. And most of you believe in Jesus Christ, that he is God's son and the Savior of mankind. And you believe that someday all mankind will stand before God and give an account for our actions and choices here on earth. That is a core belief. And if that is a core belief, then that should affect the choices we make in our life. Most all of you believe you can't earn your way into heaven and that there is only one way to heaven and that is through our faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. To reject his salvation is to reject eternal life and the consequence is to be condemned to hell for eternity. That is a core belief. And if you believe that, then that should affect the choices you make in life. You will order your steps and live your life in a way that is pleasing to Christ. You will live a life of obedience to God and you will care passionately about people around you, realizing that they are lost and headed to hell without Jesus.

Realizing that judgment is coming to this world and that Christ is our only hope, Peter said, **“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.” 2 Peter 3:11-12.**

What kind of people should we be? What kind of choices should we make in our lives? And as you answer these questions, keep in mind that wrapped up in all of our

choices are consequences, often consequences of eternal significance. It matters the choices we make concerning our lives. It matters the foundation we are building our lives upon. Build your life upon absolutes, upon the foundation of God's truth. Your foundation matters because life will bring all kinds of circumstances your way. It still amazes me the people who know this, who understand and believe what I've been saying this morning, and yet they ignore God's word, they ignore God's warnings and they go right ahead living a life of rebellion against God, living a life of sin, building their lives with rotten material, building upon a foundation of sand and when the tests of life come, everything crumbles. May I warn you, the time is getting late and it's time you start building on the right foundation and with the right material. It's time to start making the right choices. It's time to start considering the truth of the matter that you believe, even if it's just as an outside possibility, but you believe that the bible is true and if that's the case, then as Peter said, "what kind of people ought you to be?"

Let's look at a familiar parable Jesus told in **Matthew 7:24-27** and let's see if we can find some truth for all of us builders.

Remember the song we used to sing in Sunday school? "The wise man built his house upon the rock...the foolish man built his house upon the sand..."

1. Everyone is a builder but there are only two categories: wise and foolish. All of us are building a life. Everyday. Twenty-four hours a day. Seven days a week, 365 days a year. There are no breaks or holidays. You are a builder. The choices you make everyday are the materials that go into the house you will live in tomorrow. You are building a house with your choices and you have to live in whatever you build. And, whether you like it or not, you are building a life and you have to live it, whatever you build.

Now Jesus tells us there are only two kinds of builders. Wise and foolish. What determines whether you are wise or foolish? The foundation upon which you choose to build. Rock or sand.

Those who hear God's word and put it into practice, who obey him and live by his word - they are wise builders, building on a rock solid foundation.

Those who hear God's word and don't put it into practice, who choose not to live by his word, they are foolish builders and are building on a foundation of sand.

Notice this - **Hearing God's word makes you accountable.** Not believing, not joining a church, just simply hearing. "If you hear these words of mine", Jesus said, then you have to do something with them. Either live by them or not. You are accountable because you have heard. All of us are without excuse. We know what God's word says. What kind of foundation and what kind of building are you going to build out of your life?

2. You have the power to decide what to build and where to build. I realize we are all somewhat limited by our IQ, our personality and innate abilities and giftings, but God has placed within our reach the ability to build a life worth living, a life of value and purpose, a life that is pleasing to him and of lasting importance to the kingdom of God. For any of us to say, "I just can't seem to live for God. I can't seem to make the right choices. It's just too hard for me" - is to say that we are beyond the reach of God's power and grace and that is simply not true. He has given to each of us the power to choose life. He has given us the incredible and risky power of a free will. You can decide whether to build upon the rock or on the sand. You can decide whether to put his words into practice and live for Jesus or not. You can be a wise or foolish builder. You will decide. You are deciding, right now. What are you building?

E. Stanley Jones said, "**The god that would put drives within us, drives that have heaven or hell wrapped within them as results or consequences, and then give us no plan and power for the handling of these drives, would not be my god - he would be my devil.**" - E. Stanley Jones (Page 13).

God has not told us to build a life pleasing to him, to obey his word, and then not given us the power to do so. He has equipped us. He has imparted his divine nature to us. "**His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.**" **2 Peter 1:3.** Everything you need to live a godly life, to build upon the rock, to put his words into practice has been given to you in Christ. What you build out of your life and where you build - on the rock or on the sand - it's up to you. With Christ, through Christ, you can build a better life. What kind of life are you building?

3. It matters what material you build with. You learned that watching cartoons or listening to nursery rhymes didn't you? Didn't anyone tell you about the three little

pigs? Straw, sticks or brick. It matters the material you use on your building. 1 X 6's, brick and stone.

I remember hanging pictures in Sarah's room in Ireland. Carrig Eden is built on the Irish Sea. Probably 80-100 year old home. Driving nails into plaster walls of some kind until I got to the exterior wall. Nails bent repeatedly and I suddenly realized it was a concrete wall. Not moved by the sea or wind for all these years. It is built to last. Built on a rock. Built out of good material.

What kind of foundation have you built upon and what material are you building with? The foundation must be upon the rock. You must build your life upon Jesus Christ and the absolute truth of his word. To be a wise builder you must take his word and live it. Put it into practice.

