

“Rock Solid” (Matthew 7:21–29) (11.8.20)

Matthew 7:21–29 (NIV84)

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

The word of God for the people of God.

Title: **“Rock Solid”**

LET US PRAY.

INTRODUCTION:

We often think of the mid-1900s as the heyday of the Church but Arthur W. Pink declared, “Never were there so many millions of nominal Christians on earth as there are today, and never was there such a small percentage of real ones.... We seriously doubt whether there has ever been a time in the history of this Christian era when there were such multitudes of deceived souls within the churches, who verily believe that all is well with their souls when in fact the wrath of God abideth on them.” And then he added, **“And we know of no single thing better calculated to undeceive them than a full and faithful exposition of these closing verses of our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount.”**

J. Warner Wallace agrees with A.W. Pink and calls this portion of scripture a great closing argument. After giving the most frequently quoted and most studied sermon in history, Jesus lays it on the line. Your security in eternity is **not** simply professing faith. Your security in eternity is **not** based on works, even great works. Your security in eternity **is** based on living the way I just taught you. Your security in eternity **is** based on doing the will of our Father who is in heaven.

BODY:

It is not a stretch of logic to say that obeying Jesus’ laws for life is living in the Father’s will. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus takes obedience to a new level. Keeping the Ten Commandments is not enough. Your heart, your motivations must also be pure. Blessed are those that mourn over sin; that are meek; that hunger and thirst after righteousness; that are merciful; that have pure hearts; that are peacemakers; that are willing to be persecuted for righteousness’ sake.

Let us take a self-quiz and you can correct your own paper. Be brutally honest with yourself. None of us want to hear our Savior say, “Depart from me you evildoers. I never knew you.” None of us want to discover our house is built on shifting sand **when it is too late to renovate**.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad because of your reservation in heaven.

Be salt. Let your light shine.

Make reconciliation a priority.

Remove anything from your life that causes you to sin; including something as precious as your eye or your hand.

Your word should be trustworthy. Let your yes be yes and your no be no.

You really are supposed to turn the other cheek; if he takes your tunic, give your cloak; go the extra mile; and give to anyone who asks.

Love your enemies. I repeat this because you have heard it so many times you may not really hear it.
Love your enemies.

Do good for others in secret because it is the way of kingdom living.

Pray not for others to see you praying but for the privilege of communing with your Father. In a like manner, do not parade your discomfort when you sacrifice or fast.

Your priority should be heavenly treasure; not earthly treasure.

Do not worry. Trust that your heavenly Father knows what you need and is able to provide those things: food, clothing, shelter, even your life.

Seek FIRST the Kingdom of God.

Do not condemn others.

Forgive and you will be forgiven.

Ask, seek, and knock until God responds.

Bypass the broad way by entering the Narrow Gate.

Equip yourselves and be discerning to discover false prophets.

Know that evildoers cannot have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

How did you do on your self-quiz?

Hear John Wesley's strong closing argument in his sermon on this scripture: "In a word: Let your religion be the religion of the heart. Let it lie deep in your inmost soul. Be little, and base, and mean, and vile (beyond what words can express) in your own eyes; amazed and humbled to the dust by the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Be serious. Let the whole stream of your thoughts, words, and actions flow from the deepest conviction that you stand on the edge of the great gulf, you and all the children of men, just ready to drop in, either into everlasting glory or everlasting burnings!

Let your soul be filled with mildness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering towards all men;—at the same time that all which is in you is athirst for God, the living God; longing to awake up after his likeness, and to be satisfied with it! Be a lover of God and of all mankind! In this spirit do and suffer all things! Thus show your faith by your works; thus "do the will of thy Father which is in heaven!" And, as sure as you now walk with God on earth, you shall also reign with him in glory!"

Yes, we are called to openly and publicly declare our faith, but not only that. Yes, we are called to exercise our spiritual gifts to bring glory to our Lord, but not only that. Jesus is crucially concerned about the conduct of our faith. That conduct is what we are talking about in our mission statement when we say model a life-giving gospel. J. Warner Wallace says in *Forensic Faith*, "Start living in a way that provokes people to ask about the Christian worldview."

