



The Wonder Springs Chronicle

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Walls of fear

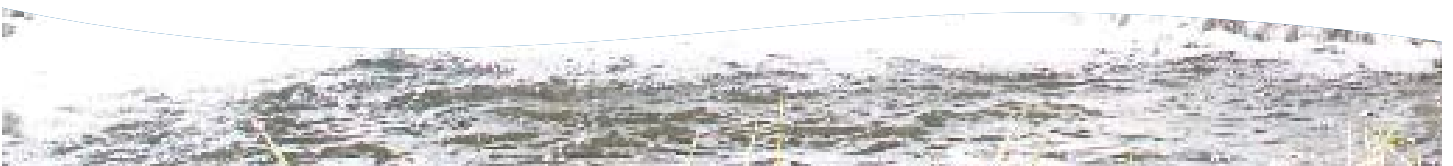
Today we begin the impossible, to attempt to describe not a program but a mission for the church to get back to the reason for her existence. That mission focuses, in Augustinian principles, to build the City of God, so that the City of Man again realizes that Biblical Christianity is a viable worldview in the complex nature of human events.

Accomplishment of this mission does not lie within the power of human facilities; these achievements can only come by the transcendent triune God supernaturally. This can best be described as ex nihilo creation of a new reality from rapidly expanding existing human social chaos.

If you haven't noticed that chaos and realized its importance in daily events, perhaps you should join the reality of this present world. By and through God's unity and diversity is the reality that reorders that chaos

into a recognizable unity and diversity of human events and social structure. That reality in which the church operates is and has always been focused upon common elements, the proclaimed word, baptismal water, communion bread and wine. Added, in this age, should be an emphasis on functional common human communities, which were historically assumed and are truly in existence throughout human history.

After our enlightened prolonged period in which human created uniqueness has been subjugated to only individual and personal fulfillment in natural noise and toys, Christians need to seek only God's grace, through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Just as Elijah came to understand in the wilderness of 1 Kings 19, the still small voice of God only is apparent where the cares and other stupendous events that surround us are put in their proper perspective.



You don't need to read much in the Wonder Springs archives to realize I have tremendous respect for the transcendent nature of wildness to restore the soul, but that wildness must be tempered with the reality of human community interactions. In that tension, we can find true common grace harmony in specific Biblical grace.

That flight of Elijah from Ahab and Jezebel into the Beersheba wilderness in Judah was really a mechanism whereby God used the journey to deconstruct Elijah's wall of personal fear of the unknown, and replace that wall with a deeper understanding of the nature of God. At that point God asks, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

The poet Robert Frost artistically describes human walls of security in his poem "Mending Wall," which can be found on the Internet. Four lines are appropriate for our context, while the depth of the whole poem is enlightening of human individual interactions.

The first is from Frost's wall adjacent neighbor, "He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'"

The other lines refer to the nature of building the wall to begin with, which the neighbor reaffirms again in the closing stanza.

"Before I built the wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense."

Changing from the artistic wall to the less tangible, but a more real wall, we see that some sense of security was the intent before the consequence of the wall materialized. Once established the existence of the wall is never questioned, because each use the wall to define personal and a legal space.

We all build and work diligently to maintain the walls around our personalities. We defend those walls to keep out others, and more importantly as much as we may deny this reality, we build walls to keep us distant from God.

The only real mechanisms in our continual wall building endeavors, that will challenge this wall to bunker mentality, are either stupendous change that knocks a hole in the wall, or some

transcendent understanding that a portion of reality exists beyond the wall, that we might experience by constructing a narrow gate to that outside world.

In the gospels of Matthew Chapter 7 and Luke Chapter 13 we find Jesus speaking about a narrow gate. That narrow gate is defined as the difficult way into God's unified and diverse kingdom, or in Augustine's concept, the City of God.

What we naturally think is that this narrow gate is really gate to another walled area, however that is not true reality at all. Through practice, and more practice, just as sports teams practice to win a championship, we begin to realize that these personal walls need not exist within the community of God's people.

However if you look at common and specific revelations of human communities you will find that they are based, as we have stated many times, one leading normally five ranging two seven , and working community organizations based upon tens, fifties, hundreds, thousands.

In America we are in the season of the National Football League playoffs. This weekend we will have the conference championship games followed by the Super Bowl on February first. Sports fans find their identity in their teams, but this stadium, or the even the home version of the event doesn't really transport or transcend these spectators into anything more than that. Spectators may get emotionally involved and that emotion of the crowd may affect somewhat the players' performance on the field, but who fills the seats, or watches the broadcast really just enlarges their wall of security temporarily in order to find some unity of meaning in their otherwise lonely life.

To some extent, group ethos is true in a large church congregation also. People congregate to find an unity identity in a world in which you must actively seek identity or be otherwise alone. Just as in the game, you know few if any of the other members well, if at all. Contrary to the sporting event, the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected, and the issuance of the historic communion cup can and does transcend that isolation, but it still does little to take that transcendence beyond the church doors.

