

“Storm Warning” (Matthew 7:24–29)

I want you to stop and think about the house that you live in. If I asked you to describe your house to me, you would most likely tell me about the location, the color, the design, the square footage, the size of the lot, and the number of bedrooms. But you probably wouldn't tell me about the foundation. Perhaps you don't know anything about your foundation. Yet, it is the foundation of your house that makes all the difference. Prov 24:3 states, “By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established.”¹ This is true not only of your house; it is also true of your life.

In Matthew 7:24–27,² Jesus tells a parable³ that compares and contrasts two builders: one wise and one foolish.⁴ He emphasizes how critical it is to have a strong foundation. The use of a building metaphor should not surprise us; Jesus was a carpenter. As part of the firm of Joseph and Sons in Nazareth, He had built the furniture that people put into their homes and He had probably built some of the homes as well. Jesus knew the difference between a solid house and a shoddy one.⁵ However, this story is not just for architects, carpenters, and contractors. It is for you and me. Building a house is simply an analogy for building a life. The point is this: You are building a life and the foundation you choose is the most important feature of your life. In the verses that follow, Jesus provides two options for building your life.

1. Build your life on the strong foundation (7:24–25). Jesus says, “The only way to build a strong foundation is by obeying His words.” He begins His parable in 7:24 with the word “**therefore,**” which looks back to the entire Sermon on the Mount.⁶ In light of His teachings, Jesus says, “**Everyone who hears these words of Mine⁷ and acts on them, may be compared to a wise⁸ man who built his house on the rock.**”⁹ By using the word “everyone” (cf. 7:26), Jesus reveals that His words are intended for all people for all time. He begins by stating that you must “hear” His words. In order to do so you must expose yourself to the truth. You can do this by reading the Bible, by reading Christian books, by attending worship, by getting involved in classes and small groups, and by meeting with Christian friends who can teach you. While this may sound daunting and tedious, this is what you do in every other area of your life, right? If you want to learn a skill or profession you must seek out the necessary information. An athlete listens to coaches and more experienced players. A craftsman becomes an apprentice to learn from those who are more experienced. A student teacher learns from a teacher in a classroom environment. In each of these cases, it is essential to not just hear the truth but to listen to the truth. Anyone who is married knows that there is a difference. Anyone who has a teenager knows that there is a difference between hearing and listening. The key to listening is to interact with the one doing the speaking. The best listeners I know are people who ask lots of clarifying questions such as: “What do you mean?” “Are you saying...?” “Can you explain that further?” These questions show that a person is listening. We should ask clarifying questions when interacting with Christ's words. Is God warning me of something? Do I need to repent? Is this a promise that I can claim or a command I need to obey?

Jesus urges you to hear His words, but He doesn't stop there. He goes on to say that you must act upon His words. If you are going to build on a solid foundation you must actually DO what Jesus wants you to do. Hearing His words is not enough. You are building your life on His words ONLY as you obey them (see Jas 1:22).¹⁰ Let me explain: I have heard that vegetables are good for you. I believe this is true. I have even prayed that the Lord would change my taste buds and give me a desire for vegetables. Yet, I rarely obey what I know to be true by eating veggies. Oh, that analogy doesn't work for you? How about this: Do you floss on a daily basis? Why not? You know how to floss, right? You've seen the charts at the dentist's office and you've purchased your top-of-the-line, mint-flavored floss in its fancy holder, right? You make a commitment that you will floss every day. But after a week you stop flossing. You don't floss because you don't really believe that your teeth will rot and fall out.

In the same way, you can hear all of Jesus' words and know them like the back of your hand, but if you don't do what He says, you aren't building on the right foundation.¹¹ Fortunately, you are likely seeking to obey Jesus' teaching. You have made a commitment to obey His words.¹² Even though your marriage is a mess and others encourage you to find happiness and divorce your spouse, you remain faithful to your spouse and to the Lord. When your finances have been especially tight and you've been tempted to not give to the Lord, instead you trust the Lord and give in obedience. In an impure world that glorifies immorality, you choose to abstain on a daily basis. When your children challenge your parental authority, you continue to persevere, loving them and sharing God's Word with them. When you have been the victim of gossip and slander and your flesh rises up to take revenge, you choose to forgive. When there doesn't seem to be enough time in the day, you still find a way to serve Christ's church and people in your community. As your pastor, I know who many of you are. But more importantly, God knows who you are.