Jesus is being consistent in these closing verses of chapter 7 with the whole Sermon on the Mount. The bar has been raised to such a level that throughout Church history, many have tried to spiritualize it. They argue, it is a standard that none of us can attain, so it acts as the law of Moses, as a mirror, to show our sinfulness and need of The Savior. This seems like quite a stretch considering its comprehensive nature with very specific illustrations. That argument sounds like someone looking for a loophole. The 10 Commandments are sufficient to act as a mirror. The Garden of Eden's one Edict was sufficient to act as a mirror for the whole human race.

This week, I watched a documentary on the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He wrestled with this great discourse of Jesus and concluded, "Surely, we are meant to live in this manner." Think about living in Nazi Germany and trying to live a truly Christian life. The state of the Evangelical Church in Germany had become a lifeless shell that had no zeal for evangelism; and, no power to turn the tide of the culture. [pause]

Can any of us do the miracles of Jesus or the Apostles? Can any of us speak with their authority?

Therefore, for us to be proper witnesses for the kingdom of God, our faith must be reflected in our life

walk. We must know what Jesus and the New Testament writers teach about Jesus and the kingdom of God.

Jesus tells us in today's scripture that the wise man builds on the Rock. The documentary on the life of Martin Lloyd Jones is called "Logic on Fire." He had completed his training to become a medical doctor, but God called him to ministry. Reverend Jones used the exacting examination techniques he learned as a doctor and applied them to his faith.

He was a renowned preacher who drew large crowds. Reverend Jones believed whole heartedly that the Bible was the word of God; that the Bible was transformative; that Christianity was reasonable and true. He preached it with passion.

In 2007, when I first started preaching, on Saturday nights at 10 PM, I would watch old Billy Graham Crusades. Now, I have to watch them on Youtube.com. I prefer the older Crusades when Reverend Graham was younger and more vigorous in his delivery. He always quoted a lot of scripture. Over and over again, Billy would say, "The Bible says." Frequently, he would adamantly proclaim the Bible IS the word of God.

Ephesians 4:1–2 (NIV84) *With Paul*, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Every one of us is on a journey; but, we are called to share our faith while on the journey. It is part of the journey. In the sharing of your faith, you will grow into your faith. No one goes into the gym and picks up three hundred pounds on the first day. In your training, you are being raised up as you raise up others.

Romans 12:1–2 (NIV84) *With Paul*, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Part of our journey is learning our Bibles. You do not need a theology degree, but you do need a basic level of knowledge on which to build. I always learn the most when I have to teach someone else. And my friends, God the Holy Spirit will work in you and through you as you prepare to present the truth of The Truth.

This past Thursday evening, we had our annual Charge Conference with the District Superintendent. He shared about the transformational power of devotional time. He gave us Psalm 55:16-17, But I call to God, and the LORD saves me. Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice. He recommended neuroscientist, Dr. Andrew Newberg's book, "How God Changes Your Brain." Here are a couple brief excerpts:

* The more you focus on something - whether that's math or auto racing or football or God - the more that becomes your reality, the more it becomes written into the neural connections of your brain."

* Contemplating a loving God rather than a punitive God reduces anxiety and depression and increases feelings of security, compassion, and love.

* Intense regular prayer and meditation permanently change numerous structures and functions in the brain, altering your values and the way you perceive reality.

So, you are now progressing on your journey; growing in your relationship with Jesus, and learning what he taught. People in whom God is working will see something in you that resonates with them. You should pray that the Holy Spirit connects you with those people. Be someone that encourages questions. Be humble, kind, and approachable.

J. Warner Wallace warns in *Forensic Faith* that people are observing and evaluating you long before you are aware of it. He uses a courtroom example. People are watching the lawyers before they ever address the jury. They may see the lawyer in the hallway or waiting for the elevator. They see their human interactions during preparation.

