

“God Breaks the Barriers”

Walls.

We build walls to make a building. Inside the building are walls separating different rooms which serve various purposes. Sometimes we may build walls to protect ourselves, like when we build a bank to keep us from being flooded by the river. The walls of our building also protect us from the cold, rain, snow and storms. In the Old Testament the cities had walls around them to protect them from the attacks of enemies who wanted to hurt the people.

However, many times people build walls because of sin. Sin is doing something which breaks God’s Law. When you hate someone and call him names to make him feel bad you sin because God commands you to love other people and speak words which help them.

When you slander others and hurt their reputation you sin because God tells you in **Ephesians 4:29** *“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear”*. When people kill other people they sin . . . or when they steal other people’s stuff they sin . . . because God commands us to help others and protect their life and stuff. Sin is doing something which breaks God’s Law.

While it is rather easy for us to build walls in our life because of our sin it is literally impossible for us to bring them down. No force of our human effort can ever bring down the walls of hostility which we create between us and others. Yes, we may make efforts at reconciliation with apologies and offers to “make it up” to the

person against whom we've sinned. However, we may find that even such efforts cannot appease the damage done by our sin.

The LORD is in the business of breaking down the barriers—the walls built by sin which separate us from God and others. *They can be destroyed only by His doing as we simply walk by faith in Him and watch it happen.* A good example is when God brought down the walls of the city of Jericho as His people entered the land which He promised to give them.

The people were instructed to walk around the walls of the city once a day for six days. These walls were constructed to protect the people within the city from the ravages of sin. In **Joshua 6:4-5** the LORD told them to march around the city seven times on the seventh day and have the priests blow their trumpets. When hearing the sound of the trumpet, then all the people were supposed to shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city would fall down flat. Sounds like kind of a strange way to make a huge wall fall down! Certainly not the normal procedure for tearing down a wall!

Actually God made the wall fall down! *His people simply trusted Him by faith.*

They did what He told them even though it seemed strange! The LORD did what He promised and brought the wall down for them! Even their faith did not bring the wall down. Only God can break the barriers which sin creates!

There was another kind of “wall” which needed to come down too. ***Actually it was a curtain.*** It too was in place because of sin—***placed by the LORD's direct command.***

God's tabernacle or temple in the Old Testament was kind of like a church building. There was a special place where God came to His people, His presence being represented by a box called the Ark of the Covenant. However, it was closed off by a curtain so **people could not get to God or they would die because of their sins**. You cannot fully experience God's presence and glory and live because He will not tolerate your sin! He will accept nothing but holiness in His presence!

This puts you in a difficult position of guilt and fear of the LORD's judgment upon your sin. In the Person of Jesus God came and "tabernacled" among us to live perfectly according to His Law for you and to suffer the eternal punishment for your sins by dying on the cross. When He did, something very strange happened. Listen to what **Matthew 27:50-51** says: **Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom**. This action symbolized opening the way into the LORD's presence for everyone through faith in Jesus' Person & Work!

Because Jesus died to forgive you your sins, you now have access to God as your loving Father! We pray this in the prayer Jesus taught us to pray: Our Father Who art in heaven.

Because Jesus opened the way to God the Father for us we are God's children! **Galatians 3:26-28** says: **In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus**. All people can now pray to the LORD just like we ask our dad for help and protection through faith in Jesus Christ!

Sometimes you still build walls because of your sin. Walls between you and your family members, fellow members of Christ Church, neighbors and others. It happens whenever you disobey God's commands which require you to treat others in the manner He wants them to be treated.

You build walls of sin when you lie, slander, gossip, covet and steal, use and abuse, and a gamut of other actions which feed your own self-righteousness and your own selfish desires. These too can only be broken down by Jesus. **Ephesians 2:13-14** says: **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 is the One Who breaks down the dividing wall of hostility which our sins create. **Ephesians 2:15-16** go on to say He did this 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.**

The work of Christ is what brings down the walls. By faith in His death and resurrection we receive the benefits of reconciliation—taking us enemies and making us His friends! Thus, any efforts at reconciling with someone against whom you've sinned or who has sinned against you happens at the cross of Jesus Christ. You received the benefits of the cross and resurrection of Jesus in your baptism. When you confess your sins and receive His absolution, the forgiveness of God, then you are moved to place others under Christ's forgiveness for you and them!

When you gather in worship with the body of Christ you are renewed in the forgiveness of sins dispensed by you and for you in the Lord's Supper.

Thus Christ's forgiveness continues to break down the barriers, the walls of hostility that your sins build. Through His forgiveness the Holy Spirit continues to empower you so that, instead of building walls, you build others up in Christ by serving them, giving grace to those who hear! Amen.