

The Solid Rock

11/26/2014

Good morning! Last week we began a new series entitled “Hymns”. If you were here with us last week then you will know that the message was inspired by the song, “How Great Thou Art”. We looked at God’s greatness in three areas. We looked at his greatness in creation, greatness in his knowledge, and greatness in his grace and love. Today we will continue this series.

Have you ever been to the beach and built a sand castle? Every year in VA beach, VA there is a festival called the Neptune Festival. This year was their 41st annual event. At this event, there is a sand building contest. I have some pictures (**insert 2 pictures to powerpoint**) for you to look at of the castles that these people build. But when I got to the beach I build a sand castle and it looks more like this. (**Picture for powerpoint**) When you build a sand castle on the beach, eventually the tide starts to come in. What happens when that tide come in? The first thing most people do is they build a moat around their castle. Then they start making the moat bigger and bigger. They are trying to prevent the waves from coming in and crashing in to their castle. But no matter how hard you try, eventually the waves will come in and will wash your castle away unless you have built your castle far enough away from the shoreline or built it on a rock. Eventually the ocean will win.

Edward Mote was born in England to parents who owned and operated a pub. He was not raised in a Christian environment, but nevertheless God revealed himself to Edward and at the age of he became a Christian. In 1834, Edward Mote was working as a cabinet maker. One day as he was walking to work, he felt inspired to start writing a hymn. By the time he got to work he had already written down the chorus and by the end of the work day he had written 4 verses. The name of that hymn is “The Solid Rock” or as it is sometimes called, “My Hope is Built on Nothing Else”. Later in life he became a pastor and it is said that during his time as a pastor that his song was published. He was visiting a friend’s sick wife. She had wanted to hear a song the day he had visited and not having a hymn book with him, he decided to sing the song he had written. The woman enjoyed the song so much that she asked for her own personal copy. In seeing how moved this woman was by the song, he decided to publish his song.

Today I want to talk to you about building a life on the solid rock. Who is the solid rock that we are to build on? In the Old Testament we read these verses, Deuteronomy 32:4 says, “The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without inequity, just and upright is He.” Psalm 18:2, “The Lord is my Rock and my Fortress and my Deliverer. My God, My Rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” And Psalm 19:14, “Let the words in my mouth and the meditation in my heart be acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.” All of these verses are talking about God and how he is the Rock of Israel. He is David’s personal rock and he wants us to build our life on him.

Jesus told a parable that illustrates the idea of building on a solid rock. The parable is found in Matthew 7:24-27, “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the Rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

The words Jesus just spoke came at the end of Jesus' most famous sermon called "The Sermon on the Mount". He had just gotten done teaching the people how to live properly. Jesus finishes by telling the crowd this story. He tells the crowd that everyone who hears his words and does them is a wise man. When we do the words that Jesus says we are building a deep foundation on the Rock. You see Christianity is not just about hearing the words of Jesus and believing them. Jesus tells us that we are to hear the words but we are also supposed to do the words. We are not called to just hear Jesus and believe Him but we are to follow Him with our whole life. So as Christians, as people who say they believe in Jesus, we have to obey everything that He said. We don't get to pick and choose the things that we want to obey. We have to put into practice what Jesus taught. Matthew 28:19-20, this passage is commonly called the Great Commission. "Go therefore and make Disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." These are the last words that Jesus spoke before leaving earth. In his last words he commands us to make disciples. Part of making disciples is teaching people what Jesus himself taught. You see making disciples is not a onetime event. It is more than getting someone to profess Jesus as their Savior. You can't teach someone everything that Jesus taught in one sitting. Making disciples is a lifelong process. And one of the ways that we can make disciples is by teaching people to build their faith on the Rock. That way when times of doubt and times of trouble come their faith will remain strong and their house of faith will not fall.

Maybe you are sitting there today wondering, how do we build on the rock of Jesus? Why is it important to build on this Rock? If you know me at all you know that building things is not one of my skills. Even the simple bookshelves from IKEA I struggle to make those. I leave that to the expert builder in our house. They even give you simple diagrams and pictures for instructions but for some reason I just don't get it. Jesus, himself, gives us a blue print or instructions if you will in this passage for building on the Rock. It is really a simple process. There are only 2 steps that we need to know. The first step is getting the Words of Jesus into your life. Verse 24 Jesus said, "He who hears my words."

