

Are You A Stone Uncut By Human Hands?

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Father we just come to you this morning, once again Lord, thanking you for the gift of life; life to worship you, life to serve you; the two purpose of salvation Lord, now and in the eternity. Your people who are called by thy name will worship you and will serve you, now and forevermore Lord but we truly do not know how to worship you, we truly do not know how to serve you, Lord. Therefore, we come to you, the author and the finisher of our faith. Teach us oh Lord your ways, show us your paths so that we can truly worship you better and better each day and serve you more efficiently each day Lord because the revelation of who you are is hidden in the word so we just surrender ourselves to you Lord; Spirit of God. We seek the anointing afresh this morning, the anointing that teaches, the anointing that breaks yokes, the anointing that sets captives free; we come under that anointing, teach us Lord. For in Jesus' name we pray Amen! Amen! Amen!

So, we go back to Elijah. I don't know I am stuck with Elijah. I don't know whether you are stuck with Elijah or not, I am stuck with Elijah. For me Elijah is a very important person in the new covenant, not the old but in the new covenant. In the last days, we see the ministry of Elijah unfolding once again before the second coming of Jesus Christ. That's why I think the Lord wants us to tarry with Elijah for some time. So, we were with Elijah at Mount Carmel and we shall once again ascend those steps up with him and be there and when we open the page of the Bible today, the prophets of Baal have run out of time and their time is up. Now it's time for prophet of God so we come to 1 Kings 18:30-32. I hope all those who are listening, you know the background from where we are talking; three and half year of pandemic in Elijah's time, i.e., absolute drought, not a drop from heaven, not a dew on earth: I mean drought like no man has ever seen. One of the lessons I learned without ever going into a dessert is that, you can survive in the dessert if you know how to survive: one, the plants that grow in the dessert like certain kinds of cactus if you cut it and take the thorns off, you squeeze, you will get enough water to quench your thirst.

Second, if you have some kind of a plastic or whatever, if you make a cone out of it and dig a hole in the dessert at night and keep it like that by morning you can get enough water. But when God proclaims a drought, nothing from heaven, nothing on earth not a drop. So, we are talking about a drought like no man has ever seen but that's what he had said "not a drop, not a dew" and three and a half years of such severe drought has still not caused anyone to take a step towards God. They are still caught between two opinions, that's a stunning part. Right? The stunning part and nothing have changed after six months of pandemic. You would think that revival would break out. See, one of the things when I watch this because India is a different case together, we always talk about a Christian nation; when you talk about these interviews with these undecided voters, okay! I still haven't heard one undecided voter saying "I am making a decision because of a Spiritual truth," not one, meaning: six months of this pandemic, unbelievable pandemic and lockdown, economic hardship, death, depression, suicide, everything is not causing these undecided ones to take a step to ask for a Spiritual truth – why I will vote in such a way? Nobody is moving towards God if you look at it with your naked eyes. What God is doing is in secret. Can you understand the reality of the hardness of human heart! that God is trying to get the people back to Him not that He has got any ego, He wants adulation, He wants majority support, nothing – just to save us from ourselves and destruction. So, there he is at the end of the day evening sacrifice has come. They got from morning till evening and now it is time for the evening sacrifice.

1 Kings 18:30-32

³⁰ Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So, all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. ³¹ And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." ³² Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed.

We are not getting into all of that. We will go back to the altar like I said – the entire set of events is orchestrated by God for one purpose and one purpose alone. Okay! We have to understand behind events that take place – every human, universal, events or at a personal level what it is happening is towards orchestrated by God for one thing; at a personal level, at a universal level it is set by prophet himself in verse 37.

1 king 18:37

³⁷ Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again."

Are You A Stone Uncut By Human Hands?

That's the whole purpose that we may know. There is only one God and He is God and that you have turned their hearts back again; not that we have turned, He is doing all these things because He is the one who is allowing all these things to happen so that He can turn our hearts back to Him again. This is the entire purpose, okay! It's not about an election though, it's one of the reasons. It's got nothing bigger than this the whole thing that God does is to turn our hearts back to Him from the world, from our sins, back to God and we saw that last week. Now we will go through the 3-verses quickly and get into the word.

Proverbs 28:13

¹³ He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

Mark 11:25-26

²⁵ "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. ²⁶ But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

Matthew 5:23-24

²³ Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

What is the common thing about these three? The first one is connected with me and God, the second two are connected with me and my brother!

But the common things between all these three is my reconciliation with God. I receive mercy from God if I uncover, confess, forsake – I receive mercy from God. When I am standing to pray, if I am holding something, I forgive so I am reconciled with God and God forgives me. When I am bringing my gift to the altar to God and the God's Spirit reminds me some my brothers got something, go reconcile come back, I am reconciled with God. So, you see the core! You cannot take God out of the picture; You can do all these things and God out of the picture; it still will have no meaning. The common factor about it is that we turn back to God, it's about God because you can get through the mechanism the outside, actions without a heart really seeking God. Therefore, this is not the experience of every man, this can be only the experience of a man or a woman who actually loves God and is missing God and wants that continual relationship or the relationship restored. So, even when we look at these portions, this is not the experience of everybody in the church or in Israel, this can only become the experience of somebody who is actually jealous for his relationship with God and he is willing to deal with anything that comes between him and God and he is willing to pay any price. Look at

Psalms 32:1-4

¹ Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered. ² Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit. ³ when I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all day the long. ⁴ For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.

Let me ask you this question – Is this really true about all sinners? No! they are having a blast.

That's what Asap said; I look at the evil one they all are prospering, nobody's bone is growing old, nobody is groaning in their sin. They are enjoying their sin. They are only adding additives to make sin more pleasurable. That's why now the narcotic bureau is after Hollywood, Bollywood. They are not satisfied with one pleasure alone, they have to keep on adding additives, additives additives...nobody is satisfied with ordinary kind of pleasure anymore. They are not even satisfied with the drink; they want a cocktail; I mean cocktail in everything. So, you will see here this is the experience of a man of God, "when I kept silent," meaning he is the one who was used to confessing and walking with God "when I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long." I am groaning: you are caught between fear and wanting to be reconciled; what will happen if I confess? What will people think? Fear of man and fear of God, fear of God and fear of man, finally fear of God wins. "day and night your hands were heavy upon me" – only somebody who knows God will know the heaviness of His hands otherwise they will not know, they will not know. How will he know the hand of God if he has never experienced the hand of God? Unless you are a son, how will you know the father's discipline? So, this messages which we preach is not for everybody; everybody can hear it, everybody may not receive it! These are the messages for the children of God who desire an intimate relation with God, not the children of God who use God like an ATM card. Not those children who are looking at the hand of

Are You A Stone Uncut By Human Hands?

God like the children of Israel but like Mosses who is looking at the face of God- the two different kinds over there. And that's what God is talking about: So, if you are not interested, there is hardly anything that God can do. It's God who is interested in man, it's God who is the prime mover, He is the one who wants to restore us. So, in Genesis 3:9 - God is interested, Adam and Eve are not. God called Adam and said to him "where are you? My regular time of fellowship, cool time I have come, and you are missing. What happen to you? Where are you?" You don't see Adam crying out 'Lord, I have sinned, I am missing the fellowship.' No, he is hiding. Adam is more like Biden, hiding. God is not hiding, man is hiding. God is searching, man is hiding. Man is not interested in restoration and reconciliation. In Genesis 4:9, it is not man who asked the question, it is God who asked the mason "where is Abel, your brother?" You know where Abel is? He has hidden him, killed him and hidden him in some bushes or something he has hidden him. It is God who is asking "where is your brother?" why? Because you got something, your brother is dead and he can't come back but you still got something against your brother; I am trying to reconcile you with a dead brother so you can walk with me. But Cain says "I don't know! Am I my brother's keeper?" you see he is not interested and because he is not interested, *Genesis 4:16 says*: this is a destiny of every man who is not interested in his walk with God;

Genesis 4:16

¹⁶ Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.