In 7:25, you will discover why it's so critical to build on the strong foundation. Jesus says, **“And the rain fell, and the floods came,¹³ and the winds blew and slammed against that house;¹⁴ and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.”** Jesus doesn't pull any punches. Just look at the word “and” in 7:25. Jesus does not say “if the rain falls” or “if the floods come” or “if the winds blow.” He says, “*And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house*” (italics mine). Jesus tells you straight-up that storms *will* come and you will not be spared! And if you've walked with Christ for any length of time, you've observed that people who hear and do the words of Jesus have the *very same crises* in their lives that people have who don't do His words.¹⁵ Obedience to Christ does not mean you will not get rained on. Anyone who tells you that the Christian life is all sunny days has lied to you. Nevertheless, the storms are what test us. Living in the sunshine of life doesn't tell us much about ourselves. Anybody can build a house that will stand firm when the sun is shining and the wind is still. It is the storms that reveal the strength of your foundation. When you build on the rock you must expect storms, because only storms can show your wisdom to the world around you.

- Sometimes the storm roars in as you are pounded by sickness or the fear of death. Perhaps you will learn that you have cancer or another life-threatening disease. Maybe a loved one will suddenly pass away. You may develop a nagging injury that refuses to heal. Maybe you're beginning to feel your age and this discourages you to no end. Times like these reveal the foundations of your life.
- Sometimes the storm is a crushing personal loss. You may lose a job that not only provides income but also provides you with self-esteem and personal security. Your carefully built stock portfolio suddenly destroyed can be like a tornado roaring through the comfortable life you have built. When you realize that you haven't built up the security you counted on, everything in your life can come tumbling down and you see exposed the faulty foundations of your life.
- In many cases, your foundation can be tested by prosperity. Prosperity comes like a gentle spring rain. At first you're convinced it will make your life green and healthy. But when prosperity keeps coming, it can develop into a large destructive force as damaging as a storm. What you gain, not what you lose, often serves as the supreme test of your foundation. More men and women have been knocked off their spiritual foundation by great wealth than by great reversal.¹⁶

In 1992, Hurricane Andrew destroyed thousands of homes in South Florida. Yet in an area where the wreckage looked like a war zone, one house remained standing, still firmly anchored to its foundation. When a reporter asked the homeowner why his house had not been blown away, he replied, “I built this house myself. I also built it according to the Florida state building code. When the code called for 2” x 6” roof trusses, I used 2” x 6” roof trusses. I was told that a house built according to code could withstand a hurricane—and it did.”

When personal storms come many lives will be destroyed and left in shambles. Most people don't find the narrow gate (7:13–14). Most people don't build on the foundation of Christ's words. But if you construct your life according to Christ's building codes you will not be disappointed.¹⁷ While obedience to Jesus' words is not a protection *from* the troubles; it is a protection *in* the troubles. Yes, you may lose some widows and the house of your life may be shaken but it will not collapse and be swept away. I want to encourage you: All the time that you have invested in laying your biblical foundation will pay off. If you haven't already seen the results and benefits, I can assure you that one day you will. Building on the rock is the best flood insurance you can invest in. Storms will come and go. You are either in a trial, coming out of a trial, or entering into a trial. Nevertheless, if you've built your life on the foundation of Christ, you have nothing to fear. A good storm will demonstrate the stability of your foundation.

Seven years ago we began building a house. Scrub brush had been cleared away. The dozer had come to dig the hole for the foundation to be poured. Lori took the kids to see the progress. When they arrived they eagerly piled out of the van and ran to see what had been done. As they looked into the hole where the foundation would soon be poured, four-year-old Joshua stood staring with a perplexed look on his face. After a moment he blurted out: "Where's the rock?" Lori had no idea what he was referring to. She said, "What rock?" Joshua replied, "The rock that the wise man built his house upon." Joshua wasn't trying to be cute or funny. He just remembered that a wise man *must* build his house upon the rock—He wanted to be assured that our house would have a rock!

Does the house of your life have a rock? Have you built your life on a strong foundation? We all need the rock. Without the rock, we would all just roll away. Place your faith in Jesus Christ today. If you've already placed your faith in Him continue to grow in Him.

[You can build your life on the strong foundation, but unfortunately you may not choose to do this. So Jesus now presents the alternative. As a builder, you can...]

