

Matthew 7:24-27 *Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell – and great was its fall.*

Today we come to consider these final words of Jesus’ great Sermon on the Mount. And critical to the whole of the sermon they are. They are the climax to His teaching on the constitution of the Kingdom.

You would never turn off the final scene of a dramatic movie, for fear of losing the complete impact of the drama. Nor would you close the book on a stirring “who done it” book before its climax, or you might never find out “who done it.” In a similar way, these final words of the Sermon on the Mount bring to a climax the dramatic impact of Jesus’ message and bring full relevance to the whole.

As I give this message, Hurricane Irma is pounding on the southern cities of Florida, having already wrecked havoc on Puerto Rico and other Caribbean Islands. The floodwaters and winds have brought great calamity in its wake, giving us a present day physical image of the great storms of life described by Jesus in his final illustration. The victims of Hurricane Irma are facing life or death outcomes. And the spiritual storm of the final judgment will also have life and death consequences – more specifically, heaven or hell consequences. Yes, this portion of Scripture is eternally critical and we must heed its warning.

So I ask this question as we begin: Is your life built on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ as your Savior, Lord and Rock?

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Psalms 18:2: *The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.*

Proverbs 10:25: *When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever.*

Hebrews 6:19-20: *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil [of death] where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us having become a high priest forever ...*

The storms of life are raging now for each one of us. But they are nothing compared to the ultimate storm of judgment that will determine each person’s eternal fate. Jesus’ words in our text tell us that either we will stand strong if our life has been built on the Rock of Jesus, or we will suffer “great fall” if not. These are not idle words. They are the lighthouse in the storm of life that will save from disaster if heeded.

Throughout the Bible, our God, and specifically Jesus His Son, is depicted as “The Rock” upon which we will find sure foundation – and the only foundation that will keep us safe. So let me take you on a brief journey of some of these references.

JESUS THE ROCK – 7 Old Testament references

1. THE ROCK OF SUSTENANCE

Exodus 17:6 tells the story of Moses striking the rock at Horeb by God’s command to provide water in the desert for the thirsty Israelites. I Corinthians 10:4 confirms this was Jesus the Christ.

2. THE ROCK OF PROTECTION

In Exodus 33 God protected Moses from seeing His face by hiding Him in the cleft of the rock.

3. THE BIRTHING ROCK AND ROCK OF SALVATION

In Deuteronomy 32:15 and 18 Moses sings of The Rock who gave birth to Israel (Jeshurun) and was scorned as the Rock of his salvation. In Psalm 95:1 David also sings of “The Rock of our salvation.”

4. THE ROCK OF ESCAPE AND REFUGE

In 1 Samuel 23:28 David escaped from King Saul who was pursuing him to kill him by hiding in a rock cave. In frustration, Saul named it “the Rock of Escape.” In Psalm 18:2 David sung of this, calling it “My Rock, in whom I take refuge.”

5. THE ROCK OF STUMBLING

In Isaiah 8:14-15 the prophet Isaiah speaks of the coming Messiah as the Rock over which Israel will stumble and fall. Paul refers to this “stumbling stone” as Jesus in Romans 9:33 and Peter does the same in 1 Peter 2:8.

6. THE EVERLASTING ROCK

In Isaiah 26:4 the prophet says of God the Lord, the coming Messiah, that in Him we have an “everlasting Rock.”

7. NO OTHER ROCK

God’s King of Israel, the Redeemer and Lord of hosts [Jesus the Messiah] says in Isaiah 44:8, “Is there any God besides Me, or is there any other Rock? I know of none.”

THE OVERCOMING ROCK

And now let me take you to Matthew 16 where in verse 13, Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is? Their response was multiple choice: “John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or another prophet.” People’s response today, if not a believer, would be “a good teacher,” “a prophet of God,” “a miracle worker,” or “the Son of God” without knowing what that truly meant.

Then Jesus asked the specific question of his disciples, saying, “But who do you say that I am?” This is the same question He asks of each of us – the critical question we must answer correctly to weather the storm of judgment that is coming. Our answer betrays either a life founded on rock or on sand. Peter, the leader of the disciples spoke up and answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Peter’s answer was that Jesus was the promised Messiah and divine as God’s Son.

Jesus then responded with a statement that is often misunderstood, but when understood correctly identifies Jesus as the Rock upon whom the Church of God is built and upon whom we can safely and wisely build our lives to assure eternal safety. Jesus replied: “...You are Peter (Petros) and upon this rock (petra) I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

The wrong understanding is that the Church will be built on Peter, the “petros.” This is the understanding of the Catholic church that makes Peter their first pope. But Jesus used “petros” of Peter – a masculine word that means “a piece of rock, a stone, a single stone which is moveable, insecure and shifting or rolling. Jesus had changed Simon’s name to “Peter” which was a piece of stone. But Jesus said He would build his Church on “this petra.” “Petra” is a female word that means “a solid, immovable rock of immense proportion.”

