

Tear Down This Wall!
Ephesians 2:14-18
Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-?

Bethany Baptist Church
May 21, 2017

...pray...

History is full of images & stories about *walls*!

The *Great Wall of China*, the *Iron Curtain*, ... the controversial wall on our *southern border*!

Do you remember this: “*Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!*” – Pres. Reagan, June 12, 1987

There were *layers of walls* in the Jerusalem Temple precinct: the *first* to define a boundary for *Gentiles*, the next for *Jewish women*, the next for *Jewish men*, the next for the *priests*, the last (the *Veil*) to keep out all but the *High Priest* from the *Most Holy Place*, & even him all but *one day of year*.

Walls keep people *in*, keep people *out*, ... keep people *apart*.

The hardest walls to bring down are *not* made of *brick & mortar & barbed wire & surveillance cameras* – they are raised in the *mind & in the heart*!

Open your NT to Ephesians 2. We’ll read vv.11-22 (today, focus on 14-18).

We saw in **vv.11-13** that there was *hostility* between Jew & Gentile, *summed up* in the importance the Jews put on *ritual of circumcision*. But Paul almost *dismissed circumcision* (11) as merely a *man-made ceremony* – what God cares about is the *heart*.

Yet Paul *admits* that unsaved Gentiles do live under several real *spiritual disadvantages* (12) that place them *far from God*.

None the less, Jesus is able to bring *Gentile & Jew near* to one another and *near* to God by His *blood* → His *sin-paying death on the cross*. (**Read v.13**)

But **(14-18)** Paul has *more* to say on this *reconciliation* between *Jew & Gentile*!

Their historic hostility can be pictured in a *wall that separates* them. That wall needed to *come down* in order to replace the *two hostile groups* with *one reconciled people*.

How Jesus made *peace* between *enemies*:

- 1. The old wall *came down* (vv.14-15).**
- 2. The two groups *came together* (vv.15-16).**
- 3. The new man *comes to God* (vv.17-18).**

Make no mistake - the old wall *came down* (vv.14-15a)!

1. Jesus is *peace*. ... I get it that *bumper stickers* are not usually a good source of good *theology*, but the one that reads (seen it?) – “**No Jesus, no peace – Know Jesus, know peace!**” - that’s right on *target!*
 - a. “*Jesus is our peace,*” is Paul’s repeated theme in this morning’s text (started in **13** – *in Christ Jesus, the blood of Christ*, now in **v.14** – *He Himself is our peace*, **15 (2x)** – *His flesh* abolishes hostility; *in Himself He* united, **17** – *He came* to proclaim, & **18** – *though Him* we now have *access to the Father*.
 - b. The kind of *peace* that Jesus brought is not simply an *end to fighting*. That’s the kind of peace we see in the world of *international relations*, where *two warring countries* sign a treaty and pull back their armies, and watch each other (avoid each other) like hawks!
 - That kind of peace is just *war waiting for an opportunity...*
 - c. The kind of *peace* that Jesus brought is a *peace* that results in *cooperation & relationship & friendship* between former enemies.
2. Jesus didn’t make *peace* between Gentile & Jew by *negotiation*, He did it by *re-creation!* Paul says Jesus made *both* - **one**.
 - a. Once upon a time there were **two hostile people**, but now Jesus has made *both* people into *one* people – the *church*.
 - b. This is such an important church idea that Paul *previewed* it in **v.13** (the *far off have been brought near*), clarifies it here in **v.14** & then turns around & will say it *again* in **v.15**.
 - c. How did Jesus make this **new group**? *In His flesh* – it’s another way of saying (13) *by the blood of Christ*.
 - i. **I.e.** Paul is referring to the *sin-paying* death of Jesus on the cross, in our place, as the basis of *creating...*
 - ii. ... a **new people** who have **new**, spiritually circumcised *hearts*, and who live together under a **new covenant**.

