

Hear and Do

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“Whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

“Now, everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

(Matthew 7:24-27)

This teaching of the Lord is so clear and so well illustrated that anyone with common sense can understand the message. Those who hear the Lord’s words and do them are wise and cannot be moved. But those who hear the Lord’s sayings and do not do them are very foolish and will inevitably fall.

This may indeed be simple and easily understood, but there is much more here than we might at first realize. Each word that the Lord used to describe the wise man and the foolish man was picked for a specific reason. Each word, with its spiritual signification, contains a whole story in itself. And, when we begin to look at the Lord’s words and their meaning, we realize that these few sentences are, in fact, laying out a whole way of life for us. The Lord is telling us what life is specifically like for those who live by the Word and what it is specifically like for those who do not, and what each kind of person goes through during his or her life.

The Lord says, “Whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.” The Heavenly Doctrine tells us that these words mean the person of the church who has founded his doctrine and his life upon the Divine truth—truth from the Word (see *Apocalypse Explained* 411:11). Such a person not only reads the Word and forms a way of thought from it; he lives by the Word. The Word and its teachings become the foundation for his life. The person’s whole way of life is ordered by a deep commitment to principles, Divine principles which have strength and meaning. And so every action such a person takes and everything he does has a very real purpose behind it, and a real life, too, because the Divine dwells within. This individual’s life is built upon the rock, the very Divine itself. And so we read in the Word, “The Lord is my rock and my fortress...my God and my strength” (Psalm 89:26).

How very different it is with a person who hears the Word and does not do what the Lord says or try to put it into life. Such a person is like a foolish man who builds his house on the sand. Who is the person who would do such a thing? Not a gentile who has never heard of the Lord or His Word, but a Christian, perhaps of the New Church, who has the Word and has heard the Lord speaking but has done nothing with the truth he has learned. The Lord’s parable is talking about a person who hears, but does not do, who has the opportunity to take this truth and ascend into the heavens by means of it, but who never makes the effort. The Heavenly Doctrine tells us that, “Those in faith separated from charity are meant by...those building a house upon the sand” (*Apocalypse Explained* 212:2).

Now the Lord tells us that the rains descend on the house built on the rock, the floods come, and the

winds blow, but the house prevails. In general the Heavenly Doctrine tells us that these things represent temptations. All those who see the truth and believe it go through spiritual storms, times when the hells attack and, as it were, beat down upon their understanding of what is true. This is because when they learn some truth about themselves or their life, they begin to see a dichotomy. They see how they have been living and also how they *should* be living, and they see that these are diametrically opposed to each other. These two states come together and clash, causing a storm to develop. It is much like cold air, or a cold front, sweeping in on a mass of warm air. When the two opposite forces come together, they create a storm, sometimes a very severe storm.

The rain spoken of in this saying represents temptation. More specifically though, it represents what the Heavenly Doctrine calls a “curse” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2445). Those who learn the truth and try to put it into their lives may indeed feel as if they have been cursed by learning that truth. Some people who come across the Heavenly Doctrine, for example, often go through a state when they temporarily regret ever having heard of it or of the New Church. Life seemed so comfortable before they knew the truth. They weren’t going through any torments or pangs of conscience. But now, since they have accepted the Heavenly Doctrine, they feel as if they have been cursed by wave after wave of temptation and conflict in their minds. There is a period when they seem to be living through one large continuous storm.

And they are right: a storm has developed, and it develops with all who begin to see truth from the Word and how it applies to their life. Evil and good, truth and falsity, have begun a great battle. The storm within rages with a fury. But how long that storm will last and what effect it will have on their spiritual state is up to them. The Lord’s message is that those who go a step farther than just believing, those who *live* these newly founded truths, will survive the storm and come out of it stronger and better than before. The rock upon which they have built their foundation is a strong rock. It is the Divine truth *lived*, made a part of their lives. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The Lord tells us that not only will the rains descend on those who believe in the Word but that wind will also come. Wind here represents reasonings from the natural man (see *Apocalypse Revealed* 334). In temptation our perverted natural man conjures up all sorts of reasons why we should do wrong. It cries out for us to fulfill its self-centered hunger and lust. It tries to trick us.

