

+ **Introduction** +

I) Rain, Floods, Winds:

Our Lord concluded His famous sermon on the mountain by saying:
“Whoever hear these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the wind blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall” (Matt.7: 24-27).

In the Gospel of St. Luke it is written:
“Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great” (Lk.6: 47-49).

+ **Comments:**

- 1) It is obvious from the above verses that the only difference between the two persons is that one of them hears the words of Christ and takes action obeying them but the other hears the same words and does nothing. Therefore it is written: “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1: 23).
- 2) St. Luke tells us that one of the two men “*dug deep*”. A superficial relation with God the Bible and the Church is not enough, remember the disciples who toiled all night and caught nothing nevertheless when they obeyed and launched out into the *deep* they caught a great number of fish (Lk.5: 4,5).

II) The spiritual house:

St. Peter said: “You also, as living stone, are being built up *a spiritual house*” (1Pet.2: 5). The house that Christ is talking about is the heart of the person for He said: “Behold, I stand at the door (*of the heart*) and knock, if anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me” (Rev.3: 20).

St. Paul said: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts (*houses*) through faith” (Eph.3: 17).

Christ also said: “A man’s enemies will be those of his own household (*heart*)” (Matt.10: 36)[Ⓢ] “For out of the heart (household) proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matt.15: 19).

This is why the Church teaches us to pray before taking communion saying: “Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under the roof of my house (*heart*)”.

+ **Comments:**

- 1) The heart is the most important part of our being⁺ therefore it is written: “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life” (Prov.4: 23).

[Ⓢ] This verse also applies literally to the days of persecution and martyrdom.

⁺ There is a very strong relation between the heart and the mind. This is why it is written ‘You shall love your God from all your heart and all your mind’.

- 2) Our Fathers the monks realized the importance of the heart and called the famous desert of Egypt <The scale of the hearts>[⊕]
- 3) Our Lord is knocking on the door of our heart (*house*) if we open to Him, He will bless our hearts and say: 'Today salvation has come to this house' (Lk.19: 9).
Moreover, in the last day He will tell us: 'Come, you blessed of My father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was a stranger and you took Me in' (Matt.25: 34,35).But if we refuse to open our hearts for Him, He will say to us: 'Your house is left for you desolate'(Matt.23: 38).
- 4) Building this spiritual house of the heart can not be accomplished without the help of the grace of God for it is written: 'Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it' (Ps.127: 1). Hence we need to pray for the help of God.
- 5) Our Lord said that every house divided against itself would not stand (Matt.12: 25). Sometimes, we don't have a clear goal in our lives and our hearts (*houses*) become divided between God and the world and this is why we fall in sin. This situation should remind us of the words of Elijah the prophet: "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him" (1kings18: 21).
- 6) Christ said: "How can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house"(Matt.12: 29). The strong man that protects the house (*heart*) is humility and the thief (*Satan*) can not plunder the goods of the heart unless he binds this strong man first by introducing pride to the heart. Therefore it was written: "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov.16: 18).
- 7) It is written: "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'. And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes seven more spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Matt12: 43-45). From this we learn that casting sin out of the heart without filling this empty space with Christ could lead to going back to the old sin in a more severe way. This is why St. Paul says: "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" (Eph.4: 28). So to stop doing wrong without starting to do good is an incomplete repentance. Therefore let us bear fruit worthy of repentance (Matt.3: 8).

III) The rocky foundation:

The rocky foundation is Christ Himself as St. Paul said about the rock from which the Israelites drank water: 'That rock was Christ' (1Cor.10: 4). The rocky foundation also means the correct, sound faith and doctrine because when St. Peter declared the sound faith about the Divinity of Christ, the Lord told him: 'On this rock (*of sound doctrine*) I will build My Church' (Matt.16: 18).

This rock of sound doctrine is the Apostolic Faith as St. Paul said: 'Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone' (Eph.2: 20).

[⊕] A young monk asked an elder: 'Father, show me where my heart is'.
The elder answered: 'My son have you ever been happy? Your heart is where you felt this happiness'.

