

**Hopewell ARP Prayer Meeting, Wednesday, July 29, 2020**  
**Devotional on 1Peter 2:4–5**

<sup>4</sup> *Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,* <sup>5</sup> *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.*

For what reason does the apostle so urge them to be holy (v1) and hungry (v2)? And why is this hunger especially for the Lord (v3, cf. 2Pet 3:18)?

Because Jesus Himself is the Temple, the Priest, the Sacrifice, *par excellence*. And we ourselves are being built up upon Him as temple, priesthood, and sacrifices.

As Jesus told the woman at the well in John 4, God's place of worship is no longer physical. Neither on the mountain nor in Jerusalem. Gathering is required, but the place where this gathering worships is "in Spirit" because God is Spirit. Solomon's prayer anticipated this, when he acknowledged that heaven and the highest heaven could not contain God, much less a physical temple (cf. 1Kings 8:27).

This makes it all the more marvelous that when the church is being built and grown and sanctified in Jesus, Who is its Chief Cornerstone, it is actually being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph 2:22), Who indeed fills the church with all the fullness of God (Eph 2:19)—the church that is the body of Him Who fills all in all (Eph 1:23), which is why the Lord Jesus gave Himself in the first place (Eph 2:10, and gave each of us also the gift of being gifts (Eph 2:11).

Now we see why it is so urgent that we purify our Christian character and feed our Christian growth. For, it is thus that God's temple is built, staffed, and consecrated unto Him.

As we pursue sanctification and attend upon the means of grace, we are like Bezalel (cf. Ex 31:2–3) and the skillful workmen of old, participating in the construction of God's house of worship. What effort and care ought to go into this construction! What craftsmanship and attention to detail! What devotion of heart unto God!

But we are not just the "spiritual house" that v5 describes but also "a holy priesthood." Would we allow the Levites and sons of Aaron to be more careful about outward ritual cleanness, than we are about righteousness of heart and mind and mouth and hand? God forbid! For our entire life in this world, we are about to come, less than seven days hence, to engage in our priestly function.

But what shall we bring, as such priests, and to such a house? The worship takes place not only with that congregation in glory, but even more than that, in spirit because God is Spirit! And, all of the blood sacrifices have come to an end—the Lord Jesus completing in Himself all that they looked forward to His accomplishing. Christ Himself is now the feast, that we dare not come without Him.

And so, this is the first answer. We come with Christ in hand. And we come to feast upon Christ. He is not only the temple that was rebuilt in three days and the Great High Priest who offered Himself as the once-for-all sacrifice. He is also the feast Whom we enjoy before God!

And the second answer is that we come with our souls in hand. We come to "offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

Throughout the week, we are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God. The teaching of Romans 12:1 is parallel to this, and corresponds to what we learned from 1Peter 2:1–2. But when we come to the assembly of the saints that is built upon Christ... when we come to God's spiritual house... when we come in the function of public worship as the holy priesthood of the new testament... then it is not our bodies that we offer up, but rather we employ our bodies as a means of offering up our souls through Jesus Christ!

And what are spiritual sacrifices? Such things as praise and thanksgiving to God in the assembly (Heb 13:15) that comes from the lips of those who have offered their bodies in doing good and sharing throughout the week (Heb 13:16, cf. Phil 4:18). This includes singing, but especially prayer, which is sometimes called by Scripture to pour one's heart out before the Lord (cf. 1Sam 1:15; Psa 42:4; Psa 62:8; Lam 2:19; etc.), and at other times that which is "offered up" to the Lord.

Now we see why we must be so careful about our souls. When that which was offered in public worship was physical, it would have been a dreadful thing to offer unto God that which was tainted or had cost us rather little. But shall we do so now with our eternal soul, when we bring it to offer through Christ, Who has given Himself to redeem that soul for the purpose of worship?!

No, let it be a powerful weapon against our sin. I am going to be praying soon. I am going to offer myself unto God with the family in the afternoon. I cannot taint my offering with this self-indulgence. I am going to offer myself unto God at the close of the day. I must not taint my offering with this unworthy thought. I am going to come in just a few days into the holy assembly—where Christ is Temple and Priest and Sacrifice, and where we too through Him must be temple and priesthood and offer ourselves as sacrifice. I must not come having been slothful and careless about my soul. I will not offer Him that which has cost me nothing. Let me put my hand to the plough now and work out my salvation with fear and trembling instead!

So, let us come now, and offer unto God the spiritual sacrifice of praise.