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What Is the State of Your Foundation?

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What Is the State of Your Foundation? Tim Rasmussen Tue, 12/19/2023 - 01:17 Due to a population explosion in Southern California in the early 1920s, plans were made to create a large reservoir to help meet the region's growing water needs. Engineer William Mulholland had achieved a great deal of recognition and respect among members of the engineering community when he supervised the design and construction of the longest aqueduct in the world at that time—the Los Angeles Aqueduct, and he was chosen as the chief engineer for the new project. After conducting a thorough study of the topography and geological features of the area, Mulholland was convinced that San Francisquito Canyon, about forty miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles, was the ideal site. Design and construction began in 1924, and at its completion on May 4, 1926, the magnificent St. Francis dam rose to a height of 185 feet above the canyon floor. The dam was an engineering marvel—the crown jewel of Mulholland's career. But there was a problem. Although Mulholland wrote of the unstable nature of the face of the schist on the eastern side of the canyon, he either misjudged or ignored it. As water began to fill the reservoir, several temperature and contraction cracks appeared in the dam, and seepage began to flow from under the abatements. Mulholland and his assistant chief engineer Harvey Van Norman inspected the cracks and judged them to be within expectation for a concrete dam the size of St. Francis. Workers were ordered to seal off the leaks, but they were not entirely successful. Late in 1927, a fracture appeared that ran diagonally across the dam. Mulholland inspected the cleft, judged it to be another inconsequential contraction crack, and left it alone. On March 7, 1928, yet another leak was discovered by a dam employee. He was concerned not only because there was a new leak but also because the water in this runoff was muddy, indicating possible erosion of the dam's foundation. Mulholland and Van Norman inspected the dam and its various leaks and seepages, finding nothing out of the ordinary or of concern for a large dam. Both Mulholland and Van Norman made it clear that there just wasn't anything to worry about. Mulholland had a reputation to uphold. Surely there couldn't be any critical issues with his masterpiece. Acknowledging major engineering shortcomings would have jeopardized his hard-earned position and reputation. Two and half minutes before midnight on March 12, 1928, the St. Francis dam catastrophically failed. Within 70 minutes of the collapse, the reservoir was virtually empty as 12.4 billion gallons of water began surging down San Francisquito Canyon becoming a 140-foot high flood wave traveling eighteen miles per hour. Countless workmen and their families were never found. The flood left an appalling record of death and destruction, with hundreds of lives claimed. The St. Francis Dam disaster, which effectively ended the career of William Mulholland, remains the second greatest loss of life in California's history, after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. Cracks in any foundation can have catastrophic effects, and the most catastrophic tragedies of all are the results of cracks in the foundations of lives. These cracks affect not only us but also those we know and love. In the busyness of life and with all the responsibilities of family and ministry, we need to ask ourselves if we are ignoring foundational issues of the heart that could lead to disaster. These cracks may not be visible yet to our family and friends, but the cracks are there nonetheless and have the potential to cause irreparable harm if not properly addressed. This is why Paul warned Timothy, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16). A wise man will faithfully and conscientiously inspect his foundation and will be honest with himself and God when cracks are discovered. We would demonstrate great wisdom to inspect our lives for the following cracks, all indicators of a deeper spiritual need: We no longer have a vibrant and growing walk with the Lord. We have stopped guarding our hearts from temptation. We have allowed our thought lives to wander. We rationalize thoughts and behaviors that previously would have convicted our conscience. We put a priority on temporal things such as money, position, or recognition over essentials like holiness, godliness and integrity. We emphasize the public over the private. We dismiss "small" sins in order to protect our reputation. We stop seeking counsel from others and discourage others from requiring accountability of us. We begin to pridefully look to ourselves rather than focusing on Jesus. If we continue to ignore cracks in our integrity, we are positioning ourselves for an inevitable and monumental collapse, bringing great reproach to our families, to our congregations, and to the cause of Christ. We are in grave danger of not finishing the race God has given us to complete. My oldest brother, Mark, has often challenged me with the following statement: "People remember how you start, and they remember how you finish." Paul wrote of his daily decision to inspect his foundation and prevent cracks in his life: "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:27). Are there cracks forming in your life—cracks that reveal deeper foundational issues? Let us take whatever steps necessary to shore up our foundation and seal up the cracks so that our lives will bring honor and glory to our Lord who saved us. How can we take steps to strengthen the foundation of our lives? By acknowledging cracks and sincerely seeking God in repentance: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). By determining to live according to the Word of God: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). By attending church and exhorting others: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). By seeking God in prayer: John R. Rice said, "All of our failures are prayer failures." "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice" (Psalm 55:17). By reading God's Word daily and committing it to memory: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11). By sharing our testimony with a lost and dying world and pointing them to Jesus Christ: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30). By intentionally meditating on God's standards: "But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2). By guarding our thought life: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). By loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and loving our neighbor as ourselves: We desperately need a great commitment to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-38). Paul admonished us to build properly, from the ground up: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon" (1 Corinthians 3:10). When we lay a proper foundation and continually build on it, we can look forward to one day hearing Christ say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Category Christian Living Tags Pastoral Leadership Integrity Christian Living Spiritual Growth