2. Destroy your life on the wrong foundation (7:26–27). Jesus modifies His previous parable and applies it negatively to those who refuse to obey His words. In 7:26 He says, "**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 opposite of a wise man is a foolish man. The Greek word for "foolish" is *moros*. I don't need to tell you what this word means in either Greek or English. A person who disregards Jesus' words is called a stupid moron. He is foolish. He didn't build on the rock of Jesus' words! Please note: The foolish builder also heard Jesus' words but didn't act upon them. The decision not to act on Jesus' words, for whatever reason, is already a decision to do a great deal. It is the decision to live by someone else's words, for we all live by someone's words.¹⁸ Every person is building a life according to some scheme, some design. People don't build at random. Everyone has a world view or a philosophy.¹⁹ Who or what is your foundation? If it isn't Jesus Christ, make sure He is today.

Why did the foolish man build his house on the sand? He miscalculated the weather. He thought every day was going to be sunshine. He thought his life was always going to be smooth. So he figured a sand dune would do as a foundation. Let's face it; it is appealing to build on the sand. It's found in a good location. It's adequate. It's easy. Who wants to dig down deep if you don't have to (see Luke 6:47)? It takes more work to build on the rock. It takes more time and energy. And it costs more. It is easier and faster to build on the sand. It's always easier to take shortcuts in building a home. It's cheaper to use inferior materials. And for a while, no one may notice. But somewhere along the line, you will pay for your shoddy workmanship. The same is true when it comes to the foundation of your life. It is easier to go with the crowd. It takes less time and energy if you simply maintain a superficial faith. And frankly, most of the time, who can really tell the difference anyway? It's easier to just show up for church for an hour a week than it is to develop spiritual roots. But there's only one problem with this mentality, the Bible teaches that storms are lurking on the horizon.

In 7:27, Jesus closes His parable with a storm warning: **“The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great²⁰ was its fall.”** Jesus concludes His parable and the entire Sermon on the Mount with an illustration of warning rather than of encouragement. I thrive on encouragement. I like to encourage others and be encouraged myself. Yet, as much as I appreciate encouragement, there is something about a strong word of warning that snaps me to attention. Jesus is saying, “You neglect My warning at your own peril!” Jesus’ warning has both a future and temporal application.²¹ The word “great” (*megale*) is the last word in 7:27, hence the last word of the Sermon on the Mount. The point is that if you reject Jesus Christ, you will spend eternity separated from Him. This is the future judgment. Yet, there is also a temporal judgment that concerns believers. If you choose to disregard Jesus’ commandments, you too will fall in this life and at the judgment seat.

Do you know what many Christians do when it starts raining? They try to change foundations. When the sky gets dark, the winds pick up, and the rain begins to pour they pick up the telephone, call the most spiritual people they know, and say, “Help me build a new foundation under my house. It’s falling apart.” But you can’t change foundations when you’re in the midst of a storm. You have to lay your foundation *before* the storm comes, so that when the rain, the floods, and the winds come, your house is secure. This is also true in the natural realm. It is hard to lay a foundation when it’s raining. Workers have to stop pouring concrete when it begins to rain. The foundation has to be poured on sunny days.²²

Our family loves to spend time at Cannon Beach on the Oregon coast. Whenever we enjoy a week at Cannon Beach Conference Center, there is a sand castle building contest. All of the kids spend an hour or so building the most elaborate sand castles. The only problem with these impressive sand castles is that when a wave rolls in, everything that these children have created is washed away.

How is your foundation? Is it built upon the rock or is it built upon sand? If it’s built upon the rock, keep on. Continue doing what you’re doing. Seek to stretch yourself further in God’s Word. Pray that He gives you an even greater hunger and thirst for His Word. If your foundation is built upon sand and you know you’re sinking down, build your foundation on the rock of God’s Word. Today, I invite you to do a building inspection of your life. If you want a stable life—one that doesn’t cave in when the rain comes—build it on the rock TODAY. One way to facilitate this is by working through the “Sermon on the Mount Personal Evaluation” worksheet below. Place a checkmark by the attitudes you have had and behaviors that you have actively been doing the past few weeks. Remember, you will not be rewarded in heaven for what you heard and believed, only for what you did.

If you have never believed in Christ as your foundation stone, do so today. At the moment you believe in Christ, your foundation turns from sand to stone. If Christ is your foundation stone, build your life on His teachings. I would encourage you to go home and find a small rock. Put the rock next to your computer monitor. Take it with you to the office. Put it in your kitchen or at your dining room table. This can be your stone of remembrance. It can signify your new relationship with Christ or your commitment to obey Him wholeheartedly.

