

In the Heavenuies
Tear down that Wall
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Preached on: Sunday, May 7, 2023

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We're continuing this theme, "Tear Down that Wall," and it's the walls that are between people, and we've been focusing in particular in the second chapter of Ephesians. Today, I want us to think about where our citizenship is. Where is our citizenship? Our citizenship is in heaven. We're told here that we have been seated in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 2:6, "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus").

It's interesting, if you look right across the page, page 1,818, in verse 19 of chapter 1, he says, speaking there of God, "And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms." Notice that, in the heavenuies, in the heavenly realms. As in Ephesians 2:6, so there in Ephesians 1:20. And on the very first page, Ephesians 1:3 says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

I'd like you to turn over now to the book of Philippians for a moment. Philippians 3. Philippians 3 and looking there at verse 20 where he says this on page 1,829, he's speaking about unbelievers and he says in verse 19, "Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things." But notice what Paul says in Philippians 3:20, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there."

So thinking about that again, this focus is on heaven, and it's not—I want to add as we turn over to a familiar verse, Hebrews 12, Hebrews 12:22, page 1,878, Hebrews 12:22 and what I want to say is this: Heaven is not just some

place we're going to go when we die; heaven is a place we're going to go to this morning. Are you ready to go to heaven? Heaven is a place we will go to this morning, and this is what we see so clearly in Hebrews 12:22. He says,

“You have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.”

Let me comment on that verse in Greek. The Greek tense there means that you have had an action in the past that has ongoing present results. You have come and are now, he says, come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem. He said,

“You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”

This is what I want us to see: Heaven is not just something for the future; heaven is something for the here and now. And I use an illustration out of that science fiction TV show from back in the 1960s, “Star Trek.” You remember how he would say, “Beam me up, Scotty”? What I want us to see using that illustration is this: Whenever two or three gather together in Jesus' name, he says, there I am in their midst (Matthew 18:20).

Does Christ leave heaven and come down here? No. Christ beams us up so that we are with him in heaven.

We are now seated in heavenly places in Christ. That's our true home. That's our true country. That's the country that we are homesick for. Down here, we're just pilgrims and strangers and wanderers (Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11). Notice what he says across the page, Hebrews 13 and verse 14. He says,

“For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.” The city that is to come. Here it is. The city that is to come is the heavenly Jerusalem and whenever we worship on earth, we are worshiping in heaven.

I want us to get this point. I don't know how to say it, but it's true, I mean here today. I cite another movie and that's the movie “Places in the Heart,” and I was struck when I watched that movie “Places in the Heart.” I don't

know if any of you are old enough to remember it. It's a long time ago. But in this movie, the movie ends with a Communion scene, just like we'll have Communion this morning, and in the communion scene, as they pass the bread and wine, you begin to notice as the observer, that something's going on in that church. You say, "Wait a minute. Didn't that guy die in the very beginning of this movie?" And you look over here, "Well, didn't he die in the beginning of the movie?" And there they are.

The point I want to make in Hebrews 12 is that what's in that movie is actually capturing a biblical truth right here today. "Hey, Miss Orenne, it's good to see you again. We've missed you. We've missed your leading this worship in the church. It's great to see you this morning. Joe, it's great to see you this morning. You're here with us."

The point is that the Bible teaches that when we worship on earth, we are caught up into the heavenly realms where we are already seated in Christ Jesus, and when the church on earth worships, if you look over here at verse 22 of Hebrews 12,
"But you **have come and are now present** at Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem."

He says in the next sentence there of verse 22,
"You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly."

So as we look out this morning, we see a vast multitude of angels. Wow. You mean what? Angels here today? Yes, right here. And when we gather together to worship on earth, we're caught up in the heavenlies.

This isn't about emotion. This isn't about feeling. This is about a reality that's real, that's true, that actually exists. When we worship God on earth, we join with the church in heaven. That's what he says there.

If you notice in verse 23,
"To the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven."

We gather with the heavenly church. When we worship on earth, whether we're worshipping in Kenya or Uganda or in Beijing or in Guangzhou or in Saudi Arabia, even where it's a deadly offense to worship and gather in of all places, Mecca, even if we're worshipping in our own home with two or

three other believers in Mecca, we're no longer in Mecca, we're gathered up in heavenly places. This is the heavenly realm.

You see, our trouble is we think this is reality, and it is reality in a sense, but the real reality is the world you cannot see, you cannot see with your eyes or hear with your ears or feel with your hands.

The real reality is the unseen world and if we could just for a moment be like Elisha's servant, where he prayed, "Lord, open his eyes that he might see," and God opened his servant's eyes and he saw that instead of being outnumbered by all these forces of wickedness, actually the hills were alive—not with the sound of music—but with massive numbers of heavenly warriors, angelic hosts. He couldn't see them with the natural eye—Elisha could—but his eyes were opened, and he saw, and he didn't have to be afraid anymore. Wow! He saw (2 Kings 6:17).

