

“How to Face Your Fears”

Text: Exodus 14

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Rev. Chris Geline

PRAY!

This morning we conclude our series called, “Achieving through Believing”. Anything worthwhile requires some risk to it. Living by faith requires risk. You can’t live without taking risks. There are...

- Risks in getting married,
- Risks in having a job,
- Risks in having a baby,
- Risks in becoming a Christian.

How do you deal with those fears that come up when you’re taking a risk?

God asks people to take risks all the time. This morning we are going to look at probably the most famous story in the Old Testament – the crossing of the Red Sea from Exodus 14.

- Five days earlier, Pharaoh had told Moses and the children of Israel that they could leave Egypt so they took off on the Exodus.
- Five days later they are camped in a cul-de-sac. There are mountains on both sides, there’s the Red Sea in front of them. The only way they can leave that cul-de-sac is to go back the way they came. And just about that time, they see Pharaoh’s army coming with its chariots because Pharaoh has changed his mind.

Exodus 14:10, *“The Israelites looked up and there were the Egyptians and they were terrified and they cried out to the Lord.”* They’re scared to death.

Fear typically does four things to us.

- 1. Fear tends to make us skeptical.** It causes us to doubt, to ask questions. Vs. 11, *“They said to Moses, ‘Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us out to die in the desert?’”* You can hear the sarcasm in their voice. “Moses! What are you doing? Did you bring us out here just to let us die?”
 - a. We usually ridicule the things we’re afraid of. If you have a tendency to doubt things, to be cynical or skeptical or sarcastic, the root of that is fear.

- 2. Fear causes us to be selfish.** We focus only on ourselves, on our own needs. Vs. 11, *“What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt?”* They’re blaming Moses. *“What did you do to us?”*
- a. When we’re afraid we tend to blame other people. *“What have you done to us?”* Passing the buck is an expression of fear. We accuse others and we excuse ourselves. Fear causes us to be selfish. We only look at our own needs. All we can see is ourselves. We’re afraid of responsibility; we pass the buck; and we blame others.
- 3. Fear causes us to be stubborn.** Vs. 12, *“They said, ‘Did we not say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone. Let us serve the Egyptians.’”*
- a. Fear causes to resist change, causes us to resist anything new. *“Leave us alone.”* That’s a basic attitude toward life of a lot of people: *“Don’t get too close to me! I might feel uncomfortable about that. Don’t try anything new! That might threaten me. Don’t upset the status quo! Don’t rock the boat!”*
 - b. The favorite phrase of people when they’re afraid is, *“We’ve never done it that way before.”* Some of you have spouses that say, *“You’re so obstinate! You’re so stubborn! You’re so bull headed! You never change. You never admit you’re wrong. You’re always against everything.”* They’re not obstinate and stubborn and bullheaded. They’re simply afraid. Fear makes us stubborn.
- 4. Fear causes us to be shortsighted.** Vs. 12, *“It would have been better for us to have served the Egyptians than for us to die in the desert.”*
- a. Fear causes us to live in the past. We try to live over our past situations – *“Let’s go backwards; let’s retreat; let’s turn around and go back to Egypt. Let’s forget this whole idea.”* Little did they know what lay ahead – the Promised Land – everything they wanted out of life was ahead of them but they were too short sighted because of fear. *“Let’s go back!”*
 - b. The Israelites said, *“I’d rather go back to Egypt. I know it was painful. I know I didn’t like it. But let’s go back there because at least we know it’s a sure thing.”* People have said to me, *“I’d rather keep my self-defeating behavior than risk the fear of change.”* Because it’s unknown. What habit or hang-up are you holding onto because you say, *“At least I know what it’s like.”* *“Where are you shortsighted because of fear?”*

The fact is, if you step out in faith in your job or your home or any area you can expect some people to take these responses to your risk.

How do you take risks in faith?

The Israelites **did three things**. There are three things you can do when you need to make a step, when you need to take a risk, when you need to lay it on the line. Here’s how you take risks in faith. Here’s how to face your fears.

I. LET GO OF YOUR FEAR

- A. Look what Moses said in vs. 13, *“Moses answered the people, ‘Do not be afraid.’”* He said, let go of your fear. It says 365 times in the Bible – “Fear not.” That’s one for every day of the year. He’s saying, “Let go. Cast all your care on God. Lord, this is too heavy a burden. I can’t handle it. I’m too afraid.” Let go of your fear.
- B. How do you let go of your fear? There’s only one way. Recognize and remind yourself that God is in control. That’s the only way you will ever let go of a fear. Recognize and remind yourself that God is in control. Then you can relax a bit.
1. 14:1, *“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea.’”* Who told the children of Israel to camp in the cul-de-sac? God told them, not Moses. God led them there. God put them in an impossible situation with mountains on two sides and a sea behind and the Egyptians coming. God did.
 2. Sometimes God sets you up for a miracle. He sets you up by pushing you. “I don’t know how I’m ever going to get out of debt! This is a total mess. There is no way it can work out.” You have a Red Sea on your hands. Remind yourself that God has led you there and the safest place to be is in the center of God’s will.
- C. **So what’s the lesson? When God guides, God provides. Where God guides, God provides.**
1. If God has brought in all kinds of problems in your life and He’s allowed these things to happen; you’re ready for something exciting to happen.
- D. Why does God lead you into impossible situations?
1. Vs. 3, **God allows you in these situations for His glory.**
 2. **For your own growth.** It was a test of faith on behalf of the Israelites. Are you facing a personal Red Sea today? Congratulations! God can do something significant in your life. Let go of the fear.