Small groups, which are quite popular in many church circles, are really the only operational structure within the church where true diverse walls can be opened and the reasons for the wall existence can be challenged. What is missing is any connection with the larger church body, in time and space, and especially the church historically.

Many church leaders would say that this small group personal dynamic is all that we can and should ask of congregants. However, is that a valid answer or a means of leadership self justification? A business that would decide that all you needed to do to become a profitable enterprise is to rent a big room, play a few uplifting tunes at the beginning of the work day, and just let the people mill around with a few other people, is not a positive game plan for any type of human endeavor.

Now let's overlay the reality of the "church quitter" in this scenario. By the church quitter definition, these people have moved beyond the assembly to attempt to become part of the academy. The reason they leave or are forced out is essentially they are really not encouraged in their calling, are informed that this calling is not consistent with professional leadership dogma, or are in some way coerced to become so involved that they eventually become burned out. They all have been supplied with no resources to achieve which is truly a voluntary task, initially performed truly out of the spiritual gift of gratitude.

These church quitters hence are really forced into a walled situation because of the limited vision of leadership, the failure to provide resources, and also to delegate power and authority. Another failure of leadership is to view the role of the church in simply human tangible results. There is nothing wrong with solely tangible results if you are running a fast food restaurant, or a car repair shop. We have come to use the same management and marketing criteria in church as the world uses to establish and operate secular enterprise.

The failure of the church however does not come from the enterprise principles themselves. The failure comes from failing to realize that

those principles are too simplistic and segmented to truly be associated with the promises of building the unity in diversity City of God.

Put another way and using our Elijah example above, I'm sure that Elijah looked at all those consequences that sent him into exile as attacks upon his ministry as a prophet of God. But in the long run, that flight tangibly enhanced his ministry and even enabled the ministry of Elisha to follow. This truth is tangibly recorded in another Jewish prophet, in Isaiah 55:8 9:

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.
"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Delegation outside the walls you personally control is one of the hardest management principles to understand. The real reason for that is simply lack of vision or sense of mission. When something is truly impossible to achieve in human understanding and wisdom, there are two options, either go, run and hide like Elijah did originally, or to walk in the transcendent wisdom of the LORD.

In the latter case you begin to realize that the grace of God will always be sufficient for the circumstances and that reality is external to your own walled area. That grace may be peace to undergo the circumstance alone within your walls, or to tear down that whole wall structure and welcome all who are called to fulfill the vision.

When you truly see the impossible, not only become possible, but also become reality, you become filled with a transcendent gift of wonder. Wonder why we chose the name Wonder Springs? That's another story. However the truth of the gift is that from wonder springs the gifts of gratitude, praise, worship, sacrifice, and a whole host of other common and spiritual gifts.

In the truly secular world, wonder is truly undefined, because secular wonder is synonymous with paradox. In the world of common and specific revelations, God wonder springs to the eternal. That is not a paradox, but a bridge to be traversed as often as need be to access the wonder of the gospel of God's grace. However, wonder beyond paradox, is

not available to spectators, only to participants.

Likewise wonder allows us to view walls as walls. In the world and changing the words of Frost's poem, "Fences don't make for good neighbors." Walls keep people from truly becoming not just neighbors but friends, and truly understanding the reason that walls exist can become mute, if friends are not afraid of their own limited mortality.

Unfolding worldly economic events, enhanced by difficult seasonal stupendous weather changes, will drive all people either to retreat deeper into the insecurity of their personal walls, or attempt to flee, to somewhere, anywhere else. We can't be just spectators in a game, this is real life, and commonly all our lives. We are being pushed out of the stands and into active participants in our and other lives.

The media and secular progressive agenda to make Barack Obama a messiah figure has raised their expectations, that their worldview is not only ascendant, but also just a few years away. What they don't see, either in reality or their operational philosophy, in a world with no absolutes, an absolute utopia is just as undefined, as is the similar religious worldview to construct heaven on earth.

The historic Great Depression lasted a decade, because Roosevelt's New Deal essentially continued to create angst of change in order to fine tune a relative constantly changing reality. The New Deal Revival, which will begin in angst by this time next week, is an attempt to revive a worldview based upon a fraudulent reality of human enlightenment.

Only Christianity has a viable God centered reality of the absolutes of human and worldly conditions. God is by all descriptions the Impossible Reality. He does not create walls. By the true Christian gospel, walls are demolished and the unity and diversity of creation is restored. Ahab and Jezebel could not create that stable reality, neither can Barack Obama and his secular progressive followers intend in utilizing all the material resources, money, wishful thinking, and karma they can muster.

There is no need to flee to the wilderness of Beersheba for the God of the universe is present everywhere. It is the noise and toys of our culture that has attempted to drown out that voice of God. God will again show His glory, through common ordinary means in this wall building world. Stones can either be used to build walls, or they can be built into a transcendent temple. Where and how you will be utilized is up to you. The common basics are spelled out above. It isn't rocket science, it is much more impossible. Thanks be to God.