

SERMON FOR JULY 22, 2018

TEXT: EPHESIANS 2: 12-22

THEME: JESUS HAS TORN DOWN THE WALL OF SIN

¹² 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. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ 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, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

In the name of Jesus:

In Berlin Germany there used to be a wall that separated East Germany from West Germany. It was called the Berlin Wall. Constructed in 1961, it served to divide the city of Berlin in half. On the one side, to the West, was West Germany. A picture of modernization, freedom, and vibrancy. On the other side of the wall lay East Berlin and East Germany, a picture of sterilization, restrictions, and fear. Standing at Checkpoint Charlie, that place that allowed people to cross over to the other side, you could see the difference. In East Germany and in East Berlin, the people spoke cautiously and looked at you warily, the buildings all looked the same, as if they were erected from the same erector set. However, in West Germany, and in West Berlin, things were different. The people were more open and honest in their conversation and in their relationships. The buildings all had a unique character or flavor to them. The Berlin Wall did more than

just separate a city, it was a wall that marked a differently type of lifestyle one from the other.

All that began to change, though, in 1987. President Ronald Regan visited Berlin and spoke at the Berlin Wall, uttering one of the most memorable phrases of the twentieth century. Standing at the podium, with East Berlin at his back, President Regan issued a challenge to President Gorbachev saying: “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.” Within two years of Regan’s speech, the wall was torn down. That which divided a city was no more. Oh, there were remnants of the wall that still remain, parts of the wall that still have spray paint on it from lovers of freedom who wrote: “This wall will fall, beliefs become reality.” With the destruction of that barrier, that wall, lives were changed. People no longer lived in fear. They had new lives to live!

And so it is with you and me. This is what Paul is addressing; this is what he is talking about in our text for today. For at one time, you and I lived in fear. There was a wall separating us from God our Heavenly Father. But thanks be to God, God tore down the wall of separation that divides us from God and now gives us a new life to live all because of Jesus!

There was a time when all of humanity was separated from God. Just listen to what the Bible says: “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind...² 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.”

Yes, at one time in your life you were separated from God, at your birth! For you were born into sin and God’s truth was not in you. Your heart and life was far from God. You did not love God with all of your heart, you did not even know who the True God is. There was hostility in your heart toward God and your fellow man. And that hostility still shows itself today, it shows itself in how God’s name is used, when the name of the Lord is taken in vain, when we treat God not as the most important Person or Being but shove Him into the background of our lives, so that He becomes one choice among many. None of us fear, love, or trust in God as we should, and it shows in how we worry about things that we have no control over, when we are anxious and afraid of what may or may not happen.

This separation from God manifests itself in how we treat one another. Instead of loving our fellow man like we love ourselves, or instead of treating others in a way that we wish to be treated, we bicker and complain about others, we tear down in our language instead of using our language to build up one another in love. We look out for ourselves instead of seeking the best for our neighbor. We have been born into a world where there is a wall of separation between humanity and God and between fellow human beings. This is the way of the world and this is what the Bible is talking about when it says: “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, **among** whom we all once lived in the passions of our

flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”

But God has torn down the walls that separate us, from Him and from one another. How did God do this? Just listen to what the Bible says: “⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved — ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.”

What a wonderful blessing to know and believe that God so loved you that He sent His one and only Son to be your Savior. Jesus has knocked down the wall of hostility that has existed between God and sinners by His perfectly led life and His bloody death on the cross. You, a sinner, who have been separated from God since birth, now are brought near to God by the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus cleanses you from all sin. Jesus has paid the price, He has purchased and won you, from sin, death and the Devil, not with money but with His holy precious blood and innocent suffering and

death. And why has Jesus done this? All so that you might give Him the glory in your life.

This is what the Bible means when it says: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

God has placed you here in this congregation and as a member of the Holy Christian Church so that you will walk in good works, thereby glorifying God the Father. He has made you a citizen of His kingdom, with others in the household of God in the waters of your Baptism. Your Baptism has rooted you in Jesus Christ. There you were marked with the holy cross as one redeemed by Christ the crucified. Your life is now not your own, it belongs to God for He has purchased you with the blood of His Son. Jesus is the cornerstone of His Church, of this congregation, and your life. God calls you to be transformed, changed, by the renewing of your mind so that you will give glory to God.

This takes place everyday when you remember that you are baptized. But it also takes place when your life is cemented in and rooted in the Word of God, the Holy Bible. The writings of the prophets and apostles in Holy Scripture are used by the Holy Spirit to change your heart, your mind, and your life.

You see, we are a people of the Word; a group of people owned by God and is privileged to be called citizens of heaven. The Word of God, the Bible, is the immovable foundation of the Church, this congregation, and of our lives individually and lives together. The Bible gives us Jesus, in whom we live, move, and have our being. Jesus is present in His Word. He is present today in the Supper. He comes so that our lives will be built upon Him for He is the foundation of our faith and life together. You need not live in fear of God's wrath, for you have been set free in Christ to live your life in the way God calls you to live: loving Him first and foremost, and loving others by serving them in the name of Jesus.

In the Book of Joshua, Joshua tells of the time when the people of God were about ready to enter into the Promised Land. All that separated them from entering and beginning to live the new life God prepared was a wall. Not just any wall, it was the wall around the city of Jericho. God told Joshua what to do. All Joshua and the people of God had to do was take God at His Word, trusting in Him, and God would bring about the victory. And that is exactly what took place. Following God's command: at the sound of the trumpets, and the great shout of the people the wall of Jericho came tumbling down. And archeologists have found the remains of that wall and it remains in shambles to this day.

So now live your life to the glory of God, telling others what God. For JESUS HAS TORN DOWN THE WALLS OF SIN.

Amen