

constitute the distinguishing difference between wisdom and foolishness.

Now observe:—

1st. The Lord says nothing, at least, expressly, of those who have no concern about this matter; who are utterly regardless how they build, who, in fact, do not build at all. Their fate is left to be inferred. And the unmistakable inference is, that it is the fate of all who remain in the broad and open way which leads to eternal destruction.

2nd. The end of those who may be said to begin the work of building on the good foundation, but do not proceed with the superstructure, is not directly declared. This too, is left to be inferred. The extreme folly of imagining, that hearing without doing is a sufficient building, amply justifies the condemnation of such as begin well, but, through lack of faithfulness and perseverance, leave the work undone. They enter the narrow way, but diverge into the broad path before the straight gate is reached. They may have got the length of asking, of seeking even; but the door remains closed to them, because they do not knock.

3rd. The foolishness of the foolish builder consists in hearing and not doing the sayings of Christ. He has the privilege of hearing, and he makes a profession of doing; but in the Lord's estimation, his religion amounts to nothing but supreme foolishness. He shows the appearance of obedience. He raises a superstructure of formal observances and outward proprieties. He enters it with pride, and looks out from its window with cheerful satisfaction. He gives proof of design, talent, zeal, and persistency. He says, Lord, Lord! In the name of Jesus he speaks good words, and in the name of Jesus does many wonderful works. He adheres to a creed which is orthodox; he belongs to a Church which is evangelical; he makes munificent donations to support the ordinances of religion, and to feed and clothe the poor. To the eye of his fellowmen, his house is as finely proportioned, as securely built, as handsomely furnished, as beautifully situated, as that of any christian. He is a most foolish man nevertheless. His house is built on the sand, and must finally fall. In his heart and practice hearing and doing are disjointed. What he receives by the ear may produce some measure of both faith and feeling; but there is notwithstanding, somewhere, a fatal defectiveness in the keeping of the requirements.

4th. The distinguishing characteristic of the wise builder lies in this, that he hears and does the word of Christ. He begins at the beginning of true religion, and he perseveres in it to the end. He lays or finds the right foundation, and erects thereon a structure which is firm and fast. The connection between hearing and doing is all-important. It is that of the germinating seed with the green fresh stalk shooting vigorously up towards maturity; that of the sound tree with the

good fruit which it yields; that of the inward with the outer life, when the latter is the holy and truthful exponent of a sanctified man. Both have respect to the word of Christ, and through that word, to Christ himself. The wise builder's experience is that of unfeigned love and trust towards his blessed Redeemer. His character is carefully modelled after that of his gracious Master. His conduct is a cheerful and ready obedience to the will of his Father in heaven. The word of Christ is addressed to his faith. That great spiritual principle first brings him into alliance with the Saviour, and then produces in him the lineaments of likeness to the Saviour. Faith is the essential link of connection between hearing and doing; the effect of the first, and the cause of the second. The ear is the avenue to the heart with which the true Christian believes unto righteousness; and the actions of the life are the out-comings of the heart, which testify that he is righteous. Not the word of Christ by itself; not the hearing or doing of the word of Christ by itself; but the word of Christ heard, believed, and obeyed—this threefold cord binding the disciple to his Master—this is true religion, spiritual edification, the building of an indestructible house upon the right foundation. To hear Christ's word and do it is to make the believing of his word the active principle of the new life of holiness; it is to form a real and fruitful union with Christ; it is to grow up in him to the measure of the stature of a perfect man. It is to receive edification from him; on him, to rest our peace and stay our hopes. And Christ, the living impersonation of his own word which gives spirit and life to his people, is the Rock of Salvation, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. Religion separated from the word of Christ will come to naught. The word of Christ apart from Christ himself cannot be truly believed and kept.

It only remains now to notice, that the two builders having finished their undertakings, in circumstances both present and prospective, which were the same inasmuch as they were external to themselves—the local surroundings of the district in which they built, and the commotions of nature to which they were exposed—but, having at the outset taken very different precautions in regard to the foundation, came together with their work to a very different end. When the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon the wise man's house, it fell not; because it was founded upon a rock; when the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon the foolish man's house, it fell; because it was built upon the sand. The same dispensations, death and judgment, overtake the wise disciple and the foolish professor. The one remains secure through the trying ordeal; the other is overwhelmed in the ruins of his own building. The one reaches the consummation and crown