

# BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

## MONTHLY DEVOTIONAL February – March Issue

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### A GAP! WHO WILL FILL IT?

#### Scripture Reading – Ezekiel 22:23-31.

There are some significant words that stand out in this portion of scripture. They are the words of the Lord and are the theme of our monthly devotional, **"I looked for anyone who would repair the wall and stand in the breach.....but I found none."** God wanted an intercessor. The issue was the need to fill **"a gap** that had developed between Himself and His people. There was a need for an intercessor and the question was "Who would fill it?" Here is the plaintive cry of God for someone to stand in the gap on behalf of the nation. It was not that there was no one to be found. It was that there were no men willing to be found, and no men to fulfill the responsibility that God wanted to place upon them. God was looking for someone to stand in the gap on behalf of a nation as intercessor because this nation was under His impending judgment. The reason for God's displeasure is twofold,

**i. The moral and spiritual condition of the nation was at low ebb. The nation had thrust God behind its**

**back and the result was wickedness.**

**ii. There was a separation between God and the nation because of their sin.** The need for an intercessor to represent God to the people and the people to God was desperate. This 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Ezekiel lists a catalogue of sins perpetrated by the people of God. The prophet of God is not painting a pretty picture of the moral and spiritual decay of the nation. This was not a proud moment in the nation's checkered history. God was not pleased with His people. Through the prophet He lays two charges at the feet of the nation.

**i. He accused them of the sin of violence. They shed blood and they did it for unjust gain.** In verse 4 he said, **"....you have become guilty by the blood you have shed....."** and this problem had become so rampant that no less than 7 times in this chapter, does he refer to the shedding of blood. Is there not a parallel in our modern society? On one issue alone, it is clear the more we have ignored God, the more have we shed the blood of millions of innocent babies, and much of it for unjust gain? Abortion is a violent act perpetrated against the innocent and helpless. But God also charges,

**ii. That the people had broken the first commandment because they had turned to idolatry, or as the prophet put it, the nation "who were defiled by the idols you have made....."**

The ripple effect of these two sins was clear. One sin led to another and the Prophet Ezekiel catalogues them. He lists does so without apology. The nation was guilty of social injustices, idolatry, excessive immorality, sexual perversion, acts of lewdness and greed. All of these sins were the fruit of one basic sin, described in v.35 of

chapter 23. "This is what the Lord says; "...you have forgotten me and cast me behind your back..." This was the root of their problem. Godlessness always leads to wickedness. I was amazed sometime ago when I heard that one of the reasons that the supreme court ordered removal of the ten commandments from the schools was that the children might just obey them, and that would be a religious act. That would make it a violation of the separation of church and state. I was some puzzled by this and wondered what was so dangerous about these commandments especially when they are directives not to commit to adultery, to honor our parents, and not to kill etc. These are some constructive principles upon which we should build our lives. Are we by implication and interpretation leaving the impression on young minds that these values are of lesser importance than pop culture values, and thus can be considered as options not to be taken too seriously??

My mind went back to that horrific killing at the Columbine school and other schools and the words of the Supreme Court came back to me, "We must remove the ten commandments from our schools because the children may obey them and that would be a religious act." To be more specific and state it more graphically, don't put the commandment "you shall not kill" on the school walls, and they may obey it and that may a religious act. Apparently that would be more acceptable than to remind and impress upon young fertile pliable minds this is a fundamental principle of moral conduct. That would be a tragedy would it not?????? I think not!! It is my feeling that we should have more religious acts like this. But any rational person knows that this law goes beyond the realm of the purely religious into the moral dimension of life. It is not merely a religious act it is a moral priority. We run around like proverbial chicken with our heads cut

off after these horrific events have taken place, trying to find a solution to our moral problems. We spend millions of dollars having hearings in congress discussing as to why these events take place and how we should resolve them. A positive start would be to allow the command, not to kill, on the walls of our educational institutions. It would be a constant reminder of the sacredness of life. I am not so naive as to say that it would solve all our problems. But it would be constant reminder to young minds the indispensable nature value of one life. While realize that this not the complete answer, at least it is a beginning.

