

## Standing In The Gap

Ezekiel 22:23-31

**Objective:** Encourage people to step up and take a stand to protect the integrity of God's people and church.

**Reading:** Ezekiel 22:23-31.

**Memory:** Ezekiel 22:30, "I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none."

**Introduction:**

1. Football coach – fill the "gap". They call football the gridiron wars – imitation of real war in which there are times when holes are knocked in the fortress walls and somebody needs to step up and fill the breach in the wall or the enemy will come pouring through.
2. Spiritually speaking, as we engage in constant spiritual warfare for our own souls and the souls of people, there are holes in our defensive wall. There are holes in our defensive line.

### We need to step up to fill the "gap". (HOW?)

In Ezekiel 22, God is not happy with Israel. They are in big trouble spiritually. They are losing the battle. They are drifting farther and farther away from God (much like our own nation). God calls attention to many of their problems and failures and makes the point that they need not be destroyed if someone would step up to build the wall and stand in the gap. Ezekiel 22:30, "I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none." This verse is a reference to an earlier warning that maybe speaks even more clearly; Ezekiel 13:5, "You have not gone up to the breaks in the wall to repair it for the house of Israel so that it will stand firm in the battle on the day of the LORD." Israel was, in fact destroyed. Leveled. People led off captive to Assyria.

Today, as we find ourselves in a very similar situation in which the same immoral conditions prevail, we can expect similar tragedy unless people are found who are ready and willing to step up and repair the breaks in the wall and fill the gaps. Are YOU willing to step up and fill the gap? Let's consider how any one of us might step up to fill a "gap" in our spiritual line of defense.

*A lot of times, when someone sees that something needs to be done, their immediate reaction is, "But that's not my job!" and so the hole goes unfilled. Before we get too much into the concepts of holes in our spiritual defenses, I would like to spend a moment on*

### I. Balancing "Gifts" With "Needs".

#### A. When it is not your talent.

1. Moses said, "It is not my "gift". I don't speak well. Send someone else. God wanted him to go!
2. Jonah said, "It is not my "gift". I'm not that kind of passionate to go and warn ungodly people.
3. Jeremiah said, "It is not my "gift". I am too young to serve in such a way. God wanted him to go
4. Gideon said, "It is not my "gift". I am a nobody.
5. Most of us feel the same way. Not my job. Not my gift. Others are better suited.

#### B. Indeed, it is better to serve where our gifts lie.

1. We each have special talents.
2. Romans 12:4-8. "4 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. 7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully."
3. We serve better and with more joy, naturally when we are where our gifts and talents lie.
4. Sometimes we have gifts we don't realize, sometimes our skills and abilities we have need developing, sometimes God is working with our weaknesses in ways we might not comprehend.
5. Sometimes somebody needs to step up.
  - a. A mother is not well suited to protect her 12 year old from a rapist, but guaranteed, she will step

- up if she see the need.
- b. You may be the smallest, least trained soldier in the fort, but if you see a hole in the wall and the enemy about to come through, you better step up and fill the gap.
- c. At 140 pounds, I was not very effective as a football guard, but it at least slowed the big boys down a little when they had to run over top of me.

### C. Sometimes willing hearts must take priority over special gifts.

1. God is looking for willing hearts to do what needs doing!
2. When someone needs comforting, and comforting is not your gift... don't leave it undone.
3. I'm not good at washing dishes, but sometimes they need washing! changing diapers is not my gift, but ... You may not be good at it, but for the love of God, fill the gap when you see a gap!

*Part of what God is looking for someone to do is work at*

## **II. Building up the wall.**

### A. Making repairs where something has fallen apart.

1. Picture a hole in fort wall; be replacing the bricks as you can. Don't leave the hole because you are not a stonemason or carpenter. Do something about the hole.
2. Refers to fixing what is broken and to strengthening our defenses; i.e., our spiritual status. Moving people to spiritual maturity.
3. Morality standards are being torn down constantly. We call it society, Hollywood, modernism, but it is Satan. We need to be able to recognize spiritual hazards when they come at us.
4. There needs to be good solid biblical teaching and training in righteousness so the children of God will have solid footing on which to stand and not be swept away by today's cultural influences.

### B. Folks need to be "edified".

1. Built up. Encouraged, strengthened, educated with knowledge of God's will and power.
2. **2 Timothy 4:2-4, "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."**
  - a. This goes on constantly. Someone must help people know the Word so they can preach it.
  - b. Someone must repair the lack of knowledge so folks will recognize when folks are going astray.
3. World-views need to be repaired, so people can recognize what is clean and what is unclean. When it comes to the ultimate goal of life, getting into heaven, God says in **Revelation 21:27, "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."**
5. Don't let God say about you / us, **Ezekiel 13:5, "You have not gone up to the breaks in the wall to repair it for the house of Israel so that it will stand firm in the battle on the day of the LORD."**

*Fix and repair the walls as you can. Step into the gap when needed. Stepping into the gap is needed when a hole is breached in the wall by spiritual conflict. With your spiritual armor on, you jump into the hole to defend against enemies.*

## **III. Stepping into the gap.**

### A. Confronting sin.

1. In **Ezekiel 22:2**, their sins include bloodshed. (tearing someone apart with words fits) Idolatry. (covetousness is idolatry) Misuse of power and position. Despising of holy things. (could include being irreverent during the Lord's supper) Despising of Sabbaths. They have a lot of sins going on among God's people.
2. Such things are also prevalent today. Gossip goes unchecked. Grumbling and slander may go unchecked. We don't need to list all the sins that people are tempted to, but we do need to recognize that each is a breach in the wall and someone has got to step up and stop it.
3. If you see a Christian gossiping, step into the gap and stop it! If you become aware of poor moral standards among Christians, step into the gap.
4. **Ezekiel 22:26, "Her priests do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference**

**between the unclean and the clean; and they shut their eyes to the keeping of my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.”** How /when do “priests” do violence to God’s law today? When ?how do they “profane His Name and holy things?