The “petra” that had just been stated was the affirmation of Jesus’ Messiahship and Deity. 1 Corinthians 10:4 confirms this when Paul uses “petra” as the rock who was Christ Jesus. Jesus alone is the “petra” or Rock that overcomes the onslaughts of the enemy and tries to tear down the universal church that Christ has built and each individual member of it. The Church of God, and the lives of each member of it who claim and live out Jesus as their Messiah, Lord and God have divine promise of overcoming. Is that you?

MY TESTIMONY OF OVERCOMING

The Lord has laid it on my heart to share with you some of the difficulties I have overcome in my life. I do this with some trepidation and concern that my motive for doing so might be seen as self-serving or even boasting. Please know this is not my intent, and that I am in no way the ultimate example of overcoming. Many if not most of you could give testimony of greater struggles and greater victories. But I want to show that my teaching on overcoming by standing on the Rock that is Jesus is not

academic for me, but very personal. He has been and continues to be my Rock of sustenance, protection, refuge, and strength.

With Jesus as my Rock, I have overcome . . .

- ✓ losing my father to death by cancer at the young age of 13
- ✓ being called “fat” and “chubby” though much of my adolescent years
- ✓ having a mild stutter, which I have to this day
- ✓ having virtually all job applications rejected after college and masters graduation with honors
- ✓ the death of my mother by cancer when I was 36 years of age
- ✓ being fired from my pastoral position of 20 years (to have it restored by the congregation days later)
- ✓ instruction by church leadership that I must apologize for actions I had not done in order to remain
- ✓ being reprimanded by my church’s conference leaders for my lack of submission to authority
- ✓ being told by my senior pastor that he would be rid of me within months
- ✓ being released as pastor of a church after 33 years (with apologies given for having to do so)
- ✓ multiple invitations and encouragements by others to compromise my Christian convictions
- ✓ having sustained the financial loss of what to me was a “fortune”
- ✓ being turned down for an early home for Oaks because of my personal “questionable past record”
- ✓ being lied to and betrayed by a close colleague
- ✓ sustaining a life threatening heart attack
- ✓ sustaining a life threatening prostate cancer surgery
- ✓ accusations by my peers of my spiritual worthiness to be pastor
- ✓ my own sense of unworthiness to be used by God in any capacity

Now I must quickly say ... please don’t feel sorry for me. These storms of life can’t rival most of yours. And I confess that I have failed to meet many of these tests with impeccable righteous response.

Yet God through His indwelling Spirit has allowed me to grow, mature and by His grace become a better and more humble servant because of these. And I stand here today to say that by having stood on the firm rock of my faith in Jesus, I have overcome these storms of life by His gracious hand.

And I am confident, by God’s promises, that He will do the same for you. With a life founded on Him, the Rock of Ages, there is no storm you cannot withstand and emerge stronger for having weathered it. There is no loss, or rebuke, or insult, or disappointment, or dream unfulfilled from which you cannot emerge stronger if you are planted firm on the rock that is Jesus and Jesus alone.

This life will fade away before we know it. Those on the broad way will end up in destruction. Those who have borne but useless fruit will be burned in the fire. Those who have professed Jesus as Lord but never known Him in relationship will be turned away from heaven. And those who have not had their life built on the solid rock of Jesus as Savior and Lord will suffer “great loss.”

PROMISES ON OVERCOMING FROM REVELATION

1. PARADISE

Revelation 2:7 *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.*

2. ETERNAL LIFE

Revelation 2:11 *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.*

3. A NEW GODLY NAME

Revelation 2:17 *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.*

4. SITTING ON JESUS’ THRONE

Revelation 3:21 *He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*

5. ULTIMATE VICTORY

Revelation 12:11 *And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.*

OUR SOURCE OF OVERCOMING

John 16:33 *These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.*

1 John 4:4 *You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.*

1 John 5:5 *Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

He who overcomes is the one who has placed his or her faith and trust in the One who has overcome – Jesus. He who overcomes is the one who trusts in the One who is greater than anyone or anything this world can throw at you. He who overcomes is the one who believes that Jesus is exactly who He claimed to be – the Messiah, Lord of life and divine Son of God.

And he who will not suffer “great fall” in the final judgment is the one who knows and lives Jesus as Lord of life. His life will weather every storm and he will never be shaken away from his confidence in Jesus as the Rock of his salvation.

Is this you? If not, do you want it to be you?

Today – acknowledge your need of Jesus as Savior and receive Him as Master and Lord of life, believing that He has died to save you from your sin and risen from the grave to lead you to eternal life.

The final storm is coming and is almost upon us. Be safe – in Jesus the Rock.