

## Fear Factor

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Numbers 13. Returning from a forty-days-check-out-adventure, the twelve Israelite leaders report Canaan to be just what the Lord had promised. However, ten of them are terrified by the enemy's physical superiority and fortified cities there, opting to drown out Caleb's encouragement to take possession of the land ("we can certainly do it") by spreading bad reports about Canaan amongst the Israelites. Thus they infect the camp with their own fear.

- Their dilemma is also ours today as we constantly face enemy threats of all sorts plus discouragement (even from other believers) on our way into God's promised inheritance, don't we? So do we give in to it or move ahead obediently, undeterred and fearlessly? My advisory role in helping people move into the Promised Land financially (Kingdom provision) implicates a constant conflict with an alleged superior enemy (unjust, destructive, godless world finance system). So I'm forced to decide persistently to either yield to fear, intimidation and discouragement (even from the Christian camp) or to stand the ground. It's tough, but rewarding. How about you and your challenges?

Numbers 14. All this results in Israel grumbling against Moses and Aaron yet again, this time around armed with the plan to disobeying God's command ("go into Canaan and conquer it") and determined to choose a new leader to guide them back to Egypt (V 2-4).

- Can you believe this? Back into slavery, back to where they've come from, back to where they cried out for centuries to be delivered from! At the doorstep of God's promised inheritance they want to go back into pagan slavery! Voluntarily! My goodness, how powerful and blinding can fear become in our lives? Get the message? Think I got it ...

Joshua, Moses' trusted aide and one of the explorers, passionately yet unsuccessfully tries to change their mind. Scheming to stone (!) the few faithful ones brings God on the scene, ready to wipe this unbelieving, grumbling, disobedient nation out from the planet. (V 6-12)

- There we go. So whose voice are we listening to? God's, who encourages and backs us, or the enemies', who loves to instill fear and deserts us? Remember? "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." (1 John 4:18, NIV) and "For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline." (2 Timothy 1:7, NLT-SE)

So once again, humble Moses, who moments ago was about to be killed by the Israelites, steps in on their behalf, reminding God of His plans and promises, pleading for forgiveness (V 13-19). And once again, God does forgive. Yet forgiveness doesn't erase the consequences of sin (!), and they are heavy this time. For forty years (one year per exploration day to Canaan) Israel will be stuck in desert. Except for Joshua and Caleb, no-one of those twenty years and older will ever enter the Promised Land. And those who spread the bad report in the community are struck down and die of a plague before the Lord. (V 20-38)

Confronted with those deadly consequences, Israel does a one-eighty, heading towards the Promised Land the very next day. Brushing Moses' reprimand of yet another disobedience aside they act under presumption that God would accompany and protect them even now - a deadly error as they are attacked and put to the sword by the enemy. (V 39-45)

- Fear is powerful. Fear causes people to make wrong and costly decisions, all the time! Fear leads to cutting God Almighty out of the impossible equation to which He is in fact the solution, cause nothing is impossible with Him (Luke 1:37). How many decisions in our private and professional lives are based on fear (education, insurances, investments, savings, securities, partnerships, alliances, business deals, financing, debt, place of living, work hours, ...)? Beware of the fear factor - a deadly trap! Be encouraged to live in obedience to our loving Creator rather than driven by fear, the destroyers powerful weapon!