

# “Fear Factor”

Preached July 31, 2011 & January 18, 2015

## Pt. 1 “The Fear Factor”

Exodus 14: 1-31

Introduction:

A. An Arab chief told the story of a spy who was captured and then sentenced to death by a general in the Persian army.

- This general had the strange custom of giving condemned criminals a choice between the firing squad and the big, black door.
- As the moment for execution drew near, the spy was brought to the Persian general, who asked the question, "What will it be: the firing squad or the big, black door?"
- The spy hesitated for a long time – It was a difficult decision – He chose the firing squad.
- Moments later shots rang out confirming his execution.
- The general turned to his aide and said, "They always prefer the known way to the unknown. It is characteristic of people to be afraid of the undefined. Yet, we gave him a choice."
- The aide said, "What lies beyond the big, black door?"
- "Freedom," replied the general. "I've known only a few brave enough to take it."]

### Two Facts...

1. Fear is Contagious.....
2. Fear is a Learned Behavior

*We are called to Live By Faith.....not Fear*

False

Evidence

Appearing

Real

## **1. Four Ways Fear Affects Us**

### a. Fear...makes us skeptical Vs.11

Root of doubt, criticism, and cynicism...is Fear

- When we are afraid, we begin to doubt.
- We doubt ourselves, we doubt God, we doubt other people, we become skeptical.
- Studies have shown that cynics, at the root, have basically a problem with fear.
- We often ridicule what we're afraid of.

### b. Fear...makes us Selfish Vs.11-12

- When I'm afraid, the only thing I can think of is myself.
- I don't think about you, I don't think about God, I don't think about anybody else, I'm just focusing in on me.
- When we're afraid,
  - (1) we accuse others,
  - (2) we excuse ourselves,
  - (3) we pass the buck,
  - (4) we blame other people,
  - (5) we run from responsibility

### c. Fear...makes us Stubborn Vs.12

- It causes us to resist change
- - We resist change when we're afraid.
- In v. 12a, they said, *"Didn't we tell you to leave us alone while we were still in Egypt?"*
- - In other words, they were saying to Moses, "Don't rock the boat. Don't upset the status quo. We've always done it this way before."
- - And fear keeps people from growing, it keeps businesses from growing, it keeps churches from growing, because it causes us to be stubborn.
- - God is ready to set them free from 400 years of slavery and the Israelites say, "Leave us alone!"

### d. Fear makes us short-sighted Vs. 12b

- It causes us to want to live in the past
- Fact about human behavior
  - (1) We hang on to our hang-ups
  - (2) The Payoff...at least we know what to expect
- They wanted to go back to the "good old days" in Egypt – They wanted to return, they wanted to retreat, they wanted to go back.
- They had so little faith that God would come through for them and grant them freedom that they preferred to return to bondage in Egypt .
- And you know what? Many people today are living the exact same way.
- They would rather live in the bondage of their own sin, rebellion, and guilt, than be set free by risking it all for Jesus Christ.

- Actually, I don't think that they really prefer living in bondage, they are just so afraid to let go and let God that they really don't know what else to do.
- Perhaps some of you have been living in fear for so long that you really don't know what it means to live by faith.

## **2. How to take Risks in Faith**

### a. Let Go....Vs.13

“Don't be afraid- stand still”

- Facts
  - (1) When God Guides.....God Provides
  - (2) Where God Guides....God Provides
- God wants to work in your life, but you have to let go of the past before you can grab ahold of the future.
- You've got to let go of security in order to grab opportunity.
- This is very important, because the most difficult part of taking the risk is the letting go of the old.
- We want to hold on to the old job, until the new job is secure.
- We want to make sure that everything's set up in our new home, before we move out of the old home.
- It's that letting go, letting go of the independence of being single in order to grab on to the intimate confines of being married.
- What am I talking about? I'm talking about throwing away the crutches – throwing away the crutches that you've been using.

### b. Look UP....Vs.13-14

“Stand firm and See”

- Lesson: God often waits until the last second to answer
- Why? Test of Faith

### c. Launch Out....Vs.14-15

- God takes you through your problems
- You've got to let go and launch out – and that's difficult.
- In most decisions, there is a point of no return, where you have to face your fear.
- That's where the children of Israel were at the Red Sea .
  - (1) God had backed them into a corner.
  - (2) There were mountains on either side, there's an ocean in front of them, and the Egyptians and Pharaoh were hot in pursuit, waiting to slaughter them all.
  - (3) They have an opportunity to believe, to have faith, but instead, they responded in fear.
  - (4) And they became skeptical and stubborn and short-sighted.
  - (5) And when all this happened, they said, "Hey! Moses! We should have just stayed in Egypt . Why don't we go back to Egypt ? The good old days."

- (6) Now, remember, they've just spent four hundred years in slavery, they've been beaten, they've been mistreated, they've been abused, they've been killed, they've been starved, they've had no rights, they've been overworked for four hundred years and now they're saying, "Let's go back."
- (7) Fear always does that – It causes you to retreat, to turn around, to go back.
- They are preferring slavery to uncertainty.
  - They say, "We know it was bad, but at least we knew what was happening there, and we don't know what's going to happen here. So let's just go back."

### **3. Now let's apply that today.**

a. Questions:

Why do we stay in destructive situations?

Why do we not step forward in faith?

Why do we hold back when God says to launch out?

b. It's because of the same reason the Israelites wanted to go back to Egypt .

c. we are afraid of freedom.

d. What is the solution to that?

How do you get the courage to let go and launch out and face your fears?

Psalm 56:3-4 *When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid...*

e. Notice that the Psalmist admits that he is afraid, but when he puts his trust in God, the fear subsides.

f. Courage is not the absence of fear – Courage is moving ahead in spite of your fear.

### **The key to overcoming the fears that keep you bound up *move against your fear.***

- Don't pray about it. Don't think about it. Don't talk about it. Take action!

- Move against the fear – Do the thing you fear the most.

- You notice when the Israelites were at the Red Sea , God didn't take them around the Red Sea , He didn't build a bridge over the Red Sea , He took them through it.

, (Exo 14:15 LB) *Then the Lord said to Moses, "Quit praying and get the people moving! Forward, march!"*

### **Now let's just get real personal.**

What is your personal Red Sea this morning?

What is it that scares you to death, that frightens you?

What is it that's got you worried?

That seems an impossible barrier?

That looks unpredictable?

That seems overwhelming?

That's your Red Sea .

- What is God saying to you today? He's saying, "Quit running and face the issue. Face it in faith. Move against your fear. Do the thing you fear the most."
- God told Moses, "*Quit praying and get the people moving!*" What is it you need to stop praying about and start doing?
- You say, "I'll get around to it *one of these days.*"
- But you and I both know, that "one of these days" is none of these days.
- You say, "One of these days, I'm really going to get serious for God. And really put Him number one in every area of my life."
- When are you going to do it? Move against the fear that says, "You'll be a fanatic. It won't work. You'll regret it." Move against the fear.
- "One of these days, I'm going to find a church family I'm going to join." When are you going to do it? What are you waiting on? Move against your fear.
- One of these days I'm going to develop my talents that God's given me and I'm going to go after the dream I know He's put in my heart." Why not now? Move against your fear.
- Quit praying – Start acting.
- Please, that thing that's out there, that has you most afraid, in Christ's name, go for it.
- You'll never want to turn back again.