

FATUOUS OR FIRM FOUNDATIONS?

Proverbs 10:23-30

(NASB) "Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool, and *so is* wisdom to a man of understanding.²⁴ What the wicked fears will come upon him, but the desire of the righteous will be granted.²⁵ When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous *has* an everlasting foundation.²⁶ Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the lazy one to those who send him.²⁷ The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be shortened.²⁸ The hope of the righteous is gladness, but the expectation of the wicked perishes.²⁹ The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the upright, but ruin to the workers of iniquity.³⁰ The righteous will never be shaken, but the wicked will not dwell in the land."

INTRODUCTION

At age 34, Nasir Siddiki, a Muslim raised in London, England, seemed to have it all. After moving to Toronto, Canada, he achieved such business success he soon made his first million dollars. He had youth, good looks, & wealth. He could go nearly anywhere, enjoy nearly anything, and his religious beliefs made him feel secure for this life and the next. But Nasir's entire world suddenly crashed around him! He then came to realize how fatuous—how foolish and illusionary—his life's foundations truly were. As **Proverbs 10: 25 & 27** declare: "When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous has an everlasting foundation.²⁷ The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be shortened."

Shingles is a painful, often blistering rash caused by the chickenpox virus that sleeps in nerve roots of anyone ever having chickenpox and may be awakened at any time by known or unknown causes. Shingles suddenly erupted all over Nasir's body. [Photo-1] His skin burned as though doused with flaming gasoline, large blisters multiplied so fast you could watch them grow, and fever tormented him. Most infectious agents require a body temperature near normal to thrive, so God designed our bodies to raise our temperature above 98.6° to fight infections. But sustained fevers above 104° often prove fatal from damage done to enzymes necessary for biochemical reactions (like oxygen transfer during respiration). Nassir Sadiki's temperature soared to 107.6! His immune system shut down more completely than if he had AIDS. Drs. told him he'd probably be dead in a few hours. If he somehow survived, he'd be blind, deaf, paralyzed on his right side, and possibly brain damaged. Nasir knew Allah gave him no hope of healing. Mohammed, Islam's founder, declared, "For every misfortune, illness, anxiety, grief, or hurt that afflicts a Muslim—even the hurt caused by the pricking of a thorn—Allah removes some of his sins." Muslims therefore believe the more they suffer in this life, the less sins they'll answer for in Allah's fearsome presence when they die. Islam, from an Arabic word for submission, thus teaches acceptance of all illness as the will of Allah. **Psalms 103:2-5** (God's Word) sounds strange to a Muslim ear: "Praise the LORD, my soul, and never forget all the good he has done: He is the one who forgives all your sins, the one who heals all your diseases, the one who rescues your life from the pit, the one who crowns you with mercy and compassion, the one who fills your life with blessings so that you become young again like an eagle."

As the medical community stood by helplessly, Nasir Siddiki said he felt "like a drowning man going down for the third time." He prayerfully whispered, "God, if you're real, don't let me die." In desperation, this lifelong Muslim cried out to know if another God than Allah was the true, Supreme God. Nassir was about to experience **Jesus'** promise in **Luke 19:10** (NIV), "[T]he Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." "The lost," in Greek, is the participle form of the verb translated "perish" in **John 3:16**. Both words are from a root meaning "destroy." Thus, **Jesus** told us He came to earth to seek out those being destroyed by the spiritual, moral, and physical effects of sin; of their rebellion against the Lord. That night, Nasir awoke to see a man at the foot of his bed. Light emanated from Him, blinding Nasir from seeing His face, but he said, "I knew this wasn't Mohammed. I knew it wasn't Allah. Jesus was in my room." Strangely, Nasir felt no fear in **Jesus'** presence; only peace. He wondered why **Jesus** would come to a Muslim's bedside when everyone else had left him to die. Without speaking, **Jesus** impressed these words on his mind:

"I Am the God of the Christians. I Am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." He then vanished! **Jesus** had not spoken to Nasir about healing, but Drs. discovered in the morning his shingles had gone into remission! He remained painfully covered by blisters but was discharged the next day looking like a cross between a leper and the deformed Elephant Man featured in the movie of 1980. Nasir knew **Jesus'** presence in his hospital room had saved his life, but he wrestled with the emphatic Muslim teaching that **Jesus** was not the Son of God but merely a prophet. The next morning, he stumbled upon a TV program that examined the truth claims for the question, "Is Jesus the Son of God?" Point-by-point, two men answered all his objections. With a "body aflame with pain," he then knelt on his floor when one of the men led the TV audience in a prayer to place **Jesus** on the throne of his heart as his own Savior and Lord!

While Nasir devoured the Bible and Christian writings to help him understand his new faith, he prayed for God to restore him to his physical appearance prior to the shingles. Within a week, every blister fell off. His skin then slowly healed without leaving scars, except upon his chest. [Photo-2] Every prediction of the Drs. proved false. His eyesight, hearing, and brain returned to normal. He married Anita: a coworker, faithful friend, and a devout Christian herself. They've held evangelistic crusades in India, Asia, South America, Europe and Africa, bringing thousands to salvation in Christ. They co-host a television program on TBN, *Winning with Wisdom*, broadcast from their base in Tulsa, OK to 15,000 stations worldwide via satellite that also reach into the Muslim world. Their Web site is www.WisdomMinistries.org.

