

In Oxford's Cutteslowe suburb in 1934, brick walls over six feet high, and topped with lethal spikes, were built across roads by people in privately owned houses who didn't want the residents of some newly built council houses coming into their area.

The 'Cutteslowe Walls' were a source of division and scandal until the 1959 when they were finally demolished.

What does it take to break down the barriers that exist between people, which the 'Cutteslowe Walls' symbolised, and bring true and lasting peace and reconciliation?

Only a God inspired humility and repentance; a complete change of heart on both sides.

I think the 'Cutteslowe Walls' really bring to life what Paul's saying in his Letter to the Ephesians: he's talking about God's 'Special' People – the Jews – who believed they were righteous, and the Gentiles – everyone else – were Godless.

Paul, before he met the Risen Jesus on the Damascus Road was a zealous Jew who looked on Gentiles just like that.

After that dramatic encounter, he was on the other side of the invisible wall that divided Jew and Gentile because he knew Jesus as his Saviour.

The Jews thought Paul was lower than a Gentile because he'd become a Christian.

The Gentiles had some excuse, they knew no better; but Paul had been born and brought up as a Jew: he'd betrayed them.

What he's saying is that everyone stands in need of salvation through the blood of Christ; all of us, whether we're Jew or Gentile are sinful before our holy God.

Our achievements, position in life, power, and money can do nothing to deal with that unassailable fact: we're all equal because we're separated from God.

But Jesus came from eternity to break down that wall of separation, and lead us gently home to God: "Now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away [from God] have been brought near [to Him] through the blood of Christ." [Eph. 2: 13](#)

Whoever or whatever we are makes no difference; for the source of our life as Christians springs from the Cross of Christ.

There He broke down the wall of hostility that we build to keep God out of our lives, and made us all one in Jesus.

There are no invisible 'Cutteslowe Walls' in the family of the Christian Church because what binds us together with ties of love is the Cross of Christ.

"Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what [Jesus] has done for us." [Eph. 2: 18](#)

On the Cross Jesus was crucified in our place. All of our sin was done to death in Him, and through His blood we're washed clean. So that: "All of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us." [Eph. 2: 18](#)

Now we can enjoy a living and loving relationship with the Lord. But is that actually true for you and me?

We can produce a Certificate of Baptism and Confirmation, but does our personal relationship with Jesus just remain on paper?

In the Gospel Jesus gives us a pattern to follow so that we can bring to life what those pieces of paper signify.

He takes His disciples away with Him to a quiet place so that they can be with Him and talk to Him and listen to Him.

We need to put aside time in our hearts to be with Jesus, just as Jesus went away on His own to be with His Father.

Those times they shared together were life and breath to Jesus, and gave Him the peace and the power to fulfil His mission of salvation.

We can see that in the Gospel where Jesus and His Disciples had only a short time of peace together when they were in the boat.

As they stepped ashore a vast crowd surrounded them, all wanting a piece of Jesus.

But Mark says that Jesus: “Had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.” Mk. 6: 34

The compassion He had for these lost and confused people found its source in those times Jesus and His Father spent in prayer together; bound together by the Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament reading from Jeremiah the Lord says that His people need to be tended and shepherded, but that those He sent to care for them had neglected them.

Then He makes a promise in His own name: “I myself will gather the remnant of my flock and I will bring them back to my fold. They will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the Lord.” Jer. 23: 3 – 4

Jesus fulfils that prophecy perfectly. He is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for each of us. Let’s praise Him, and thank Him for such love. Amen.