He went away from the presence of the Lord further and further and Cain's generation will go further and further, and they will do great exploits; everything of Cain's generation will be destroyed finally after tenth generation. So, everything that God does is to restore us back to that relationship with Him and we need to realise the entire incarnation of Jesus when God becomes flesh and dwelt among us, His entire sinless life, His death and His resurrection is to bring Jew and gentile back to God. And one is not interested in that relationship, there is actually very little that God can do. He will feed you, but He will not speak to you. Lot of people are just interested with just being fed and not with a conversation, a relationship. But then after a period of time when Israel is not interested in at all and goes into idolatry, God locks up heaven, He locks up heaven. What I am saying is, this is the struggle behind the pulpit: I believe most pulpits not all pulpits or many pulpits, I don't know, I don't know the numbers only God knows. It is impossible to minister consistently to those who are not interested in God with eternal things. It is very difficult to minister to people whose eyes are on the temporal things. You know! The simple example we use every day: your tiny little toe, you don't think about the toe but let's say – Peter went and bought a pair of nice shiny shoes, the kind that people wear these days so they look like crocodiles and all and he is wearing it but after an hour he is in Church and after an hour he realises, it bites, it is too narrow at the front. Now his little toe is complaining loudly. We can't hear it, but he hears it loudly. Now his entire walk, his worship, everything is being defined by that little toe. And lot of people are like that: something happens in their life, you know; they are going through an issue, they are going through a problem, whether it's in the family, personal life, office, business, whatever it is; that thing defines their life. It defines their worship, it defines their walk, it defines their serving, everything and the problem is this – because of that they are not able to hear from God. That's why the fundamental thing Jesus said was "everyday labour to enter into my rest, otherwise you will not be able to hear." Restless people cannot hear from God. That's why in *Mark 1:38*, the most compassionate man who ever walked on earth, Jesus of Nazareth, our Saviour just walked away from the crowd.

Mark 1:38

³⁸ But He said to them, "let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth."

These people are only moved by troubles, they are not interested in a relationship with God. The crowd is full. They have already come early in the morning, the town is packed, it is packed but Jesus walks away because they are just moved by their temporal, they are not interested in the eternal things and whenever Jesus opens His mouth and He teaches, it's all about eternal things; the things that we will carry with us into eternity, the kingdom of God and people are not interested so Jesus walks away. In *John 6:66-67*, He doesn't even mollycoddle His own disciples.

John 6:66-67

⁶⁶ From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. ⁶⁷ Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"

Do you also wanna go away? Nobody is stopping you.

Are You A Stone Uncut By Human Hands?

like; next Sunday we will go back to the church, honestly, I like this. Yesterday also I was telling this at home, in the beginning it was little uncomfortable because we were not used to this. I am not talking about the cameras okay; cameras don't even bother me. I am just looking at the four faces. One thing I know, in the Church we have to look at the tired one, the lazy one, the sleepy one, the angry one; here you know there is only four people, you have been given complete autonomy of free will, meaning: those who are watching online, you can watch or you cannot watch, you can shut if off or you can tune on and wait till the benediction at the end and listen to the concluding song also, it is up to you, it doesn't touch us at all. In a way, we have a freedom to preach form here which was never there before. Now when you go back to Church, now with social distancing of 6-feet where you will be sitting, you can't even ask that one to wake this one up 'coz 6-feet distance is there. Earlier remember, I used to tell wake this one, poke this one, I give you power and authority to poke this one, now you have to get up and go and poke and come back, okay. You are breaking the rules of the government. This was simple, very simple- 3 people, 4 people, they are interested, they are listening and the rest.....

So, we will have to come to that point in our life and God will bring us and everybody doesn't come to that point, please note this if you read the entire narrative from Genesis 1 to Revelation. People will come to that point where everything else has failed, heaven has failed, earth has failed, heaven is brass, earth is iron or iron on brass whichever way okay. Then only we will hear His voice, "come near to me" and we will make a move towards God. Remember, all these days people had heard the shouting and the screaming and the shrieking of the prophets of Baal; jumping, everything was going on. Now their time is up, everything is quiet. There is a deadly stillness in the air. They are tired, nothing has happened, nothing, and they hear the voice of Elijah- the voice of true servant of God: "come near to me."

Let's go back 1kings 18:30-32,

1kings 18:30-32

³⁰ Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So, all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. ³¹ And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." ³² Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed.

Now they had to move away from the altar of Baal and the prophets of Baal towards the prophet of God. Now, they had to take a decision and make a corresponding action; they had to move away and move towards. The altar of baal and the prophets of baal and move towards the prophet of God and the scripture says, Elijah repairs the altar. He takes 12 stones. Elijah knew, Elijah is a man who knows the word very well so, he will not defy the word. He also knows when you build an altar of the Lord, what kind of stones of you should use.

Let's look at-

Exodus 20:25-26

²⁵ And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it. ²⁶ Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.

First instruction, ten commandments are given and then there is a sacrifice to be ordained because of the sins we will do because the commandments are given, immediately we know nobody can keep the commandment, so offerings have to be given, altar is to be build but either it's a simple altar of earth or if you use stones, don't use your tool on it, do not cut the stone.

Deuteronomy 27:5-7

⁵ And there you shall build an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron tool on them. ⁶ You shall build with whole stones the altar of the Lord your God and offer burnt offerings on it to the Lord your God. ⁷ You shall offer peace offerings, and shall eat there, and rejoice before the Lord your God.

Are You A Stone Uncut By Human Hands?

When they enter into the promise land, there are two mountains: mount Gerizim and mount Ebal. One is for cursing and other is for blessing, but cursing is not where the altar is; the altar is where the blessing is.

See, when God repeats something twice, you need to realise there is something bigger than what we think about it, otherwise He wouldn't be so specific about it. Then when the children of Israel finally knew, generation moves in **Joshua 8:30-31**. Joshua takes them, they cross river Jordan and this is what they do.

Joshua 8:30-31

³⁰ Now Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal, ³¹ as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: "an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron tool." And they offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings.

3-times it is mentioned and when it is mentioned 3 times, you can be absolutely sure, a man, a servant of God like Elijah would not use a cut stone, okay. What is God basically telling us? God says, "you can't do it your way and expect God to receive our sacrifice and hear us." Think about it, simply think about it: in the world which we live, everything, from the wood to the diamond it's not used or has value unless it is cut. You can get the best diamond from South Africa but it is brought to Surat or Jerusalem where it is cut, these are two places where diamonds are cut. Even a diamond has to be cut before it is used. The diamond may wander one day end up in British Sovereign's crown, but it has to be cut first. The tree will stand over there but if you have to use the tree, either for firewood in your fireplace or to make furniture, it has to be cut so, we are going from wood to diamond and everything in between. If it is not cut, you can go to a clothe store and a Raymond's wherever perfect man works now, and you can take this entire length of clothes but it is useless unless it is cut. What are we wearing; everything is cut, what are we wearing on our feet; it is cut. Everything that we are wearing is cut by human hands, even our hair is cut. You have seen in the world which we live, everything's value is added when we cut it and shape it in the image we like. We have an image, we cut it and fit it to that. But God says, "if you cut it, you will profane it." That's a very powerful word to use if you understand God's language. This is not man's language, this is God's language, and we don't care because profanity has become the norm now, in public discourse. Profanity has become the norm now. Everybody uses, like you see the public media, everybody uses profanity. Now, God is saying "the stone which you use to build my altar, if you use a tool on it you will profane it." Why is He so strict about it? Because the altar, from the first altar that was made in the garden of Eden to every other altar of God is pointing to Christ Jesus, His life, His death is primarily pointing to the Cross of Jesus Christ because there is an altar and sacrifice and God is saying - when you use a tool on it, you are adding something to it. You cannot add anything either the life, the work, the death or the resurrection of Jesus Christ, you cannot! Salvation is entirely, totally, the work of God and God alone. Nothing can you add, and the carnal man doesn't like it. Paul would thunder to the Corinthian Church – I mean, he says: when you see me, I look this thing but when he read his letters, they are very weighty. Now, when you read Paul's letter you get some thunder in your ears, very weighty letters but that's not how he actually spoke. It didn't look like that, that's what he himself says. So, he will say we preach Christ crucified.