The Sermon on the Mount concludes in 7:28–29 with Matthew’s powerful first-hand account: **“When Jesus had finished these words,²³ the crowds were amazed²⁴ at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority,²⁵ and not as their scribes.”²⁶** The crowds²⁷ were amazed at two things: the matter and the manner of His teaching. They were astounded by what He taught. He differed from anyone they had heard before. He didn’t urge them to new forms of religion, to give more money, or to attend services more often. He didn’t summon them to a greater commitment to a religious routine. He kept going back to their motives, to what they were deep inside. He said that what mattered to God was their relationship with Him. He said that true religion wasn’t a performance; it was a deep reality of who we are deep inside.

In addition to their amazement at the matter of Jesus' teaching, the crowd was impressed by the *manner* in which He taught.²⁸ Jesus taught as one having authority, not as the teachers of the law. Rabbis were highly educated. They knew their 2,000 years of religious tradition inside and out, and they had studied all the learned opinions but they did not teach as if they had authority. In most of their teaching they simply quoted the experts. Listening to them was like listening to someone read an extended footnote. As a college student, you don't have credibility or authority so your professors expect you to liberally use footnotes to bolster your authority. Jesus, however, uses no footnotes! Standing 2,000 years away from the Sermon on the Mount, we may not appreciate the significance of this difference. Jesus was about thirty years of age, not very old by the standards of the ancient world. He had grown up in Nazareth, a small town of little importance. He was a carpenter. He had not gone to the schools the rabbis attended. He had never studied the religious traditions. And yet, Jesus spoke with an authority that the older scribes did not possess.²⁹ Even the Old Testament prophets introduced their message by saying, "Thus says the Lord." That little phrase appears almost 3,000 times in the Old Testament. The prophets did not speak with their own authority; they spoke with the authority of God. It is striking that Jesus never used that phrase. He spoke with His own authority. He spoke with authority all through the sermon when He interpreted or reapplied the law, when He promised, when He commanded, when He prohibited. Not in the name of God, but as God Himself. The people had never heard anyone do that because no one like Him had ever appeared on earth before. Indeed, Jesus Christ was and is amazing!³⁰

The sad thing is: The crowd didn't accept Jesus as Savior; they were merely impressed. Don't stop at being impressed with Jesus' words. Amazement is not enough! Many religious leaders, professors, literary writers, and moral people have been impressed with Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. But this is inadequate. Belief in Christ is necessary for salvation. Obedience to Christ's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount is necessary for Christian health and growth. Therefore, if we could sum up Jesus' words we might put it like this: "*Draw a line on the rock, not in the sand.*"³¹ The rock signifies the person and teachings of the Lord Jesus; the sand symbolizes your worldview.

I haven't been to the doctor in many years. In fact, in the eight years that I've been in Olympia I've only been to the doctor once! I have my reasons for why I don't go to the doctor, but they aren't important or valid. I know this though: When I go to the doctor, I must believe that he is able to help me. I must then submit myself to his authority so that I can become well. If I refuse to trust in the doctor and submit to him, I have no one but myself to blame for my own demise. Similarly, if you want to be eternally well, you must trust Jesus Christ for your spiritual deliverance. Additionally, if you are seeking to be healthy and whole in this life and the next, Jesus asks that you trust Him and then submit yourself to His authority. *Draw a line on the rock, not in the sand.*

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Sermon on the Mount Personal Evaluation
Matthew 5–7

Directions: Salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone, yet obedience to Jesus’ teaching is important in this life and in the life to come. In the chart below, rate yourself on the various attitudes and behaviors that you have actively been practicing (1 = much room for growth to 5 = growing strong in grace). Remember, the Sermon on the Mount was not intended to be admired, but obeyed. Consequently, you will not be rewarded in heaven for what you heard and believed, only for what you did in obedience to Christ.

Passage	Attitude/Behavior	Obedience
Matt 5:3	Am I poor in spirit?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 5:4	Do I mourn?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 5:5	Am I gentle?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 5:6	Do I hunger and thirst for righteousness?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 5:7	Am I merciful?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 5:8	Am I pure in heart?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 5:9	Am I a peacemaker?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 5:10–12	Am I persecuted for the sake of righteousness?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 5:13	Am I the salt of the earth?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 5:14–16	Am I the light of the world?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 5:17–20	Do I keep and teach Jesus’ commandments?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 5:21–22	Do I reject ungodly anger?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 5:23–26	Do I reconcile with those who are angry with me?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 5:27–30	Am I controlling my thought life?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 5:31–32	Am I honoring my marriage vows?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 5:33–37	Do I honor my word?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 6:1–4	Do I give without fanfare?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 6:5–15	Do I pray without pride?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 6:16–18	Do I fast without notice?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 6:19–24	Am I storing up treasure in heaven?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 6:25–34	Am I refusing to worry?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 7:1–5	Do I judge myself before I judge others?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 7:6–12	Do I pray for wisdom and discernment?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 7:13–14	Am I trusting in Christ for salvation?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 7:15–23	Am I guarding against false prophets?	1 2 3 4 5
Matt 7:24–27	Am I building on the right foundation?	1 2 3 4 5

