

## Standing in the Gap

The text for tonight's lesson is found in Ezekiel 22 verses 30 and 31.

*(Ezek 22:30-31 KJV) And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. {31} Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD.*

In ancient battle tactics if the city wall was breached the defenders would go to the breach and have a man stand in the gap to hold back the onslaught of the enemy. The defenders would then try to rebuild the wall around the soldier or soldiers holding the gap. At the time this verse was written Jerusalem was under siege by the armies of Babylon. The Lord was always mindful of Israel, but particularly of Judah. If we look at a List of the Kings of Israel we'll notice one thing right off the bat. Their reigns were almost always short ones. There were some that reigned for around 20 years, but they were relatively few. We also notice that not one King of Israel followed God. Starting with Jeroboam and continuing through Nadab, Baasha, and on down all the way through Hoshea, the last King of Israel who was defeated by Shalmaneser and carried away to Assyria, all were unfaithful. Jehu, the most righteous King, did follow God's word to an extent. He was the instrument the Lord used to rid the Northern Kingdom of Baal worshipers.

*(2 Ki 10:28 KJV) Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.*

However, we read later that he took no heed to follow God's commandments and instead followed after Jeroboam. We also notice that there were 5 different dynasties and 2 independent kings at the end. However, if we look at Judah, we notice that there is only 1 dynasty

throughout: The dynasty of David. We also notice that some of the Kings were good and followed after God. The Kings of Judah had a longer reign on average than the Kings of Israel did. This was probably because of their faith and the fact that they were much more apt to follow him.

*(2 Ki 8:19 KJV) Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah for David his servant's sake, as he promised him to give him alway a light, and to his children.*

As we can see from our example text, The Lord *wanted* to spare Judah. He even relented on one occasion, which we just read, from destroying it because of David. The Kingdom of Judah lasted almost 150 years longer than the Kingdom of Israel, because they, at times, followed God. However, at the time Ezekiel was writing about, The Lord was looking for someone to stand in the gap so that he could spare Judah yet again. However there was none to be found. Because of Judah's lack of a committed servitude to God, they were destroyed.

God doesn't want to destroy anyone. He loves all men.

*(2 Pet 3:9 KJV) The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

*(John 3:16-17 KJV) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. {17} For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

However, we cannot use this as an excuse like many of the world do. As we just read, he destroyed Judah even though he had previously spared the country for David's sake. God's love for David didn't stop him from

destroying his dynasty when it became infested with sin, and neither will his love for us stop him from condemning us if we practice sinful stuff, and don't fully obey him. We need to be ready to stand in the gap and face the assault of Satan and the World, and trust that God will be there with us.

*(James 4:7 KJV) Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

First, we need to look at what we're going to be facing by standing in the gap.

#### I. Persecution

We are told in multiple places in the Bible that we will face persecution.

*(Acts 11:19 KJV) Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.*

*(Acts 13:50 KJV) But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.*

*(2 Tim 3:12 KJV) Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

Persecution, as we can see, is inevitable for us. It may not be as severe as it has been in times past, but it will come in one form or another.

**Making fun of us, Trying to turn others against us, Thinking of us as being "small-minded" because of our faith, etc.**

We have Biblical examples of persecution for us to look up to and strive to come through it as they did.

## 1. Job

*(Job 1:14-22 KJV) And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: {15} And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. {16} While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. {17} While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. {18} While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: {19} And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. {20} Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, {21} And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. {22} In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*

## 2. Paul

*(2 Cor 11:23-27 KJV) Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. {24} Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. {25} Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; {26} In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers,*

*in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; {27} In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*

It's not very likely that we are going to face this type of persecution let alone this much of it. However, we can still look to Paul and Job as examples on overcoming persecution.

Fortunately, for now at least, we live in a country that allows us 'freedom of religion' although we are slowly losing much of it. Kids are no longer allowed to say prayers in public schools, we cannot speak out against gay marriage which the Bible condemns, The Pledge of Allegiance no longer has the words 'under God' in it, and so forth. From these troubling trends, we could very well face persecution not too far down the road. We need to be ready to face it and know that God is on our side. No matter how bad the persecution gets, we need to know that with God, we can get through it and it won't separate us from God, unless we let it.

*(Rom 8:35-39 KJV) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? {36} As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. {37} Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. {38} For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, {39} Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

We also need to remember we are to be glad under persecution.