1 Corinthians 1:23-24

²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

And you know, pastors struggle to preach this. They think they have to add something to the message of Christ to attract the people. Something has to be added. Paul says I never add anything. I cannot add because if I add anything to the gospel, I profane it. You cannot add anything to the gospel, then it is no longer the gospel. You cannot add. That's why God is not fascinated by crowds. The whole idea is how did the crowds come? Did you profane the gospel? Did you add to the gospel? If we add to the cross, we are adding to the work of Christ. We actually admire those who have cut the altar, nice, shaped stones and put a marbles slab also on the top. That's why in our houses; every year, new-new things are coming up. We never knew any of these things, in old days what did we knew? Now I don't know. It can never catch up with the things with which we can make your flooring and kitchen slab. It's like unbelievable. You know, stuff is coming up, but the Cross of Jesus is still the old rugged Cross, it has never changed, it is still never changed. Life flows only from there, okay. It's not an ornate cross. It's just two pieces of logs put together for utility alone just to hang a man. Many men were hung. So, there were many crosses in Romans history but only from one cross, came the life. Everybody was crucified to the cross by the Romans, it was only one man who crucified Himself to the Cross. Ps. Vijay even put it more beautifully, I think it was yesterday right? Or day before yesterday. It was only one man who was crucified to the cross by Himself, by His Father and He hung there, not the nails that held Him, He hung there by His free will, okay. That's an old, rugged cross. You cannot improve on it; you cannot

Are You A Stone Uncut By Human Hands?

change it. From there it is the life flows and God has told His servants, “don’t use a tool on my altar, don’t use, don’t modify it, don’t make it beautiful to the carnal man, to the flesh” and that’s what He accuses Israel of doing in their days,

Isaiah 65:2-3

² I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who walk in a way that is not good, According to their own thoughts; ³ A people who provoke Me to anger continually to My face; Who sacrifice in gardens, And burn incense on altars of brick.

Okay, altars of brick. That is the nature of Babylon and the sad part is that, so many servants of God within courts is building Babylon, they are not building Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem. Babylon is built by the charisma of man, the intellect of man with all man’s gadgets and ideas and everything and it replaces stones with bricks. And we know that, but lot of new people will not know. You go back to the beginning when Babylon is first mentioned in the Bible which is in

Genesis 11:3

³ Then they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar.

What did they say? They replaced stones with bricks. You see, stone was made by God, brick was designed by man. God gave us water; God gave us grapes and we mixed together and made it into wine. Sometimes, we don’t even mix. Noah planted a vineyard; how did He know? Because God planted a vineyard. God didn’t make wine! Noah made wine. I am not saying you should not drink wine, sometimes it’s good to drink wine if you have a problem with the stomach like Timothy but I am just giving you a simple example, what God gives and what we make out of it. That’s what He is telling them. This started in Babel and worship is there in Babel, there is worship in Jerusalem. The worship of Babel is always directed to the flesh. Its human effort: let us come, let us make. Look at what they say in verse 4, what is the whole attitude?

Genesis 11:4

⁴ And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

This whole thing is from the devil. Remember? He also uses; I will, I will, I will. When a set of people who say, I will, I will, I will, they will say; let us, let us to heaven. This is not towards God, it’s almost like in challenging God - we can do, we can do it we can do. We are in competition with God. The devil was competing with God to exalt his throne above God. So that’s what happens when you replace stones with bricks, we need to understand this spiritual symbolism and meanings of what God is doing. God is saying, don’t add to my work, don’t add to my work and that’s why Paul is so upset with church in Galatia and you have to look at the strong language he uses to the church in Galatia and to all churches if they depart from that.

Galatians 1:6

⁶ I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

When you listen to a different gospel, you are turning away from Christ. They pervert the gospel of Christ by adding to it, by changing it. What do they do? But he says, even if I later come because he is putting himself in the category, if you don’t walk with God, anybody can fall away from faith, right? Anybody can fall away from faith. So, Paul is saying, even if we or an angel from heaven: almost every cult you see, they have angels, every major forms of aberrations you will see there’s an angel. First the angel of Lord Jesus gave the law to Moses and after that other angels supposedly have come and added to it. One angel was resulted in Islam, another angel resulted in Mormons. So, like that so many, either angels, dreams, visions, all are from God? Many are from devil. They can come from God; they can come from devil too.

Galatians 1:8

⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

Language he uses, not once but twice-

Are You A Stone Uncut By Human Hands?

Galatians 1:9

⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Twice he says that. He is actually pronouncing a curse. When people don't believe in the new covenant, there can be curses; the self-afflicted curses because you choose to listen to a gospel that takes away the work of Jesus Christ, that adds to the work of Jesus Christ, that denies the work of the cross. When you believe that and walk under it, you are coming under a curse. And God says, "don't use cut stones." My altar will not profane, the work of my son will not be profaned. And this is the struggle in ministry. We may use humor, we may use illustration, that is all fine to explain a truth better, to make people understand but we don't add to the gospel, we don't change the gospel, we don't change the gospel, we don't change truth, we don't fool around with it. An altar of uncut stones! Look at the deeper truth in it,

1 Kings 18:31

³¹ And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name."

Each stone represented a son, okay. So, when you put 12 stones together, you get Israel. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah.... like you go there, when you put it all together, corporately they have one identity. What is that? Israel. Individually, they have their own identity. They have their individual identity, and they have their corporate identity. Corporately they are called, Israel. Individually, each of the sons of Israel. Now we need to realise, the first uncut stone is Jesus Christ.

Daniel 2:34

³⁴ You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.

There came a stone, but that stone was not cut by human hands, it was not cut by human hands and it broke the entire image into pieces; okay, that's Christ.

Isaiah 28:16

¹⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily.

So, there is a foundation stone God has laid, a corner stone has laid. It is a stone uncut by man, the stone was not cut by man, the stone was cut by God, that was His own son. He is the cornerstone, and in any construction, any civil engineer will tell you, that stone matters; it is from there he takes his alignment. For the alignment to be taken, you have to use that first stone, that's a big thing. Like, in Hindu and all, the pooja and the money will be buried under it and all kind of things are done from there. They don't bury money under every stone than nobody will build the house, we will be searching for money. They don't do pooja for every stone if you look at it, they don't do it. They do it for the first stone. So, somewhere in the conscious of pagan religions also, there is something the cornerstone matters, that is the stone, okay. Meaning: where do you and I get the significance from? It is from that cornerstone. How do I know whether I am in line or not? I have to align myself with cornerstone. So, Christ is called the cornerstone and in Zachariah He is called the capstone. He is the cornerstone and the capstone also, okay.

In **1 Peter 2:6**, this is repeated again because what they did in the old covenant, we are understanding in the new covenant.

1 Peter 2:6

⁶ 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.

There it says, will not act hastily and here it is written so you will see, sometime there is little difference between what is said because this has spiritual meanings. So, Jesus Christ is the first uncut stone and then in the same chapter, verse 4 to 5, scripture talks about other stones which will be put around and above Him.