Scripture References

Matthew 7:24–29

Luke 6:47–49; 4:32

Matthew 13:54; 22:33

Mark 1:22; 6:2; 11:18

John 7:46

Acts 13:12

James 1:22–25

Study Questions

1. How often do I read and listen to God's Word in the course of a week (7:24)? What are the best methods of filling my mind with God's Word? To what degree do I obey and apply what I read and hear? Have I grown in my obedience to the Savior in this past year? If so, how have I specifically progressed as a disciple?
2. What personal storms have I experienced in this past year (7:25)? How did I fare spiritually in the midst of these storms? What did I learn about my spiritual foundation (i.e., my obedience to Jesus' words) in the midst of my personal storms? In what ways do I need to strengthen my foundation? How will I go about this and who will help me?
3. Who do I know that is building on a sound foundation (7:26)? How can I challenge these individuals to build on the rock of Jesus' words? As a Christian, how have I been guilty of building my life on the sand? What specific areas of my life need to be stabilized or restructured? How can I go about this building process in 2009?
4. What made Jesus' teaching so amazing? How did He teach with such authority (7:28–29)? How can I learn to teach like Jesus taught? What specific methods, skill-sets, and character qualities would help me be more effective in my communication of God's truth? Do I believe that I am a teacher? Read Hebrews 5:11–14. What responsibility do I have to teach God's Word to those who have been placed in my life?
5. What have I learned from my study through the Sermon on the Mount? How has God changed my heart? In what ways have I determined to obey Jesus' teaching? What are my spiritual goals for 2009?

Notes

¹ In Prov 9:1 wisdom was personified as a woman who builds a house; but here the emphasis is primarily on the building—it is a sign of security and prosperity (C. H. Toy, *Proverbs* [ICC], 442). One could still make a secondary application from this line for a household or “family” (cf. NCV, which sees this as a reference to the family). See NET study notes.

² Cf. Luke 6:47–49: “Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.” Morris writes, “This passage is similar to Luke 6:47–49, but the similarity is more in the thought than the language.” See Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 181.

³ After other lengthy teaching block, Jesus often concludes with a parable (Matt 13:52; 18:21–35; 25:31–46). This is the only parable in the entire Sermon on the Mount.

⁴ Other parables of wisdom and folly are: Five foolish women and their friends (Matt 25:1–13); the rich fool (Luke 12:13–21); a shrewd man of the world (Luke 16:1–19); the empty house (Matt 12:43–45; Luke 11:24–26); the unfinished tower (Luke 14:28–30); and the rash warfare (Luke 14:31–33). See David L. Larsen, *Telling the Old Story* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1995), 147.

⁵ See Haddon W. Robinson, *What Jesus Said About Successful Living* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1991), 288.

⁶ Most commentators suggest that the conjunction *oun* (“therefore”) links back to Jesus’ discussion about false prophets in Matt 7:15–23.

⁷ The word “my” (*mou*) is stressed by its position in the Greek sentence. Matthew is alerting us to the fact that Jesus’ words are God’s very words. The phrase “of mine” is repeated twice for emphasis (7:24, 26).

⁸ The wise person is a theme in Matthew (cf. 10:16; 24:45; 25:2, 4, 8–9). Wilkins writes, “The wise person shows that he or she has carefully viewed the shifting sands of life’s teachings and understands that Jesus is the only secure truth of life (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10–11). The wise person thinks ahead to when there will be storms and sacrifices and builds his or her life on the rock of Jesus’ words. The choice is no less stark in our own day. Wise men and women build their lives on Jesus, regardless of the cultural or religious weather.” Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*. NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 327.

⁹ Keener writes, “The Hebrew Bible often employed the rock image for the security Israel had in God if they obeyed Him (e.g., Deut 32:4, 18, 31; Ps 18:2, 31, 46; 19:14), as in a time of flood and disaster (Is 28:14–19); other biblical images may also be indirectly relevant (see on Mt 16:18): a house was built by wisdom (Prov 24:3; cf. Ps 127:1; Jer 22:13).” Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 255.