The second step is using the Words of Jesus in your life. Verse 24 also says, "And does them." So they put the words of Jesus into practice. Let's take a closer look of getting the words of Jesus into our life. The simple way to remember this is by "Jesus In". I can't say it simpler than this, in order to get the words of Jesus into our life we have to hear the words of Jesus. You see if you aren't getting the Word of Jesus into your life then you cannot begin to build your faith on that Rock solid foundation. Hearing the words of Jesus is not a passive process. It is an active process. Hearing the words of Jesus is an active act on our part. We have to be intentional about finding ways to get Jesus words into our life. Like anything good in life it doesn't happen without some effort on our part.

Let me give you a few examples of how we can actively get the words of Jesus into our life. The most basic way is by reading the Word of God. If you really want to know what Jesus had to say open up the Bible and begin to read it. It is there that you will find the truths that you need to be putting into your life. I will be talking more about Bible reading later in the message. Another thing we can do is you can go to church. When you go to church you will hear the word of God being taught. You can take notes on what you hear. You can allow the words of God to be spoken to you through the words of the speaker. Don't just be someone who sits in church but be an active listener to the message. Another way that you can be active is by joining a small group. When you join the small group don't just attend but come with a desire to learn about God and learn about Jesus. Offer your thoughts and opinions on the passage that you are studying. Another way that you can be active is fellowshiping with other believers. The early church they gathered in homes to share a meal and to talk about Jesus. To talk about the things He had told them. I encourage you to do that in your life. All of these things are going to take an effort on your part. But it is an effort that is well

worth it. It is vital that we get the Word of God and the Word of Jesus into our life. They are the foundation that step #2 is built on. When you build a house you make the foundation first. You can't put the walls and roof on first and then expect to build the foundation because everything would just fall in on its' self. Before we can move on to step #2 of discipleship we need to make sure we have a firm foundation.

Step #2 is using the words of Jesus in our life or "Jesus Out". Let me ask you a question. What is the purpose of the Bible? Is the purpose of the Bible to inform us of all the interesting things that God did in the Old Testament? Is it to inform us of how the early church operated? Is it to inform us of what the future will look like? While all of those things are important and we need to know those things, that is not the purpose of the Bible. The purpose of the Bible is not to inform but to transform.

Transformation takes place when we begin to put into practice the things that we have read in the Bible. It begins to take place when we begin to put into practice the things that we have been taught at church. In the Bible we read that we are to love our neighbor. That is good information but loving our neighbor only begins to happen when we actually begin to love our neighbor. We read in the bible that husbands are to love their wives like Christ loved the church. Again that is good information and it will make for a happy marriage but again it will only happen when husbands begin to love their wives like Christ loved the church. The Bible also tells us not to worry and to trust in Jesus. Once again that is good information. That is good to know but again it will not happen until you stop worrying and you put your confidence in Jesus and trust that he is able to handle the situation. You see that it is not enough to know the Scriptures.

Many people know what the Bible says. They can tell you a lot about what the Bible has to say. They have memorized large amounts of the Bible. They have lots and lots of knowledge about the Bible but they are not doing what it says. They are not putting in to practice all of the knowledge that they have gained. When I was in university professors warned us about this trap. We were studying the Bible every day in class and they warned us that it would be real easy to become that person who knows the Bible but doesn't practice it. I know there are times in my life where I have fallen in to that trap. The longer you stay in that trap the harder it is to get out. We need to practice what we hear and what we learn. We don't do ourselves any favor by hearing the word of God and not doing it.

James 1:22-25 says, "But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. If anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing".

James gives us a warning not to deceive ourselves by being hearers only. He says that if you are like that then you are like a person who looks in a mirror and forgets what they look like as soon as they turn around. James tells us that we need to be doing the words that we hear. Now some of you know that I coach a basketball team and when we are at practice I will tell them how to do things or improve their play. I try to teach them on how they can improve their ability on the basketball court. But if they don't practice what I teach them then their ability will not improve. The same goes for us. If we don't practice what Jesus tells us then we will not be able to become full disciples of Jesus. We will never reach our full potential for Jesus.

