

What Kind Of House Will You Build For Me

by Santosh Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of creating a dwelling place for God in our hearts, homes, and churches by cultivating humility, contriteness, and reverence for God's Word. It warns against becoming stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart, resisting the Holy Spirit's promptings, and valuing worldly things over spiritual sensitivity. The story of Stephen's martyrdom is used to illustrate the opposition faced by those who seek to build a church where God can truly dwell.

Scripture: Isaiah 66:1, Acts 7:48, Malachi 3:16, Acts 7:51, Acts 7:54

Topics: "Creating a Dwelling Place for God", "Overcoming Resistance to the Holy Spirit"

Description

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Transcript

Thank you all. Even though I can't see many of you, I'm blessed to be with you. Sometimes my family and I watch, join these services and we're always encouraged.

I'm encouraged by what the Lord is doing in different parts of the world through the teachings of Jesus, through the obedience to his full commission to take the world to all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to do all that Jesus commanded. And I believe that God is preserving a remnant of people who are seeking for this, to obey this command of Jesus. And so I'm blessed that in the Bay Area, I have a home that's even beyond my biological relationships here, the relationships in Christ.

I've been thinking recently about how what the world considers church or even Christendom considers church has changed over the last few months. In the past, there was the typical Western mentality about going to church. And you probably heard the saying, if you're going to church, you better get there before Jesus comes.

Because especially in the West and maybe in other countries in the world as well, there is this mentality of church being some place you go physically on a Sunday morning. And I think most of us have probably

heard enough teaching that we know that the church is a spiritual body. As I look at Christendom, and I look at how that concept also has changed for Christendom in general, because of the pandemic going on in the world, all churches around the world, almost the entire world, I think, had to change even their understanding of church and go online and have these virtual gatherings.

And it's easy for us, I think, to find congregation and club mentality in others. You probably heard of the congregation and the club and the church as three different types of gatherings in Christendom. And Jesus is building his church.

He wants to build his church. But I found, even as one who has spoken about it and written about it a lot, it's very easy for me to look at some other gathering and say, oh, that's a congregation. Or look at another gathering and say, ah, that's a club.

Therefore, we must be the church. And I find that it's like layers of an onion with a lot of things spiritually. It's like layers of an onion that we peel back and realize it's a mentality.

It's a way of thinking. And just because we may be more scriptural, more biblical, perhaps, than some other churches, that in itself doesn't mean that we're building the church. I'd like you to turn with me to a verse in Acts chapter 7. This is a verse that came home to me recently.

I thought I would speak on that briefly today. Acts chapter 7, verse 48. Acts 7, verse 48.

However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says, he goes on to quote from the book of Isaiah. But that phrase, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands.

And I've been examining my heart, dear brothers and sisters and friends, about whether in seeing the congregation, seeing the club, and seeking to build a church, is it still the work of my hands? Now, this could apply in the church, but also in your own home or in your marriage and in your personal life. Is the dwelling place that we are seeking to make for God in whatever area you think about, is it something that I am building with my human hands, expecting God to dwell there? And if you look back, this is actually the story of Stephen when he was brought before the Jews. And you know that story, how he was the first martyr.

And he recounts the history of Israel as pointing to Christ. And it's significant that in the middle of his recounting of the history, you can read back in the previous verses of chapter 7, he talks about this dwelling place. And as I've read this chapter again recently, I've seen God's heart for a dwelling place.

So let's go back. You know, we won't go all the way back, but he talks about the people of Israel, the patriarchs, how they go into captivity in Egypt, and God raises up Moses. But let's start reading in verse 44, Acts 7, verse 44.

Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern which he had seen. And this is very interesting, because it says that, and as we know, if you read the book of Exodus, that Moses instructed for the builders to build the tabernacle exactly as God had said. And Stephen mentions that here.

Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern which he had seen. And immediately my mind went to how in our churches and in a lot of the teaching that we listen to, we hear and understand the new

covenant pattern, not only of life, but also the home and the church, not as a formula. I think we all know that it's not a formula that works automatically, but it's still a pattern that we're given through the teachings of especially Paul regarding church life, and even the home life, the married life, how to walk.

And we are careful, as we should be, to build the building that we're building as a dwelling place for God according to the pattern that God has given us. But the interesting thing about that is even though that tabernacle was built, the original tabernacle was built according to the pattern that God had given them, it still got destroyed. Today that tabernacle doesn't even exist.