¹⁰ Matt 7:21–23 contrasts “saying” and “doing”; Matt 7:24–27 contrasts “hearing” and “doing” (cf. Jas 1:22–25; 2:14–20).

¹¹ In Luke 8:20–21, Jesus said to “hear the word of God and do it” is to be His mother and brothers. That is, those who obey Him enjoy a closer relationship to Him than even His closest family members. In John 15:14, Jesus said, “You are My friends if you do what I command you.” Those of you that have been obeying Jesus’ words, you are His intimate disciples. He wants you to know He loves you. You are special to Him. Let the truth be known: To experience intimacy with Jesus, we must obey His words. There are no other options or short cuts. In my flesh, I wish there were some other way. But there isn’t. Jesus wants our heart-felt obedience above anything else (1 Sam 15:22). Jesus is saying His words are the foundation of our lives and they are to be obeyed. This means whatever we hear, read, and study, we immediately apply to our lives. Application is essential!

¹² Bruner writes, “It is worth noting that Jesus compliments and encourages those who hear and act on His words.” Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Christbook: Matthew 1–12* (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 289.

¹³ Historically, water is the most destructive force of nature. It is not wind, earthquakes, tornados, hurricane, or volcanoes. Interestingly, in Luke’s account, the focus is on the powerful eroding work of water.

¹⁴ This phrase is similar to the parable of the sower in which the seed sown on rocky ground lasts only a short time, until “affliction or persecution arises because of the word” (Matt 13:21).

¹⁵ The language of Matt 7:25 is identical with the language of 7:27. A life of persecution is a real possibility for Christians (cf. John 15:20; 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom 8:17; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim 3:12; 1 Pet 2:21; 4:12–16).

¹⁶ Revised from Robinson, *What Jesus Said About Successful Living*, 290–91.

¹⁷ See 1 Pet 2:6–7.

¹⁸ Bruner, *The Christbook*, 290.

¹⁹ Robinson, *What Jesus Said About Successful Living*, 290.

²⁰ Bruner suggests that the only finally great thing about greatness-seeking Christians is the greatness of their fall. Bruner, *The Christbook*, 290.

²¹ France writes, “To derive a purely eschatological reference from ‘will be like’ in vv. 24 and 26 (so Schweitzer, 190–91) loads too much onto the natural use of the future tense to describe the future response of someone currently hearing Jesus’ words.” R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*. New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 297.

²² Tony Evans, *What Matters Most* (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 267.

²³ Matthew uses the phrase “finished these words” to close several of the major sections in his gospel (cf. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). They form one possible outline of the book.

²⁴ Wilkins writes, “Amazement at Jesus’ teachings does not indicate acceptance. The term ‘amazed’ is the passive form of *ekplesso*, which in Matthew is not a description of faith. It indicates a variety of emotional responses but not a commitment to Jesus’ messianic ministry. The word is used to describe Jesus’ hometown’s unbelieving reaction to his ministry (13:58), his own disciples’ astonished response at the difficulty of a rich man being saved (19:25), and the crowds’ astonishment at Jesus’ teaching on marriage at the resurrection (22:33). Amazement is not the same as a commitment of faith. Only when a person accepts Jesus’ invitation and enters the kingdom of heaven does he or she become a disciple.” Wilkins, *Matthew*, 328.

²⁵ The Latin root of “authority” means “that which allows growth and life.” Our resentment of the authority of God in Christ is, therefore, foolish. Preaching Today citation: Diogenes Allen in *Quest: The Search for Meaning through Christ*. Christianity Today, Vol. 40, no. 7.

²⁶ Jesus considers Himself the agent (7:21–23) and His words the standard of judgment (7:24–27). David L. Turner, *Matthew*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 224.

²⁷ The term “crowd” (*ochlos*) in Matthew refers to those who have an interest in Jesus but who don’t believe in Him as Savior.

²⁸ Matthew repeats the idea of amazement at Jesus’ teaching in Matt 7:28–29 in 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; and 26:1.

²⁹ This aspect of Jesus’ authority is a characteristic of Matthew (cf. 8:9; 9:6, 8; 10:1; 21:23–24, 27; 28:18).

³⁰ Robinson, *What Jesus Said About Successful Living*, 293–94.

³¹ Revised from Ramesh Richard, *Soul Passion: Embracing Your Life’s Ultimate Purpose* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 126.