

Fear, Faith Or Foolishness?

Num 13:1,2; 17 – 14:11; 26 – 45.

III – My speakers from India.

I learned a valuable lesson that day, that there is a thin line between faith and foolishness. The children of Israel at Kadesh Barnea also learned the same lesson; here they were –they had seen God’s miraculous deliverance from Egypt, been part of the wonderful 12 plagues, seen Pharaoh defeated, seen the Red sea parted, seen bitter, poisonous water turned to a harmless, refreshing drink, seen God provide for them time and again, and now they stood at the verge of the greatest feat itself – ready to cross into the promised land – all God’s purposes, all God’s promises, all God’s plans were about to come to fruition – but they needed to make a choice first, to act on a report first – the report of the 12 spies . . . and the choice for them, as it always is for us, is that they could choose to act in fear; or faith; or foolishness. They fumbled and chose the way of fear . . . instead of faith!

ACTING IN FEAR VS FAITH : Why did they do that? Actually, when you think about it, theirs was a good decision look at it

- They had received a report from 12 leaders of Israel – 12 spies.
- Statistically, 10 of those reports indicated danger,
- They had verifiable evidence that the land was occupied,
- They had verifiable evidence that the cities were fortified and therefore impregnable,
- The structural dimensions of the occupants showed that they were strong giants,
- The Israelites were tired after walking thru the desert for days,

- The Israelites were not a trained fighting people, they were merely a freed mass of slaves,

And so, using the powers of logic and deduction, it was clear that the wise thing to do in this situation was not to attack the promised land, but to look at Plan B. For all reasons and purposes, given the fact’s available - the decision the Israelites made that day was a wise, logical one.

But there was one thing wrong with that decision – it was not a decision informed by the will of God! And it is exactly at this point that Caleb, Moses and Joshua differed from the people. How many of your decision are like this – they are perfectly logical, but they are perfectly wrong? You’ve considered all the facts, you’ve weighed them out, you’ve consulted all the wise men and women, you’ve read up on this decision, you’ve even talked to the Gurus in this area, and have come to a perfectly logical decision. . . but it is not the will of God.

The Israelites did exactly the same thing, used their logic, but their logic was actually motivated by facts, fear & feelings and not by faith. It’s a trap that we so easily fall into a Christians – we have been taught to make reasonable decision, based on gathered facts. We meet together, we discuss, we reason, we try and understand and then we vote on the most logical conclusion, but it is so easy, having done this, to limit God only to that which is logical!

Now, I’m not saying that logic is bad, or that we should not reasonably consider things, Oh no. Faith is not about doing the illogical thing. The real question is whose logic are you acting on? You see, for the Israelites, the only logic they consulted is Human Logic, what they could reasonably think thru together, what they could grasp, weighing the cards from their perspective, etc, etc – perfectly logical – but limited to human logic alone. The decision of Faith looks at exactly the same facts, but from God’s

perspective of logic. What would have been different for the Israelites? It is that God would have added to their logic the fact that

- He had given his word and his name was at stake,
- The fact that he had the power to deliver them even though the Anakites were bigger than they were,
- The fact that he could see into the future, not just extrapolate from the present on the basis of past trends.
- The fact that he had the power and resources to determine whatever end he chose, in this case that the Israelites would conquer the Anakites if they trusted in Him!

Human logic acts on facts as we see them, and on our ability to predict an outcome on the basis of conjenctual extrapolations.

Faith acts on God's logic and God's promise, even where it may seem irrational or illogical from our human perspective. It's not irrational, it's not illogical because God can see things we cannot, because God has the power to determine outcomes that we cannot, because God isn't guessing, he is determining!

So my friend, what is God calling you out to? As you face the fearful possibility of the future, are you going to act in fear or in faith?

Israel's choice in Num. 14 also teaches us a few more lessons on leadership and direction :

- **First** is that the democratic vote is not necessarily god's leading. I am constantly amazed at the number of times the Israelites took a democratic poll and chose what was not of God. At the crossing of the Red Sea, they wanted to go back. At the Waters of Marah, at the Desert of Sin . . . they kept consulting with

one another and choosing the wrong path. Democratic votes are not necessarily the way God leads!

- **Secondly** is the fact that their decision would have been a better one if they had listened to their spiritual leaders. Now I say this cautiously as many spiritual leaders today are the very reason why God's people have been led astray. But think about it, God had appointed Moses, and verified his credibility, the people themselves knew that Moses spent days and days seeking God's face, and that he truly dwelt in the presence of God; they themselves had said to Moses that they were afraid of coming before God's presence and would prefer that Moses go and meet with God and then tell them what God had said; but every time a decision came up, they considered their leaders words to be nothing more than just one more opinion.

Now, we don't want to put anyone here on a pedestal, or to give anyone the authority to play God in our life; but we do want to recognize that when we appoint a man or a group of godly people; and we commission them to seek the face of God, we set them apart to lead and direct us – and they are men or women who spend time in the presence of God, who study his word, who are given to prayer, then we had better listen to them and allow their perspective to inform our decisions because they have been with God! This is not to say that we must always do what they think, no! but it is to say that we need to prayerfully consider the words of counsel our spiritual leaders give us. Part of the problem today is that we are all leaders and there are no followers anymore!

- **A third lesson** from the Israelites mistake was that their spiritual decision had awesome consequences for it affected not just them, but the next generation as well Vs 32, 33. *But you -- your bodies will fall in this desert. Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the desert.*

This puts a huge responsibility on us when we make spiritual decisions – the decision is not ours alone, it may stand the chance of adversely affecting the next generation – whether that generation is our children or those who follow after us in the Lord.