I don't know what happened to it. Maybe by the time they got into the land of Canaan, it fell away or where they left it. I don't know if scripture records that.

But regardless, today there is no such tabernacle, the physical tabernacle no longer exists, even though they built it according to the pattern that God had given for them to build. And I believe that it is possible for us to take the teachings of the New Covenant, New Covenant life, and New Covenant church according to the pattern that God has given us. And we think about things, for example, let's take a very simple, small command about women covering their heads when they pray and prophesy.

That is a New Covenant teaching, New Covenant pattern. And other things like that about eldership and relationships in the church. And it could be exactly as God has instructed us in the New Testament, according to the teachings of the apostles, but it could wither away.

It could be a work that does not remain just like the original tabernacle. And then we go on to see in verse 45, let's look at verse 45. And having received it in their turn, so the next generation whom God said, okay, you all can enter the land of Canaan because they were under a certain age and God didn't hold them accountable for the disobedience of their parents.

They received this tabernacle and this ark. Our fathers brought it in with Joshua upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers until the time of David. So here we read about how these Israelites came and dwelt in the promised land, the land that God had planned for them, had promised their forefather Abraham many hundreds of years before that.

He finally brought them into the land and dispossessed. We've heard often about how the land of Canaan that we read about in the Old Testament is a picture of our body, our flesh and our physical body, but really the temptation that come, that we face through our flesh, through our body and how God wants us to possess our entire body. Every part of the spirit, soul, and body must be completely holy, possessed by the Holy Spirit and dispossessed all those lusts in the flesh.

And the people of Israel dispossessed that land, dispossessed the nations. That means those giants and those nations that rule in the land of Canaan, they defeated them. It's a picture of the life of victory that God has intended for us to experience in increasing measure, day by day, coming to a life of victory.

But even that, now remember, we've already read verse 48, which begins with the word, however. That means all these things that we're reading about, good things that God prescribed and God planned for them, there was still a however that meant that even that fell away. So even the teaching of victory over sin and coming to, battling our lusts and becoming more like Jesus, that too may not be, is not in itself an indication that we are a church where God dwells.

Because we could easily have the pattern, we could easily have the teaching, but God himself may not be there. Just like God departed from the tabernacle. God, you know, you read about the time of Eli, where that word Ichabod is found, where the glory departed.

They were in the promised land. The enemies of Israel had to some extent been dispossessed. They were living there, but the glory, the presence of the Lord had departed.

They still had their temples. They still had their gatherings. They still read the Torah.

They still had priests and high priests, but the glory had departed. So what I see here is that with all of these things, we could have the pattern, we could have the teaching, we could even have some level of experience of that life of Christ, but the presence of God himself may not be there. And it's so important, I believe, for us, especially as the time of Christ return draws near, that we know for certain that God is in our midst, in our churches, that God is in our homes, God is in our church.

And what does that actually mean? We'll continue reading. It says also, verse 46, after they had possessed the land, David found favor in God's sight and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob, but it was Solomon who built a house for him. So now God allows them to build a structure.

It was much better looking than the original tabernacle. It was planned by God. God, I believe, was pleased by David's request.

When David saw that God was just living in a tent, the tabernacle was just this run-down looking tent, you could say. He said, I want to build a temple for you. And God, I believe it was pleasing to the Lord.

He just said, since you're a man of bloodshed, I must build it through Solomon. And Solomon built a temple and God dwelt there. You can read about it in 2 Chronicles.

I think it's in chapter six or something, where God was pleased by the prayer that Solomon prayed and came, the glory came down. But even that temple perished. Remember what Jesus said, how the Pharisees were so proud of that temple that they thought God was there because of this temple that God himself had told David to build.

God again gave detailed instructions to David. He passed it on to Solomon. They built the building exactly as God said, but God was not there.

And Jesus said to the Pharisees who were so proud of that temple that that temple would, he was talking about his body, but even that temple ultimately was destroyed. So after describing these things of these different works of God and manifestations of the presence of God, Stephen says to these Jews, who at that time the temple was still there, they took pride in their Jewish heritage and the presence of God. Also they thought in their midst, he says, however, after Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, whom you call your father and after Moses and after Joshua and the tabernacle and possessing the land and David and Solomon, however, the most high does not dwell in houses made by the human hands, as the prophet said.