Furthermore when you remove the Ten Commandments from our schools you also remove the first commandment which focuses on the one true God, who clearly said **"You shall have no other God's before me..." It is another step in the process of slowly removing Him from the center of our culture. This mindset is leaving us without a moral foundation and an absolute standard for moral values. While it is not honest to tar the whole of society with the same brush, the indication is that relative values are fast becoming the order of the day, and our lives are being guided by how we feel. The cliché by which decisions are made is "if it feels good then do it, as long as it does not hurt anyone." This is a mindless philosophy, for it becomes the guiding light and the foundation for choices in life, the consequences of which are too horrible to contemplate. It is an extremely dangerous perspective, and will ultimately lead to chaos.**

**But** our society is beginning to reap the harvest of the neglect of God. In Ezekiel 23: 35(N.I.V.) the Lord reveals the consequence of people turning

their backs on Him. His words have impact. **"This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Since you have forgotten me and thrust me behind your back, you must bear the consequences of your lewdness and prostitution."** The Children of Israel had turned to lifeless **god's who would not interfere with** their loose lifestyle, and as a result the nation had become a cesspool of wickedness. Godlessness always leads in a downward direction. **God's** people had descended to depths of gross immorality combined with the senseless shedding of human blood. God says simply and directly what you sow you will reap. Each choice made, and each direction taken, has its **consequences. God's anger with His** people is evident. But accompanying this warning is a note of grace, mercy and salvation. God is looking for some one to help stem the tide of wickedness and bring the nation back **to Himself. What is clear is that God's** first priority is not judgment. It is not the destruction of His people. His first priority is grace, mercy and salvation for His people. In Ezekiel 22: 30, God says, **"I looked for man among them** who build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so **I WOULD NOT DESTROY IT, but found none."** What is amazing about these words is that the all-sufficient God makes it clear that he needs a man to be part of His mission and declare His purposes and present His will to a wayward people. God is calling for an intercessor to stand in the gap on behalf of the land so that He would not have to destroy it. It is clear then, that God is not intent on the destruction of the nation. His intent is the redemption of His people and His servants are a part of His redemptive plan. They are to be partners with Him in the ministry of intercession. In the deep darkness and sinfulness of the people, there comes from the heart of God,

**1. A DISTINCTIVE CRY. Ezekiel 22:30. "I sought for anyone among them who would repair the wall and stand in the breach before me on behalf of the land..."**

We have before us a glimpse into the heart of God. This is a point of light which focuses on the appealing love and grace of God.

I have wondered God why continually is concerned about a people who have forgotten Him, and thrust Him behind their backs. Here were a people who deserved the judgment of God, and earned His wrath, and yet we discover Him looking for a way to save them. This moves beyond the dimensions of human rationality and reason. He did not reject His people, they rejected Him. They had thrust Him behind their backs. He did not have to respond in this way. Yet He longed to save them. This is a point of His Grace. Mercy and love are tied together with it, and all these attributes show the nature of His heart. When you bring grace, mercy and Divine love into the equation, you move beyond the boundaries of rationality and reason. God cries out **"I sought for a man."** It is a cry compelled by love and constrained by grace. This speaks of,

**a. The Initiating Love of God. Ezekiel 22:30.**

It was God who took the first step toward His rebellious people. This is the way it has always been with God. The people had stepped away from Him, and He took the first step to reclaim them. On the surface this is unreasonable for they deserved the justice of His judgment. But grace finds away to satisfy Divine justice and redeem the lost nation.

