

QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry
for the Christian community*

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THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

Peace is given to us by the Lord Himself – John 14 v 27. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

Peace is confirmed by apostolic authority – Philippians 4 v 7. “The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guide your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

Peace is part of the gospel and motivates the Christian – Ephesians 6 v 15. “Your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

The peace that the Bible talks about is not the same as the peace that everyday life in the world sometimes offers (Jeremiah 6 v 14). Biblical peace can only be given to us through our acceptance of the gospel of Jesus and is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives (Galatians 5 v 22). However much we may enjoy a “bit of peace and quiet” or the absence of any troubles in our lives, these are not what the Lord is promising us. The word for peace in scripture is based on the beautiful Hebrew word “shalom”. It means “wholeness” or “completeness” and refers pre-eminently to our inner condition and attitude.

This fully holistic state of heart, soul and mind is the way we were intended to be when God designed us, but we have lost the inner wholeness through our sinful separation from God. This is why true shalom can only be restored by the Lord through his redemptive work within our lives. It is, or should be, the default state of the true believer and is unlike anything the world can experience. So powerful within us is this God-given peace that it is quite beyond the world’s understanding. Indeed, its quality motivates the Christian to seek to bring other, tortured souls into the place of real shalom.

Conversely, the enemy of shalom is the existence of barriers in our lives, for barriers take away the completeness and wholeness we have been promised. So, if we are to enter fully into the peace that the Lord has purchased for us our real need is to identify and remove these barriers. There are horizontal barriers, vertical barriers and circular barriers.

1. Horizontal barriers

These are like ceilings above us that prevent us having a real relationship with God and peace with Him. Without that relationship we are less than complete, we have no shalom. This is the position of all unregenerate souls. When we receive the Lord Jesus fully as Saviour and Lord, He removes the horizontal barrier and we have full and free access to, and therefore peace with, God (Romans 5 v 1). We can come to him without fear of condemnation (Romans 8 v 1). We can call Him Abba, Father. But even Christians can lose their peace with God and find horizontal barriers between themselves and the Lord spoiling their enjoyment of wholeness. This is when we have issues with God and question His guidance, discipline and will for our lives. Resistance to Him recreates that ceiling and we feel He is far away, and we have no shalom. We may feel angry with God. Then unbelief often makes the feeling of alienation even greater. It is only when we bow in full surrender to Him once again, we find the peace restored. This is so graphically explained in Isaiah 48 v 17 – 18; see also v 22.

2. Vertical barriers

These are the barriers between us and other people. When we have issues with others, we certainly find very little peace and the relationship problems seem to eat away at any possibility of inner wholeness. Far from promoting our shalom, conflicts with others often bring about anxiety, breakdown, anger, malice, jealousy, hatred and even murder. Such barriers can destroy families, churches, and businesses. Here also the gospel of peace needs to operate as the Holy Spirit prompts us to forgive, apologise and seek forgiveness, according to the nature of the issue. Real peace is not possible without these spiritual exercises (Matthew 5 v 23 – 24, 6 v 14 – 15, and 18 v 21 – 22). The great example is the attitude of Jesus Himself (Philippians 2 v 2 – 5). Indeed, our peace here is a powerful indication that our relationship with God is right (1 John 4 v 11 – 12).

3. Circular barriers

These are within our own lives. We may have a sense of peace in our relationship with God and even with others around us, but we are not at peace with ourselves. Deep inner insecurities and abiding feelings of failure and rejection can be a great hindrance to real shalom. Often such peace-destroying issues stretch back to our earliest days. They can be the result of the nature, body and character we were born with or of experiences in life that have shaped the way we think and feel about ourselves. Such barriers can only be removed ultimately by the love of God Himself as we realise that whatever we think of ourselves we can say with Paul: “the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2 v 20). The great news of the gospel is that “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5 v 17). The power of renewal is at work within us now and we shall ultimately be totally changed when He shall appear (1 John 3 v 2, Philippians 3 v 21). In the meantime, we might, with David, cry out for the Lord to help us understand why we are still wracked with anxieties from time to time (Psalm 139 v 23 – 24). But even David’s depression and inner conflicts were so often overtaken by great heights of experience of the love and wonder of God (e.g., Psalm 138).

It is the job of all of us Christians to seek to help others recognise the barriers that separate them from real and lasting shalom. This is part of our work as evangelists, at whatever level we operate. In the beatitudes Jesus tells us that peacemakers are blessed and will be called sons [and daughters] of God (Matthew 5 v 9). If we really have the peace that passes all understanding how can we not yearn that all those around us might enjoy that bliss also? Our feet should be fitted with this great task: “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns’” (Isaiah 52 v 7).