And then he goes on to say, as the prophet says, heaven is my throne and earth is the footstool of my feet. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what places there for my repose? Was it not my hands, which my hand, which made all these things? The way I understand this quotation from Isaiah 66 is it's as if God is saying, if all I wanted was a comfortable place, a nice looking building, and we

can apply that spiritually. If all I wanted was for a group of people to get together, whether it's physically in the same room or even online, like we are now, and have the right pattern and have the right teachings and all of those things, can you do any better than heaven? Can you do any better than earth? He himself has made heaven and earth as his dwelling place.

Can you improve on that? Do you think that you're going to do so good with your new covenant teaching and your good looking life and somehow think that that's a better dwelling place for God than even heaven and earth? We can't. We cannot do better than God, and yet he desires a dwelling place among men. So I can't do better than God.

I can't build a temple better than that. And we can look at, you know, I think of how the Israelites were in captivity in Babylon, and there they looked towards the temple in Judah and prayed. And that's why Daniel, we read of how three times a day he opened his window towards Jerusalem and prayed.

And it could have been easy for them to even look at that temple as something better than what they had in Babylon. Today we see a lot of Babylonian mentality and a Babylonian work even in Christendom. And we can look at that and see the love of money and the pursuit of greatness in the eyes of the world and popularity and people pleasing and look at that and think, ah, yes, God must be with us because we're not like Babylon.

But even that temple which was not in Babylon, the glory of God had departed from it. So what is it that makes a place something where God can dwell? The word that really stood out for me in verse 49 was this, the last word of verse 49. The New American, my translation, it says, what place is there for my repose? Repose is a word that we don't use very often, perhaps, but every now and then you hear about it.

And the only times I've heard it used are in talking about these little sanctuaries or places where you can go away, like a retreat center, a place if you want to just get away from the busyness and the hecticness of life, you want to go somewhere up in the mountains or some quiet place, that's a repose. Some place where you won't be distracted and you can just quieten things down and think about God asking us for a place of repose. The question I want you to think about, which is what the Lord's asking me to think about today, is my life, my heart, a place of repose for God? In the midst of the busyness and how hectic Christendom is, especially on a Sunday, whether it's online or in person, it's hectic.

Frantically, people are trying to get everything ready and organized for this and for that. And whether it's Orthodox churches where they've got to get all the candles and the lights and all those awkward things, or other churches, evangelical churches, where the band has to practice and the sound guy has to get his things together. In the midst of all of that, my dear brothers, dear sisters, God is looking for a place where he can be at rest, where he can have a repose, where he can sit back and be comfortable, where he can be at rest there, whether it's a church gathering, your home, your marriage, and your heart.

It's a good thing for us to examine ourselves, to see, Lord, is my heart the place where you come back and you finally take a breath and relax and your Holy Spirit can dwell in my heart and be at rest? That's what it means to build a church. That's what it means to build a godly home and a godly marriage and to be a disciple of Jesus, ultimately. Because the moment the Holy Spirit feels uncomfortable, let's say God was in a gathering, in a marriage or in a home or in the church gathering, the moment he felt uncomfortable and he found that the people there are more interested in something else and the Holy Spirit would try to nudge and say, hey, I'm not comfortable here.

I know you guys are praying to me and invoking my name and all that, but I'm not comfortable here. And I believe like a true gentleman, he might quietly slip out the after trying and seeing that we're not really that interested in him. We're interested in other things around him or about him.

He'll quietly leave. He's no longer there. Just like when the glory departed from Shiloh, from that temple in the days of Eli, I don't think Eli knew.

There was no physical evidence that the glory had departed necessarily, but it had departed. You couldn't, outside the tabernacle, the rest of the Israelites had no idea that the glory had departed. And it would be a great tragedy if in the midst of all the right pattern and the right teaching and the pursuit of a holy life, the Holy Spirit's presence departed from my life or my marriage or my home or our church meetings, and we don't even know it.

So how can we make the Holy Spirit comfortable? He goes on to say. Let's look at this. The passage that he's quoting from is in Isaiah 66.

And if you will turn there with me, we'll just look at those two verses, Isaiah 66 verses one and two. Isaiah 66 verse one, thus says the Lord, heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. Where then is a house you could build for me? And where is a place that I may rest? There's that word again.

For my hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being, declares the Lord. And then he says, in other words, the question he's been asking, what kind of a house can you build for me, is a rhetorical question. He's not asking us to answer it.