Are You A Stone Uncut By Human Hands?

1 Peter 2:4-5

⁴ Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 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.

So, we are also living stones uncut by human hands, we are cut by the Spirit of God. So, you need to realize the altar symbolise much more, something bigger than any Israel would understand. It represented the kingdom of God on earth, it represented His bride, it represented His church. The cornerstone was Christ, and every other stone that would be aligned to it would be a living stone, it was never cut by a man, meaning: I can teach till I am breathless still I cannot save any man. Salvation is entirely the work of God, no preacher can save anybody, nobody can save themselves. I can repent until I have no tears left, but still grace doesn't have to come. There are people in pagan religions who have repented probably better than most Christian, while a simple fellow comes, repent; grace of God comes and he walks away free. So, it is not my repentance that saves me, it does not save me because there are lot of people in the world who have truly repented of their actions and turned around and gone into incredible good works and changed society and went to hell, because if you repented from your dead works and then did good works and made it to heaven than salvation was of and not of God, you were that beautiful stone, shaped by your own efforts and God says; wow, I was looking for a man like you. God says nobody, it is my Son and my Son alone. See, these are the things that upset us but you need to be upset before you can be saved. You and I cannot be cut by human hands to become part of what God is building. Our education is not going to save us, it can help us to serve Him but it is not going to save us. Our intelligence is not going to save us, our money is not going to save us, our talents is not going to save us, our strength is not going to save us, you can add to it....

Only God can save us. This is the mystery of salvation. There are so many things in the mystery of salvation.

1 Kings 6:7

⁷ And the temple, when it was being built, was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built.

Now turn to **Genesis 49:24**

Genesis 49:24

²⁴ But his bow remained in strength, And the arms of his hands were made strong By the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),

If you have notice, you know! I have seen many quarries in my lifetime in different places, if you have seen it, the quarry is actually one big stone, one big stone, meaning: the entire temple of Solomon was built from one stone. Let me show you the mystery of salvation okay, this is what defies our imagination.

Revelation 13:8

⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Ephesians 1:4-5

⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

When were we chosen?! Before the foundation. So, what we are seeing is 6000 years of human history, just a drama that is being played out. Everybody who is saved is already saved, everybody who is not saved is already unsaved, everybody who is in heaven is in heaven, everybody who is in hell is already in hell, only we will experience because we are caught in time. For God, nothing is a mystery. He has seen the end from the beginning, it is over. We who are in time, are caught in time.

So, there was only one big, huge stone and from that stone, pieces were made and together it is made and suddenly you realize - He is the cornerstone, He is the capstone and we were always in Him-that's the bride of Christ. Nothing is mystery for God, everything is mystery for us and for the demons and for the angels because they have no clue of what's happening! Only the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit knows. So, what we call salvation is just history, okay! We are historical beings; we are caught in history. The next thing we need to note about uncut, don't cut the stones in the altar; be very, very careful, don't add anything to it.

Deuteronomy 27:1-8

¹ Now Moses, with the elders of Israel, commanded the people, saying: "Keep all the commandments which I command you today. ² And it shall be, on the day when you cross over the Jordan to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, that you shall set up for yourselves large stones, and whitewash them with lime. ³ You shall write on them all the words of this law, when you have crossed over, that you may enter the land which the Lord your God is giving you, 'a land flowing with milk and honey,' just as the Lord God of your fathers promised you. ⁴ Therefore it shall be, when you have crossed over the Jordan, that on Mount Ebal you shall set up these stones, which I command you today, and you shall whitewash them with lime. ⁵ And there you shall build an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron tool on them. ⁶ You shall build with whole stones the altar of the Lord your God, and offer burnt offerings on it to the Lord your God. ⁷ You shall offer peace offerings, and shall eat there, and rejoice before the Lord your God. ⁸ And you shall write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law."

So, if you went to Mount Ebal that day, it was very strange. There were so many stones; there was one altar probably with 12 stones, uncut and that is the altar and then there were lots of flat stones, all whitewashed and on which the law of the Lord was! Meaning: you cannot have an altar without the word of God, they go together. You cannot have an altar without the word of God, they go together. There were two types of stones, lot of people have the altars without the word of God and there is much activity, but God says 'No,' you cannot have one without the other and most beautifully Jesus explains this out of all people, is to this Samaritan women in **John 4:23**, because what is the altar? that is your sacrifice. What is your sacrifice? Your act of worship.

John 4:23

²³ ***But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.***

What is truth? The word of God: "Father, sanctify them by your word, truth; your word is truth."

What is faith? Hearing and hearing from the word of God. Are we seeing what God is doing? God says: your act of sacrifice is which is the outward act, the act of service, cannot be detached from the truth that should be inside. So, David knows, he looks for truth in inward paths.

There is an altar and there is the word of God and the word of God should define your altar. The word of God does not define your altar; that's your sacrifice, your worship, your religious service; whatever, whatever. The word of God does not define it, God will not accept it. There are so many churches, there are so many denominations, and they have their own ways of worshipping – the simple question to ask is; does it agree with God's truth? You can have different patterns, that's okay; prayer in the beginning, worship, you can have it, you can have your own pattern as Godly but that's not the point. The point is: whatever your pattern is, does it agree with the word of God? Does it agree with the truth! The question God is asking is, are you bound by God's word? If you look in **Deuteronomy 12**, it is talking about all the sacrifices, how the worship of sacrifice should be given. Look at **verse 8** what he says-

Deuteronomy 12:8

⁸ ***"You shall not at all do as we are doing here today—every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes***

He says-don't do it what you think is okay because for many of us, worship is about us, worship is not about God. That's why we looked at those 3-things.

If you hide or cover sin, God will not hear-because if you hide your sin and come to worship God, then worship is about you. You are just trying to act that you are a worshipper before people, it is about you, okay. You stand to pray, and you have something against your brother, but you still pray then you are praying to yourself, you are just praying to others. It's about your prayer, it is about you and it's not about God, it is not about hearing from God and God should answer my prayers. You bring a gift to the altar and the Holy Spirit reminds your brother's got something but you still offer and go, it's about you and God is saying there, Moses is saying, "don't do as we are doing over here, each man according to what you want."

Deuteronomy 12:38

³² ***"Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it."***

Are You A Stone Uncut By Human Hands?

Don't add, don't take away, because we are very good at math when it comes to God's word and not in the classroom. You know, we either add or subtract and God says-don't do that. The altar will be an entirely of uncut stones and beside it will be the word of God. The word of God has to agree with the altar, and the altar has to agree with the word of God-like we say: The Holy Spirit will never contradict the word of God, and the word of God will never contradict the Holy Spirit, they go together. Where does confusion comes? It is when you don't look into the word of God and say, the spirit told me. See, God does not want us to cut the stone. He is not interested in our beauty or aesthetics. I know, yesterday, people were all fascinated when they saw the church but the first thing that came to my mind was this: how many days will it last? Two weeks, 3 weeks?

Have you noticed that, anything new we buy for ourselves, the joy doesn't last it for more than a few days because God made it that way. You are not supposed to find your joy or satisfaction continually in anything except me (God) because He is interested in only one thing, **Psalm 96:9**- our sacrifice, our worship should be defined by this.

Psalm 96:9

⁹ Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth.

His holiness, that's simple as that. There is beauty but beauty in holiness. The carnal mind does not find beauty in holiness, that's why the carnal mind does not find beauty in righteousness, but the scepter of His kingdom is the scepter of His righteousness. We are asked to seek that first. So, God says, don't play around with those stones. You may think, I will dress it nicely; nobody wants to buy a simple chicken and bring it home, they want dressed chicken. When I was young, growing up, I was a chicken dresser. We want to dress up everything.

