

Ephesians 2:11-22

There were no walls in the Garden of Eden. But since the day when Adam and Eve were driven out of that paradise, building walls has been a major part of our human history. The only man-made structure which supposedly can be seen from outer space is a wall--the Great Wall of China. In Bible times every city was fortified with a wall. In fact, the city's walls were always built first before anyone dared to build a home there. In the Middle Ages walls continued to be built for protection against invading armies. And here in America, how would we live without walls? We are not one with nature. We must separate ourselves from wild animals and from the elements. We do not have all things in common with all people. We lock up criminals behind prison walls, and we ourselves live behind walls to keep undesirables out and our lives somewhat private.

The Apostle Paul speaks about walls in our text for today, but the walls he speaks of are not only unnecessary, they are dreadful and come about because of our wickedness. These walls are built by our sinfulness. These walls separate us from each other. These walls hide us from what is real and true, and make us satisfied with our sinful behavior. And these walls isolate us from God.

But no wall built by mankind is ever permanent. Wind, erosion, earthquakes, fire, and water can all break down the walls we erect. Even the Great Wall of China will, one day, cease to exist. And so it is with the walls we build with our sins. These walls, too, can be broken down. Not by us, however, but as the Apostle writes, by Christ Jesus and Him alone.

When God began creating, He never intended for His creatures to separate themselves with walls. Man lived in perfect harmony with all of the animals God had made, and they lived in holy fellowship with God and with each other. When sin came, so did the walls of separation and isolation. From that moment on, couples, families, communities, and all people would build walls between themselves.

What do you and I do when we become angry with our spouse or another person? You and I put up walls...anything from the wall of "silent treatment," to the wall of "divorce." We erect these walls within our families, among our relatives, and between us and our neighbors. A grudge is nothing less than a wall that has barbed wire covering it from top to bottom. Walls exist in small-town communities. They exist within congregations. Walls are erected between peoples of different color--walls of hatred and bigotry.

But what's worse is that we also build walls between ourselves and God. Separation and isolation from God is the direct result of sin. This, too, happened in Eden where there were no walls. Rebelling against God, Adam and Eve became afraid of Him and tried to hide from Him. They were no longer in holy fellowship with God. When God found them and confronted them with their sin, Adam and Eve built walls between each other blaming the other for what had happened. No longer in perfect harmony with each other, and now isolated from God, their sin had built these walls in Eden's paradise.

This is deadly serious, for we are all born today behind these walls of separation. Back when the Berlin Wall was still in place separating Free Germany from Communist Germany, a child born behind that wall was just as much a slave to Communism as his parents were. Because our first parents built a wall separating themselves from God, everyone born of Adam and Eve, us included, is born isolated from God behind that wall. Hell is separation from God...permanently. Unless that wall is taken down, therefore, we will live in separation from God forever.

Dear friends, do not fear...I have good news for you. The Apostle Paul writes in our text: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility." Jesus broke down the wall. You and I could not scale that wall. We could not go under it, or around it, or through it. Sin builds walls that are high, thick, and strong. But Jesus, by His death and resurrection, broke down the barrier separating you from God. The temple curtain was ripped in two. You now have access to the mercy of God, for He is at peace with you because Jesus shed His blood for you.

This wall of separation Jesus broke down for every sinner. And yet most people in our world, and many in our country, even within our communities are living as though the wall is still there separating them from God. Can you imagine a German family living in fear, believing that they are still slaves of Communism, because they do not realize that the Berlin Wall came down twenty years ago? Many people...most people...some that you and I know well, are living with that kind of fear and unbelief--not hearing and believing the good news that the wall of sin, death, and hell between them and God has been torn down by Christ Jesus. Without faith in the Crucified One, the wall of unbelief replaces the wall of sin, and many people...most people...still live in separation from their loving God.

If you have been living behind that wall, hear this good news--it is for you...your sins are forgiven. Jesus took them into His flesh. No sin of yours can ever separate you from God. Nothing in your past, or your present, or your future can cause God to cast you away from His presence. He draws near to you through the blood of Christ. He meets you here in Jesus' flesh and blood to give you in this Sacrament a sure sign and seal that His forgiveness, life, and salvation is yours now and always.

And even more, when couples, and families, and congregations come together before Christ, and in Christ, there is no more separation between them. Any walls that we may have built here in the past are torn down by God's love for us in Christ Jesus. And now here in this church, fellowship, and friendship, and love replace those walls that sin built.

In 1899 the people of Argentina and the people of Chile, in South America, were poised for war. Strife had been building between these two nations for some time, and now it had come to a boiling point. But something remarkable happened. A Christian bishop in Argentina made an appeal of peace. Soon after, a bishop in Chile echoed his appeal, and together these two Christian leaders pleaded with the people of their countries, which were on the brink of war, to lay down their weapons and settle their dispute. The peoples of these two nations listened. The impending war was stopped and peace reigned. Today if you were to travel to the mountain range which separates Chile from Argentina, you will find a gigantic statue of Christ. That statue was built by the peoples of both countries taking their unused guns, which had been readied for war, and melting them down to make that beautiful statue.

What differences do you have with your neighbor? What disputes have taken over your family? What anger needs to be unloaded from your marriage? Bring them to Jesus Christ and let His cross melt them away. Truly He is the One who has broken down the dividing walls...walls between us and God, walls between peoples. Take your walls to Jesus. He breaks them for you. Amen.