

WCCC 2024

Brother Ted Peng

Desiring a better country, a heavenly one (2)

Good afternoon brothers and sisters. It is very hot outside, but our hearts are with the Lord. So may the Lord be with us this afternoon. Yesterday I was sharing with brothers and sisters this subject of desiring a better homeland which is in heaven. While we were reading the scriptures there, we find Abraham. In Hebrews 11, it says that Abraham was waiting for a city with foundations, whose builder and maker is God. At the end of the discussion of his family, these 3 generations, the Bible says that God is not ashamed to be their God. He has prepared for them a city.

Coming from this story of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and finally Joseph, in God's heart, they are not just individuals. In God's heart, they represent the beginning of a city. So that is why in just a few verses, God speaks of a city twice.

So today I would like to share with brothers and sisters on the subject of "Living stones and a spiritual house". A way to look at it is that this city is where God's people are. And these living stones and spiritual houses are at the center of that city.

Now if you look in the Bible, and in history, the situation in Jerusalem was like that. If you have read the story of Ezekiel, in chapter 43 to 44, God shows him a city. At the center of the city is this house of God. God willing, I would like to share with brothers and sisters on this house of God.

One description that is related to you and me is this matter of the house of God being living stones built up to be the spiritual house. So, what are these living stones? Living stones are you and me. And the spiritual house is where the living stones gather together, and the Lord builds us together to be His spiritual house. Who will live there? The Lord Himself. What is the principle that governs this house? It is the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit.

"Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,"

1 Peter 2:4 NKJV

In verse 4, it speaks of Him, being Christ, a living stone. That living stone is just not standing there. It was rejected by men. But that living stone is chosen and precious to God. In verse 5,

"you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

1 Peter 2:5 NKJV

It says "you also," which means you and I, when we come to Him, we become many living stones to be built up into a spiritual house.

"Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture,

"Behold, I lay in Zion
A chief cornerstone, elect, precious,
And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.""
1 Peter 2:6 NKJV

So here, the apostle Peter describes the living stone, that the living stone is the chief cornerstone. This speaks of the foundation of the house. The cornerstone. He also says that the chief cornerstone is elect and precious. This comes from Isaiah. The key thing is that this living stone is the chief cornerstone, elected and chosen by God. He is precious.

"Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient,

"The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone,""
1 Peter 2:7 NKJV

Here a thought comes in of these builders who rejected the stone. We will speak of these builders later.

"and

"A stone of stumbling
And a rock of offense."

They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;"
1 Peter 2:8-9 NKJV

Verse 9 is actually the conclusion of being living stones built up to the spiritual house. It speaks of those who are living stones built up to a spiritual house having to proclaim the praises of Him. Some versions say "the excellencies of Him". The One that calls us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. Verse 9 is loaded with a lot of things there. It is also the conclusion. If we are living stones and a spiritual house, this happens. We will leave verse 9 for tomorrow. It deserves a lot of thinking, because it brings us to a state in which we can proclaim His excellencies. We will speak of the reason for that today, God willing.

I do want to read 2 more portions of scripture. From the gospel of John, when the Lord Jesus was with His disciples on that last night. They had a meal together, and He told them many things. At the end, He had a prayer to His own Father. There are two verses I would like to read for you.

"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do."

John 17:4 NKJV

This is what the Lord Jesus told His Father. "What you have asked and sent me to do, I have done." Brothers and sisters, the Lord is praying to His Father in the presence of all the disciples. Our Lord Jesus has done everything the Father has entrusted Him to do on the earth.

"And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:"

John 17:22 NKJV

Dear brothers and sisters, this is an incredible statement. The Lord told His Father: "the glory you have given Me, I have given them. I have given them this glory for a purpose: that they may be one." That they may be one is not just gathering together and not arguing with each other. It is a lot more than that. "That they may one as You and I are one." As the Father and the Lord Jesus are one.

Brothers and sisters, do you see the expectation the Lord Jesus has for the church? And the expectation He has for you and me? He asked the Father to give the glory that has been given to Him be given to us, that we can be one as He and His Father are one.

Let us bow our heads in a word of prayer.