In **Deuteronomy 12:4**, God tells them...

Deuteronomy 12:4

⁴ You shall not worship the Lord your God with such things.

Meaning: you shall not worship God their way. Don't do it their way. You know, what the church has literally, in any denomination, why do they lose its power? Because power comes from God. Why does it lose the power? Because we depart from His ways, because it's all about holding the people and we, ultimately are dependent upon the people and not upon God and to depend upon the people, you have to constantly keep in pace with the world because people who are in the world define the world. And God says, be very, very careful.

Deuteronomy 12:29-31

²⁹ "When the Lord your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, ³⁰ take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.'

³¹ You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.

He says, this is the problem.

You shall not worship your Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.

Literally that is what happened! They just gave away our children to the world because we just tweaked with worship. We don't realize, we blame the education system; the education system has nothing to do with it, we just tweaked worship in the house, we just changed the altar, we just changed priorities. That's all it took! because our worship will ultimately define our life. What is the altar for? The altar is for worship, it's to offer a sacrifice, but God is saying, even before you put anything over there, just check your stones, check your altar - are they made of cut stones or are they made of uncut stones. Second thing, is it defined by the word of God? Are you able to say that this work is not my work, this work is the work of God? That's the work done in faith, uncut stone, it's a work of God. Okay, man did the quarry and was not cut by man, it was cut by God. From there they took the stones. Was your life, was your service defined by the word of God? What you are doing, is it defined by the word of God? They are side by side. You see, on a fateful day, representing of a man flesh in the house of God, you know who it is? The first King of Israel. The man of flesh, in the house of God who is also saved at that point of time.

1 Samuel 13:9

⁹ So Saul said, "Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me." And he offered the burnt offering.

So, there is an altar and there is a sacrifice.

1 Samuel 13:10-12

¹⁰ Now it happened, as soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him. ¹¹ And Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, ¹² then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord.' Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering."

You look, everything that he is doing is connected with people, the pressure. He is a restless man. Look at what Samuel tells Saul -

1 Samuel 13:13-14

¹³ And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you. For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. ¹⁴ But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you."

He says, you see; you got an altar and you have a sacrifice and I smelt it, I could smell this when I was coming, I saw the smoke, I could smell it. The problem is, you have an altar and you have offered a sacrifice, you have offered it unto God but you haven't obeyed the word of the Lord, your sacrifice is contrary to the commandments of God. See, for all that you know, the altar might have been of the uncut stones, everything might have been right, only problem is he did not obey the word of the Lord. So, he says; you are discarded. God has found a man after His own heart. What does it mean? Now we have another definition of what it means - a man after God's own heart: a man who will seek to obey God in everything, that's David. So, these two goes together. You cannot separate the one from other. So, finally his final indictment over Saul is in **1 Samuel 15:22**.

1 Samuel 15:22

²² So Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams."

He says, if your sacrifice and your obedience don't go together, God is not interested in your sacrifice. And lot of people have that complaints; I did so much in the church, in homes, you never appreciate me. Children: I did all this but God says, I agree! But you didn't do what I told you to do. You did everything else except what I told you to do. That's why the Bible says – it is impossible to please God without faith. The usual illustration I give to people everywhere I go – imagine, someone invites me to their house, and once a year I go and they cook everything, Hyderabad style; chicken biryani, mutton biryani, beef biryani, all biryani is there and then along with that, they have a little white rice, little dal and curd also and after prayer and all, I get up to eat. I take a little white rice, little curd and dal and the person is saying – pastor, I made this all for you but I said, "sister, I don't like biryani" but I made it with so much love, so much sacrifice; but you didn't ask me what I like. Everything you made was what you like and you think what I like. All you have to do is, give me a call or ask my wife – what does pastor like. She would have said, throw some coconut into it.

So much of what we do does not please God because to please God, it has to be done by faith and faith comes by hearing and hearing from the word of the God. So, God says, "I don't want your sacrifice, I don't want your offerings, I am looking for somebody who obeys my voice and I will have somebody like that" He says. He is not so much looking at the quantum of our sins, He is looking at the quantum of our obedience in repentance. No man sinned like David in the Bible. I mean you can't take any sin out of him, he has done it all but no man repented like him either because he was a man after God's own heart, like I said in the introduction; if you are not interested in God and the things of God, you can't preach to those people and even Jesus walks away. So that's what happened to this guy, Saul. So, Understand the nature of the altar – the word of God and the altar has to go together, the word of God should define your altar and the altar should be defined by the word of God. It goes together, side by side. The word of God or faith should lead to obedience and ultimately, God found one man

Are You A Stone Uncut By Human Hands?

like that – it wasn't David, it was the Son of David. In **Hebrew 10:5-7**, you will see how the altar, the sacrifice, the voice of the Lord, everything is defined in one person.

Hebrew 10:5-7

⁵ Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. ⁶ In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. ⁷ Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me—To do Your will, O God.'"

It's a superstition statement; He says, "in the word of God, it is written-your will. I will do exactly what you want me to do. My entire life will be on stretch of sacrifice." That's why when we teach, we say how are saved? By the life of Christ, the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. All three matter. If He had lived His life for Himself, He couldn't have become God's atonement. So, He says-behold, I have come. This is exactly what God is asking of us in Romans 12; offer your body as a living sacrifice, I don't want dead sacrifice, I don't want dead sacrifices, I have had enough of that in the old covenant, too many; I want living sacrifices. What is living sacrifices? It is the man or the woman who rises up each day and say-behold, I have come to do your will and in the volume of your book, it is written about me, show me your will. So, Jesus said-when you pray, this is how you need to pray; your name, your kingdom, your will be done and when you do that, you are not living your life, you are living a life that is pleasing to me. It is a living sacrifice. When I breathe, it smells good. Wherever you see this sacrifice, sacrifice in the old covenant which God accepted and it says it was a sweet-smelling aroma. Do you think He like the smell of cooked food or burnt offerings? No! it is just the spiritual reflection of the life of Jesus Christ and the life of every believer who lives that life in and through Christ. He says, your life smells good, you smell good. That's what God is asking about. That's where the Bible says, "it is impossible to please the God without faith." faith is the only way we can please God. So, here was one-person, ultimate sacrifice, perfect obedience, complete sacrifice and when God saw Him on the cross, His life and His death, God was satisfied. That's what **Isaiah 53:10-11** says,

Isaiah 53:10-11

¹⁰ Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. ¹¹ He shall see the labor of His soul and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

So, please remember! Elijah's altar is not a joke, okay. Elijah's altar is not a joke.

Now let us go to another point, **1 kings 18:30-33**

1 kings 18:30-33

³⁰ Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So, all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. ³¹ And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." ³² Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. ³³ And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, "Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood.

