

# QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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

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## COMMENT – COMING OUT OF LOCKDOWN

We've certainly had a taste of external restriction and control over our lives, our lifestyles and our basic freedoms during the past three or four months (writing in mid-July 2020). Of course, we do understand the reasons for this, and generally Christians have not raised any objections. We're in the same position as everyone else in society and, so far, we really cannot complain that as Christians we've been unfairly targeted.

Even so, we're not used to this happening to us. If this same degree of control had been directed just to Christian worship and fellowship, or even if it had happened to all religious activity of any description, as happens in some countries today, it would have caused us to rise up in righteous protest. We would be accusing the authorities of blatant persecution, especially as the recent lockdown restrictions have been backed by legal powers. In other words, we have actually endured a level of prohibition that, if directed towards us alone, would be seen as a cause for the utmost concern – the end of centuries of freedom of worship and religious tolerance.

And yet, such legal action specifically targeting Christians has been the norm across many cultures throughout the last two thousand years. Maybe God is showing us how privileged we have been, and how easy it is for us to take it all for granted. In this comment I want to share some of the thoughts that come to mind arising from this recent experience we have all passed through, especially as now, hopefully, we may be coming out of this lockdown period.

### 1. The reality of the condition of lockdown

Perhaps we should look at the whole issue of lockdown in a broader, biblical way. Defining lockdown as “a severe curtailment of our ability to live in the way God provided for us to enjoy”, we can see that in a fallen world lockdown, or captivity, of one sort or another is a very common state. There are many causes, and here are a few examples:

**Circumstances.** Many and varied situations can act as a deterrent to one's full enjoyment of life.

**Health.** Any physical or mental impairment can feel like a prison, and we rightly feel sympathy for those whose health falls far short of what it should be.

**Family.** Dysfunctional family life of any sort can seriously affect any member of such a family and cause a lifetime of turmoil and insecurity, restricting a normal and enjoyable level of experience. This can be caused by the breakdown in the parents' relationship, or the nature and influence of the parents' characters, lifestyles and prejudices in bringing up their children.

**Character.** A troubled and insecure personal character can cause terrible deprivation in an individual's life, especially when it leads to a feeling of rejection, a sense of inferiority, or addictive or violent behaviour.

**Bereavement.** The loss of loved ones can cause substantial lockdown in the lives of those left behind.

**Finance.** Debt can be a very debilitating condition to be in, even leading to suicide, which is total lockdown.

**Politics.** Here we think of the frequent and sad influence of corrupt and godless authorities of many kinds, religions and philosophies, leading to terrible misery, persecution, bloodshed and death, a veritable lockdown storm.

### 2. God's plan for human freedom

God designed a high and exalted place for mankind in His creation, a position of much joy and freedom. For example:

**Genesis 1 v 26 – 28.** Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

**Psalm 8 v 3 – 8.** When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

At the beginning God only put one restriction on human freedom, and that restriction gave us a permanent reminder that mankind was to live under a sense of responsibility and worship towards the Creator, and ultimately to be accountable to Him (Romans 3 v 19):

**Genesis 2 v 15 – 17.** The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.’

As we all know, following Adam and Eve’s satanically-inspired rebellion, the Curse, and the subsequent Fall, mankind’s history has been one long saga of lockdown, with millennia of indescribable suffering and misery. God’s plan for our freedom was reasserted by Jesus Himself, as the antidote to all lockdown:

**John 8 v 31 – 32 & 36.** To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free... So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.’

### 3. Living with the conflict between lockdown and freedom

Once we have received new and eternal life through faith in the saving work of Jesus, we should find we are developing a heightened awareness of the spiritual causes of lockdown in all its forms, and how we should cope:

- a. **Romans 1 v 18 – 32. All rebellion against God and His ordering of life on earth.** We are well aware of the original sin of Adam and Eve, but we should also be very conscious of all acts of rebellion against God, both in our own hearts and minds, and in the lives of individuals and society around us. This rebelliousness is specifically described here through the theory of evolution. It is our duty to stand against such blasphemy. We should have a great sensitivity for situations such as described in this passage, where the result of a society’s disregard of God as the Creator, operating through His eternal power and divine nature and not through the process of blind chance, is His anger leading to the withdrawal of His protection. The evil forces that are then unleashed lead to total personal and social lockdown.
- b. **Ephesians 6 v 10 – 18. Satan’s activity, leading to spiritual warfare.** This is so much more than human greed and conflict - matters of flesh and blood - but is the involvement of principalities and powers - spiritual forces of evil. Any Christian with a good Bible-based understanding and the inward leading of the Holy Spirit will be very sensitive to these spiritual powers, together with the severe degree of lockdown they generate. Spiritual discernment and a clear anointing are vital in dealing with this area of Christian life and witness.
- c. **Mark 3 v 5 – 6. Hardness of heart and determined unbelief.** Genesis 6 v 3, 5 & 6 shows that God’s patience with humanity has its limits. Jesus told the Pharisees that they had gone too far and committed the unforgiveable sin (Matthew 12 v 31). Romans 2 v 5 shows that such behaviour will be subject to judgement. There are many other instances in scripture where this determined rejection of God, and its consequences, creates real trouble. In response, we need to hear the words of the Lord in such circumstances (Matthew 10 v 14 – 15).

### 4. God’s sovereignty demonstrated through lockdown situations

**Joseph.** His imprisonment in the pit by his brothers, and again by Potiphar in Egypt, were literal lockdowns. But following one of the most emotional passages in the Bible (Genesis 45 v 1 – 15) we read Joseph’s immortal words: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50 v 20).

**Job.** Job’s trials amounted to a lockdown unlike anything any of us are likely to experience, but Job was able to triumphantly say to God afterwards: “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you” (Job 42 v 5).

**Jeremiah.** Poor Jeremiah appeared to stagger from lockdown to lockdown, but all his trials only served to make him ever more determined to get his messages across, the prophetic messages he had received from the Lord and which always proved to be completely accurate. The importance and force of his ministry were only enhanced by his imprisonments and miserable treatment.

**Jesus.** “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1 v 14). The greatest lockdown of all, so forcefully expressed by Paul in Philippians 2 v 5 – 11. But then, the great scheme of redemption, universal in its application to the whole of creation, could not be achieved by any other means. Through that mighty transaction God is glorified beyond our greatest understanding (John 13 v 31 – 32).

In all our lockdown experiences, we hold on to the great reality expressed by Paul in Romans 8 v 28, 31 & 37: “In all things God works for the good of those who love Him... What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us”.