3. Jesus' death made Gentile & Jew into *one* & Jesus' death *broke down* the wall between them.
 - a. Let's disassemble Paul's *picture* so can get His *point*. There are **three parts** to Paul's *wall picture*: the *building blocks* of the wall & the *wall* & the *results* of the wall.
 - b. Have you ever built a *wall*? You can choose *wood* or *brick* or *stone*. But some walls are made of *ideas* & *traditions* & *words* & *actions*!
 - i. The troublesome old wall in Eph 2 was built using the *Law of Moses*.
 - ii. Paul further analyses these *building materials* as the **OT commandments** stated in *ordinances* or *decrees*. A summarizing example of all of these *commandments* would be the *law of circumcision*, as we saw back in **v.11**.
 - c. Paul writes that the Jews used the *Law of Moses* to build up a *wall*, by which they *separated* themselves from the *Gentiles*.
 - i. The apostle uses a *rare word* – my **NASB** translates it as the “*dividing wall*.” A wall that stands between **two** parties to *separate* them from one another.
 - ii. The Jewish rabbis referred to Law of Moses as a *fence* around *Israel* to protect it from the *Gentiles* and their *pagan culture*.
 - d. Yet what was the *result*? *Enmity* – *hostility*, growing out of Jewish *pride* over the *Law*. So instead of *sharing* the Law w/ the nations, as an *aid* to *finding* God & *pleasing* God, they *stacked* the Law's commandments up into a *proud fortress wall* between themselves & the *nations*.
 - e. But now, in Christ, that wall is *torn down*! More *correctly*, the *dividing wall's* basic *building blocks* no longer work (Gr. *inoperable*). Jesus' *death on the cross* rendered the Law *inoperable*.
 - i. Kind of like building a wall using bricks that *melted in the rain* & *evaporated in the sun*!

- f. How did *Jesus' death on the cross melt the bricks & bring down the wall*? **Turn w/ me to Romans 8:3-4.**
- i. Jesus' death satisfied the *requirements of the Law* for every Christian, thereby rendering the Law *inoperable (irrelevant)*. Jesus *fully paid every demand* of the Law for His *elect people*.
 - ii. The **OT** Law is no longer the *distinguishing mark* or the *moral compass* for the **NT** saint (whether Jew or Gentile)!
 - iii. *That wall is down!* **PAUSE...**

Jesus *brought down the wall* that stood between *Jew & Gentile* because the **OT** Law *can't be used to distinguish & separate* one Christian from another.

Paul repeats that in Jesus the two groups *came together* (read vv.15b-16 – so that...).

1. *Bringing down the wall by way of the cross had two related purposed/ results: one horizontal & the second vertical.*
2. Here's the *horizontal* (15b) – *so that in Himself* (emphatic) *He might make the two into one new man.*
 - a. Here's a surprise, Paul is implying that there are only **three kinds of people in the world!** ☺ *Jew & Gentile & ...one new man!*
 - b. Paul means the *Church*, and his verb is “*create.*” Jesus doesn't make *Gentiles* into *Jews*, He makes *believing* Gentiles & Jews into *Christians*. The *old two* become a *new one!*
 - c. *Christians*, then, are the basis for this *new man*, this *new group* – the *Church*.
 - d. Paul underscores that *Jesus Himself is our peace* (14) by explaining that bringing together Jew & Gentile into this *single new identity* *establishes peace* between them.
3. Here's the *vertical* purpose (16): this *new one* is ***reconciled to God.***
 - a. Paul has *coined* another new word! (How would you like to play *scrabble* w/ that guy!)
 - i. **απο κατα λλασσω** –“*reconcile*”
 - b. W/his new word, Paul is writing here about the *one new man* (*Christians*), being *reconciled* to God. What does “*reconciliation*” mean, in the relationship between God & His *church*?

