

“A Spiritual House”
By Associate General Pastor Hubert Ulysse
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Thank you very much. Good morning everyone. Well, I bring greetings from Norfolk, especially from Pastor Paine; he wanted me to make sure I pass these greetings to you. And, from Haiti, I've just come from Haiti, and I definitely do not want to forget that they want me not only to greet you, but to thank you and those pastors with the phones; they especially wanted me to say thank you. And, they always, always need phones in Haiti. And, I'm glad to be with you as always, and this morning, I have the word that the Lord has laid on my heart for you. This morning we're going to talk about a spiritual house. What is it we're going to talk about? A spiritual house. And, I would like you to stand one more time and let us read together our main Scripture from First Peter, chapter two, verses one to five. First Peter, two, one to five.

1 Peter 2:1-5 *Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

May the Lord bless the portion of His Word for the edification of our souls, and for His Glory. Thank you, you may be seated.

This letter was written by Peter to Christians who were scattered, and being persecuted. And, he wrote them to remind them that they are a privileged people. He wrote to them to encourage them, and then he reminded them that they were redeemed, they were redeemed by the Word of God. They were redeemed by an Incorruptible seed, which is the Word of God, and that's why in verse one, in First Peter, chapter two, verse one, it says, “wherefore,” so, if you go to chapter one, it's continuing. Whenever you're reading the Bible and you see wherefore, you do need to go back to understand. Why? Because, they were redeemed by the Word of God, an incorruptible Word, and then it says:

1 Peter 2:1-2 *Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk...*

Well, by saying this he assumes that everybody understood what does it mean when a baby desires milk. Right? What do they do? Do they just wish they had some milk? Do they just, you know, do a soft request for milk? I'll tell you right now they cry about it; they want it, and they are going to get it. Until they get it they keep on crying. They are persistent. So he says, “...as newborn babes,” to have that desire. And, we went over desire pretty much this trip. Desire is not like just a soft wish; desire is something you're after it, you want it. Okay? But, it says the sincere milk of the Word, so there is milk, and there is sincere milk. Oh, yeah, just because you want milk doesn't mean you'll drink any anything. What, you're not going to check to see if it's expired? You don't check to see if it's good for you? Milk can hurt you, you know that, right? Very quick. So he's talking about the sincere milk. And, we all know that the sincere milk is the pure Word of God; that's what it is. “...That ye may grow thereby,” we may grow thereby. Remember, we went over where Peter told the Christians to add to their faith, right? Add to their faith, and, he says if these things be in you, and they abound, then that will make you so fruitful (2 Peter 1: 8). And, so, that's how we grow. We are—we grow into salvation. It's like a baby is born,

right? But, to get into maturity, they need that milk, and that supervision, and all that kind of things in order to grow into maturity. It's the same thing when we are born in Christ, we say we're saved, but we are growing into salvation. Okay? "If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious..." If you have tasted, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious you're going to do all that. You're going to desire the sincere milk. And, it says to whom—who is this whom? Whom we place here? Verse four: To whom coming, and we go to verse three again: "If so be you have tasted..." who "...is gracious?" The Lord. To whom coming, who is this whom? Coming to the Lord. To whom, he asked them to come as unto a living Stone. Who is a Living Stone? The Lord. "...Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious..." Now, I just want to get your attention to the word coming, here. In Greek, when they read that word, it that's something a little more than the way we may take it. This drawing nigh, coming, had the meaning of come with intent to stay. It's not coming to check Christ out. It's not coming to check the Lord out, to see what you can get out of it, it's just like you come, but with intention to stay. So, when he says come, to whom coming, they understood it's like he's saying coming and we're coming to stay in the Lord. Okay? So, here it means to stay in the presence of Christ in an intimate communion. In John, fifteen, one, John, fifteen, verses one through eight, I'm just going to read verse four for you, Jesus said:

John 15:4 *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

So, that's why, in order to bring any fruit, you have to come and abide in Christ; you have to come to stay, you cannot just come temporarily. You have to come to stay in order to bear fruit, okay? A branch cannot come to the tree and say, I'm just going to stay for a couple of weeks and see. No, that's not the way it works. You stay there and get fed. And, then you grow. And, continuing in verse five, in verse five it says:

1 Peter 2:5 *Ye also, as lively stones....*

Jesus Christ was the Living Stone because He was dead and Resurrected but when we are in Christ we are Lively as well, because we have our life in Christ. Okay? Now, as Christ was chosen by the Lord, because He was disallowed indeed by men, but He was chosen by God, it's the same way we also are chosen by God. Actually, the Bible says no one can come, Jesus Himself said no one can come to Him except the Father draw Him. Right? And, plus, He told his disciples you have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you (John 15:16). Actually, even in First Peter, in his introduction, in verse two--First Peter chapter one verse two, Peter called them, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father..." (1 Peter 1:2) So, that's how special they were they were not just by accident. They were elect. And, not only elect, but they were elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:2). When you come to Jesus, there is a process. So, if you find yourself in this room, take it seriously. You have a calling. That's been established long, long ago. So, Christians are so intimately identified with Christ that the very Life of Christ is present in them. The very Life of Christ. So He is the Living Stone, we are the living stones. Okay? Actually, in Colossians, three, one through four, it says:

Colossians 3:1-4 *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead [right?], and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

Remember what Paul said? He counted himself faithful. I mean, he says he thanks the Lord for counting him faithful, and putting him in the ministry (1 Timothy 1:12). So, God put you in Ministry; God put me in Ministry. We are chosen. Actually, I think in Psalm 127, where it says except the Lord build the house, what happened? You'll build it, but in vain. So, you can come to church, you can do whatever, but, except that calling is there, oh, anything you do, really, if it's by your own power, you will do it, but it will just be in vain.

So, he continues to say, "Ye are built up a spiritual house," and that's where we get our title, as Lively Stones, we are built up a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5), so God is creating a spiritual house by placing all the Believers, you and I, grouping us, and activating us into the Life of Christ. That's what He's doing. That's what He's doing. Hebrews, three, four six:

Hebrews 3:4-6 *For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast [If we hold fast] the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.*

You don't come to check him out, and leave. If you come to stay, you don't take a break, build a house, and, after that, take it and get out, the brick is for the Builder, it stays there. It stays there. So, what God is doing, He's building us. We are stones. I'm sure we've all experienced seeing those workers using stones. Do they just take the stone and place it? What do they do? They measure it, and then they have something like a chisel to cut it and make sure it's fit for the spot. And, they place it. And, the one that's fit to one spot will not necessarily fit to another spot. Because it is made for that special spot. So, if we are stones, and God is building a House with us, guess what is happening? You think He's easy with the chisels, and just cutting us? No, it's not easy., So He's—when you feel uncomfortable, when you feel like brothers and sisters are bothering you, or anything you feel that, that's the Chisel, God is making you and I. No, you're laughing, it's not a joke. No, I'm just kidding. Yes, it is true, God is working in us. I love this song, I'm not a song person, but the song, it says God took so many days to form the world, and the stars, and whatever, but he's still working on me. Still working on me. That's what happens every day, every time you feel something is bothering you, and this brother, you know, he just—you are impatient and he's just—God is working on you, because He building a House, He is building a House, and we need to pay close attention so that you don't run out, because, you know what? sometimes the worker takes a stone and just tap it, and the whole thing falls apart. What do they do? They'll throw it out. They'll throw it out. So, if God is working in you, and God is trying to shape you, and then you just break down, then just move aside. You were chosen, you may be in the pile to be used, but you're no good. So, even though you were chosen, you still were put aside because you're not firm enough, you collapse with the first tap. Okay? And then after He just tap you and shape you, and that's when He used to cement, to seal you, eternally. Ephesians two, Ephesians two, verses eight to twenty-two. I'm going to read for you eight to ten:

Ephesians 2:8-10 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

You can continue for yourself, but in verse eighteen:

Ephesians 2:18-22 *For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself*

being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

That's what we are. All those stones separately, when we come together we build a habitation for God, through Jesus Christ. So, when you are here, you count. I remember, that probably a couple years ago, Greg Bozarth took me to Williamsburg, and then they give us a tour, and then the tour guide asked us a question: "How many bricks it took to finish this building?" Like, how much—can you guess how many bricks it took to finish this place? Just guess. Nearly a thousand? Everybody give a number, and the answer was, one. It took one to finish, that's all it took. To finish a building, is one. And, what I get out of that, is every one of us count. Without one of us, the building is not complete. So, if you consider yourself like a stone, then you count. And, the building is not complete without you. And, he continues to say in verse five, we are a holy priesthood. Anytime you say House of God, you must see the priesthood. Now, Moses built a house, which is called the Tabernacle. And, this was commanded, that wasn't his choice. And, God told him exactly how to do it. David wanted to build the Lord a house, but the Lord says, "No. Let your son do it." So, Solomon build Him a house. But, between the Moses house, and Solomon's house, there were things in common. Right? Like what? It has the Holy of Holies, where the priest offered to sacrifice. It had the Holy of Holies, where the priest would come every single day, to offer sacrifices. Actually, you could not come without the sacrifice. Okay? The sacrifice was coming, the Holy of Holies, you find that. And you also had the High Priest who would come once a year. So, it was coming. So you have these two houses, but there was a third one, the Holy Ghost build his temple in us. We are, we are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. We are. We are the Temple of the Spirit, and you know what? And, we're still the priests, because it says we are. It says we are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5). So, not only we form the Temple, the House of God, but we are the priests, we are the priests. Now, when Solomon built the temple, you know it was wonderful, it was great. In Second Chronicles, chapter six, verses one and two, Solomon said:

2 Chronicles 6:1-2 *Then said Solomon, The Lord hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness [That is the Lord said that he would not live among men. He will live by himself]. But I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever.*

Okay, the Lord says He will not dwell among men, but this guy built Him a beautiful home. He has a concern. In verse eighteen, in verse eighteen, he has a concern:

2 Chronicles 6:18 *But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!*

Yes, that's true, I spent all this money, I made You a sacrifice, I built this house, but will God accept this house? Will God truly come and live in it? You know, these words, I love them, about what money can buy. Yeah, his money made a beautiful— you can buy with your money, you can buy a house, right? But what cannot you buy? What cannot you buy? You cannot buy the home. You can buy the house, but you cannot buy the home. You can buy medicine, right? Can you buy health? No. So, there are many things your money and your sacrifices can have you to have, but there are things it cannot help. So, after he built this beautiful house, he said, "Oh, my goodness, now there is a concern. Will the Lord even live in it?" Then, in Second Chronicles, seven, one through four. Now, the rest of the chapter, chapter six, he had a long prayer, long prayer, begging the Lord to accept it. And, in chapter seven:

2 Chronicles 7:1-2 Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house.

That's a sign, the Lord says, "Yes, I got it."

2 Chronicles 7:3-4 And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord.

And, in Second Chronicles, chapter seven, still, starting at verse twelve, pay attention to this:

2 Chronicles 7:12 And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.

For an house of sacrifice. And he continues, and that's where we get the key verse that we say a lot:

2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

So, that's what He promised. Now, this should remind us what is the purpose of the house of God. The purpose of the house of God is for sacrifice, because the priests could not come without sacrifice, and you and I, in the house of the Lord, there must be sacrifice. My house shall be a house of sacrifice. But, the first question, "Yeah, we build Christ a church, we are the temple," but, have we asked ourselves the question, "Will God live in my house?" Will God live—"Yes, Lord, we are Your church, we are Your temple. But, I am concerned, Lord. Are You in me? Are You in our church?" Because we know the building will not impress God. Much noise will not impress Him. But, God's acceptance depends on its function. God's acceptance to the House depends on what the House is used for. His House should be a House of sacrifice. Anything good in life calls for some kind of sacrifice, you agree? Anything in life. If you want a good marriage, you think it's just going to come? Think you can just pray for it and it will just fall down from Heaven? What if you want a great degree? If you want a degree in anything, you just go to the mountains and pray and it will just come down? Think about it. Imagine anything you want to imagine. Even if you want to be lazy, it takes some sacrifice to find a place to sit down. Anything good, anything you really, really want, requires some sacrifices. But, for us, it's talking about offering spiritual sacrifices and it's good for you and I to know what are those spiritual sacrifices, which are many, many, many. I'm just giving you an idea. Okay? Obviously, spiritual sacrifices are not sacrifices that you would offer for forgiveness for sin because this is done; Christ did it once for all. You're not doing anything—anything you are doing is not for salvation. Christ got this covered. All you have to do, come to Him and like it said, we are His workmanship. There are things already placed for you. So, whatever we do, we don't do it to be saved. We do it because we are saved. Okay? But, generally speaking, in offering yourself totally to God for His service, in accordance with His will, like in Romans, chapter 12. It says:

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

As Christians, individually, we are the Temple of God. Our Spiritual sacrifices, is like when we Face something that you were not a Christian, you would not endure it. But, because you are a Christian, you remember that you are crucified with Christ, right? Nevertheless, I live, but... when your flesh wants you to act a certain way, and even if everybody would say you are right, you, you, you—but, you say, “Yes, I know I'm right, but I am a House of sacrifice.” What would Jesus do? Would Jesus let it go? Or would Jesus suffer it? You know, if we understand what it is to be a Christian, a House of sacrifice, our marriages would stay; our friendships, our relationships would be solid here; we would be forgiving, we would be accepting, and doing like Paul says, “Hey, why can't you suffer this? Why can't you suffer a wrong?” (1 Corinthians 6:7) You don't suffer it because of your flesh, you suffer it because you are a House of sacrifice. Spiritual sacrifice. Yes, it's wrong. Yes, you are right, whatever judge you would go before, they would say, “Yeah, you're perfectly right, this one.” But, it says, “No, I'm a House of sacrifice; I do this for Christ.” That's what the House of sacrifice is. But, we know we are Christians, but, yet, this, “I just cannot forgive this. I cannot let it go. I cannot let this go. You did this to me, you did that, this, no.” You know, I hear the story about the young man who had something with somebody and came to the pastor and he said to the pastor, “This is what,” and the Pastor said, “You have to forgive.” He said, “No, I cannot forgive.” The guy said, “I cannot forgive this.” And, the Pastor insisted. He said, “No, I cannot forgive this.” And, the Pastor said, “Well, let us pray.” And the pastor praised the Lord, and said, “You don't have to worry about this brother; he can take care of himself. He doesn't need your protection. He doesn't need a, you know? He can take care of his own self.” And, that solved the issue. Whatever you say you are not forgiving, you should have this conviction the Jesus did it for you. He did it for you. And you may say, “Well I'll forgive this, but not that.” We are living sacrifices, but Christ truly died for us so we can have life. Remember, you're dead in Christ. You're living, but yet not you (Galatians 2:20). But, if we know the Scripture, and we don't want to practice it, aren't we hypocrites? I'm not saying it's easy, I'm not saying it's coming automatically; it's hard. Sacrifice hurts. It's not convenient. It's not like taking, “Yeah, I will do this, but this, no.” no, no, no. It's really hard.