IV) The sandy foundation:

Sometimes people refuse to accept the person of Christ, the true rock and the chief corner stone, as a foundation to their hearts and replace Him with lust, sin, and even possessions that fill their hearts and become a sandy foundation for them.

Since the rocky foundation is also the Sound Apostolic Faith, therefore the sandy foundation is the false teachings of the heretics.

+ Comment:

It is really sad when we hear Orthodox youths and servants belittling the value of the Sound Faith and Doctrine by claiming that many of the non-Orthodox Christians have a good spiritual life without having to keep the Sound Doctrines and Dogmas⁺.

This brings to mind the disciples who were impressed by the beautiful buildings of the Jewish temple (Mark 13: 1- Lk.21: 5), and the words of Christ to them: “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Mark 13: 2).

The same applies to any spiritual building that is built on the sandy foundation of false non-Orthodox teachings. So let us not be fooled by the beauty of the house but rather examine its foundation. The following description of Arios by historians is a good example: *<A knowledgeable priest with a beautiful voice, a thin body due to fasting and ascetic life style. His righteous appearance and beautiful voice fooled many>!*

V) The rain and the floods: (WATER)

During Pascha week the Coptic priests pray saying: “O Thou, the creator and provider of all, deliver Thy people from *the flood of the sea of this passing world*” (Nighttime Litanies). St. John describes this flood by saying: “All that is in the world- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1John2: 16).

In Holy Scripture ‘*water*’ is used sometimes as a symbol of lack of love; “many waters cannot quench love nor can the floods drown it” (Song 8: 7) on the other hand love is symbolized by ‘*wine*’; “your love is better than wine” (Song1: 2)[Ⓢ] and ‘*fire*’: “the love of many will grow cold” (Matt.24: 12).

+ Comment:

In spite of the raging floods of the world and all its waters we should have a strong faith in Our God and sing with David saying: “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side,..., then the *waters* would have overwhelmed us, the *stream* would have gone over our soul; then the *swollen waters* would have gone over our soul...our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth” (Ps.124: 3,4,5,8).

VI) The wind:

St. Paul refers to the devil as “the prince of the power of *the air*, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Eph.2: 2). This devil is the author of all false teachings and heresies; “for such are false apostles (*heretics*), deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself

⁺ This is due to a misunderstanding of the words of Christ ‘Judge not, that you be not judged’(Matt.7: 1). Please note how strict Christ was with the Pharisees and Lawyers who were teaching false tradition and how compassionate He was with Tax Collectors and sinners!

[Ⓢ] Remember the miracle at the wedding of Cana of Galilee when Christ turned ‘*water*’ to ‘*wine*’.

transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing that *his ministers* (*the heretics*) transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works” (2Cor.11: 13-15).

This is why the wind means false teachings of heretics and philosophers; “We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every *wind of doctrine*” (Eph.4: 14).

Lord Jesus praised St. John the Baptist because he was not like a reed shaken by the wind (Matt.11: 8). On the other hand David in the Spirit says: “The ungodly are like chaff which *the wind* drives away” (Ps.1: 4).

VII) The wind and the ship:

On two occasions the disciples were in the boat striving against contrary winds.

A) After the miracle of feeding the five thousand:

+ “Immediately Jesus *made His disciples* get into the boat and go before Him to the other side” (Matt.14: 22)

+ “Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now *about the forth watch* of the night He came to them walking on the sea, and *would have passed them by*” (Mark6: 48).

+ “For they had not understood about the loaves, because *their hearts were hardened*” (Mark6: 52).

+ “And Peter answered Him and said, ‘Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water. So He said ‘Come’. And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that *the wind was boisterous*, he was afraid and beginning to sink he cried out saying, ‘Lord save me!’” (Matt.14: 28,30).