The only thing allowed he allowed the people is to do is to bring the water and pour it. Everything else was done by Elijah. So, the question is, why? Why he doesn't he include anybody? Because in the entire crowd, he is the only one who has the life of faith and obedience and God's work can be done by only those who have a life of faith and obedience. The others: when the others are bringing the water and pouring, it is the first act of surrender, it is their first act of surrender, they are not getting involved in the work of God. So, when I train people into ministry, I tell them, when you go on missions, like we all went and were in the first places, you almost did everything, you cleaned the church, you led worship, you preached, you didn't allow anybody to get involved in the work of the church because you are planting a church and you cannot get this unconsecrated, unsundered people involved in the work of God. You did everything and then when one person surrendered and said: pastor, "I want to surrender my life" now you can come and join me. You didn't allow anybody to get involved over there. What is God looking for first? God is not looking for technicians, carpenters and masons, He isn't looking for any of those people, those who can dress the stone and all, oh! Anybody among here who's a butcher, yeah! Yeah! You come! You guys cut the bull. How many woodcutters are here? Okay, 3- He didn't ask. Any masonry here? Okay, come, you make the altar, different things are taking place over here but he did not use different people to do different things, he did it

Are You A Stone Uncut By Human Hands?

all by himself. It's not they were rare in trained people in the crowd, there were no consecrated people in the crowd. Please understand that the first thing God looks: do you have faith? Do you have the obedience that comes from faith? He isn't listening to my voice, He is listening first do I obey His voice? He doesn't listen to our songs first, our prayers first or any of these things. So many prayers we say; God answered, even if you hadn't prayed you would have got it; it was not an answer to a prayer, it was simply the mercy of a loving God. Oh, I got a job! 500 gentiles also got a job so what's the difference between them and you. Oh, I got a promotion, 300 people also got the promotion, so what's the difference between them and you. I bought a new car, they bought two new cars. So, don't bring all these and say God answered my prayers. Sometimes, it has got nothing to do with your prayer. Tell me one thing in your life which the gentile hasn't got. So, the question is, is there faith? Do you believe? Will you obey? Remember Cain and Abel! We heard right? Cain offered an excellent sacrifice, but it was cut by human hands. If you spiritually look at every stone in Cain's altar was cut by him, every offering on that altar was his work, his sweat, his labor, but how did Abel's become more excellent? There is one word used there – by faith. He listened to the voice of God and gave what God wanted His way, God's way and not his way. Lord! I am a shepherd, okay Lord, okay, you don't want vegetables, you want a lamb: Lord this is a cute little thing, I will put it on the altar. God says, "No, that's not what I said; I said kill it." Lord! But how can I kill it? "But that's my way." Whatever Abel did; it was not pleasing to him, but it was pleasing to God. It was painful to him but pleasing to God. So, so many of the things which God may tell you to do, may be painful to you but pleasing to God and because you don't understand, you still do it because faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen. You don't see it. Why should I do it that way? But I will still do it this way, I don't see it but you see something which I don't see it. I don't have to ask – Lord, reveal it to me now! One day you may, you may not; that's your sovereignty. If this is one of those secret things which belong to God, I may have to do it all my life and never see it until I reach the other side. That's where faith comes in and so, people of God, servants of God, man and woman of God has to be willing to go through humiliation, misunderstanding, hostility because the people of the world are not going to understand you. Just keep your mouth shut and keep doing it. You know why? Because you are doing it by faith, you are doing it by faith. So, when Abel did it, nobody understood. His brother was angry, mad and killed him for that. So, the question is, do you believe? Do you have faith? You look any one of them in that narrative Hebrew 11: which one understood? Noah, when he heard, with Godly fear he built an ark for the saving of his family – has it rained? Does he know what a flood is? Does anybody have a boat in the middle of that land and this is a dude who is building a boat when everybody is building houses, mansions, palaces, this guy is building a boat. So, God is saying – what you build, does it look contrary to what God is building? Are you still building or are you saying – the pressure is too much, let me start changing my construction a little to like the world so that you know, they will not be offended, they will not mock me, they will not scorn me. That's what happened to the church; ultimately, we are speaking to the church. The church couldn't handle the pressure anymore, so they changed. So, if Luther, Wesley or any one of them were to come today, they would beat the heck out of the Lutheran church and the Methodist churches and all. What were the founders and what were the followers? What did they preach and what do they practice? Our Pentecostal churches, the origin, the first set of Pentecostal churches were apostles; what did they preach, what do the Pentecostals follow?

You look at it! You know why? The pressure got too much on us and we started changing. So, God says, will you obey? Noah did for 120 years, Abraham when he heard the voice of God, he obeyed and went, going without knowing where he was going; that is faith, God doesn't have to explain to you. Many things God doesn't explain because if He did, we wouldn't understand. We think we are smart but we don't realise before God, we are dumbos. So many things we understand is because God came down to our primary level and explained to us and we understand it and we say we have a revelation and God says; foolish man, just zip your lips, it's not a revelation. It's a revelation, I had a revelation, He says: do you know dumbos, ordinary people in Spurgeon's church could preach better than you. Have you read his sermons? Forget Spurgeon, he was a highly anointed man. Listen to his sermons, read his sermons, if you could preach this sermon to a crowd like that, what is their caliber, consistently? One daily devotion sends us up the wall, one line of Spurgeon! We know who Spurgeon is! What kind of a congregation did he have! What kind of a spiritual intellect did he had that he would confound Marxism when Marxism was birth through the mouth of

So, God says, you know what! Don't boast about your revelation and all, just chill. Just walk by faith, when you are building an altar don't use human hands, let it be uncut and also, see that the word of God goes with it. Third thing about the altar,

Exodus 20:25-26

²⁵ And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it. ²⁶ Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.'

Are You A Stone Uncut By Human Hands?

He says, you know what! There should be no steps to my altar. We like stairs but God says, no steps to altar. These are spiritual realities.

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

What is He saying? It is level ground at the foot of the cross. Everybody comes through the same door. There are no two doors. One door for congregation, one door for pastor, 'No,' same door. One door for ordinary, one door for kings; God says 'No,' it's same, the foot of the cross. I gave this illustration long time ago. It was in an Anglican church in England in old days; you know they have this rail, even in CNI church you will see when you take communion, people will come there and kneel. So, there were this drunk, dirty dressed drunk who was in the congregation along with lord Mountbatten and all where entourage were all there in the church. So, when it was communion time, the drunk got up and knelt next to Mountbatten, so his security detail was trying to move him, so Mountbatten looked at them and said; don't stop him, at the foot of the cross, we are all the same. One of the first thing God says about the altar is, don't make steps. The problem is, let us imagine: this is the altar and you have six steps here; the one fellow is on step1, another fellow is on step2, another fellow is on step3, now you have and hierarchy there. There is only one name under heaven by which there is salvation, it's the name of Jesus. There is only one mediator between man and God and that is Jesus Christ. There is no Jude here and Paul here, Peter here and Mary here and Jesus here-No! there is only one. Don't make all these steps. Only one step. You see, God had seen all these things that would happen in history, so He said only one. But you will say: isn't there the high priest and this priest? That is just function. Even the high priest when he went into the Holy of Holy, first he made atonement for himself. His atonement was not different from the other's atonement. He also was saved through the same blood. We are here talking, there may be order and responsibilities different. First of all, in the church there is apostles, then prophets, then teachers but the apostle is also saved by the cross, the prophet is also saved by the cross and the teacher is also saved by the cross. Everybody is saved by the same way. There is no other way. It's the blood of Jesus that saves. So, God say: no steps please! No steps please!

Galatians 3:26-28

²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

That's what the first problem that happened over there. Oh, you are gentile Christian, I am Jewish Christian. So, I cannot fellowship with you. If that day Paul hadn't stood up, can you imagine the system that would have happened in the church then itself? Paul, Peter; the first one who spoke and Barnabas who encouraged and taught Paul, both have fallen away because they made one step to the altar, one step to the altar. Can you think about it? That's exactly what they were trying to do, this entire book of Galatians is written because of that and you see that everywhere, especially in Kerala in India; the Syrian Christians. What difference does it make it to God? And the Syrian Christians can't even speak Syriac, that's the funny thing and they call themselves Syrian Christians, when Syria is constant bombarded by Israel. So, what's happening? Jewish Christian is standing one step higher than gentile Christian. That's what happened. God says, don't make any steps to my altar. There are no steps. I am closer to Christ than you; you see we are Jewish. You have advantages, that's a different thing but that doesn't mean you are closer to God, No! you are not. The gentile and the Jew have to come through Christ and the same Spirit to God. There is no distinction. There is no distinction. When it comes to salvation, the foot of the cross is level ground.