Lord, we come to you and thank you that you have done such a wonderful thing so many years ago. There were a group of people who were obedient to you. May you open our eyes and our heart, that we can see the great expectation you have for your own people. Lord, we really ask you to help us today to see that you have opened up the way for us to really pursue you and run the heavenly race. That we can really follow you and enter into the kingdom, and really glorify you. Lord, be with us. In the name of the Lord Jesus we pray, Amen

My wife told me that a sister had asked her a question. "How do we see that we can really see this heavenly country and get in?" Brothers and sisters, you can make it really complicated. You can also make it really simple.

Remember the better homeland in heaven. This is talking about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Why do I say it is simple? At that time they did not have any Bible, or Bible studies, or Christian conferences. They just had the grandfather, the father and the son. They walked on earth, but were actually walking the heavenly way.

What does heaven mean? Again it is not complicated. Heaven, to them, is just where God is. What does God mean? God means, years and years ago, He appeared to my grandfather. The glory of God appeared to Abraham. To them, God is not an abstract concept. God is the One who appeared to Abraham. With such a striking effect that Abraham decided to go with Him, leaving home to a place he doesn't know.

For three generations, they walked in the heavenly way. Why do we call it a heavenly way? Because when they lived on earth, they knew that God was leading them. Although they lived on earth and faced so many difficulties, although they made mistakes all the time, at night they could come and bring their hearts to the Heavenly Father. They knew for sure that God would listen to them. They knew for sure that God would always accept them.

To them, the heavenly country or heavenly homeland is very simple. It is where God is. It is very simple. If God is there, that is the heavenly country. If God is there, that is my heavenly homeland. If God is not there, don't tell me that that is heaven. To them it was extremely simple.

At that time they did not have the concept of Christ Jesus. But on the other hand we read yesterday that the Lord Jesus said, "Your Father Abraham rejoiced when he saw me" (John 15:56). Although they don't have the concept of Christ Jesus yet, as time goes on, they knew God would send someone in the future. And God is so good that He gave Abraham a seed. Although they did not have a literal word called Christ Jesus, they had the concept that the seed is with God. In our present day language, Christ Jesus is with God. So heaven is also where Christ is.

I think that if God is there, Christ is there, that is my home country. That is my heavenly country, my heavenly homeland. If They are not there, it is not my homeland. This is really simple.

One other thing the Lord said Himself, when He was talking to Nicodemus in John 3,

"No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven."
John 3:13 NKJV

So brothers and sisters, it is very simple. The heavenly homeland is where my God is. The heavenly homeland is where Christ Jesus is. So that says that the heavenly homeland can be my homeland. You don't need to remember the whole Bible to say that "now I have a heavenly homeland". As long as you know that my God is there, my Christ Jesus is there, that is my heavenly homeland. I will just put that with you.

Peter spoke about living stones and the spiritual house. Peter is one brother who had followed the Lord Jesus and learned the most lessons among all the other disciples. Using the term our brother Dana used, "the reproach of Christ", we see that Peter experienced a lot of that. He was corrected by the Lord many times. When he wrote 1 Peter, you could feel that it was so important in his heart for us believers who really pursue the Lord to have a practical way to serve Him.

Remember in the Old Testament God's house, the temple, was in the middle of Jerusalem. Only the priests could serve in God's house. God's original purpose was for all of us to be priests.

"And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."
Exodus 19:6 NKJV

So it is a kingdom of priests. Everybody that came out of Egypt is told by the Lord that they are to be a kingdom of priests. Everyone has to serve Him. We know later that the hearts of the people who came out of Egypt remained in Egypt. That generation's heart remained in Egypt.

God's original mind was for everyone to come out and serve Him. When Peter wrote about this in 1 Peter, he came back to this. So he wrote, "we as living stones are called to be a spiritual house. We are going to be a holy priesthood where everyone is a priest and everyone serves the Lord."

This was not only for the time of Moses. Moses was 1,500 years before Christ. In Peter's time, he urges everyone to be a priest. We are a priesthood. There he says something very specific. I want you to pay attention to 3 things from the verses we just read.

1. That Living Stone. That Living Stone which was rejected.
2. When we come to Him we are many living stones
3. He who is the Cornerstone that was rejected by the builders

I would like to explain these 3 to you.