The point is you and I probably don't need to have our eyes open this morning because you know what would happen?

"Oh my goodness! Ahhhhh!" We'd be terrified. And Iona, you did not yell at all. Wow! She has this neat thing when she hears a loud noise, she comforts herself like this. So you know, this is the deal. If our eyes were open, we could see what's really here with us now, we would be amazed. We'd be frightened. We'd be so distracted because the heavenly warriors are amazingly resplendent in their glory and beauty.

So, thank the Lord that we can't see them, but this is the reality: The reality is that we're not here on Robison Road in Texarkana, Texas. The reality is, because we're worshipping, we are already seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

That helps explain Holy Communion. Do we really receive Christ in Holy Communion? Yes, we do. Jesus doesn't leave heaven and come down here. Jesus has seated us in heavenly places in him, and he feeds us in his presence.

We have a greater communion, a greater fellowship, a greater intimacy than any of the disciples—the 12 disciples who were gathered that day for the Last Supper, the Lord's Supper in the Upper Room, because the reality is, you and I now, by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, are seated in

heavenly places with this vast multitude of believers and angels (Ephesians 1:3, 17-21; Hebrews 12:22-23).

And so he says these things to us there in Hebrews 12, and so Christ is present in the Lord's Supper. How? I don't know.

The Bible just teaches me **that** he is. I don't have to know **how**. The trouble with theology is that people want to figure out the "hows" and they come up with all kinds of theories and ideas about how Christ is present, and they're just speculations, and those speculations try to explain the inexplicable, try to take the mystery and make it less mysterious.

But Jesus Christ will meet with you this morning in this meal. When you receive that bread, somehow or another, you're receiving Christ himself because he's with us here this morning—not by his being down here on Robison Road—but we are in the middle of heaven itself in the heavenly assembly, and so this is an important truth.

Now I want us to look at an implication of this that's rather profound—if you will turn with me back to 2 Timothy 2. 2 Timothy 2 and you'll find this on page 1,853. And this is 2 Timothy 2. I'm going to begin reading at verse one.

“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer.”

Now this is what I want you to understand. What are the walls and barriers between human beings today? Well, there are all kinds of them. All kinds of them. And I think in modern America, the two political parties work to divide us. This is how they do it. You've got to get your base to turn out, and in order to get your base to turn out, you've got to be very radical to attract that base and win in the primaries, and then you begin to mellow out when it's the general election. But the key is galvanizing your base.

That is, take if you're a Republican, you want to make Republicans mad. You want them to be very angry. You want them to hate Democrats. And if you're a Democrat, you want to stir up the Democrats and make them very

angry at Republicans and make them blame Republicans for everything. That's the goal. You need to see that modern politics is simply the old, old story of divide and conquer.

It's get people angry, angry enough that they will turn out in great numbers to the polls and win. The thing I want to tell you is that American politics, like all politics throughout all ages, is about self-serving and winning at the expense, not only of the other side, but at the expense of the citizens and the country.

We're in an awful mess in this country, and you think about all the gun mess that's going on. I mean, just yesterday in one of those really fancy malls, this one just north of Dallas. Wow! What is going on? Satan is having a field day. And the point I want to make is this: Are you a soldier? I submit to you: You are a soldier.

He says there in 2 Timothy 2.4, "No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs." What does that mean? It means that you are in the army of the Lord.

I think of a Sunday school chorus or vacation Bible school chorus, "I'm in the Lord's army." You're in the Lord's army.

Does that mean you can serve in your nation's army? Sure. You know, nowhere do you find in the Bible that believers were forbidden to serve in the military of their country (Luke 3:14). And this is the thing, if you can hear this very radical set of truths:

If you're living in Russia and you're drafted, you should serve. If you're living in Iraq and you're drafted, you should serve. If you're living in Saudi Arabia and you're drafted, you should serve. If you're living in Vietnam and you're drafted, you should serve. In other words, it's not, is my country right? It doesn't make any difference whether your country's right or wrong. You obey the government (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-18); you should try to avoid, if you can in many conflicts, because of the division.

The point I want to make is what is my country? What is the army that I need to be loyal to above all other things? And that is the heavenly army. I'm in the Lord's army, and whether I take an oath of office where I solemnly promise before God to defend the Constitution of the United States

against all enemies, foreign and domestic—I've got to tell you, in spite of what it says, without any mental reservation, I've got a mental reservation.

My mental reservation is I take this oath of office, and I've taken an oath of office, I take this oath of office recognizing that the Supreme Commander is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is my Commander in Chief. He is the one to whom I owe unwavering, absolute, total loyalty, and I can never give that kind of loyalty to any human being on earth, not to my wife, not to my husband, not to my parents, not to my country, because I'm a citizen of a better country than the United States of America. I'm a citizen of heaven. I belong to the heavenly army. That's my loyalty.