5. We (Christians) are priests. Our job is to distinguish between clean and unclean and preserve Sabbaths. Unwholesome words, crude jokes, apathetic hearts. Roots of bitterness.
6. This is a clear instruction from God;
  - a. Galatians 6:1, **“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently....”**
  - b. Matthew 18:15-17, **“<sup>15</sup>If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. <sup>16</sup>But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ <sup>17</sup>If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.**

#### B. Resolving conflict.

1. Conflicts can and do arise even in the church, They are supposed to, but we are supposed to work through them by Spirit and truth so we can grow.
2. Matthew 5:9, **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”**
3. Find the truth in a godly spirit. Step in and help brothers and sisters understand each other.

#### C. Teaching truth where it is lacking.

1. When you see brethren who don’t know the truth. When you see neighbors that don’t know the truth. When you see error being taught.
2. Ezekiel 3:17-21; **“<sup>17</sup>“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. <sup>18</sup>When I say to a wicked man, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. <sup>19</sup>But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself. <sup>20</sup>“Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before him, he will die. Since you did not warn him, he will die for his sin. The righteous things he did will not be remembered, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. <sup>21</sup>But if you do warn the righteous man not to sin and he does not sin, he will surely live because he took warning, and you will have saved yourself.”**
3. Point out the transgressions. Point out potential dangers. Give Biblical direct to morality.
4. Our own children are unprepared for spiritual attack. Who will teach them, prepare them, train them?

#### D. Praying for folks.

1. Interceding for people on behalf of their relationship with God. Who will intercede in prayer and action on behalf of those who are unprepared if you don’t?
2. James 5:16, **“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”**
3. Psalms 106:23, **“So he said he would destroy them— had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him to keep his wrath from destroying them.”**

#### E. Helping families with home problems.

1. Can you give a single parent a respite?
2. Can you listen to their problems with a spiritual ear? Can you offer prayer and encouragement?
3. Can you gently point out things that exacerbate their problems? Encourage patience and understanding? Be a “Big Brother” to someone? Be a mentor to others?
4. Titus 2:3-5, **“Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.”**

## F. Doing things that need to be done.

1. There are simply things that need to be done for the church to function. Mopping floors. Mowing the lawn. Picking up the mail. Making phone calls. Teaching classes. Checking in on shut-ins. Giving single mothers an hour off now and then.
2. When God's name needs to be glorified (helping poor. Haiti earthquake. ...) To show the love of God to people.

### So What?

If no one steps up to stand in the "gaps", what can we expect? Ezekiel 22:15-16, "***will disperse you among the nations and scatter you through the countries; and I will put an end to your uncleanness. When you have been defiled in the eyes of the nations, you will know that I am the LORD.***" Can you think of a more detestable thing even for us today than to be "defiled" in the eyes of other nations: North Korea, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran? Would that bring the fear of God back into people?

What is YOUR contribution to the protection of God's children in this time of spiritual warfare? What is your role in seeing that God is legitimately honored by His people? When Israel was in trouble, God looked for someone to step up and build the protective wall, someone to step up and fill the gap in the wall to protect His people from evil forces. No one was willing to step into the gap at that time. Will He find someone today? Are you willing to step up to fill in the "gap"?

Unlike on football team, filling the gap does not entirely depend on your size or ability; as a Christian, you have the power of the holy Spirit working with you and in you. *Put on the full armor of God and step up to stand in the gap!*

### Closing Prayer:

## Standing In The Gap Ezekiel 22:23-31

Reading: Ezekiel 22:23-31.

Memory: Ezekiel 22:30

“I\_f\_a\_m\_a\_t\_w\_w\_b\_u\_t\_w\_a\_s\_b\_m\_i\_t\_g\_  
o\_b\_o\_t\_l\_s\_l\_w\_n\_h\_t\_d\_i\_b\_l\_f\_n\_.”

### We need to step up to fill the “gap”.

Ezekiel 22:30    Ezekiel 13:5

How any one of us might step up to fill a “gap” in our spiritual line of defense.

### I. Balancing “Gifts” With “Needs”.

A. When it is not your talent.

B. Indeed, it is better to serve where our gifts lie.

Romans 12:4-8

C. Sometimes willing hearts must take priority over special gifts.

### II. Building up the wall.

A. Making repairs where something has fallen apart.

B. Folks need to be “edified”.

2 Timothy 4:2-4

Revelation 21:27

Ezekiel 13:5

### III. Stepping into the gap.

A. Confronting sin.

Ezekiel 22:26

Galatians 6:1

Matthew 18:15-17

B. Resolving conflict.

Matthew 5:9

C. Teaching truth where it is lacking.

Ezekiel 3:17-21

D. Praying for folks.

James 5:16

Psalms 106:23

E. Helping families with home problems.

Titus 2:3-5

F. Doing things that need to be done.

So What?    Ezekiel 22:15-16

Put on the full armor of God and step up to stand in the gap!