Today's message, *Fatuous or Firm Foundations*, explores Why Life Hopes Founded upon Anything but the Lord are Fatuous, and Why Life Hopes Founded upon the Lord Are Firm.

I. WHY LIFE HOPES FOUNDED UPON ANYTHING BUT THE LORD ARE FATUOUS

Could you be confronted in the future by a situation as excruciating or bleak as Nasir Siddiki faced? Yes, we all could. God's Owner's Manual, the Bible, reveals who our Manufacturer is, why He created us, and how He designed us best to function. We can be confident, for a time, of the certainty of many of our plans or ideas, even if our plans ignore God. Whether we know it or not, we place our lives on the line by our beliefs; the outcome of our earthly life and of our eternal life. Arthur Wellesley (1769-1852) is better known as the Duke of Wellington for his celebrated military victories over Napoleon. An inventor once tried to interest him in a "bulletproof waistcoat." He praised its remarkable construction and confidently announced it could save the great man's life if someone tried to assassinate him. The Iron Duke (as he was respectfully known) asked the man to put it on so he could examine it more carefully. He then sent for a rifleman to prove it could withstand the impact of a bullet. The inventor immediately bolted through the side door! Did he have life-on-the-line confidence in his "bulletproof" waistcoat? No! The point being made is that we're often unaware of how faulty our life's foundations are, or of the dangers they place us in, until disaster exposes our foolishness. **Romans 2:4-8** (NCV) explains if God postpones the doom we bring upon ourselves by denying the reality of His existence or rejecting His standards for how we should live, we are tempted to "think nothing of His kindness." We may filled with all sorts of fatuous—foolish and illusionary—ideas that we won't suffer dearly for making a god of our own selfish will and self-centered desires. God declares such foolishness seals our doom more certainly. "He has been very kind and patient, waiting for you to change, but you think nothing of His kindness. Perhaps you do not understand that God is kind to you so you will change your hearts and lives. ⁵ But you are stubborn and refuse to change, so you are making your own punishment even greater on the day He shows his anger. On that day everyone will see God's right judgments. ⁶ God will reward or punish every person for what that person has done. ⁷ Some people, by always continuing to do good, live for God's glory, for honor, and for life that has no end. God will give them life forever. ⁸ But other people are selfish. They refuse to follow truth and, instead, follow evil. God will give them His punishment and anger."

Even more tragic than the troubles we cause ourselves by basing our lives upon illusions are the blessings we miss out upon as a result. Nasir Siddiki experienced more of God's presence, power, and

peace within hours as a Christian than in a lifetime as a Muslim! **Isaiah 48:17-18** (God's Word) promises, "This is what the LORD, your Defender, the Holy One of Israel, says: I am the LORD your God. I teach you what is best for you. I lead you where you should go. If only you had listened to My commands! Your peace [well-being], would be like a river [continuously renewed]. Your righteousness [cleanness in God's eyes] would be like waves on the sea." To explain this last phrase, let me describe a fall day in 2010, our first year in our current home, when Loretta and I worked all day on outdoor projects. Due to the day's agenda, I'd not taken the usual morning shower. By late afternoon, I'd been soaked in perspiration several times, which had dried. I had bits of twigs and leaves stuck to my body and in my hair, which the insects I could feel moving in my hair were probably feeding upon. I didn't dare whiff my underarms; tingling for hours as though some foul life form had begun to breed there. After I finally showered around 5:00 P.M. and knew all foreign and foul matter had been cleansed away, how do you think I felt? It was exhilarating! God promises us that when we cooperate with Him to be rid of everything He knows is foul and foreign to how He created us and intended us to live, we will experience this same exhilaration!

The essence of what **Proverbs 10:23-30** teaches us it that we choose whether we'll find God's presence *exhilarating* or *exasperating* by whether we build our lives firmly upon the reality of God's majesty as our holy and loving Father, in this world He's made, or if we base our lives fatuously upon the illusion of other secure foundations for our happiness and well-being.

Vs. 23, "Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool, and *so is* wisdom to a man of understanding," describes people so intent upon having their own way and making their own rules to live by they actually find it amusing to attack society's foundations and gross others out by their actions. **Proverbs 15: 21** (NASB) adds, "Folly is joy to him who lacks [moral] sense, but a man of understanding [practical sense] walks straight ["aligned" with God's wise principles set down for our good and protection]." A boy named Bucky was in my sister's class in school. He found it "sport" to make homemade bombs. He ignored all who tried to warn him. He knew what he was doing. And, besides, it was just for fun. He blew up abandoned cars or sheds; but no one really got hurt. One day, a new bomb he was making blew him into eternity!