He's saying, let me tell you what is the kind of house that would be better than physical heaven and physical earth as my footstool, better than the tabernacle in the wilderness, better than the great temple of Solomon. All of these things that God himself either made like the heavens and the earth or prescribed like the tabernacle in the temple, something far greater than all these things, he tells us what that is. To this one, I will look.

To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, this is a tremendous thing, that my humility, my contriteness, or my margin says, being crushed. The one who is crushed, the one who is humble and crushed, there God can come in and have a dwelling place and feel at rest and be comfortable and have repose because he finds a humble person, not a gifted person, but a humble person. Don't we want that in our marriages, brothers and sisters? Don't we want that in our homes with our children? It starts with us.

It starts with us men as leaders of the home, to pave the way for God to find repose by our humility. I've been challenged by the fact that in my relationship with my wife, for example, when I choose the way of humility, when I choose the way of being crushed and being broken in some situation with my wife, God delights with it. Even though there may be things that need to be worked out, God can come there and find repose because he found a husband who was willing to be contrite and humble and broken and crushed in his relationship with his wife.

Vice versa, wives with your husbands. Think about it, parents, even in our discipline and correcting of our children, it's our humility, not our standing up for the truth and ensuring that our children, watching what games they play or what they watch on the internet or all of these things, that's good. But all of that is empty and meaningless if the Holy Spirit is not present and finding repose in our homes.

And he will if he finds a humble and a contrite and a crushed father and mother. Likewise in the church, it's not that we make sure that the teaching is right, we sing the right songs and we honor God by the pattern of the new covenant meeting that we see in his word. Those are wonderful things and we continue to uphold them, but he'll find repose among the humble and the contrite, the crushed, those who are broken.

Now this word contrite, I recently got a picture of it just a few days ago. I was pulling into a grocery store in Colorado and I watched as I was walking in to the store, there was another young lady who was walking in pushing some carts. She was an employee of the store and she had a busy, you know, she was trying to push all these carts and just, I don't want to read too much into it, but she looked, just in my observing her, she seemed like she had some developmental disability.

And just from her behavior and appearance, I could tell she had a little bit of a development disability and I was glad that the store had employed somebody like that. But I observed her as I walked in and we came to the entrance of the door at the same time and she was busy pushing this cart and she's probably a little weaker than me physically, just judging by outward appearances. And yet she just kind of had this look on her face.

She just kind of lowered her head, stopped the carts that she was pushing and allowed me to go first. And immediately the Lord spoke to me, that's contrivedness, that's true humility, that's poverty of spirit. She's somebody that the world doesn't value.

She's thankful just to have a job. She's got disabilities that probably I'm imagining she compares herself with others that seem to be able to do things well and she cannot. And thinks of herself lowly as a nobody, as not somebody that anybody else would even acknowledge.

I acknowledged her, but she didn't even know that I was acknowledging her because her face was down and she stopped to let me go. And I went in, but I've never forgotten that picture of that's what it means to have a contract. It's not outwardly necessary, but to have that spirit in my heart, a yielding, not only to the Holy Spirit, but to others as well.

Where when somebody wants to go ahead of me, I let them go. If somebody wants a particular ministry or somebody wants, gets some preferential treatment in a particular way, I yield. I say, yeah, you can go ahead.

You can have it. I'm not going to fight. That's contract this in spirit.

Think what a promise that the Holy Spirit says, I will find a retreat center in your marriage, in your home and in your church, when I find people like this. And I wonder what, where those are. I hope our churches will be like that, that the Holy Spirit will find repose and rest, not because of any of these outward things, but because he finds contrite people, a gathering of people.

And it could be online. It could be like we are gathered even right now, but in our hearts, as the Holy Spirit searches our hearts, he finds a contrite person here, contrite person there on this gallery view. I think of the Holy Spirit's gallery view, where he sees contrite heart, contrite heart, contrite heart.

He knits those hearts together. And he says, this is a meeting that I really enjoy. I'm here.

I'm at repose. And then he says, the other characteristic is those who tremble at my word. That means when they see God's word and they see what God says, his written word, but also the teaching of the Holy

Spirit today and applying these truths today.

And we tremble at it. And we don't just take God's word casually. And I've been examining my heart.

I don't know what it actually means to tremble at God's word. I hope I have, I can say, but I've had recently a greater sense of valuing the word of God. See, today we have Bibles that are, we've had printed Bibles for hundreds of years.