And, also, there are offerings of praise, and thanksgiving, acts of loving service to God's people. And Hebrews, thirteen, fifteen through sixteen:

Hebrews 13:15 *By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*

That's a spiritual sacrifice.

Hebrews 13:16 *But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

To do good. Never return evil for evil. But, you do good not only when—always! Not only among ourselves, but, what? Among all. Never—when it comes to evil for evil, never. Never. As spiritual sacrifices, as Houses of God, an House of God, when it comes to evil, forget it! Always good. You say, “Well, this evil, really it's an evil.” Yes, but you return good for it. This is a sacrifice; God is well pleased. Do you know, if only we could do this, we would be so great. So great, if only, “I'll never return evil for evil.” It will work in our houses, it will work in our church, it will work at our work, it will work wherever we are, “Okay, because it's evil, I know it, I see it, but I'm not going to return evil for evil.” That, by itself, will be a testimony! People always say, “Man, who is this person?” When they find out, “Well, I'm a Christian. I could do something, but because Christ is in me, I am the Temple of Christ I am the house of sacrifice, I leave it alone...” And, that may cause people to come. I want this. And then, to communicate, this word, in Greek it's koinōnia, I think, it means fellowship. This word is fellowship, like to do good and

to fellowship, don't forget that. Don't forget that. It's a sacrifice, sometimes, to find time to be together. It's a sacrifice, sometimes, to give a call. It's a sacrifice to talk to each other, but, it is a sacrifice, that's why it's not convenient. But, as a House of sacrifice, if you do it, God will be well pleased. Well pleased. Very well pleased. Actually, Malachi, I think it says, "Those that love the Lord," what do they do? And what God does, Himself? He heard them, and what happened? He wrote a book. He has a book! (Malachi 3:16) And, every time you get together, every time you could go there for coffee and talk, the Lord is so happy. It pleases Him, the sacrifice, and then He writes it down. You know, when you go to Revelation, I think, four, five, it's talking about what was before the throne and the Beast and all that... (Revelation 4) And, then he says there was a little thing that had a great smell in it, it was the prayers of the Saints (Revelation 5:8). So, when we get together, God is happy, it's before the Lord, and at the very end, our communications, our fellowship, will be before the throne, will be before the throne. Philippians, two, seventeen; I have a couple of short Scriptures, I'm not going to elaborate on them, and then we're finished. Verse seventeen:

Philippians 2:17 *Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.*

Who is speaking? If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I Joy, and rejoice with you all. What attracted me to this Scripture is when I read it in French. When I read it in French, something was a little different, so it pushed me to go to the Greek word, where it says, 'be offered upon,' and I find out that word, called in French, libation, that's what the word they use in Greek, and, what it says, it's like when you have fire, for example, you make a fire to cook anything, you have the big piece of wood, but you need small pieces so the fire can go, what's that called? So, that's what he's saying, even if I be served for that, to get that sacrifice going, I rejoice, I joy, and rejoice. So Paul was saying I'm a sacrifice, and even if I serve like the libation, to be offered up, the sacrifice, I'm happy. Can you imagine if we understood what we are, as the house of God? And knowing, all I am, all I am is to get the fire going. Even if I'm used for that. But, if we don't see us as being the sacrifice, we really cannot say we are the House of God, because the House of God is sacrifice! And the House of God, not only sacrifice, but we are the priests who offer up the sacrifice, that's what we are, all of it! And, let me finish with Micah 6. And, let's stand up, please, let's read Micah, six, and six through eight:

Micah 6:6 *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?*

What kind of stuff I'm bringing before the Lord? I'm trying to impress the Lord? The way I dress, the way I say hallelujah, the way I jump, the way I humble, like on the outside, will I come with much money? And let everybody see? no.

Micah 6:7-8 *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? [Will I do great, great, great things?] He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

May the Lord bless you. Amen.