The material you build with? It must be those things in keeping with a godly life. Those things that are pleasing to God. Some people use bad material like greed, jealousy, bitterness, unforgiveness, anger, criticism, negativism, wickedness, lust, fear, worry, ungodliness, wrath, pride, rage, dread, doubt, unbelief, immorality, cruelty, shame and guilt. Remember you have to live in the life you build. What do you think the life will look like if those things are the building materials you use?

2 Peter 1 mentions a different quality of material. He mentions things like faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love. Paul mentions things like love, joy, peace, patience, temperance, goodness, meekness, gentleness, faithfulness. Build with whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or worthy of praise.

You get to choose. What will you build with? Remember you are living in the life you build. How will you build? I suggest you build to last. Build with the right material. Don't look for short cuts. There are no such things. Remember, you will be building for a lifetime. 365 days a year. Whether you build with good material or bad, you are still building everyday. The difference will be in the finished product - whether it is a building of honor or dishonor. It matters the foundation you build on and it matters the material you use.

4. No one will build this for you. It doesn't get any simpler than this but someone needs to hear this simple word today. No one will build your life for you. It's up to you.

Some of you have been counting on someone to step in and construct a spiritual house for you. You've made no effort towards it yourself. "God, I want to be a better person. I want to live a better life." Then we walk away and do nothing. We don't put his words into practice. Jesus said we are building on sand if we don't put his words into practice and live by them.

Hear me again. No one else can build your life. No one else can build character into you. No one else can make you a person of integrity. No one else can make you be faithful to your spouse and to your marriage vows. It's your job. Your responsibility. Your choice.

Mom and Dad can't do this for you. Don't wait for them to. Your friends can't do this for you. Don't count on them to. Your spouse can't do this for you. I can't do this for you. This is in your hands. What do you want to make out of your life? Do you want your life to count for God? For the kingdom of God? Then start making the right choices. Start building on the rock. Start putting Jesus' words into practice in your life. Start building with the right material instead of that cheap junk you've been using.

Look at the life you are living right now, the life you have built so far. Is it what you wanted? Is it where you thought you would be? Is anything missing? Are there things you want to change? If so, who is going to make that happen? Who is going to decide? You! With God's power and grace at work in your life, you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. That is God's word. That is the truth. You can change. You can get your life turned around if you will come to Jesus, surrender to him, ask him for his help and decide to do it. Then get up and get going. Act. Put your plan into action. Whether it is in your spiritual walk, in your school, your job, your plans for the future. It's up to you.

It simply won't happen any other way. It's time to wake up. Grow up. Sit up and pay attention. The time for playing games is over. Your choices count. The days are precious. Do something with your life and do it now! No one else will build the life God has for you. Are you fulfilling the purpose and plan God has for your life? Are you living up to the potential God put within you? Are you building the life God designed and laid out for you? No one else will build it for you!

5. You have to build for storms. Jesus said the rain came, the streams rose and the

winds blew and beat against the house. He didn't suggest storms might be a possibility or that they might blow through. Don't be surprised when storms come. They come into every life. It is a part of life. The question is not "will the storms come?" The question is, have you built a life that can weather the storm? Jesus said those who have built upon the rock - the wise builders - those who have heard his word and put his word into practice in their lives - they can weather the storms. Their house didn't fall because the foundation was on the rock. They had built on the right foundation. They built using the right material. Storms may come but those who have built on the rock are still standing after it's all said and done.

Some of you came through the roughest storms of your life in 2008. And where does the new year find you? In the church. Worshiping God. Receiving his word. Putting his word into practice day by day. Has it been easy? I wouldn't think so. But you kept on building. You kept on doing the right thing. You kept on putting God's word into practice. You kept holding on to what you knew to be the truth. You kept standing on the solid foundation of God's word. It's the only thing that will stand when everything else has been shaken or has fallen.

Last year I saw some lives tried by the storms that fell with a great crash. I saw people give up, call it quits. I saw people who thought they would simply stop building when they walked away from God and the church. Sadly, what they didn't understand, they kept right on building, 365 days of the year, but this time, that part of their house was built on sand and the material they used was poor and decaying. They thought they would simply take a break from serving God, from building their life - but they kept right on building- but this time they were building destruction and hurt and death into the life they were building. They will have to live with that as well.

Taking a break, walking a way from God and from the faith, from a life of surrender to the Lordship of Christ, you don't stop building. You're just building a mess that you and your family will have to deal with tomorrow and the next day and the next. It matters what you are building and the material you are building with. It matters the building you leave behind.

What are you building? What are you building on? What kind of material are you using? What will remain? Paul said **"By the grace God has given me, I laid a**

foundation as an expert builder...But each one should be careful how he builds.”

1 Corinthians 3:10

Five simple truths for builders. Did you get it? Everyone's a builder. You have the power to decide what kind of life you are going to build. It matters the material you use in building your life. No one will do this for you. You have to build for the storms.

Now the rest is up to you. What have you been building? Are you ready to begin again? With new construction plans? With a new building superintendent perhaps? Be careful how you build! It's up to you!