- **Fourthly**, their acting in Fear instead of Faith was a sign of contempt before God. Contempt is a strong word – and different people have different ways of showing contempt. Herod showed contempt by mocking Jesus; the soldiers showed contempt by spitting in his face; I've read of cultures where a leader shows contempt by having his opponent pinned to the ground and then the leaders urinates on him. Not too long ago, at the freedom corner in Uhuru Park, when the govt. attacked and beat up the mothers of political prisoners, the women showed their contempt for the govt. by lifting their skirts and exposing their nakedness to the police. The Scottish do the reverse, they lift their kilns and bare their bottoms. Whatever – contempt is a shameful, disgracing thing – and to show God contempt? Wow. Can you imagine baring your bottoms to God? By acting in fear instead of faith, when God had clearly told them what to do, was an act of contempt. Now I don't think the Israelites set out to bare their bottoms to God, but that's exactly what they did. Are you doing it also?

- **Finally**, God's punishment to them is that he brought their worst fear alive. They refused to obey because, as they cried out in 14:3 *Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?* And they said to each other, *"We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."*

And yet, when God punished them in Vs 28, when God punished them, he said *"So tell them, 'As surely as I live, declares the LORD, I will do to you the very things I heard you say:'²⁹ In this desert your bodies will fall -- every one of you twenty years old or more who was*

counted in the census and who has grumbled against me.³⁰ Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home,"

He brought their worst fear alive! Maybe you're afraid to step out into ministry because you are afraid of financial ruin, maybe you are running away from the mission field because you are afraid you will not have the comforts of life, maybe you are afraid to share your faith at your place of work because you are afraid you may lose your job . . . and God says, *"the very thing that has caused you to disobey me, will be the very punishment I will give you!"*

All this is not to say that we cannot acknowledge our fear – I believe there is enough room within God's grace that we can admit we are afraid, BUT we must act in faith. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane – *"Father, if it is possible, may this cup be removed. Yet, not my will be done, but your"*

ACTING IN FOOLISHNESS : But let, s give the Israelites credit, they finally realized that they had acted in fear, and as Vs 40, *When Moses reported this to all the Israelites, they mourned bitterly.⁴⁰ Early the next morning they went up toward the high hill country. "We have sinned," they said.* They recognized their sin, and they mourned bitterly. But again, instead of acting in Faith now, they swung to the opposite extreme and acted in foolishness. *"We will go up to the place the LORD promised."⁴¹ But Moses said, "Why are you disobeying the LORD's command? This will not succeed!⁴² Do not go up, because the LORD is not with you. You will be defeated by your enemies,⁴³ for the Amalekites and Canaanites will face you there. Because you have turned away from the LORD, he will not be with you and you will fall by the sword."⁴⁴ Nevertheless, in their presumption they went up toward the high hill country, though neither Moses nor the ark of the LORD's covenant moved from the camp.⁴⁵ Then the Amalekites and Canaanites who*

lived in that hill country came down and attacked them and beat them down all the way to Hormah.

Foolishness and presumption is when we demand something of God when He has not promised it.

- Foolishness is when we give our money to one of those fellows in town who ask us to close our eyes as they pray to God to multiply our money.
- Foolishness is when we demand God is under obligation to heal us and to make us rich.
- Foolishness is when we come railing and raging against the Devil, with some convoluted formula for success; and we think we have done spiritual warfare. The current fad right now is to wave a sword in the air.

Foolishness is when we take God's promised out of context and try to hold God ransom to them. But foolishness is very tricky because it looks so much like faith; and Satan often traps us between fear and foolishness.

Jesus' temptation to jump from the top of the temple pinnacle was an attempt of Satan to disguise foolishness as faith – *“Jump, make a splash, get into the media, think how much it will do for your ministry, and after all – God has promised to give his angels charge over you”*

Now the Israelites tried to show how much faith they had, but they were acting in foolishness. Notice that the dividing line between Faith and Foolishness is the same line as between Faith and Fear – WHAT GOD'S WILL IS. Moses tried to warn them in Vs 42 *“Why are you disobeying the LORD's command? This will not succeed!”*⁴² *Do not go up, because the LORD is not with you.*⁴⁴ *Nevertheless, in their presumption they went up toward the high hill country*

CONCLUSION : We stand at the threshold of a new decade; a new century and a new millennium. It is an honor that very few people in the history of the world have ever had. In some ways it's a momentous occasion. But as we go into this change as individuals, will we be a people motivated by Fear, Faith or Foolishness?

And as a church? Look at the 5 fold vision printed at the back of your bulletin -

GROW :

- **Leadership Development** – keep growing all areas, especially the internship to full capacity (20 – 30 people per yr).
- **Tyrannus Hall**
- **Premises**
- **Social involvement**
- **New initiative and ministries** – new initiative - the clinic, ROPES

RELOCATE : look for property of **10 – 20 acres**

CHURCH PLANTING : **Ekklesia District Church Planting**

- **Antioch Team**
- **Missions Teams .**

INSTITUTIONS :

- **Children's homes**
- **Primary and high schools,**
- **Polytechnics**
- **Studios**
- **Publishing house**
- **Radio station, etc.**

Can you see that happening? The recent 15 acres on Ngong Rd.

WILL WE AS A CHURCH ACT IN FEAR, FAITH OR FOOLISHNESS?