- c. The 20th century British pastor, **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones**, when teaching on these verses, suggested a **5 fold** understanding of *reconciliation*. *Reconciliation* brings about:
- i. A *change* from a hostile to a friendly relationship.
 1. The Bible says we are now *friends of God*. Jesus said, “no longer do I call you slaves ... but **friends**.”
 - ii. A *reconnecting* of both parties.
 1. Mankind had been **unconnected** w/God *since the Garden*. Not any longer!
 - iii. *Reconciliation* brings about a complete *replacement* of *hostility* with *harmony*.
 1. All *hostility* has been *erased*; *harmony* is the *word of the day*.
 - iv. *Reconciliation* starts with an *initiation* by the **offended** party to achieve reconciliation (**2x**).
 1. *Who* sinned against **who**, here? Yet...
 2. *God demonstrated His own love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us* (Rm 5:8).
 - v. *Reconciliation* brings about **restoration** of a relationship that *used to be whole* (prefix **re** signifies “again”).
 1. Our *first parents* walked w/ God in the Garden.
 2. Sin caused us to *part ways*!
 3. But now, in Christ, we *walk daily by God’s Spirit*,

Again, it’s all about the cross! Jesus’ death in the place of sinners, paying for their sins, established peace in the horizontal & initiated reconciliation in the vertical!

Paul is not ready to leave the idea of *reconciliation*! The focus is moving from the *two* that were *separated* from each other to *one* that is *reconciled to God*.

1. Paul pauses to *back up* what he is saying with an **OT** *illustration* about Jesus' *peace mission*. **Read v.17.**
 - a. The apostle's verse is **Isa 57:19**. Do you *recognize* the language of "far away" & "near"... ?
 - b. *Far away* → Gentiles; & *near* → Jews (just glance back to vv.11-13).
 - c. Paul is using Isaiah (**OT**) to reinforce that *Jesus* came to *reconcile* both Jew & **Gentile** to God, and to *bring peace* between them.
 - d. Anytime the *Gospel* is preached, *peace & reconciliation* are preached.
2. *Reconciliation* is the goal of this Trinitarian peace creating & peace keeping mission. (What do I mean by *Trinitarian*? *Father, Son, & Holy Spirit*.) **Read v.18.**
 - a. *Jesus* is our *basis* for coming to God (*access*).
 - i. *Access* in the sense of our *salvation* and then our *daily access to God* in *prayer & spiritual communion*.
 - ii. **Romans 5:1** – *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace w/ God through our Lord Jesus Christ*.
 - b. The *Holy Spirit* is our *bond* as Gentile & Jew come together to God.
 - i. Paul writes "we both." He is still thinking of the *Jew & Gentile* groups who have been *created* into *one new man*.
 - ii. In v. 16 we just read that *Jesus reconciled them both in one body to God*.
 - iii. Now (18) we read that *Jesus reconciled us both in one Spirit to the Father*.

- iv. Paul's point is *unity: one body* (church) & *one Spirit* (the same, indwelling Holy Spirit in every believer, regardless of background).
 - v. That's what is true of ***all*** of us as we *come together to God*.
- c. "*Father*" defines the *family relationship we share* as we come to God.
- i. At the beginning of Ephesians (1:2&3), Paul greeted his readers with a reference to God as our ***Father*** (and also the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ)...
 - ii. ...a few verses further the apostle reminded us of the blessing of being *predestined to adoption as God's children* (1:6), complete with a *royal inheritance* (1:11 & 14).
 - iii. Because of *Jesus*, and in *God's Spirit*, ***every*** true believer, ***regardless*** of background, comes *completely & confidently* to God as his/her *Heavenly Father*.

What makes walls fall?

1. When the wall is made up of *pride*, you have to have your *boast* busted!
The believing Jews needed to have the *Law of Moses* removed as their mark of *distinction* & grounds for *boasting*.
 - a. It is helpful to remind yourself that you are *nothing* apart from Christ.
 - b. Or, as they say: *there, but for the grace of God, go I!*

2. When the wall is made up of a *lie*, the *truth* brings down the wall.
 - a. Holding to Scripture as our *authority* for what we *believe* & how we *all live* removes *barriers*.
 - b. Paul will write in Eph 4 – *speaking the truth in love we grow up in all aspects into Him who is the Head, even Christ*

3. When the wall is built of *personal offenses*, it takes *repentance* & *forgiveness* crumble the wall.
 - a. It's helpful to *remember* how much God has *forgiven you*.
 - b. In a few weeks we will read in Eph 4 – *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God is Christ also has forgiven you*.

Do you have a wall going on? Mr. Christian, tear down that wall!

...pray...