For example, when a person is tempted to lust, even though he or she knows from the Word that it is wrong and even harmful, the natural man cries out that it is not only right but necessary to fulfill that lust. It says that you are depriving yourself of a wonderful pleasure not to fulfill those desires. It may even go so far as to tell you that you will go insane if you do not give in to its will.

Who would believe such a thing? A foolish person might, someone who builds his life on something other than the Word. But the person whose foundation is the Lord hardly even hears the wind or false reasonings of the natural man. The false reasonings certainly do not move him. How can they? If a person has not only *heard* the Word of the Lord but has begun to put it into his *life*, he knows that what the natural man is telling him to do is a lie. He knows what lust is and where it is from. He knows what goodness and purity are and how happiness belongs to these. He knows because he has lived them and experienced the fruits of a good life. Such a person rests his thoughts upon the rock, the Divine truth of the Lord, which protects him.

The Lord also says that after the wind and the rain, the floods will come to those who hear the Word.

Floods which surround a regenerating person represent an inundation of evil and falsity (see *Arcana Coelestia* 660). There are times in temptation when all sorts of false ideas and confusion enter a person's head, along with a variety of mixed feelings, most of which are undesirable.

These floods come upon everyone, even those who try to live by the Word. In fact, those who opt for what is right go through terrible torments as they are trying to establish the Lord as the base for their life. But the wonderful thing is that those who do make that effort begin to build that base, and as they progress in regeneration, the floods have less and less destructive effect. At last, with the Word as the basis for their lives, the flood cannot reach them any more.

It is otherwise when temptations hit the person who believes but does not live what he believes. When the rains descend, his knowledges are scattered. The flood waters or falsities quickly carry the knowledges off, downstream. The flood is our evil will. It uses the things we have learned for its own purposes, to confirm what it wants us to believe. It sends out a wave of falsities which sweeps our knowledges up and carries them away. Therefore, our house is left with no foundation upon which to rest. And so it falls—a terrible fall into the lusts of evil—conquered in temptation.

When temptation hits the person in faith alone, separated from life, the winds also come. The winds, or false reasonings from the natural man, blow with a fury. But, unlike those who have been protected by the Lord's rock, the foolish person finds himself caught in the wind. False reasonings infest his mind. When he is tempted to do evil, he may remember the truth, but since he has never *experienced* that truth in life, it does him no good. It quickly passes from his mind and all he hears is the wind.

The Lord's words in this parable are clear. He has laid out a whole foundation for us in His Word upon which we can build our lives. Not only is it our duty to do so, it is also the best thing we can possibly do for ourselves. For in His Word is our hope. In His Word is our strength. In His Word is our protection from all evil and falsity in temptation. But the choice is ours. Will we honestly try to make His Word our foundation by taking His truth and using it for good in our lives? Or will we waste our lives building castles in the sand?

Look at the imagery of the parable once again. How could a flood hurt a house which is built on a huge and impenetrable rock? It cannot. The flood never even reaches the house because the rock protects it, repelling the flood water. The raging water bounces off, divides, and continues somewhere else. This rock and fortress is the Word, the Word understood and lived. Evil and falsity can't penetrate the Divine truth, nor can they cover it, once it is in life. They have absolutely no power. All else might be swept away, but the rock will remain forever.

Truly, we are wise if we build our house upon that rock, if we build our life on the teachings of the Lord's Word. Once our life has been dedicated to Him and that truth has become not only a belief but a reality in our life, our house will stand forever. No rain, wind, or flood can hurt it. No storm of any kind will move it because it is founded upon the rock, the firm foundation of the Lord and His Divine truth. Amen.

Lessons: Matthew 7:7-29; *Apocalypse Explained* 411:11