

THE BIG IDEA: We can't be WALLED in if we're going to be ALL in.

The Take-Off

Every now and then, one word can feel weighty.

The answer to "will you marry me?" A doctor saying cancer. The first word of Ephesians 2:11.

"Therefore"

It's Paul's way of saying, "This isn't theory anymore. Here's what we need to do, what we need to never forget."

He's told the Ephesians that they are chosen, that they are blessed, that they can live live fully alive even though they were once fully dead, and in one word he brings them to the question we always seem to ask, "So, what now?"

And over the next 12 verses, Paul explains to them something that God desires for them and something that God did for them, and the implications for us are huge.

First, what God desires for each of us:

1. What God desires

- a. It won't take long to answer this: God wants us to be in relationship with him and with each other
- b. We're going to see this in these verses in Ephesians 2, but first let's paint a bigger picture
- c. Way back in Genesis 1 when God created everything - before sin entered the world - we learned two truths:
 - One, that creation wasn't VERY good until after man had been created (Gen. 1:31), so we know that God found great pleasure in us, and
 - Two, God said it wasn't good for man to be alone and gave him Eve as a partner (Gen. 2:18)
- d. Now all of this happened before the world went bad, and that's really important, because often we see our need for others as a curse.
- e. It's actually what God has desired for all of us from the beginning, and after Paul had shared with the Ephesians everything that God had done for them, he hit the pause button with that word - "therefore" - to make sure they understood the reason behind everything God had done.
- f. The next 12 verses are not only a glimpse into what God desire, but it's also the section of Scripture that drastically grabbed my heart years ago in such a strong way that it has become the foundation of everything we do here at The Gathering, from the name of the church to the mission we have.
- g. In fact, this part of the chapter can be divided into 3 sections that will sound pretty familiar to you if you've been at The Gathering for more than a week.
- h. First, God wants us to be **Near God** (vv. 11-13)
 - Ever since Adam sinned, there has been division, and the biggest one was between us and God
 - We were separate from God (v. 12)
 - And what we've learned so far in Ephesians is that God isn't "stuck" with us, but that he chose us
 - That means he wasn't content with a gap between us and him
 - John 3:16 says he was motivated by love to send Jesus into our mess, and v. 13 here says that he did it to bring us from far away to near him
- i. But God wants more for us than just to be near him
- j. He also wants us to be **Near man** (vv. 14-18)
 - Verse 14 mentions a "wall of hostility"
 - It was a real wall that kept Gentiles and Jews separated from each other
 - Jesus blew it up because Jesus is all about getting us near each other
 - We'll see it later in Ephesians, but this is why the local church is so important - it's where we live out all the one another commands
 - I can say that I love my neighbor and as long as my neighbor is miles away and never rubs me the wrong way, it'll look like I do love him
 - But let him move closer - maybe even share a room - and that gets put to the test, doesn't it?
 - Being near one another can sometimes be uncomfortable, but it is something that God desires for us
 - John 13:35 - how we love one another reveals to the world that we're following Jesus
 - Matthew 5:46 takes that one step further - it is the love of people who we don't like that really sets us apart from the world!

- k. Finally, God desires that these relationships would result in our **Making disciples** (vv. 19-22)
 - If God's desire was just for each of us here to be near him and near each other, then God has a one generation dream!
 - But God's desire is that our relationship with him and with each other would position us bricks in a building that he has been working on since the apostles and the prophets and will continue building until it is complete with people from every tribe and tongue (Revelation 5:9)
 - *We are part of a building that we then have a part in building!*
- l. So we know what God wants for us, right? To be in relationship with him and others.
- m. We also know that there are barriers to that desire.
- n. Sometimes we want things but can't have them, kind of how I'd like a Super Bowl ring but have no ability to make that happen.
- o. But God has desire for us to be near him, and the ability to do whatever it took to make it possible.

2. What God did

- a. So what did he do? He sent Jesus as the original wrecking ball, and he "destroyed the barrier" (Ephesians 2:14)
- b. "Destroy" literally means to loosen or break up what is built together
- c. Jesus' death was the wrecking ball that busted up the walls that stood between us and God and us and others
- d. Paul uses a word for "abolish" that has a dual meaning. One, it means to render useless, and two, it means to terminate all intercourse with. That's pretty strong!
- e. Those barriers are gone!
- f. And here's what I want us to get from all this wrecking ball talk: Jesus has already done it ("has destroyed") and so any walls that still exist between us and God or us and others are walls that we've built back
- g. Let that sink in for a second. We hear people pray for God to break down the walls between churches, races or generations, and yet this passage says that he already did.
- h. Is it possible that he's simply waiting for us to begin tearing down what we've rebuilt? I think it is.
- i. So we need to recognize the walls in our lives so that we can start tearing them down, right?
- j. Here are 5 things that WALLS do, and if you recognize any of this in your life, then chances are good you're working at replacing what God's torn down.
- k. WALLS...
 - Work for us
 - they help us keep out people that we may not really like
 - this isn't necessarily a bad thing, and there were even times that Jesus went away to be alone
 - but the test of good or bad is whether the walls take the next dangerous step
 - Alienate us
 - the funny thing about walls is that they really do work well
 - the problem with walls is that they eventually alienate us from the God and people we need
 - you can see this in Ephesians 2:12 - they were separate, excluded, foreigners
 - Lead us to frustration
 - because we have to try so hard to get over, under or around them
 - and often this work doesn't do anything but make us feel more alienated, more frustrated
 - Leave us hopeless
 - try something long enough with no visible success and you'll lose hope
 - it is the cycle of failure that we see so often in sports, in business, in culture
 - And when we've given up hope, we find out the last thing walls do
 - Stop us
 - we simply stop trying, because who wants to run into a brick wall over and over again (VIDEO CLIP)
 - we accept the distance and try to make the best of it
 - and we live crazy lives full of emotional roller coasters - up, down, good, bad, in love with God and others and then proclaiming our call to be a hermit
- l. That's why Jesus was the wrecking ball to the walls in our lives
- m. Because you and I were NEVER meant to live life alone, and the only way to accomplish that is by getting rid of any walls between us.

The Landing

Before we wrap this up, I want to show you one more video - let's just call it exhibit A for how none of us really ever flourishes when we're separated from the love we need

Let's roll it and then I'll come back up to close

[SHOW VIDEO OF REUNIONS]

We all want that, don't we? And the only way to have it is be all in with God and with each other, and that can't happen if we rebuild the walls that he's destroyed.

So let's close with today's Big Idea: **We can't be WALLED in if we're going to be ALL in.**

To go all in, to carry this mission that God had for all of us originally, to be near God and near man and making disciples, we've got to live free from the walls that keep that from happening.

You and I were made for relationships, and if we're going to be all in, we can't be walled in.