

## **Deliverance From Fear #1 Fear of the Unexpected**

Read Luke 1:18-38, 57-66

### **DON'T BE AFRAID**

Fear is one of the things that hold us back from doing the will of God

In the NIV –

- 'Fear' occurs 252 times
- 'Afraid' = 206 times
- 'Do not fear' = 19 times
- 'Do not be afraid' = 89 times
- But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah..." (13)
- But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary..." (30)

### **Don't Let Fear of the Unexpected Hold Us Back (1:8-13)**

- For centuries, priests had gone faithfully to the temple to burn incense (Ex 30:6-8)
- Nothing unusual ever happened
- Suddenly—the unexpected! An angel!
- The unexpected can be very frightening
- Fear 'fell upon' Zechariah (ESV) and 'gripped him' (NIV)
- Angels usually appear in human form, but in their true form, they are terrifying!
- See Judges 13:20-22; Revelation 10:1-7; 19:10
- Imagine if here today an angel appeared in his glory before you
- eg In 1914, at a church in Wales where the anointed English evangelist Stephen Jeffreys was preaching, a large image of the head of a Lamb appeared on the wall behind him. Gradually the face changed to that of Jesus, with tears flowing down his cheeks. Sceptics turned up and people tried to erase the image by rubbing it. They turned lights on and off, raised blinds etc but it remained for hours before finally fading. This was just before the sorrows of World War One. What if something like this happened in our church this Sunday? How would we react?

### **Barrier #1: The Familiar**

- We may be upset if things are changed
- Genuine newness comes from God (2 Corinthians 5:17). It changes things!
- Newness is not novelty. Novelty and gimmicks are a different matter.
- Newness brings change
- But change is threatening – yet essential if we are to grow
- Imagine a group of young people are converted and begin to attend your church. People should be delighted but Mrs Keys, who has played the organ for 25 years is not. What if one of these new people is a brilliant keyboard player. She might lose her position! As for Mr Pew, what if they sit where he always sits? How can he worship in a different place? Or what if one of them

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is a florist – her floral displays might be better than those of Miss Rose. Or if one is an accountant, what will happen to the church treasurer, Mr Cash? And when they come early and begin a song service before church, Mr Pattern, who always arrives just two minutes before eleven will be appalled... Such people do not welcome change!

- Remember the ‘seven last words of the church’ – ‘We never did it that way before.’
- Read Psalm 55:19 – ‘People who never change their ways... have no fear of God.’
- Only a perfect person (ie God) does not need to change, because any change would make Him imperfect.
- But when we refuse to change, we are in effect declaring that we are perfect as we are
- When a church refuses to change it is in effect declaring it is perfect as it is.

**Barrier #2: The Comfortable**

- We like things to be comfortable and reassuring – and to some extent this is normal and natural. It is beneficial to be surrounded by the familiar and the supportive.
- But God’s Word is often confrontational – hence it is called a sword (Eph 6:18)
- Its aim is to cut deep (Hebrews 4:12) and to pare out sin and corruption.
- The task of ministry: ‘To comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable’

**Barrier #3: The Inevitable**

- We grow used to the same problems—to accept the inevitable
- Sickness; poverty; unhappy or dull marriage; teenage rebellion; parental dominance; spiritual defeat
- We can do some things ourselves eg giving flowers to one’s wife (this may be unexpected!)
- On the other hand, we can have an attitude of anticipation—expecting something unusual from the Lord!
- We never know when the unexpected may happen. Always have an eye open for a miracle!
- What do you need in your life right now? Jesus showed that no matter how desperate our situation, there is always the possibility of the unexpected (eg Luke 5:4-10)
- Balaam’s journey was interrupted by the unexpected (Numbers 22:21-35)
- A widow was ready to die but then the unexpected happened (2 Kings 4:1-7)
- Four lepers were astonished when they found what they did not expect (2 Kings 7:3-9)
- Jehoshaphat discovered an unexpected victory (2 Chronicles 20:20-30)
- Nathanael was surprised by his meeting with Jesus (John 1:43-51)

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**The Outcome**

- Because Zechariah did not believe the Lord's word, he was mute for months (1:20).
- Let's so live that we will not be taken off guard when the Lord does something surprising in our lives

**SOMETHING TO THINK OR TALK ABOUT**

**Remember:** You don't have to answer all the questions. Choose those that seem most relevant to you at this time.

Read Luke 1:8-235

Biblical

1. Angels often appeared in human form, but sometimes in angelic form. Who was this angel and how did he appear to Zechariah? (11-12, 19) How do we know?
2. What do you think of Zechariah's question? Was it reasonable? Why or why not? (18-20)
3. What do we learn about Gabriel (and about archangels) from this passage? (11-20) Make a list.
4. How much of what Gabriel said about John came to pass?
5. When Zechariah's speech was restored, what happened and what did he say? (64, 67)
6. If you had to write a character study of Zechariah, how would you describe him?

Personal and practical

7. Have you ever seen an angel? Or do you know someone who has? Share your experience.
8. Imagine you are Zechariah. What do you think you would have said and done. Why?
9. When, after a struggle, have you finally obeyed the Lord and instantly found yourself wanting to praise Him as Zechariah did?
10. It was the Holy Spirit who loosed Zechariah's tongue and enabled him to prophesy (67). What has been your experience of this kind of thing?
11. When has God surprised you with something unexpected?
12. What areas of your life are in need of change? What would you like God to do? (cf Luke 18:40-41)

Memorise – Luke 1:13a ('Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard.')

## About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

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