Colossians 3:11

¹¹ where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

There is no Madam or Bai, okay. There is no Mistress and maid servant, there is no Master and man servant. Both are made equal. Let me ask you this question, for whom is it easier to go to the cross then? The maid and the man servant than the mistress and the master.

Are You A Stone Uncut By Human Hands?

You are also coming with me? You mean to say you will also be sitting at the same level in the kingdom? What? You are also son, I am also son? No, then I don't want to be son. That's why Jesus looked at the pharisees, "the publicans, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering into the kingdom of God, while you guys are out. You know why you are out? You are not willing to come through that door because they are coming through. You think all your scholastic abilities in the Torah and all your sacrifices should give you special privileges? I am sorry, you all come through the same door, my work and my work alone." And these people are willing to get in and you people are out. You know why? Because we made steps to the altar. No male, no female; I am male so I have special access to God, females you have to stand up there okay, understand that. But God says, No. salvation is the same you are all one in Christ Jesus. There is no difference. So, you will see, first; He deals with race, second; He deals with class and third; He deals with gender. This is the problem in the world right now, we are seeing in the streets in the US, right?! So, I wouldn't say the US politics failed, I would say the church in US failed. There is no race, there is no class and there is no gender. Want to talk about equality, it is in Christ and in Christ alone, no government can do this. There are no steps, I am sorry brother, there are no steps. No race has special privilege. No! every race has the same privilege in Christ. No class has special privilege, every class had the same privilege in Christ. You look at what the religion has done from Brahmin to Shudra! You want to go to God? Come through us. How dare you on your wedding go on a Horse? It's only meant for our cast. It's the same thing everywhere, everywhere it is the same and that's what God is saying; how many steps do you have?

This is the struggle all believer face. Let us imagine, there are five of us sitting here; we all are educated, we all have degree, post-graduation, everything is professionally qualified and all and one illiterate fellow comes to our church and he is saved and he does not even speak English. Do you know whether you will struggle to fellowship with him? Honest fellowship, not to show this false sympathy because he is lower than you or weaker than you, so we say: I need to, I need to...but God says he is just another brother in the Lord. He may not be culturally proficient as you, he doesn't use a fork and spoon, he doesn't eat your diet, he doesn't dress like you but the fact is he is the same in Christ as you in Christ, there is no difference, absolutely no difference. And we struggle with these concepts and we don't realise that in us, there is race, there is class, there is gender; all these things are there in us. But God says altar will have no steps, absolutely no steps. They are all different, different stones but cut from the same rock. Are you getting it? Imagine you are wearing a 3-piece suit, cut from the same fabric, the trouser doesn't look like the coat, the inside waistcoat doesn't look like the coat but if you look at the fabric, it is the same. So, he is different, you are different, you are different, I am different but cut from the same fabric if you are saved, the same stone. That's how the altar is; you shall have no steps to it. Don't add anything to the work of Jesus Christ, don't put six steps to it, it is only one way and in that way there are no steps. If you add psychology to the word of God, your mind will fall apart, if you add dermatology to the word, your hair will fall apart, if you add dentistry to the word of God, your teeth will fall off, if you add sociology to the word of God, the society will fall apart. The word of God can stand on its own. Like we keep saying, truth doesn't need any props, it will stand on its own, it will either free you or damn you and Jesus said; I didn't. the word you have heard will judge you that day; either free or damned to hell. Truth stands on its own. You cannot add anything to it and our problem is, we try to add to the truth, we add steps over there. We bring psychology, we bring sociology and every 'ology' over there and 'isms' and all we add over it and we realise why does God never hear me, why is that I never hear from God, where I am stuck and rot in my spiritual life, why am I not moving forward, you know why? Because we add steps to the altar. You are getting the point what Elijah is doing over there!

Let's go to the next point, **Exodus 20:26**,

Exodus 20:26

²⁶ Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.'

He says, when you come to my altar; now He is using a physical thing, they are all wearing robes and altar is very high like the pagan with lots of steps going over there, when you are going up the steps, what happens? Your nakedness gets exposed. But He is not just talking about it to them then, this is spiritual. We do not understand God's view after the fall of public nudity. There is one thing that He did before He sent Adam and Eve out. He covered them. Two animals had to die to cover them, He didn't send them on a bikini, He covered them and sent them out. Let me explain to you, I learned this from Derek Prince okay, in Daniel 2, you have the statue; head of gold, silver, middle Persia and then brass and then iron. If you look at the waist part, it is **Greece** represented over there, meaning: the reproductive part of a person's body, it's only one part of your body which can produce life, your head cannot produce life, one part; it's Greece and if you look at every culture has been reproduced by Greek thought. Babylon never reproduced itself, Babylon thought is gone, middle Persian never reproduced itself, Rome never reproduced itself. Roman thought nobody talks about, Roman thought was Greek thought.

Are You A Stone Uncut By Human Hands?

What we are living under the world is Greek thought, it is Greek thought, it is Greek mind, everything is Greek philosophers, everything that you see in western world to Indian pagan world, everything has been taken over by Greek thought. Even Marxism is an offspring of Greek thought. The problem with Greek is that, the Greek admired two things: one was the human mind and the other was the human body. They admired these two. That's why the Greek Olympics and all was in the nude. That's why you have all the human statue where the human body, naked body, the mind; they admired these two. So, in the Greek culture, nudity wasn't a problem, nudity was something that was celebrated. In the Greek culture, in the thought, what relationship was exalted was homosexual relationship with a man and a man and not a man with a woman that was for reproductive reasons. But this is what was celebrated. So, we are coming to the altar. God says, are you Greek in your thinking? Are you Greek in the way that you think? That's why He says, "offer your body as living sacrifice and do not conform to the pattern of the world." What is the world we are talking about? It is a Greek world. Even during Jesus time, even though the Romans were ruling, the world is Greek in their thinking. So, Romans have no issue in stripping people and crucify. It had been a more conservative culture; they would crucify but still cover the man. No covering and all, they were least bothered because of the Greek thought. So, God says, when you come to worship, when you come to serve me, when you go into the world as living sacrifice, do you reveal your nakedness? Are you covered physically? Are you covered spiritually? Both. Are you covered? Remember the first time Israel offered a sacrifice in the wilderness, first time, I think that's the only time they offered the sacrifice. Moses is missing, the man who knows God is missing. Aron gave them what they wanted. This is what Aron did.

Exodus 32:5-6

⁵ So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord." ⁶ Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Listen to God's indictment in verse 25,

Exodus 32:5

²⁵ Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies),

Their worship was shameless, they were naked, frolicking, having orgies, all kind of crazy stuff was howling over there. There shame is gone, there is no shame in their worship and who did it? Aron. So, there are two priesthood; the priesthood of Moses which restrains man and does not expose his nakedness either publicly or spiritually and tells, cover! Cover! Our God is holy. When you come to the altar, when you are a living sacrifice, don't reveal your nakedness because our God is holy. Our God when He sent out man first before man fell, they were naked, and they were not ashamed because the glory of God had covered them. When they sinned, the glory left and they realized their physical nakedness, they were struck by shame and they made fig leaves but God knew fig leaves cannot cover them, so He covered them, and sent them out. But there is a worship that uncovers-the shame does not matter and almost all kind of pagan worship, you see there is an uncovering that takes place. There is no sense of shame at all and you will see that crept into Israel, that crept into the church, it crept into the church; no shame, no shame at all, no shame.