II. LOOK UP

- A. Look up to God. Vs. 13, *“Moses answered the people and said ‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance of the Lord that He will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today, you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you. You only need to be still.’”* Over and over again in the Bible God says, *“Stand still! Watch Me do it! Be still! Be quiet! Watch Me! Keep your eyes on Me! Look up!”*
- B. Why does He say stand still? Because fear always causes you to run. When you’re afraid, the natural reaction is “I’ve got to get out of here! I’m leaving. I can’t handle the pressure. It’s too much. I’m going to

leave my wife, my job, and my kids. I'm going to quit. I'm going to leave the situation." And we run. God says, "Stand still." You can't see God act unless you're standing still. God says, "Look up. Relax. Calm down."

- C. What's ironic is at this point there was nowhere to run anyway for these Israelites. They looked every direction but up. Instead of looking out at the circumstances, look up to the Source. You'll start relaxing.
- D. You can imagine the situation. Moses and the children of Israel are camped in this cul-de-sac of impossibility and one of them says, "Moses, they're coming." A few minutes later another one comes, "Moses! They're getting closer." Finally somebody comes up and shakes him and says, "Moses! Do something!"
 - 1. **What's the lesson here? The lesson is that God often waits until the last second to answer.** Why? It's a test of faith. God wants to know how long you can wait. He'll wait right until the last second and then the waters will part.

III. LAUNCH OUT

- A. Launch out in faith. Vs. 15, *"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Why are you crying to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.'"* This is the moment of truth. You launch out in faith. This is where you lay it on the line. Forge ahead. God says, "Take the plunge!"
- B. The fact is there is a time to pray and there is a time to act. There is a time to fast and believe and expect and there's a time to move. There is a time to sit and wait and stand firm in expectation and then there is a time to go for it. Make the investment.
- C. Faith is a verb. It's not passive; it's active. It's an action. It's moving, stepping out, launching out, and forging ahead. If you want to walk on water, you have to get out of the boat! That's the moment of decision.
- D. How do you get rid of fear in your life? The secret of eliminating fear in your life is move against the fear. Ask any psychologist, the Bible teaches it – move against your fear. Do the very thing that you fear. God says to Moses, "Move on! Go for it. Take the risk. Step out and watch your fear vanish before your eyes." Watch the waters part as you walk through on dry land. Face your fears. Behold the turtle! He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out! Faith is action.
 - 1. It's more than just believing. You can say you believe a chair will hold up. But nothing happens until you sit down on it. That's the act of faith.
- E. **What's the lesson here?** Vs. 16, *"Raise the staff and stretch out your hands over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea."* **The lesson is this: God usually takes you through your problems, not around them.** If he took you around it,

it wouldn't require as much faith. But He'll take you right through the middle of it.

- F. Every step through the Red Sea was a step of faith for the Israelites. Every step a risk. That's the way God works in your life, and there's no way you can get around it. You can't really live without taking risks. God wants us to live by faith, to trust Him.

What is the Red Sea in your life this morning? What is it you're afraid of? What is it that scares you to death? What is that fear in your life? What daring decision do you need to make?

Let me ask you a penetrating question: What painful hang-up in your life are you willfully holding on to?

- Maybe a **habit**. "I know this is wrong, but if I gave it up, what might happen?"
- Maybe it's a **relationship**.
- Maybe it's a **way of responding or acting or relating to life**.
- Maybe it's a **regret** that you don't want to let go of. You keep piling the guilt on yourself.
- Maybe it's a **resentment** and you don't want to forgive the other person.

I dare you to take three steps this morning in faith. Risk!

PRAY!

Jesus Christ, this morning I let go of my fear and I look up to You and I launch out in faith. I realize that wherever You guide, You will provide. You may wait until the last second to test my faith but You will come through. I thank You for that. Help me to realize that what I've asked You to do for me, You want to do through me. Thank you for the impossible situations we face as a church right now. We know that as we take these three steps – Let go of our fears, Look up to God as our Source and Launch out against our fears -- It will be for Your glory and our growth. We thank You. In Jesus' name. Amen.