Vs. 24, "What the wicked fears will come upon him, but the desire of the righteous will be granted," declares if we pursue a selfish life bent upon getting what we want, regardless of the harm this may cause others, we'll be afflicted with gnawing terror: expectation we'll pay one day, in this life or the next, for our crimes against humanity. **Vs. 25**, "When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous *has* an everlasting foundation"—Once God's judgment falls upon us, we can expect our devastation to be sudden and complete. It could be today; it could be tomorrow. In 2009, a woman went jogging in Philadelphia's Fairmont Park. Suddenly, a branch 30' long and 50' above her snapped off a tree, fell on her, and killed her instantly! We cannot say for certain if God's judgment befell her that day, but she certainly faced God in judgment that day. The days assigned to her to build her life upon the foundation of God's loving guidance, which could save her from sin's control and its consequences, were over. Every other thought, hope, or plan she had for that day and her future proved fatuous. **Job 14:5** (NCV) reminds us, "Our time is limited. You [God] have given us only so many months to live and have set limits we cannot go beyond."

Vs. 27, "The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be shortened," tells us the more we persist in ignoring God's claims upon us and selfishly spend His blessings upon gods of our own pleasures and desires, the quicker we may hasten our doom. As **Proverbs 29:1** (The Message) explains, "For people who hate discipline and only get more stubborn, there'll come a day when life tumbles in and they break, but by then it'll be too late to help them." **Vs. 28**, "The hope of the righteous is gladness, but the expectation of the wicked perishes." "Expectation" of a better future or of dreams being realized based on plans that displease the God who made our world "perishes" the moment God dissolves the illusionary hopes upon which our plans are based. **James 4:13-15** (GNT) wisely points out, "Now listen to me, you that say, 'Today or tomorrow we will travel to a certain city, where we will stay a year and go into business

and make a lot of money.' You don't even know what your life tomorrow will be! You are like a puff of smoke, which appears for a moment and then disappears. What you should say is this: 'If the Lord is willing, we will live and do this or that.' But now you are proud, and you boast; all such boasting is wrong."

By the time we realize our plans are wrong, it may be too late to correct our mistakes. A CNN photographer was assigned one year to cover California's wildfires. He wanted pictures showing the heroic work of the firefighters battling the blazes. Once he arrived on the scene, he realized dense smoke would make it nearly impossible to get good photos at ground level, so he called his boss and received permission to charter a flight from the nearest county airport. Calling the airport, he was told a single-engine plane would be waiting for him. He rushed to the airport, spotted a small plane warming up outside the hanger, jumped in with his camera bag, and shouted, "Let's go!" The pilot seemed surprised, but dutifully taxied onto the runway and took off. Once in the air, the photographer told the pilot, "Fly over the valley and make two or three low passes so I can take pictures of the fires on the hillsides." "Why?" asked the pilot. "I thought you understood I'm a photographer for CNN and I need to take close-up shots of the fires and firefighters." The pilot grew strangely silent. Finally, he stammered, "So you're telling me you're not the flight instructor?"

Vs. 29, "The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the upright, but ruin to the workers of iniquity." Those who build their lives upon cunning as "workers of iniquity" to get their way have no "stronghold" or "fortress" that can protect them from God's hand whenever He chooses to judge all who refuse to live by His principles of love, kindness, and goodness. **Vs. 30**, "The righteous will never be shaken, but the wicked will not dwell in the land," in context, assures us we'll miss out upon the solid joys of God's kingdom in this life and the next to the extent we choose to leave Him out of our lives in the present.

II. WHY LIFE HOPES FOUNDED UPON THE LORD ARE FIRM

If we fill our days with plans or activities that ignore the Lord and are founded upon nothing more solid than our own whims & desires, we'll find God's presence *exasperating* if He restrains our selfishness in this life by His direct action or by His representatives (as parents or law enforcement), or if He abruptly calls us from this life to account to Him as our Holy Creator. To the extent knowing our Heavenly Father becomes our priority in this life, we'll find His presence *exhilarating*! **Proverbs 10:23-30** promises we can have a smile on our faces as God guides us through life in better ways than we could guide ourselves, as an experienced tour guide can relieve our stress and enable us to experience wonders and joys we would otherwise miss!

CONCLUSION

On June 26, 2011, Tommy Teague awoke with great expectations. He was in Israel, leading a tour group as he'd done every year for 13 years since he became Head Pastor of North Richland Hills Baptist Church (a church of over 2,500 members near Fort Worth, TX). Pastor Teague seemed to be in good health and it was his 58th Birthday. Suddenly, as he walked, he experienced a major heart attack and dropped dead! "I was just shocked," said church member Cary Hancock. "It was like an instant void."

On Sunday June 30, the church held a memorial service in Israel for their beloved church leader. Do you think they believe he'd been swept away by a storm of God's judgment, with all of his hopes, plans, and dreams as dead as he was? Or did they believe Tommy Teague experienced the joys of God's forgiveness, friendship, and fellowship in this life, so now he was on the verge of discovering every truth from God's Word, every promise upon which he'd founded his life, were more permanent and real than he even dreamed? As **Proverbs 4:18** (NLT) proclaims, "The way of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, which shines ever brighter until the full light of day."