

Refuge City Church — September 10, 2023

“Tear down the wall” (Ephesians 2:11-22)

Introduction

- **Last time:**

- We *were* dead. We *once* walked in sin. We *once* lived in our flesh. We *were* children of wrath... But God!
- By His grace, we are alive, made new. God’s handiwork; vessels filled with His Spirit, ready to walk in His purposes.

“No Hope” [Verses 11-12]

“Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”

- In the moment, Paul addressed the division between Jew and Gentile; yet this message is for all of us!
- We’re called to remember, from time to time, who we *used* to be apart from Christ.
 1. **Separated:** by your own choosing. Chasing idols and temporary pleasure that had no lasting fulfillment. Walking in darkness.
 2. **Alienated:** The door was open and an invitation given, yet by choice, we remained enslaved to our sin.
 3. **Strangers:** a foreigner who doesn’t understand the culture, language, and customs of the light and love of God.
 - Consider everything promised and given from God [chapter 1]
 4. **No Hope:** **Ephesians 1:18**, “having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you...”
 5. **Without God:** two of the scariest words that should frighten everyone!
 - This is our testimony of God’s mercy.
 - We don’t live in our past and allow it to affect us now.
 - We use our past to give glory to God for what He has done for us, Amen?!
- **EXAMPLE:** Pink Floyd’s “The Wall”: the story of one man’s life trauma.
 - Death of father, over-protective mother, abusive teachers, failed marriage, hope in material possessions, drugs, loneliness, depression, and isolation.
 - So he builds a metaphorical wall of separation between himself and the reality of his turmoil.
 - “Tormented with guilt, Pink places himself on trial for ‘showing feelings of an almost human nature’ before his inner judge orders him to ‘tear down the wall’.”
 - Albeit a musical/lyrical example, this is the reality for so many apart from Christ.

“Our Peace” [Verses 13-17]

“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 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.”

- But Jesus!
 - Extended His grace and forgiving hand to bring us near.
 - Only by His blood, made available to all.
- The hostility that existed between Jew and Gentile was extreme.
 - The Gentile was less than human in the eyes of the Jew.
 - [Paul returns to Jerusalem and goes to the temple] **Acts 21:27-28**, “...Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and *the law* and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.”
 - The wall between the Court of Women & Court of the Gentiles
- **QUESTION:** What hostility resides in you towards others? Did Jesus not tear down that wall too?
 - **Luke 10:25-36** [The Good Samaritan]
 - The priest was too holy to help.
 - The Levite was too pure to get dirty.
 - **Luke 10:33**, “*But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.*”
 - Our religiosity and self-proclaimed purity will only keep us from truly loving our neighbor and pursuing true unity in the church.
 - **QUOTE:** “If the Lordship of Jesus Christ is not greater than any difference you have with others - be it political, racial, economic, language, geography or whatever, then you have not fully understood what it means to be under the Lordship of Jesus.” [David Guzik]
 - In the church, there is no wall, no hostility, no segregation, no alienation. Only unity and peace.
 - Jesus is the peace in restored relationships.
 - **QUOTE:** “The reason why there is so much strife in this world, between individuals, families, social or political groups, whether small or large, is that the contending parties, through the fault of either or both, have not found each other at Calvary. Only then when sinners have been reconciled to God through the cross will they be truly reconciled to each other.” [William Hendricksen]
 - **Romans 10:4**, “*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*”
- Hebrews 9 and 10 beautiful encapsulate this concept through the explanation of the law and ordinances of the wilderness tabernacle and the temple in Jerusalem.

- *Hebrews 9:1-5* quickly explains the division between the holy place where the priests enter to go about their rituals, and the holy of holies that was only entered once a year, as outlined by God under the old covenant.
- *Hebrews 9:6-10* explicitly tell us that under the new covenant of Jesus, all those rituals have no affect on the conscience of those who worship.
 - Ritual worship does can do nothing to cleanse us from our sins and make us right before God.
 - **Hebrews 9:11-14**, “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”
- Yet a lot of people “feel better” about themselves after having gone to church once in awhile, as if the outward act of entering a building on Sunday has some sort of affect on your well-being. *It.Does.Not.*
 - **Hebrews 10:11-12, 22-23, 26**, “And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful... For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,”
 - **Romans 5:2**, “Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

“Solid Foundation” [Verses 17-22]

“For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

- Separated — Connected
- Alienated — United
- Stranger — Friend
- Hopeless — Hope-filled
- Without God — United with Him in Christ.
- What was once homeless, is now welcome into the household of God!
 - **1 Corinthians 3:16**, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”
 - The Jew: would think of the temple in Jerusalem.

- The Gentile/Ephesian: would think of the great temple of Diana [wonder of the ancient world]
- Where are those temples now? Gone. Because it's not about the physical structure.
- **Acts 7:48**, "Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands..."
- Jesus told us that He would not leave us as orphans. We are not alone.
- Not only do we have a place to stay/home, we are part of a larger body of family who are welcomed into the same household.
- And we each get to play a special role.

Conclusion

- So how can we continue to hold hostility between ourselves and other members of our family?? [like siblings who separate their room; what's mine is mine; don't cross that line]
- **1 Corinthians 3:10-11**, "...Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."
- Jesus said, "I will build my church..."
- **Psalm 40:2**, "He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure."
- With the dividing wall of hostility broken down...
- With the peace of Christ in our hearts...
- With our feet firmly planted on the solid foundation, covered by the blood of Jesus...
- **QUESTION:** What are we doing to continue to build up that most holy place, in ourselves and in others?
- **2 Corinthians 4:5, 7**, "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord... But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us."