+ **Comments:**

- 1) Notice that it was the Lord who *made* the disciples get into the boat knowing what they will be facing, also he left them without *obvious help* until the forth watch of the night. Moreover He seemed as if He is passing them by and leaving them to their troubles! St. Mark tells us the reason behind all this “*Their hearts were hardened*”. Sometimes God would use the contrary wind to soften our hearts, which are hardened by sin or ignorance. This is why St. Paul reminds us with the words of the Holy Spirit: “Today, if you will hear His voice do not harden your hearts”(Heb.3: 7,8).
- 2) When St. Peter wanted to walk on the water and go to Lord Jesus, He said to him ‘Come’. He didn’t tell him ‘wait until I rebuke the wind and then you can come easily’. From this we learn that the problem doesn’t lie in the outside wind that is blowing against us but the true problem is within our hearts that faints and doubts when faced with such wind. “O you of little faith why did you doubt” (Matt.14: 31). Therefore St. Paul writes to his disciple Timothy saying: “Having faith and good conscience, which some having rejected, *concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck*” (1Tim.1: 19).

B) “ Now it happened on a certain day that *He got into a boat with His disciples*. And He said to them ‘let us cross over to the other side of the lake’. And they launched out. But as they sailed *He fell asleep*. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they *were filling with water*, and *were in jeopardy*. And they came to Him and woke Him saying ‘Master, Master, we are perishing’. Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging

of the water and they ceased, and there was a calm. But he said to them ‘Where is your faith?’ (Lk.8: 22-25).

+ **Comment:**

On the previous occasion Christ was not in the boat and here He was inside the boat but sleeping. Sometimes Christ would be in our hearts but sleeping and this is a very serious condition as evidenced by the words of the Lord to the Bishop of the Church of Laodiceans: ‘Because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth’ (Rev.3: 16).

Notice that this time the boat was filling with water (Lack of love) and indeed they were in jeopardy for St. Paul said: “Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing” (1Corinth.13: 2)

Let us quickly awake Christ in our hearts by praying with loving faith saying: *“Awake! Why do you sleep O lord? Arise! Do not cast us off forever. Why do You hide Your face and forget our affliction and our oppression? For our soul is bowed down to the dust our body clings to the ground. Arise for our help and redeem us for Your mercies sake”* (Ps.44: 23-26).

VIII) Faith: (THE ANCHOR)

St. Paul talks about those who ‘concerning the faith suffered shipwreck’ (1Tim.1: 19), Our Lord rebuked the unbelief of the disciples, St. Peter teaches us to resist the devil and all his works (*wind*) ‘steadfast in the faith’ (1Pet.5: 9), St. James says, “He who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind” (Jam.1: 6) and St. Paul says that faith should be a ‘faith working through love’ (Gal.5: 6).

During the last Youth Convention in Orlando, FL. (7/27-7/30/200) we discussed the characters of faith: {sound}, {loving}, {working}, {endures to the end}*.

Faith is one of the fruits of the Spirit mentioned in (Gal.5: 22). Christ said: ‘He who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit; *for without Me you can do nothing*’ (Jn.15: 5). Let us abide firmly in Christ through the sacramental life of the Church to bear the fruit of Faith.

+ **Comments:**

- 1) All of us, as members of the body of Christ (*the Church*) share the same ‘GENERAL’ faith as St. Paul said: “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph.4: 5). There is another aspect of faith, which is the ‘PERSONAL’ faith that is based on specific personal experiences between each individual member and God “I have heard of You (God) by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You”(Job 42:5).
- 2) The Orthodox Doctrines and Dogmas are not mere information that fills the mind but rather a living faith that is manifest in our daily lives. For example, one of the very important doctrines is the belief that the Sacrament of Eucharist is the true body and blood of Christ. You may know all the verses that prove this doctrine and you may be able to refute all the Protestant teachings concerning this Sacrament but what benefit does this knowledge do you if you approach communion without the due respect and preparation?
- 3) For more about Faith, you may want to read “Life of Faith” by H.H.Pope Shenouda III and also “Life of Hope” to have a complete picture of the subject.

* Lectures available on request.

IX) The First Winter Youth Convention:

By the Grace of God this Convention will focus on:

“An Anchored Faith Withstanding The Water & The Wind Of Philosophical Challenges”

This topic was inspired by the words of St. Paul:

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (Col.2: 8).

+ The following subjects will be discussed:

- 1) **Evolution.**
- 2) **Humanism & Individualism.**
- 3) **Feminism.**
- 4) **Modernism.**
- 5) **Post Modernism & Social Construction.**

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