

Paul clung to a similar hope regarding his Jewish brothers and sisters who had not accepted Jesus as their Messiah. He pleaded with those who continued to remain behind walls of rejection and disbelief. He himself had worked at bulldozing the walls that separated Jew from gentile, and he prayed his efforts would ignite a desire in his fellow Jews for the all-inclusive Gospel that he preached.

Today, walls continue to segregate God's people. While some of the most notorious of these have fallen, like the Berlin Wall or the Iron Curtain, others are in the process of being built, like the one along the U.S.-Mexico border. But walls are not only political; they are also economic, as in treaties and agreements that marginalize and disenfranchise people. Walls can also be social and emotional, as in the walls we raise against others who are different or unwanted, or who are deemed unforgivable and unlovable. Some walls are even self-imposed as a means of protecting ourselves from others or as a way to avoid being involved in the frequent messiness of life.

Whatever the reason for the origin of the walls, the results are often the same. As in Wilde's story, a walled-in garden soon becomes a desolate place. To avoid this sense of loss and isolation, we might do well to remember the wisdom of John Chrysostom: "What wall, strongly built with well-compacted and large stones, is as impregnable against the assaults of the enemy as a united band of believers, joined by mutual love and sealed by oneness of mind?"

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