The 3 things that Peter said:

1. The Chief Cornerstone, chosen and precious (1 Peter 2:6-8)
2. The Living Stone rejected, but chosen and precious (1 Peter 2:4)
3. (Many) living stones being built up a Spirit House (1 Peter 2:5)

The Chief Cornerstone is chosen and precious. Who chose it? God chose it. Who is it precious to? It is precious to God.

The Living Stone, that particular Living Stone, was rejected, but chosen and precious.

The third thing is us, the many living stones being built up into a Spiritual House.

Dear brothers and sisters, you see the burden of Peter is to bring us into God's purpose. We have to know these 3 things. We see how the Chief Cornerstone is rejected by the builders. This is essentially the reproach of Christ. The second thing is that although the Cornerstone is rejected, it has a second function as that Living Stone. That Living Stone is rejected by man but chosen by God. And the third thing has to do with you and me. We are the many living stones.

The Cornerstone, Chosen and Precious

From the Old Testament times, in God's heart there is this stone. The emphasis is not that it is a living stone. It is that this stone is bigger and more powerful than anything. Many of you may remember the story of Daniel, and how when Daniel was in Nebuchadnezzar's house and he was very young - probably less than 20 years old. He and his 3 friends were very faithful to God to keep themselves separated. Everyone knew that they were smart. On the other hand, they were captives. They were captives in Nebuchadnezzar's house.

One night Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. When he woke up he was so scared. He knew he had a terrible dream, but he forgot what that dream was. So he told the wise men in his country that

he had a terrible dream but he forgot what it was. Since they were wise people, they would need to tell him what the dream was and what the interpretation of the dream was.

Now Daniel and his friends were supposed to be smart. The King's staff was also about to harm them. So that night Daniel and his 3 friends went to pray before the Lord. "Lord, if you do not tell us what that dream is, no one will know." But thank the Lord that He told them what the dream was, and the interpretation of the dream. Daniel went to the Lord and praised and thanked the Lord for that.

The next day he went to the King. The King's staff told him that this young man would know his dream. So Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that his dream was one of a huge statue with a gold head, a silver chest, a bronze waist and feet made of iron and soil. And the meaning was that the gold head was the King, and he would die, and the next kingdom would be the silver chest. And one day that kingdom would be gone. And the next kingdom would be bronze, and so on and so forth.

Daniel also said to the King that he dreamed of a big stone which was not cut from the hand of man, that would come from heaven and smash the statue to pieces. And that stone would grow to be a huge mountain, filling the whole earth.

Nebuchadnezzar prostrated before him, acknowledging that it was indeed his dream.

So dear brothers and sisters, this is the stone that God showed to Nebuchadnezzar, and through Daniel, He showed this to all of us. Today in hindsight, we know what that stone is. And who that Stone is. That Stone is obviously Christ Jesus.

So Nebuchadnezzar and the next kingdoms, all the earthly kingdoms would not last forever. They would come and go. But there is this rock that would smash everything to pieces. That rock would be forever, filling the whole earth.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord is coming. We all know that. In chapter 10 of Hebrews, it says that "in a little while He that is to come will come, but my righteous one shall live by faith." So you see what Daniel's picture shows us? Kingdoms will come and go, and the age will end, and the Lord will come back. The righteous shall live by faith. You and I are not going to be affected by earthly kingdoms. But we are going to depend on that Stone that is not cut from the hand of man. It will come and smash everything to pieces, and it will grow and fill the whole earth.

So this is the picture of that Stone who is Christ.

After that there is another picture worth looking at. Lord Jesus in Matthew 16 said, "on this rock I will build my church." So dear brothers and sisters, we are in God's church. Christ Jesus is building out His own children, you and me, on that rock.

What is that rock in Matthew 16? That rock is Peter's confession. Peter represented his fellow disciples when the Lord Jesus asked them "who do you think I am?" And Peter said, "You are the Christ, Son of the Living God."

Brothers and sisters, this is a very significant word. Over generations and history, no one can be called Christ. No one can be called the Son of God. At that time the Jewish religions would never recognise that Jesus is the Christ, but Peter said that.

So the Lord Jesus said, "on this rock I will build my church." So when we are built up to be His church, we must always remember that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is the One that God sent to build His own house. There is no other foundation, no other Cornerstone. So this is the other statement: the first was that the Lord Jesus is Daniel's stone, and this is Peter's confession that Jesus is the rock.