Let me ask you this question, where are they? They are in the camp. Who are the enemies? The spiritual enemies. Devil is laughing; oh God brought these people out of Egypt with the power of His right hand....look at their first sacrifice! The demons are laughing and who was responsible? Aron was. A priesthood that was responsible for revealing their nudity, physical and the spiritual nudity. Remember, when it comes to worship in the church; when a woman prays or prophesies, let her have a covering on her head because of the angels, don't reveal your spiritual nakedness that you are not under cover. When a woman does not cover herself and gets into ministry, she is exposing herself spiritually and the demons are laughing and there she is target, we got her on target, she has no covering. There is a physical and spiritual truth to it. And that's the first thing that happened. You know what happened that day? There was an altar, there was sacrifice, there was nakedness and there was judgement and 3000 died that way. The result of that sacrifice and worship was, 3000 died. Worship should have brought life, but worship brought death. That's why Elijah is not allowing anyone to do the work over there. He knows they are all naked, they are all exposed, spiritually. So, God says, don't change the gospel. There is righteousness that covers us. The only thing that can cover us is the righteousness of Christ Jesus.

Romans 1:16-17

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

What is the righteousness of God? It covers me. It covers my shame. I am not exposed before God's enemies. But how does it come? Only through one way, through faith, unto faith as it is written, "the just shall live by faith." When you live by faith, you are covered. Only when you are consistently covered before the enemies of God and your enemies is when you live by faith and faith comes from hearing, hearing the word of God alone. And you look at the churches, what is taken away? The word of God is taken away. So, you have set of people, naked and frolicking, just like Israel in the desert. They have made their golden calves and they have been told that is 'Yahweh' who brought them out of Egypt.

So, as we come to the end, there is this call of God through Elijah. Elijah is just echoing God's call, "come near me," and he begins the work of repairing. So, God can start the work of repairing only to those who hear the call of God and move towards Him. He can't repair others, He can only repair those. Because, remember? The altar is us, our hearts and I still believe, on that day, there were thousands of people including Elijah's servant, who I believe was the widow's son (when he reaches the widow's son, he was only one. When he left the widow's house, he was two). So, it has to be the widow's son, okay. That's simple mathematics, my simple mathematics. There were 100 prophets who were hidden by Obadiah in the caves. I believe they were also definitely there. There were seven thousand others who had not bend their knees to Baal and they were the man of Israel, okay. So, Elijah said, "come near me" and all of them moved towards Elijah. Elijah can only see a crowd and we also see a crowd, but we cannot see what God sees. We cannot see the work that God is doing, we can only see the work of God that He is doing, that is revealed to us. So, what is revealed to us: a crowd moves, an altar is made, fire comes, everybody falls on their feet, everybody goes down, the prophets of baal has been killed, he comes back, rain comes, everybody goes home; that's all we see. But in that crowd, there was one man, I believe who would be relieved six weeks later; that is Elisha. This entire thing was orchestrated to get that man who understands the ways of God, that one man. You know the rest of them are not interested, so why bring fire and all down? They want rain, give them rain, jaane do. Right? I need fire, I need all this. Why? Because the moment 42 days later, literally, that day he ran reached, next day he ran then he walked 40 days, so it is 42 days, then he comes down; he puts the mantle, he recognises him, he knows who it is and he is willing to follow. Why? Because he was there on the hill. His heart is the only heart that had caught the fire of God that had fallen on the altar, everybody went drenched by water, one man caught the fire in his heart; he was just waiting for the mantle to come. That's still what God is looking for; God hasn't changed.

As we close; two verses,

1 Kings 18:36

³⁶ And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word."

The altar is there, the word is there; they agree, they are one. The altar is built accordingly to the word; my life is built according to the word, now let the fire fall. That's what happened in the day of Pentecostal, 10 days; their lives are in alignment with the word of God and the Holy Spirit comes upon them and they stand up and thy become the word.

Now, teaser for the next meeting, verse 33 and we shall close.

1 Kings 18:33

³³ And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, "Fill four water-pots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood."

Three and a half year has gone by and there is no rain. Now, everybody is expecting rain. I mean; imagine you are expecting for something for three and a half years, then from morning till evening these dudes are jumping and screaming, nothing happened. You know, your patience has its limit, but God cannot be hurried; you still have to everything the God's way. Lot of people breeze in and breeze out of the and they think they will expect a miracle, God says; Not." If you look at it, there is

Are You A Stone Uncut By Human Hands?

a sense of urgency, but he is not taking any shortcuts, no shortcuts here. Everything is being done according to the word of God.

he built an altar, he made a trench, something strange that has never happened before, something that has never happened later; he knows very clearly what has been told because there is no precedence that doesn't mean I don't have to do it, God said; do it. Oh, why are you digging this trench? Isaac did not do, Jacob did not do, Moses also did not do, Joshua did not do but I am very sure God told me to dig a trench, so I am digging a trench.

After that scripture says, he put the wood and water. You look at that! There is order in God's kingdom. You can't put the wood the way you like, after all it is to burn; why do you need order? This looks better like that no, why not like this? Why do you have to do it always your way? You are very selfish, why can't I have my ways sometimes? Because son, in your way there is death, my way is life; I am not selfish, I love you, I am selfless. My Son when He came down to earth, His entire life was lived my way so that you would be alive.

There is order, there is order, we will look at the next meeting. When you go, you read the regulations about sacrifice, everything had to be placed in order. You just can't bring your peace offering and just – here, take it and go. No! order. That's why the only thing most people get out of a church is a fellowship after the service. Nothing happens in their life because there is no order. For fellowship you don't need order, disorder also will do. Like I said, the best fellowship is in the bar because there is no order. Then what should happen is inside the church, inside that 2 hours, 3 hours that you spent over there, you know who receives! The ones who have order, the fire of God falls upon them, consistently they are flaming, their zeal never goes out. Nobody has to tell them come early, wake early, sit with Lord, pray. Nobody has to tell them, they don't need instruction at all, they are instructed of the Lord. Get these pictures into your mind and say, 'Lord, I understand what is happening in Mount Carmel is defining for Israel and for the church.' That's why I said the ministry of Elijah can never be discounted. He is there in Israel's history, he is there in the coming of Jesus Christ, he is there in the second coming of Jesus Christ. God will have a set of people who have order in their lives, God will have a set of people who have been set ablaze by the fire of God and they will welcome His second coming. They are not afraid of anything, they don't fear the pandemic or anything, they are not worried, they are not afraid, they are not restless, they are not moved by the troubles in their lives or pleasures in their lives. They are moved by God and to generate such a kind of people is the purpose of the pulpit. After people have come in, the whole work within the kingdom of God is to generate that kind of people God is looking for. Amen!

Let's pray!

Closing Prayer:

Father, this morning, we just come to You, we just thank You, we just praise You, we just worship You Lord. Thank You, Lord, thank You, thank You, thank You. Truly Father, every time we meditate on Your word; Your ways are not our ways, Your thoughts are not our thoughts; as the heavens are higher are Your ways and Your thoughts higher than ours, oh Lord. We can't even measure it, we can never truly understand it, all we can do is bend our knee, bend our heart each day and say, 'Lord, we surrender to Your ways and to Your thoughts and we shall live by faith and the obedience that comes by faith.' I don't have to understand everything, all I have to know is You are true, and You are always true and You are always faithful. So, I pray Lord, do the work in us, the repairing of the altar. Let our altar be made of uncut stones, not cut stones, let nothing of man be there, let everything that happens there be of God, only God. Help us to hear, help us to believe, help us to obey then it is Your works and not our works. The voice is Yours; the word is Yours, the power is Yours, all we are is an instrument in Your hands. Then we can truly say; this was living stone cut of that quarry built by God and God Himself. We will have a place in Your temple that day when Your temple is revealed from heaven. We commit our lives to that oh Lord and all those who are listening. We just wanna thank You, praise You and worship You Lord, in Jesus' name we pray, amen!