*(James 1:2-4 KJV) My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; {3} Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. {4} But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

This doesn't necessarily mean that we are to be jumping for joy. Persecution will be hard, but, we need to be glad that we are counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake.

## II. False Teaching

False teaching covers much of America. There are hundreds if not thousands of different denominations that supposedly are all 'Christianity' and will get you to Heaven. The Bible tells us that there is ONE WAY!!! to get to Heaven.

*(John 14:6 KJV) Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Jesus said he is THE WAY!!! Not A way, THE WAY! He is the ONLY WAY to Heaven. We are also warned that false teachers will come.

*(2 Pet 2:1-2 KJV) But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. {2} And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.*

It tells us that many will follow them. It's OUR job to tell as many about the Gospel as we can.

(Mark 16:15 KJV) *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

It also provides for us the evidence that, if we are following a crowd, we are probably on the wrong path. The Bible tells us that FEW will follow the way that leads to life. Matt 7:14.

There have never been many willing to stand in the gap!

Are we willing to stand in the gap? The false doctrines are dominating the world. We need to stand in the gap and take a stand for Christianity. We need to be able to refute false doctrines such as ‘once saved, always saved’ or ‘faith only’ and such like. We know these are false and can give a Biblical scripture to disprove them.

Faith Only- (James 2:24 KJV) *Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.* Faith needs works.

Once Saved Always Saved- (1 Cor 10:12 KJV) *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.* It’s possible to fall

There are many other false doctrines that we don’t have time to look at, but we can know that there is an answer to it in the Scriptures! We need to study our Scriptures daily **like the Bereans Acts 17:11** so we can be ready to give an answer should anyone question us about it.

(2 Tim 2:15 KJV) *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

### III. Temptation

Lastly we’ll see that we are going to face temptation.

(James 1:14 KJV) *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*

This verse plainly states that EVERY man WILL be tempted. We will face temptation whether we are prepared to stand in the gap or not. **It seems that the more committed we are to stand in the gap, the greater the temptation will be to abandon our post.** But The Lord is on our side and with him we can come through it.

*(1 Cor 10:13 KJV) There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

Even Jesus, our Savior was tempted.

*(Mat 4:1-11 KJV) Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. {2} And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. {3} And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. {4} But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. {5} Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, {6} And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. {7} Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. {8} Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; {9} And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. {10} Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. {11} Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*



However we see that Jesus was able to withstand temptation and, from the previous passage we read we see that God has made a way of escape for us. But I want us to notice HOW Jesus withstood temptation. He quoted Scripture. Each of his responses begins with the words: It is written. This goes back to our earlier point of studying. The best way to recognize temptation is to read our Bible and be ready with a Biblical answer as to why it's wrong.

There are many types of temptations we will face. Going back to Dad's lesson last Sunday he used the quote "Nobody made a greater **mistake** than he who did nothing because he could do only a little." Dad went through how this is a danger to all Christians. This is a temptation that everyone faces and is a very subtle form of temptation. We need to be prepared. This type of temptation especially can prevent us from standing in the gap. We can just say, "I'm only one person, how can I be a strong defender of the Lord?" Well, back in our reference verse it says the Lord looked for A man. Not many men, a man to stand in the gap. From the way the verse reads it seems to me that the Lord may have spared Judah had he found that one man willing to stand in the gap. So we see here, one man could have made a huge difference. There are many other types of temptations which we don't have time to go through, but we need to be ready to face each. We also need to recognize that we are never tempted from God.

*(James 1:13 KJV) Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:*

We need to realize that we CAN resist the Devil's machinations with help from the Lord.

*(James 4:7 KJV) Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

We need to keep our eye on the prize and struggle through our temptations, and take a stand for the Lord.

#### IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, are we willing to stand in the gap for the Lord? Will we stand there and face the attacks of the Devil? Because if we don't, destruction will come. As we see in our reference verse, Judah was destroyed for their lack of a man willing to stand in the gap. If we aren't ready and willing to take a stand for God and the church, we will not reach heaven. How do we start? By obeying the plan of salvation.

Hear

*(Rom 10:14 KJV) How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*

Believe

*(Heb 11:6 KJV) But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

Repent

*(Luke 13:3 KJV) I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

Confess

*(Mat 10:32 KJV) Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

### Be Baptized

*(Acts 2:38 KJV) Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

### Remain Faithful

*(Rev 2:10 KJV) Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

If there's anyone who needs to obey the Gospel or has done something to bring reproach upon the church, won't you come now as we stand and sing this song.