So in these few verses, 1 Peter 2:4-7, the Cornerstone is mentioned 3 times. This Cornerstone is so important to Peter. In Peter's time, if you said that Jesus was the Cornerstone, you would be persecuted because the whole Jewish religion was against that. Because if Jesus was the Cornerstone, then who are we (the Jewish religion)? Everyone would go to Him. So they made it a point to persecute this Cornerstone.

Let me give you a couple of facts. In chapter 4 of Acts, Peter and John were dragged into the Sanhedrin, and they were told they were not supposed to say this. But Peter said, "what we have seen and heard, we must speak."

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well,"
Acts 4:8-9 NKJV

Peter refers to the rules of the people and elders of Israel. These are the builders who have power to say who the foundation of the building is. No one else could.

"let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone."
Acts 4:10-11 NKJV

This is the first time Peter announces to these powerful people in the Jewish religion that the One they had crucified was the Chief Cornerstone. You see how Peter who wrote 1 Peter 2 was so impressed with this Chief Cornerstone. He is also so impressed with the pressure from the religious world. The real story of this Chief Cornerstone that was rejected by the builders can be found in what Stephen said. At that time, Jesus being the Chief Cornerstone was the center of the fight. The religious powers at that time were 100% against that. And there were disciples who had seen Jesus, and they knew for sure that the basis, the foundation of the church, the Cornerstone was Christ Jesus.

We know the story of Stephen. He was a very young man. In those days in Jerusalem, he went from place to place telling people that Jesus is the Christ. He also mentioned that Jesus is the real source of righteousness, and it was no longer the law. And that the house of God now meant something different. This is in chapter 6 of the book of Acts.

In chapter 7 the Jewish powers dragged Stephen before them, asking if he said these things. Then Stephen gave his speech. From the beginning Stephen knew that once he finished speaking, he would be killed. As he started talking, his face was full of light.

1. Remember that we mentioned how the God of glory appeared to Abraham? That is exactly what Stephen proclaimed in his speech. And our brother spoke this morning on the story of Moses, according to chapter 7 of Acts. This is also in Stephen's talk. After that Stephen said, "We are so proud of our law, but what God told Moses to tell us we did not do. We did not want to obey."
2. About this temple. It is all very good to have the ark of God in the tabernacle, and later the temple was built. This is all very good. And we are so proud of our temple. However, God said that the Most High doesn't live in the temple made by human hands.
3. We are so proud of our circumcision, but our ear and our heart are not circumcised.
4. The Righteous One came and we killed Him.

At that point, the Sanhedrin could not stand him anymore. They dragged him out and stoned him to death. That was the end of Stephen's story. But among the Sanhedrin, there was a young man by the name of Saul. He was so zealous for the traditions of the fathers. He was very young, but the Sanhedrin included him. He couldn't stand Stephen either, and he agreed to the killing of Stephen.

Brothers and sisters, do you see the Stone rejected by the builders? This is the story of Stephen. It is very vivid and specific. The law, the temple, the circumcision.

So he pointed out how they killed the Righteous One who came. Stephen gave us a picture of how the builders essentially rejected the Cornerstone. I should say that they rejected the Stone, but within the next year, Saul started to persecute all Christians.

Thank the Lord that on the way to Damascus, the Risen Lord appeared to him and he completely changed. It took a few days. For 3 days his eyes were completely blind. But thank the Lord that someone came to him and said "brother Saul, the One you saw on the way was Christ Jesus."

Saul went to the desert for 3 years. He had time to think over what the whole thing meant. It was different from what he had learned before. He was familiar with the Old Testament. He was zealous of their own Jewish religion. But he started to change in a big way.

About 20 years later, he wrote Romans, Galatians, Corinthians. In all these letters, he addressed what Stephen spoke about the law. Galatians 2, "We are justified not by the works of the law but by faith in Christ alone." This is about the law.

About the temple, "now we are God's temple. We are God's house. Now Christ Jesus is the foundation, there is no other foundation."

About the circumcision, "It is not important whether one is circumcised, but it is important that one is a new creation."

About this Righteous One, Paul wrote so much about the righteousness of Christ. "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

So brothers and sisters, you see what Stephen gave his life for? This stone, rejected by the builders, now became the Chief Cornerstone. This is now what Apostle Paul is trying to tell us.

