

279 We know best!

In recent Reflections we have been considering our “freedom in Christ” – how this freedom has been won for us, how we receive it, and how we are to apply it in our lives.

Freedom has always had a central place in human longings. Eve and then Adam grabbed at it, exchanging the true freedom they already knowingly possessed under the Lord God, for what they thought was a better version – “your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3.5b). “We know best!” was their assumption, and how wrong they were, as quickly became apparent both to them and to all those who have come after them, including us.

Such sin-driven, “we-know-best” freedom led to the catastrophic divine judgement of the Flood (Genesis 6–8), but soon reappeared with the defiant building of that tower at Babel (Genesis 11.1-9). Then by way of contrast came the Exodus, the God-wrought deliverance from slavery to true freedom in the Promised Land – for God really did know best! - which even then the people made a habit of messing up resulting in that forty-year delay (Numbers 13-14).

After the shambolic years of the judges (summed up for example by Judges 17.6 and 21.25) rose the demand, “We want a king! We want to be like everyone else!”, brought on by the people ignoring the God of the covenant who was already their King, and by the corrupt sons of Samuel no less (I Samuel 8.1-5). The Lord graciously warned them against this step through Samuel, but “we-know-best” won the day yet again (8.6-22). The Lord granted them kings that they might learn at first hand, in the hard times that would now lie ahead, who was indeed their true King, and what this covenant with this true King involved on their part – their worship, gratitude and obedience. It was as simple as that.

We all know what happened from King Saul onwards as the Lord’s warnings came to pass. There were a few good, covenant-keeping kings over the next four centuries, but most kings took the old line of “We know best and we’ll do what we want”, with the people duly following the royal lead. Despite a stream of faithful prophets “speaking truth to power” as the saying goes, such as Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah, the nation split, and there followed idolatry, wars, defeats and exile. The Jews did return to their land of Judah, just as the Lord had promised them (eg., Jeremiah 29.10), with Jerusalem being rebuilt and a second temple constructed (as told in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah). But it was clear that the true covenantal freedom which the Lord God had always desired for them was now lacking, for the people were under the thumb of various foreign powers, primarily Greece and then Rome. Yet throughout these years of despondency the steady, precious light of messianic hope never failed (eg., Micah 5.2ff). The God of the covenant remained as faithful as ever, a divine characteristic that had been known from the Genesis years, despite the sinful follies of His covenant people requiring periods of divine judgements (egs., Genesis 12.1-3 / Psalm 89 / Hosea 14 / ...).

Unfortunately “We know best” is doing very nicely today, as life for many becomes increasingly about Me, My Rights, My Wants and My Grudges. With such priorities it is a short step into, “I will do whatever I choose – foul language, aggressive

behaviour, violent relationships, or ...”, in the most extreme cases, “by bringing maiming and death to the crowds by means of a van, a suicide belt, a knife, bomb or machine gun”. This is the world we are now living in, with such appalling and sinful behaviour becoming more commonplace, and beamed rapidly around the world by “24 hour news” and social media, thus granting to such foul deeds instant global reach and effect. What a terrible contrast now exists between such “I know best” behaviour, be it “mild” or extreme, and the “think on these things” of Philippians 4.8.

Of course we don’t know best. It is Almighty God alone Who knows best, as He always has known. In His written Word, the unique Holy Bible, and in His living Word, Jesus Christ His only-begotten Son, He shows His fallen creation very clearly Who is best and what is best (egs., Genesis 1.1 / John 1.1-14 / Psalm 119.105 / Proverbs 3.5-6 / Matthew 6.33-34 & 7.24-29 / Acts 5.29 / Romans 5.1-11 & 8.28-39 / Hebrews 4.12-16 & 7.25 & 10.19-22 / and these are just a sample!).

God the Father requires His covenant people, be they living long ago under the Old Covenant of Law, or these days under the New Covenant of Grace focussed on the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, to proclaim God’s Best in life, word and deed.

Such proclaiming on our part will not always be easy or comfortable – but it will always be best.

© 2018 Faithful Sheep Ministries - www.fsmins.org