We've had Bibles on our watches, on our phones, and it's very easy to find God's word, God's written word. And perhaps the danger in the midst of all of this, that if I want to know where a verse is, I just pull up my phone real quick, get the app and do a quick search. There it is.

It's possible for us to lose a trembling and a sense of value for the word of God. I know people who value the physical word of Bible, the physical Bible so much that they make sure nothing's on top of it and treat it carefully. I think that's good, but it's more than that.

It's a trembling of God's word, and in my heart, or when I hear the word of God, or when I listen to the teaching of God's word, there isn't a casual, oh, let me see what's going on in Facebook, or mentality towards God's word spoken. And think about the delight that comes into God's heart, the Holy Spirit finding repose again when he sees there's somebody that trembles at my word. We read in the book of Malachi, we show you that verse, Malachi chapter three.

This is the last prophet of the Old Testament before John the Baptist. And then there's hundreds of years of silence after Malachi. And here God is calling his people back to himself.

And we read in verse 16, you know, the previous verses, he talks about how pride and other things are exalted. You can read in verse 13, your words have been arrogant against me. They say in verse 14, it is vain to serve God.

What profit is it that we have kept his charge? In other words, they're obeying him, but they're frustrated about it. And they're saying, this is empty. God didn't answer my prayer.

I'm offended at God, that I wanted him to do this. I've served him so long, and he didn't do that, or he didn't do that other thing. And so verse 15, we call the arrogant blessed.

Not only are the doers of wickedness built up, but they also test God and escape. And then we read verse 16, those who feared the Lord, those who feared the Lord, and then my says revered, had a reverence for God, spoke to one another. And the Lord gave attention and heard it.

And a book of remembrance was written before him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem his name. And they will be mine, says the Lord of hosts, on the day that I prepare my own possession. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.

So you will, again, distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, not by these outward things. Between the one who serves God and the one who does not serve him. Between, you can say, in language we might understand today, the church versus the congregation and the club.

By this inner characteristic, those who fear him. And God wrote a book of the names of the churches and the people whom he counted as churches because they revered him, they feared him, they revered his name. So those two things, having a humble contrite spirit and having a reverence, taking every word of

God seriously, every single word.

And I found that if there's a small command in God's word that I want to neglect or sweep under the carpet and move on to something else, when the Holy Spirit convicts me of a small area of disobedience in my life, my response to that, because I think it's a small command, it's not a big deal. And, you know, let's just mention once in scripture or a couple times, and it's mentioned in passing, but it's a clear command of the word of God in the new covenant. If I find a mentality to just sweep that under the rug and focus on something else, let's talk about some spiritual doctrine or something like that.

The Holy Spirit sees that and sees that I don't have a reverence for him for the little commands of Jesus of the new covenant. He can't be at rest there. Let's go back to Acts chapter 7. We'll continue reading after Stephen quotes from Isaiah.

And he says exactly the same things to the Jews. Acts 7 verse 51. You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and in ears, are always resisting the Holy Spirit.

This is exactly the warning that we've been talking about, where the Holy Spirit, in the midst of the tabernacle and dispossessing the nations and building the temple, the Holy Spirit was trying to speak to God's people, but their hearts were always uncircumcised and stiff-necked. That means the Holy Spirit would speak to them and they would shrug their shoulders at it. Think of Eli, for example, where God, his heart, his ears became so stiff-necked that the Holy Spirit had to speak through a little boy, must have been eight years old or so, Samuel.

What a tragedy that the man who was supposed to be hearing from God and speaking to the people had become so dull of hearing because God had tried to tell him, your boys are rebellious, they're a dishonor to my name. And he was afraid of his sons. This priest of God was afraid of his own sons and what they were doing, and he was afraid to correct them.

And even when he did, he did it in a casual way. Stephen says, you men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart. First of all, in my secret area, when God speaks something to me, I don't want to listen to that.

I reject it. I move on to something else. Uncircumcised, that means there's a love of the world.

Circumcision was always a picture of separation from the world. And this uncircumcised heart is one where I still have a little bit of the love for the world and God's still teaching. Now it's getting through my ears, but it's not able to get into my heart.

Because like he says, actually in verse 53, you who received the law as ordained by angels yet did not keep it. So I reject it. Or it starts by rejecting different portions of the law that I don't like, different portions of the commands of Jesus that I'm not happy with.