Thank the Lord. Think about it. Christ Jesus being the Cornerstone. This was precious to Peter and Stephen. This is precious to Paul, and should be precious to you and me. If we really understand that Christ Jesus is that Cornerstone, and there is no other Cornerstone, we will be the living stones. We will be able to build together as His spiritual house. We thank the Lord for that.

This morning our brother spoke on the reproach of Christ. Nothing is easy. Blood was shed. People who followed Him were persecuted. But now, He is the foundation. So I will leave that with you.

Living Stone, Rejected by Man

Now the second matter of that Living Stone, it is very interesting that it speaks of this Living Stone rejected by Man. When we speak of the Cornerstone rejected by the builders, there is this big battle. Satan is behind it. Religion is behind it. They don't want Jesus to be the Cornerstone. They don't want Jesus to be the foundation. There is the big fight.

But we see the Lord Jesus as the Living Stone, we are not talking about the foundation anymore. We are talking about Jesus Christ being the Living Stone. We all come to Him to become living stones as well. When he mentions this Living Stone, he says "this Living Stone rejected by man."

What does that mean? That means that even you and I, when we look at Christ Jesus, we may think it is not convenient to follow Him. We may think that we will lose out if we follow Him. If we follow Him we are going to suffer. Just like our brother shared this morning, this is the reproach of Christ. So we may actually stand back.

But here he says, "this Living Stone, rejected". When we come to Him, we become living stones being built together into a Spiritual House. This is wonderful.

This Living Stone, our Christ Jesus, comes to us. Because He is the Living Stone, He is full of life. For us, it is not enough to have the life there. The word "living" is a verb, so it is not only enough to have this life, we have to live it out. So thank the Lord for that.

The picture that is shown to us is this Person who is full of life, and is able to cause us to live a life like Him. Also, because He is rejected, you and I can see the sign of the cross on Him. Thank the Lord, brothers and sisters, that we are given such a good picture of what we ought to be.

When we say we want to be conformed to the image of Christ, it is not only the life, it is not only the living, but also the cross. Thank the Lord for that.

Dear brothers and sisters, think about the life of Christ and living it out. I will give you a few examples.

Remember when Jesus met Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a learned person who felt something lacking in his life. He must have spoken to his Pharisee friends. He said, "Sir, we all feel that you have come from God.", but the Lord did not let him finish, immediately saying, "you have to be born from above. You have to be born again." Thank the Lord that He emphasized this. That we have to be born of heaven.

We have to remember that we have to be connected to heaven. If one day we are not connected to heaven, we will feel very down. Let us remember that our daily lives need to be connected to heaven.

In another story, our Lord Jesus saw this Samaritan woman. This woman was very smart. She knew religion and many other things, but she had a miserable life. Her marriage life was horrible, and she didn't dare let people see her. So when she was coming to the well to get water, Jesus was there waiting for her. "You need living water." Thank the Lord! After their conversation, the woman dropped her bucket, went back to her village and told everyone that she had seen the Messiah.

The Lord Jesus brought His wonderful life to the Samaritan woman. She now had a different life. This is not just about the Samaritan woman. It has to do with you and me.

You may have a perfect life, but there are times when you are down. I know that there were times I made big mistakes. There have been long periods of time where I messed up. But brothers and sisters, there is one thing I am sure you and I have experienced, just come to worship Him. Things will immediately be different.

Then there was this person sitting before the temple for 38 years. The Lord came and healed him. This man stood up, with a completely new life. Again, brothers and sisters, this is not a subject for us to give a gospel talk to other people. This is a subject for you and for me in our lives. There are times when we feel that we cannot move forward any more. Especially the younger ones. "No one loves me. I don't know what to do. I don't know what the meaning of my life is." The wonder is that we can come to Jesus. Then His life will enable us to step up again.

There was this man born blind. And other people said, "this man is blind. Is it because of his father or his mother's sin." And the Lord came and said, "it is not because his father or mother sinned, but upon him will be displayed the glory of God." This man started to see. If you look at John 9, how many verses were about this man's physical ability to see? Maybe just the first 5 verses. The rest of the chapter was about how this man's spiritual eyes were opened. He sees that the One who opened his eyes is different.

