

310 A bad dose of FOMO?

In the light of the recent hype about Black Friday and Cyber Monday, you may now be suffering from a bad dose of FOMO, perhaps without even realising it! Possible symptoms include a burnt-out credit card, exhaustion and a black eye.

FOMO stands for “Fear Of Missing Out” – a fear that is especially prevalent at this time of year. The shops gird up for their notion of “Christmas” from September onwards, and as the date for Black Friday draws near, excited TV reporters hype the hype with news of mouth-watering deals which anyone with a brain even only the size of Winnie the Pooh’s brain simply MUST rush in to grab! And so the pressure grows, sense quietly departs, and we reach those scenes of elbows and fisticuffs as frenzied people fight over vast TV sets in the check-out queues. FOMO plays its part – “I must not miss out. I must be in the thick of it. I must get what others around me are getting, and whether I want or need this stuff has nothing to do with it”. Quite why so many folk feel like this – the fear of falling behind, of coming up short, of “letting the kids down” - raises interesting questions about current society.

Allowing other people to keep what is theirs, and avoiding our wanting what is actually theirs to become ours, is the strong theme underlying the sixth to the tenth of the Ten Commandments (murder, adultery, theft, honesty and general covetousness): FOMO was given short shrift on Mount Sinai! – where the legitimate interests of Almighty God Himself, and then of our parents, and then of our neighbours, are carefully spelt out with the force of divine commandment (Exodus 20.1-17 / Deuteronomy 5.1-22). These commandments of course remain in place today (Matthew 5.17-19), though, by God’s grace under the New Covenant in Christ, they no longer hold the key to our salvation (some examples from John’s Gospel: 3.14-18, 35-36 & 4.14 & 5.21-24 & 6.37-40).

Rather than people being driven by FOMO, they are urged instead to accept their many blessings under the Lord, and to give thanks to Him for those blessings whatever their outward circumstances may be (eg., I Thessalonians 5.18). We know how Paul “learned to be content” (Philippians 4.11, and see *** below) noting that even he had to learn this contentment over the years through the many roughs and tumbles of his life.

We find this same rejection of FOMO in the Book of Proverbs, especially from these few examples about the blessings of simple “merry hearts”. “A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken” (Proverbs 15.13, KJV). “All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast ... Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith” (15.15-16). “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones” (17.22).

What a contrast between the push-and-shove mayhem of a Black Friday with all its stress, and a God-fearing, Christ-knowing household down the road that is filled with “merry hearts” even if with little else!

Those merry hearts develop – for they too, like contentment, have to be slowly learned – as the fullness of the blessings freely bestowed upon us in Christ are more fully appreciated and applied in our lives.

As we draw to a close this time we can return to Proverbs: “My son ... keep sound wisdom and discretion: so shall they be life unto thy soul and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked when it cometh. For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken” (Proverbs 3.21-26, KJV).

Those words, from the Holy Spirit through Solomon, were true under the then-existing covenant. They are just as true, indeed are more fully true than ever, under the New Covenant with its abundance of further blessings now poured out upon those “in Christ” (eg., Ephesians 1.3-12).

The only way that someone can MO – miss out – on these Father-given, Christ-won, blessings, is by their own refusal to accept for themselves with head and heart the central truth that “Jesus Christ is Lord”.

But once that acceptance has happened, FOMO is replaced by thankfulness, contentment and a merry heart, with the price tag on any of these blessings, and on any day of the year, proclaiming - “Nothing to pay, freely given from the God who loves us” (Isaiah 55.1 / Revelation 21.6 & 22.17b).

Praise God, the setting-up of those gifts occurred not on a Black Friday but on a Good Friday, followed by the discovery of an empty tomb ...

© 2018 Faithful Sheep Ministries - www.fsmins.org

(*** See also TWR 162 on fsmins.org under the Practical Discipleship button)