Wallace specifies that arrogance is especially harmful. If the jury doesn't like the prosecutor, it is that much harder to convince them of the truth. When expert witnesses are called to the stand, they too

must not exhibit arrogance. If the expert is aloof towards the jury, they lose credibility. We must make sure to **choose words that communicate not alienate**. Wallace cautions against using terms that only Christians understand when we are trying to make a case for Jesus.

Wallace encourages us to ask people questions. That demonstrates our interest in them. It builds a relationship. The more we find out about a person, the better able we are to connect with them. We may see how God is moving in their lives or maybe why they have objections to the things of God.

Another important issue is our motivation. This is not about putting another notch on our pistols. This is not about racking up God points. Our motivation should be the Great Commandment: our total commitment to God and our love of neighbor. **If even a sniff of self-centeredness is on our breath,** people will turn away and not hear our words.

One of my all-time favorite questioners is the fictional detective, Columbo. Wallace mentions him in *Forensic Faith*. Columbo is a humble and unassuming, somewhat disheveled guy. He is always asking just one more question. He builds a relationship with people and he learns about them. Even hard questions are delivered with tact. Often, a suspect may have special skills or knowledge used in the execution of the crime. Columbo does research and asks them more questions until they reveal the critical piece of evidence. Then Columbo is able to prove his case and make the arrest.

Wallace has a friend named James who has an approach to engaging people with which he has become comfortable. "James almost always started his conversations by finding a way to ask a version of the following question: "So, what do you think happens to you when you die?" That simple, brief question would typically start much longer conversations about the nature of life, afterlife, and the existence of God."

Another friend named Grover, "usually approaches people and points out something in their immediate environment that's clearly designed (like a watch or ball-point pen). He then starts by saying, "Everything in life has a design, function, and purpose. What is *yours*?" This simple, engaging, inoffensive opening has given Grover an opportunity to start a number of spiritual conversations."

You don't have to have all the answers. Be honest: "I am not sure. I don't know. But, I will look into that and get back with you. I know someone who knows the answer. Give me a couple of days to find out."

You may get involved with someone who is disingenuous. They might not really want to know God or they just want to argue. Still, you should be gracious. You may be able to overcome their attitude. Ask them "(1) What do you mean by that? and (2) Why do you think that's true? These two simple questions will help you clarify what people believe and why they believe it."

Make sure you are playing on a level playing field. Whatever standards of proof they require of your faith statements should be applied to their presuppositions and worldview. A simple example is the question, "Well, where did God come from?" The same question can be asked of those that think "matter" has always existed. Remember that your goal is not to win a debate, but to win someone for Jesus.

CONCLUSION:

When we are faithfully sharing our faith, we are not alone. God is already at work and the seed of prevenient grace has already been planted. J. Warner Wallace says, "Every story of conversion typically involves *incremental* decision making." Others came before us and others may come after us.

Wallace remarks, "Too often, we look at the situation as a tennis match. We are on one side of the net and the person we are trying to reach for Jesus is on the other side of the net. The ball volleying back and forth simulates the questions and answers. But in reality, it is more like a baseball game. There are a bunch of teammates on whom we depend. And, we don't have to hit a homerun, but just a single. Someone else will have the opportunity to bring the baserunner home."

The Wesleyan Bible Commentary says, "Not **profession** but **possession** is what makes one a true disciple of Christ. It is not calling Him **Lord**, but doing the **will** of the Father. That is the one requirement for membership in the **kingdom of heaven**. For the Kingdom is the reign or rule of God. It is not an outward

organization but a living organism. It is composed of those who have submitted their hearts to the will of God and who seek to work out the divine will in their daily lives.”

In the Gospel of Luke, there is an additional piece of information given on the man who built his house, who built his life, on the rock. Luke says, this man **dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock**. That is the person Jesus calls us to be, the one willing to work and establish our lives on Him.

*On Christ the solid rock I stand,
all other ground is sinking sand.*

Jesus’ departing command was to go and make disciples of all peoples. Immediately followed by, “And surely I am with always, to the very end of the age.” That promise is Rock solid. Build your house on Him and you will be in the Father’s will.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.