"I don't know if this Man is a sinner, but I do know one thing: I was blind but now I see!". His spiritual eyes were opened. Last night our brother Godwin reminded us that our spiritual eyes

need to be opened again. Brothers and sisters, we read a lot of things that will not allow your eyes to be opened, and you may read many things that do not help you open your eyes.

Come to the Lord honestly, that He may open the Bible so that every chapter means something. Every time you hear brothers and sisters speak, you may get something real. That your eyes may be opened.

Let me give you another example. In chapter 11 of John, Martha and Mary's brother died. They told the Lord and He came. Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had come earlier, my brother would not have died." And you'd think that Mary would have been more spiritual, but she said the same thing. "Lord, if you had come earlier, my brother would not have died."

Our Lord said, "I am the resurrection and the life.", and He called Lazarus from the grave. This changed Martha and Mary.

A few days later there was a feast and Mary brought this alabaster jar. She poured out the perfume from the jar unto the Lord. Many felt that it was such a waste, but the Lord said "wherever the gospel is preached, you have to tell the story of this woman."

Brothers and sisters, Mary said nothing. But what Mary did was such a praise to the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus came and gave us His life. He Himself is the Living Stone. We come to Him and we become many, many living stones.

The other thing is about the cross. Remember that Peter called Jesus the Living Stone, rejected by man. To be rejected is to have the cross.

If we really want to follow the Lord Jesus, we cannot avoid the cross. We remember that this person Whom we want to be like, to Whom we want to be conformed to, He has the image of the cross upon Him. So we cannot avoid that.

The Apostle Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ. Therefore it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." Brothers and sisters, if we want to follow the Lord Jesus, we must take up the cross and be crucified with Him. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. This is the first reason for the cross.

There is a second reason for the cross. Remember that we are supposed to be built up as a Spiritual House. The first time Solomon built the house of God, there were the stones that were brought in to be built together to be God's house. The Bible records that when the stones were brought together, there was no sound of cutting or grinding. There was no sound of any iron tool. Every single stone had already been cut to size, ground to size. So when they were put together to be the house, they did not have to be cut again.

What does this mean? If you and I are to be built up to be the House of God, you and I need to go through the cross. We need to allow the cross to do things on us. The things that are not worthy of the house of God have to be cut away first. Our rough edges have to be ground smooth, so that we can be put together beside our brother.

There is the story in 1 Kings 6:7.

There is a third reason for the cross. Remember the Lord Jesus said "on this rock I will build my church.". Immediately after that, Jesus told His disciples how He would go to Jerusalem to suffer. Peter said, "no, Lord, you cannot. Let this not happen to you." The Lord immediately told His disciples that "anyone who wants to follow me must take up His cross and follow Me."

Brothers and sisters, this is right after the Lord Jesus saying "I will build my church". To take up the cross and follow Him is necessary for the building of His church. If we are not willing to take up the cross, then we are not working. We are not qualified to be any part of His church.

I cannot say that the cross is beautiful, but the cross is necessary. It is important to you and me. If we do not allow the cross to work on us, we cannot be built together. If I am not willing to be worked on by the cross, then I am not worthy to be with you. I will only be a trouble to you. I will only be a trouble to my Lord. This is something we have to remember - to be a living stone for God's house.

The third thing about you and I being living stones is the Holy Spirit. The only governing principle in the house of God is the Holy Spirit. Brothers and sisters, when we talk about the Holy Spirit, we must speak of Him with great respect. The Holy Spirit is not a force we can borrow to do things. The Holy Spirit is one with Christ Jesus and our Heavenly Father. We cannot think of the Holy Spirit without Christ Jesus, or the Heavenly Father.

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.
Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."
Romans 8:9 NKJV

Here we see that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ are one. Brothers and sisters, do you see the Holy Spirit in this verse? The Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ? They are all one. If we think this way, we will give the Holy Spirit more respect. Then we will recognise that without the Holy Spirit guiding us, we will not know what to do.

In Genesis, the Lord told Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And the Lord said "the day you eat of it, you will die." Adam ate it, and do you know how long Adam lived? Over 900 years. So did God say something in vain? He said "the day you eat of it you will die", and Adam went on to live 900 years. What is going on?

Physically he lived, but spiritually he was totally disconnected from God. From that time on, Adam wouldn't know what God thought. God would not talk to him for 900 years. So spiritually he is dead.