I have been saying that we need to get the Word of God into our life. One of the ways to do that is reading the Bible. I believe with all of my heart that as Christians we need to be reading and studying God's word. At the same time though I believe with all of my heart that we need to read the Word properly. We have to be careful that we read the Bible in a way that we make it say what we want it to say. 2 Timothy 2:15 tells us that we are to be believers who handle the word of God correctly. I want us to be people who

correctly handle the word of God. Let me give you 4 basic questions to ask yourself when you are reading the Bible.

1. Step 1. What did the text mean to the Biblical audience? Remember, the Bible was not written to us in the year 2014. It was written many years ago to people who lived in a different world than we live in now. When you read a passage look at the historical context of what is being said. Look at who is being spoken to and ask yourself, "What did this mean to them at that time?" When you read the Bible look carefully at everything that is being said. Look at it in its historical context. Don't read it with 21st century eyes, read it with the eyes of the person who first read the passage. I would encourage you to write out what the passage meant to the biblical audience. Use past tense phrases such as, "God commanded the Israelites.., Jesus told the disciples...., Paul encouraged the church.... "Be as specific as possible when you write out what the passage meant to the biblical audience.
2. Step 2. What are the differences between the biblical audience and us? In this step we look for significant differences between our situation and the situation of the biblical audience. Keep in mind that we are separated from the biblical audience by time, language, and culture. These differences create a gap that prevents us from moving straight from meaning in their context to meaning in ours. The size of the gap depends on the passage we are reading, but be aware that there will always be a gap. In this step also look for unique aspects of the situation of the passage you are reading. Unique situations such as Moses leading the people of Israel out of Egypt, or David killing the giant Goliath.
3. Step 3. What is the theological principle in this text? This can be challenging, but it is very rewarding when we discover what it is that God is trying to teach us. In this step we are looking for the theological principle in the meaning we discovered in step 1. Do not try to create a theological principle, look for the one that is already there. Try to determine if there are any similarities between the biblical audience's situation and ours. While we may not be leading a nation out of slavery like Moses, we may be leading a group of people in the church or at work. Moses was seeking to do God's will while he led the people and so are we when we lead people. When determining the theological principle, remember that it must line up with the rest of scripture. If you think you see a principle in the passage but it violates another passage of scripture then you reassess the principle you think you have discovered. Again I encourage you to write out the principle you have discovered, but this time use present tense verbs.
4. Step 4. How should individual Christians today apply the theological principle in their lives?" This is the most important step for us to grasp. This is where we take what the Bible is saying and apply it to our life today. We cannot just leave the Bible as a bunch of theological principles. We have to wrestle with the question of how the passage applies to real life situations today. Even though there is usually only one theological principle in a passage there will be many possibilities for application. A passage may have a special meaning for you here in Japan, but it will have a different meaning for a Christian in Mexico. Each person here today is in a unique place in life and when you read a passage it can be applied to your life. When I read the same passage it can be applied to my life, even though our lives and situations are different. ⁱ

Now that we have seen how we can properly hear the word of God, we need to make a plan for how we can be a doer of the word. When I was in college my professor said this, "If we want to see results when we make plans then the plan needs to be attainable and measurable."

The first thing is, is it attainable? Is it real? Is it solid? In other words is it something that you can actually do? Let's say this next year you want to get to know God better. How are you going to do that? How

are you going to see that happening? You can't just say that you want to know God better; you have to actually do something to get to know him better. One way to do that is by reading the Bible. Be careful though that you set a goal that is doable. Don't tell yourself that you will read the whole Bible in a month. Instead set a goal of reading a one of the Gospels each month. So the first month you read Matthew, the next Mark, then Luke and finally John. You see reading a gospel a month is very doable and a great way to get to know God better.

Secondly, is it measureable? In other words can you see yourself making progress in that area? If your goal is to read a Gospel a month, you have something that is measurable. You can check your progress as you read through the books. You can see if you are meeting the goal of reading a Gospel a month. If you are struggling to meet the goal then adjust the goal so that you do not become discouraged, but keep striving to reach the goal.

As important as it is to have goals, it is far more important to do it. Good intentions are not enough. We have to put actions to those intentions. If I intend to read my Bible and learn about God then I have to start by opening the Bible and reading.

Do you want to be known as a disciple of Jesus? Do you want people to be able to look at your life and say, "Hey there goes a follower of Jesus and I want what they have." If you do then you need to get the Words of Jesus into your life and you need to put those Words into action.

ⁱ Journey into God's Word. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays