

# QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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

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## **CHRISTIAN FREEDOM**

In Ephesians 3 v 1 – 13 Paul states emphatically that God has given the whole world (and not just Israel) a new revelation; that he, Paul, is one of the foremost announcers of this new revelation; and that through this revelation given to the Church, God will reveal to the world His great wisdom. The revelation is centred on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The heart of this revelation - this new era, the dispensation of grace - is God's will that through the gospel mankind should be freed from the bondage of the law as a means of salvation, and that salvation is a free and personal gift of God's grace. This will apply whatever our cultural background; we are not to be bound by Jewish social or religious legal conditions (see Acts 15 v 1 - 29). Each of us are thus free to follow His unique plan for our lives, praising the wisdom of the One who has such a wonderful plan tailor-made for each of us personally. The overall effect of this new era is that humanity (at least, those humans that accept this freedom through faith in Jesus Christ) can then live lives that break through the bonds of any imposed and ungodly legalism and soar to new heights, even in our fallen state. It is on this basis that humanity has developed a new understanding of the importance of the individual, leading to democracy, freedom of conscience, the sanctity of life, etc. In societies based on this great truth (basically found in Protestant countries) mankind has achieved new heights in exploration, science, medicine, etc.

The true understanding of this revelation of freedom, especially in the earliest days of the Church and then again increasingly since the Protestant Reformation, enables the individual Christian to enjoy the amazing calls of God upon them, without the restriction of man-imposed legal religious restraints (John 8 v 31 – 32 and 36, Galatians 5 v 1). This does not lead to lawlessness (Romans 6 v 1); rather the guidance and empowerment given by the indwelling Holy Spirit (e.g. Isaiah 30 v 21), together with a heightened conscience, means that in our freedom we want to please Him who liberated us. We have died to self and now want to live, gloriously, to God (Romans 6 v 8 – 12).

We certainly do not want to place ourselves under a new form of religious legal bondage, which happens with false doctrine, cultic authority, the traditions of men, and in other faiths. As Paul argues so strongly in Romans chapters 13 and 14 the main rule of life for the follower of Jesus is the law of love, by which we regulate our freedom through our love for God and love for others, especially so that we do not become in any way a stumbling block. However, when I see Christians being placed under petty rules and traditions of worship, behaviour, etc, on the basis of an odd verse here and there I just cannot see that the Apostle Paul, having been led by the Holy Spirit to protest so powerfully against the imposition of the Mosaic law (in the letter to the Galatians, for example), would then proceed to impose a new set of rules. He certainly advised a loving duty of care, given the social and practical conditions in any one particular cultural or church situation, and so did the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15. But neither Paul nor James appears to have been led to bring the entire Christian church throughout history into a new legalism.

Sadly, within the church the traditions of men can indeed become a powerful legalism, which takes us away from the true freedom we have in Jesus, as Paul made abundantly clear to the Galatians (see also Philippians 3 v 8b – 9). This is where denominationalism often ends up. The resurgence of militant Islam, the rise of the cults, even the attraction of traditional Catholicism, shows the desire of many religious people for someone to impose upon them a set of rules and obligations.

Without this revelation of the freedom that God has given the world through the gospel of Jesus Christ, a humanistic legal and religious framework would just lead to tyranny, dictatorship, fear, and guilt. We must then live under the decree and diktat of someone else, as the past centuries have amply demonstrated with such creeds as Islam, communism, fascism, apartheid, etc. Today all over the world the God-given New Testament genius of freedom with personal responsibility is in grave danger of being extinguished by the present rampant humanism, with a new Dark Age of bondage engulfing humanity. This certainly is a possible scenario for the antichrist's entry onto the world stage. He will have all the plausible qualities of a messianic figure, but his clear willingness to impose religious obligations, structures and ultimately fatal religious laws on the world will be the great sign of a terrible imposter.