

WEEK 3

“Closer than you think.”

Ephesians 2:11 – 3:21

The Wall That Came Down

Ephesians 2:14 (NIV)

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

There was a literal wall. Archaeologists have found the inscriptions that once marked it in the Jerusalem temple — a stone barrier separating the court of the Gentiles from the inner courts where Jewish worshippers could go. The inscription warned in Greek and Latin that any Gentile who crossed it would be responsible for their own death.

This was the world Paul's readers lived in. Not just a cultural preference for keeping certain people at a distance. A physical, legal, theological wall that said: you don't belong here. You are outside. Stay out.

Paul says Christ demolished it. Not lowered it. Not made it optional. Demolished. The Greek word he uses is the same one used for tearing down a building. What Christ did to the wall between insiders and outsiders wasn't a renovation. It was a demolition.

And notice what Paul says replaced it. Not tolerance. Not a diversity program. Not a set of rules for getting along. He says Christ himself is our peace. The peace between formerly divided people isn't an arrangement or a treaty. It's a Person. Jesus didn't just broker reconciliation. He became it.

This matters deeply for how we live. There are walls in every human community — between classes, races, generations, political tribes, insiders and outsiders of every kind. The church is not immune to them. But the gospel insists that Christ has already demolished what we keep trying to rebuild. Every wall we erect between ourselves and someone else is a structure we're raising on ground he already cleared.

The wall came down. The question is whether we're still trying to put it back up.

Personal Response

- Where in your life do you notice a wall between yourself and someone else? It doesn't have to be dramatic — even subtle distance or avoidance counts.
- What would it mean to treat that wall as something Christ has already demolished rather than something you need to maintain?
- Ask God to show you one specific relationship where he's calling you to live like the wall is already down.

The Least Likely Messenger

Ephesians 3:7-8 (NIV)

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ.

Paul is describing himself here, and his self-description is striking. He doesn't say "I am the least of the apostles." He says "less than the least of all the Lord's people." Not just the bottom of the leadership ladder. Below everyone. The least qualified, least deserving person imaginable to carry this message.

And he meant it. Before his conversion, Paul hunted down Christ followers and had them imprisoned. He watched approvingly as Stephen was stoned to death. He was, by his own account, the chief persecutor of the very community he was now being sent to serve. If you were going to design a resume for the person least suited to preach about God's love, Paul's pre-conversion life would be a strong candidate.

And yet. God chose him. Not despite his history, but — in some way that defies human logic — through it. The man who knew better than anyone what life without Christ looked like became the man who described it most vividly. The man who persecuted the church became its most passionate missionary.

This isn't a story about how bad people can become good people if they try hard enough. It's a story about what grace does when it lands on someone who knows they don't deserve it. Paul's sense of his own unworthiness never left him — "less than the least" is how he describes himself years into ministry. But that awareness of what he didn't deserve only made the grace more extraordinary.

God has a pattern of choosing the least likely messengers. Which means your history — whatever it contains — is not a disqualification. It might be exactly the thing that makes you the right person for the specific work God has prepared for you.

Personal Response

- Is there something in your past that you've believed disqualifies you from being used by God? Name it honestly.
- How does Paul's story speak to that belief? What does it suggest about how God works?
- Ask God to help you see your own story — including the parts you're not proud of — the way he sees it. Ask him to show you how he might use even that.

Rooted

Ephesians 3:17-19 (NIV)

So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

This is where the title of this series comes from. Rooted and grounded in love. Paul prays it over his readers because he knows it's the only thing that can hold a person steady when everything else is shifting.

A tree with a shallow root system looks fine in calm weather. It's only when the storm comes that you find out how deep the roots actually go. Paul's prayer isn't that his readers would have a good spiritual season. It's that they would be so deeply rooted in the love of Christ that the storms — which are coming, Paul knows this from a prison cell — wouldn't uproot them.

And then he asks for something that sounds almost paradoxical: that they would know a love that surpasses knowledge. How do you know something unknowable? Paul is reaching for the distinction between intellectual knowledge and experiential knowledge. You can know everything there is to know about the ocean without ever having stood at its edge. That's not the same as standing there. Paul wants his readers at the edge. He wants them to feel the vastness.

Wide enough to cover everything you've done. Long enough to stretch from before you were born to beyond the end of time. High enough to be above every circumstance that feels crushing. Deep enough to reach whatever in you is buried and hidden and hasn't seen the light.

That's what Paul prays over you. Not that you would understand it perfectly. That you would be rooted in it so deeply that it becomes the thing you draw stability from. The thing that holds when everything else shakes. Being grounded isn't settling in. It's preparing to move.

Personal Response

- Where in your life right now do you feel most unrooted — most easily shaken? Bring that honestly to this prayer.
- Paul asks for power to “grasp” the dimensions of Christ's love. Wide, long, high, deep. Sit with each one for a moment. Which dimension feels hardest to believe right now?
- Pray Paul's prayer in 3:14-19 slowly over yourself today. Let it be your prayer rather than just your reading.