In Ezekiel 36, there is a verse that talks about God giving us a new heart and a new spirit, and God's Spirit would live in that new spirit. So now God's Spirit comes back to man. If we repent and believe in God, His Spirit comes back.

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."
Ezekiel 36:26-27 NKJV

So here you see that there is a new heart and a new spirit which God will give us. In addition to that, God places His Spirit in ours. We are different from Adam. We are no longer the same as Adam. We have a new spirit within us. It is an organ in which the Holy Spirit can dwell in. Thank the Lord, brothers and sisters, this is the grace of God to you and to me. He really wants you to be connected to Him. He really wants you and I to listen to His voice. How is He going to do that? He is going not only to put a new heart and spirit in us, He is going to put His Spirit in us. This is truly wonderful!

That night when the Lord was about to leave his disciples, He told them that He would be sending the Holy Spirit to them. And the Holy Spirit would abide in them. Prior to that, the disciples did not know who the Holy Spirit was. Of course when they read the Old Testament they read about the Spirit of God. but that night, the Lord Jesus showed them how important the Holy Spirit would be to them.

From the next day on, the Lord would not be with them. But they are not to worry, because the Holy Spirit would come. The Father would send the Holy Spirit to them. He will not leave them, and dwell in them as the Comforter. When they are sad, He will comfort them. And He would teach them. The Bible is so hard. I have read it so many times and I cannot really relate to much of it. But the Holy Spirit comes to teach the Bible to me. Not only are my brothers and sisters teaching me, the real teacher is the Holy Spirit. If I rely and revere the Holy Spirit, He will open my eyes and I can understand 1 Peter 2.

That night, the Lord said that the Holy Spirit would testify of Him. Who in the world really knows Christ Jesus? The Holy Spirit knows Him. And the Holy Spirit would tell us who Christ Jesus really is.

We have had WCCC for so many years, and one of the main purposes is for us to know Christ. The most important thing is for us to rely on the Holy Spirit. We must humble ourselves to tell the Holy Spirit "unless you open my eyes, I will not understand. Unless you make me humble, I will not be able to understand. I can probably talk and teach others, but I won't understand you." We thank the Lord that the Holy Spirit came to do that.

The Holy Spirit comes to glorify Christ Jesus in you and in me. The Holy Spirit will come into us and tell us what the Lord Jesus said, but finally, He is going to glorify Christ in you and in me. Dear brothers and sisters, it is something we all desire to have. We desire to see the glory of the Lord. We desire to really feel the glory of the Lord. If we are humble enough, we know that we will not be satisfied if we do not see His glory. There is something lacking. We need to see His glory. The Holy Spirit will help you really see His glory.

Thank the Lord that when we come to the conference, we see our brothers and sisters who love the Lord display the glory of the Lord. We thank the Lord for that. But do I see for myself that the Lord Jesus is so good, and that I cannot be without Him? He is the most beautiful, the most marvelous and the most wonderful. How do I know that? The Holy Spirit will help you and me see that all this is absolutely true.

The fifth thing is about this thing called conviction. The Spirit will convict us about sin, for righteousness and judgment. Brothers and sisters, so often we feel that we have done nothing

wrong. Or that it is always someone else's fault. We are not convicted. But if we are convicted, then our thinking will be totally different. We come back to the Lord and allow the Lord to do wonderful things in us. Then we will see that it is not my wife's fault, it is our fault. It is not our brother and sisters' fault, it is our fault.

This is what conviction means. The Holy Spirit comes to convict us. No one else can convict you or me. Thank the Lord that the Holy Spirit convicts you and me. The Lord Jesus knew that on the next day He would no longer be with His disciples, and they would need to start building His church. So from the next day, they would need the Holy Spirit to lead them. He would tell them what the Holy Spirit would do for them, and they would have to follow Him.

Lord, your heart and mind to your people is tremendous throughout the generations. And your heart and mind towards each one of us is also tremendous. That we can never fully understand your expectations for each one of us. So many times we are so disappointed in ourselves, but we thank you that you always give us hope to seek and serve you once again. So Lord, we just pray that you have mercy and grace on us. Lift us up from the dirt, that we can see that you are the wonderful Stone, that wonderful Rock, the foundation of your church. You are the Living Stone and our guide. You move us forward. Thank you Lord. In the name of our Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.