And this is what we have to understand. When he says in 2 Timothy 2:4, "No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs," the civilian affairs are what we would call sometimes military affairs. In other words, where are we going with this? Where we're going with this is no matter who you are, no matter when you are, no matter where you are, you serve the King of kings and Lord of lords, and you always serve with mental reservation of a loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. Always, without exception.

That means that sometimes as a soldier of Christ, you're going to have to disobey an earthly ruler and the earthly ruler says, "You will do this," and you say, "Sir, I cannot obey that order. I respectfully decline to obey." You have to do it respectfully, but you respectfully decline to obey, and what happens if they shoot you?

Glory to God! Hallelujah! I'm going to heaven! I'm already seated in heavenly places. That's my country. That's where my loyalty lies. And I'm just being dispatched out of this world, which is called "a vale of tears." (Psalm 84:6, "As they pass through the valley of tears (עֵמֶק הַדְּמָעָה), they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools.")

No matter how good you've got it in this life, it's still a vale of tears. No matter how much you have the joy of the Lord, you still encounter circumstances in this life that vex your soul. And this is what I want to say in 2 Timothy 2:4: The civilian affairs are all of the things of this life and this world that divide human beings.

"Tear down that wall." Don't ever let your politics keep you from being able to share Jesus with another person. Don't ever let your military allegiance

and alliance keep you from sharing Jesus with others, because in the final analysis, this country is over, and Europe is over.

You know, the coronation of King Charles III, the little bit I did see of it with photos, I saw a review that said it looked like two aging polar bears. It was at once great and beautiful and dignified, and on the other hand, it just was downright silly.

When his mama received the coronation, Queen Elizabeth II, the British Empire pretty well still existed, though it was in decline, but the British Empire is over and who took its place? We did.

The point I want to make is every country on the face of the earth is ruled by fallen, fallible, finite human beings who are selfish and self-centered. It is a rare thing to find a political leader who puts his country ahead of himself.

Do you know what I said? You remember David? David arranged to have Uriah the Hittite killed in battle. Why do he do that? Because he had slept with Uriah's wife. She'd gotten pregnant. David knew that he would be accused. He knew the child wasn't his (2 Samuel 11:2-5). And do you know that was a death penalty under the law of Moses? The king of Israel, David, was facing a death penalty because he slept with another man's wife (Leviticus 20:10).

So, what does he do? He tries to get him to go home and sleep with his wife. Won't do it. He gets him drunk thinking, well, candy's dandy, but liquor is quicker. And that didn't work. And so finally what he does is he writes out a note and he gives it to Uriah the Hittite himself to take, and it's sealed so he can't open it, and what he did not know, that is Uriah, he was carrying in his hand a death warrant because what happened is Joab followed the instructions of King David and put Uriah in the heat of the hottest battle and then he sounded a retreat (2 Samuel 11:7-17).

Do you ever think that the Army, the Navy, the Air Force in various countries throughout history has deliberately murdered people by such a stratagem as that or is David unique in all of the annals of human history?

What's so amazing is that David sends another message to Joab and said, "Don't let it bother you." He said, "People die in battle every day" (2

Samuel 11:25). The callousness of sending people into battle and having them killed. Wow!

And so what I want you to see is this: What really matters in life is that our neighbors, our relatives, our friends, our enemies come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, and that they swear allegiance to him because I will tell you, on the day of judgment, every American General, every American President, every American war hero, and those of the old Soviet Union, and those of the British Empire, and those of the ancient Greeks and the ancient Romans—all of them without exception who have not bowed their knees and sworn allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords are going to be cast into the lake of fire that burns forever and ever (Revelation 20:11-15).

And so here's the deal: Don't ever let some worldly division like I'm a Democrat, I'm a Republican, or I'm a Libertarian—I kind of am—don't ever let that ever get in the way of Jesus with people. Never. Don't ever let your worldly position, don't ever let your wealth or your poverty, don't ever let family loyalty or anything else that the world sees us on, as a point of division. Those are the civilian affairs. Remember you're a soldier. Every single, solitary one of you is a soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's your calling to serve him in this world. And if it costs you your life, soldiers die. Better to die for the Lord's cause, better to die because you're in the Lord's army than to die for some worldly thing that ultimately—and I look at Vietnam as an example where you get good clothes now cheaply. I mean, wow! Governments betray other nations. Governments betray our own military. It's all about money and don't ever let that come between you and the Lord Jesus Christ, sharing him with other people.

So, part of tearing down that wall is to not let your entanglement with your social standing, your economic standing, your family position, your political party, or military service for a particular country ever get between you and sharing the Lord Jesus Christ with others, and never forget “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the saints” (Attributed to Tertullian).

And so now we move to the Lord's Supper, and I want to pray.

Lord, as we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we pray, Lord, that you would give us to remember the reality is we are already citizens of heaven. We already

live in the heavenly realms. Our true home is heaven, not here on earth. And that Lord, as we eat this bread and drink this wine, we do so as a means of having real fellowship, real communion with the most precious of all people, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.