

A HOUSE BUILT ON SAND

SOME MILES below Mount Morgan, Queensland a farm-house was built in a bend of the River Dee. It stood on a "rise", which was really a big mound of sand covered with a thin layer of soil. Behind it was a shallow depression, which once had been a watercourse. It was an attractive spot, and the owner of the house was satisfied as to the suitability and safety of the site.

"Doesn't the water ever come across here?" asked a neighbour one day. "No, not in my time."

"You'll be washed out of here some day," warned the neighbour, who, incidentally, has contributed this story. The other man, whose name was Mul-doon, laughed.

"Not on your life!" he replied with complete assurance. He was a pleasant and generous man and well liked in the district. In the Easter of 1928 a married couple were staying with him and they had three lovely little children. In that Easter time the coastal districts of Queensland and New South Wales were lashed with tremendous storms and many devastating floods resulted.

It Was Built On Sand!

At Mount Morgan, a cloud-burst sent a roaring torrent over the dam on the River Dee and broke away some of the top of the concrete wall. The water went down the river, rushing at a pace that took everybody by surprise. The telephones were silent, for it was night, and no warnings preceded the racing flood. What ordinarily would have taken days and allowed time for flood warnings, happened in a single night. Farm-houses, towns, and townships were caught completely by surprise. Cattle perished in hundreds, cotton crops were destroyed, and altogether tremendous damage was done.

And what of the farmer who had built his house on the sand in that bend of the river? Early on the following morning some neighbours on a hill nearby endeavoured to discover how things were on that property. One climbed a tree for a better view, and then sat down speechless with horror. Another did the same and with a similar result. What had happened ?

The flood waters had swept the area clean! The barn and the house had vanished. Even the heavy blocks which served for a foundation had been washed out of the ground!

And where were the family and the older man ? They, too, had gone for ever from that farm. One by one the bodies were found; two of the little children had their shoes on and had been at least partly dressed as in preparation for flight. But it was too late.

The warning had been lightly disregarded. The farmer had lived safely for years in that spot. No flood had ever threatened his home. Why worry about such possibilities? On the actual piece of ground where the house had been built the roaring waters could not have been more than four or five feet deep. Why, then, was the house swept away?

Because it was built on sand!

On To Better Ground

You and I are the builders, and the houses we are building are our characters, with all the furniture of our hopes and wishes and thoughts and actions. We are “building for eternity”.

In the days when life goes smoothly there seems no need to bother about the foundations. “Do the best you can. “Don’t do any violent harm and all will be well in the end.”

But the first requirement in building a house is a suitable site with a good foundation. Even a palace is of no use if its foundations can be swept away by a swollen stream.

No architect or builder worth the name would be so foolish as to build in a river-bed! Yet people are building the house of life without thinking about the things that matter most of all. They are “broadminded” enough to think that almost anything will do.

An architect who is so broadminded as to sanction the erection of buildings anywhere at all would soon lose his reputation. The best that we can do, apart from God, is a pitiful mixture of good intentions and failures, virtues and sins. It is a foundation of sand which may seem right enough in fair weather, but can never stand a real test.

In fact, it has been condemned over and over again. “Not by works of righteousness (goodness), which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.” The question is, do we rest our hopes for the future on God’s mercy or our own merits? No matter how hard we try to build, if we are building on forbidden ground it will be all in vain in the end. All human life has been spoiled by sin. “There is none righteous, no, not one.”

We must shift on to better ground. We must trust for our pardon to what Christ has done for us. We must get the great question settled before we go any further with the building of life. What are our hopes of acceptance with God?

One man says, “I pay all my bills, I do good turns,” etc., and hopes that this foundation will pass the great Architect. Another says, “I cannot stand on my merits. I have failed in a thousand ways and I can never earn a place in the Kingdom of God. But I know that He is full of mercy to those who repent and turn to Him. I am trusting alone in that mercy. Christ died for sinners and I am one of them. He died for me. On the pardon that He has bought with His life-blood, I stake all my hopes for eternity.

This is the foundation on which my house is built, the ground on which I am resting, and on which I mean to rest in life or death and in the day of Judgment.”

So he sings, in the words of the old Scottish hymn:

“I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e’en where glory dwelleth In Immanuel’s land.”

Or again as another wrote:

“On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”

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