Because I have a secret love for the world, I'm not completely circumcised from the world. But I believe it grows from that to a stiff-neckedness in my ears and an uncircumcision in my ears. So eventually I might listen to this teaching.

That's the danger, I believe, for us. I take this as a warning to my own heart. I can listen to teaching, wonderful newcomer teaching, but if I don't obey it, if I'm not diligent to keep it, like we read in verse 53,

my heart becomes hardened.

Eventually I will reject the teaching itself. And over the years I've seen that happen, where that evidence of a lack of obedience to the new covenant teaching, the new covenant that Jesus has established for the church, became stronger and stronger and stronger in secret until the point came where they didn't even want to listen to it anymore. And people who once upon a time enjoyed the teaching and were gripped by it outwardly don't no longer want to listen to it.

And I believe that will happen more and more. I want to take that to heart for my own life, that that hard-heartedness I take seriously, otherwise it'll manifest in ears that have become stiff-necked and uncircumcised. Resisting the Holy Spirit, so important to receive the light touches of the Holy Spirit.

Now, I believe the Holy Spirit is loving and will speak to us according to our sensitivity. And if we're immature Christians, if we're new believers, He might have to hit us a little harder. But as we grow, as our conscience and our sensitivity to the Holy Spirit grows as it should, the sensitivity, the touch of the Holy Spirit may be very light.

It may be a very small thing, but I want to grow in my sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, where even saying the right words to my wife with the wrong attitude or a wrong tone of voice becomes something that the Holy Spirit can touch in my heart and say, that wasn't right. You said the right things. According to the court of law, you are justified.

You're correct. But the tone was wrong. Your attitude was wrong.

You have a superior attitude towards her or towards another brother or another sister. Now, look at what happens to Stephen, verse 55. After this, you see he's full of the Holy Spirit.

He gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. I don't think he had seen this before. We don't know if Stephen actually met Jesus physically, but what a blessing that Stephen, even if he did, he got to see Jesus one time on this earth before he got taken up into his presence minutes later.

He got a revelation of God, the glory of God and of Jesus himself. Very, very precious thing. But Satan hates this message.

Satan is angered when we start to seek for the Holy Spirit to be comfortable in our midst. If we start to teach these things and live out these things and invite the Holy Spirit to be present and at rest in our hearts, he will attack us. He will attack us physically.

He will attack us spiritually. He will attack our marriages. He will attack our homes.

He will attack our church. That's the church that the devil is against. And so we see, verse 54, when they heard this, they were cut to the quick.

They got angry. They began gnashing their teeth at him. Who? So-called God-fearing Jews gnashing their teeth at him.

We read in verse 57, they cried out with a loud voice, covered their ears. They said, we don't want to hear this anymore. And they rushed upon him with one impulse.

And when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him. And the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, Lord, do not hold this sin against them. And having said this, he fell asleep. He died and was taken up into the presence of God.

What a testimony Stephen was. He was unafraid to stand for the truth. And this is the first martyr in the sin after their Pentecost.

The first person killed by religious people after Jesus was Stephen. And I believe that continues today. The devil will continue to attack churches that seek for this.

They're not trying to impress other people with their church gatherings. They're not seeking to copy the ways of the world. They're resisting Babylon.

They're resisting sin. They're preaching the holiness of God. And they're seeking for the Holy Spirit to be comfortable at repose in their gatherings by their humility and by their reverence for God.

That's the church the devil will attack. But that's also the church that Jesus said will not be able to defeat that the devil will not be able to defeat. The gates of hell will not prevail against this church.

So may we be such a church. It's not by our abilities. It's not even by the pattern.

It's by our contrite-ness of heart and our reverence for the Word of God, for God's Word. I pray that it will be so in our lives. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for your love for us, that you made a way for us to follow. And I thank you that you long to be comfortable and to find a dwelling place where you can be at rest in our midst. Unworthy as we were as sinners, unworthy as we still are, who are we? Mere flesh that you would take pleasure in us and come and dwell in us and dwell in our homes and our marriages and our churches.

Lord, I pray that this will be so. The Word we've heard will be true in my life and the lives of these dear brothers and sisters. And build up such a pure testimony, churches that are known in heaven and known in hell as well, because we value that secret, humble, contrite spirit and we value your Word.

Build your church, Lord, these days and preserve us in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Thank you for listening.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/vDKa2lBskE.mp4>

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