Redemption started in the initiating love of God. He has always taken the first step to save mankind. This is the thrust of the message of the parable of the lost sheep. It portrays Jesus as the

seeking shepherd who embarks on a mission to find a lost lamb. You can picture Him as He pushes His way through the entangled thickets of the forest. He braces Himself against the lashing fury of an angry storm. He scales the craggy cliffs of the rugged mountain country, until in a secluded crevice He discovers a lonely frightened lost lamb. He, then, tenderly reaches out with His shepherds crook and pulls the little lamb to safety. The little lamb was lost and destined to die but for the initiating unconditional and sacrificial love of the Shepherd.

Let us remember that it was God who sent His one only Son to redeem a lost human race. We are redeemed not because we deserve it or earned it, but because His unconditional love for us initiated the plan of salvation. But as God looks upon His sinful people, He made it clear that to accomplish His saving purposes, there needed not only to be the initiating love of God but a willing response of,

**b. The Instrument of God. Ezekiel 22:30. "I looked for anyone...but I found no one."**

**There was a need for an intercessor that would be the instrument of God. He would be the channel of reconciliation. It was not that there were no men. There were plenty of men. There was, however a shortage of willing and available men.**

It is clear from this passage of scripture that if the nation was going to be saved from the judgment of God, there would have to be willing and available instruments which he could use to carry out His purposes. God clearly says, "I looked for a man to stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land, so that I would not have to destroy it but I found none. So I will pour out my wrath upon them and consume them with fiery anger, bringing down on their heads all they

have done, declares the Sovereign Lord." God sought for someone to who would take on the difficult and dangerous task of interceding for the people just as Moses did successfully after the incident of the golden calf at Mount Sinai. But this time no one was found to deflect the wrath of God. There was no one to intercede for the people. God makes clear that he found none. These tragic words are filled with despair and darkness. God goes on to make clear that because there was no intercessor, He would pour out His wrath upon them and consume them with a fiery anger. The tragedy is that this could be avoided, if someone would step into the gap to intercede. Has this changed? The context may be different, the age in which we live may not be the same, nevertheless out in this society of ours, in the communities of our world, there are lost souls who are on their way to an eternal hell who could be saved if each born again Child of God would step into the gap and plead on their behalf, and reach out in love to them, with a blazing witness of the reconciling love of God and restoring grace of God. God is seeking for His children to fill the gap. The question is "Is He finding anyone?" His distinctive cry is still challenging to His children. The cry that comes from the heart of God is distinctive, but it is also,

**2. THE DIVINE CALL. Ezekiel 22:30. "I looked for anyone..."**

This is not the Jewish religious hierarchy calling for help. It is not the church calling for assistance. This is the call of God for someone to stand in the gap and it is met by silence. This call sprang out of God's concern for his people, and His concern was twofold. He was concerned for,

**a. The Restoration of His People. Ezekiel 22:30. "I looked for anyone from among them who would repair (build) the wall and**

**stand in the breach before me on behalf of the land..."**

Building speaks of restoration. There was repair work to be done. God wanted to call His people back to Himself, and restore the old moral and spiritual values - values that had crumbled and disintegrated. The political leaders had betrayed their trust. They had used their position and their power for material gain. They had ravaged the people and like a lion had devoured men. They had seized precious possessions. They had murdered men leaving the nation with many widows. Ezekiel 22: 25.

The priests were no better than the political leaders. They had blatantly violated the laws of God, and desecrated the Sabbath, and they did not distinguish between the holy and the common. They failed to teach the difference between that which was clean and that which was unclean, and as a result the Name of God had been desecrated and dishonored among the nation. **But in the midst of it all**, the plaintive call of God came to the nation **"I looked for a man who would build up the walls and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the people."** A vital part of an intercessory ministry is a reaching out to the lost. That same call faces the church today. This present age demands willing available and committed men and women who will play a part in intercession and evangelism in the salvation of eternal souls. It is said the Caesar played his fiddle while Rome burned. The question that faces each of us is **"are we willing and content to sit back while souls go to hell?"** **What God is calling for is fighters not fiddlers, players not spectators, instruments not ornaments, dedicated workers not religious decorations. God's cry is I sought for a man or woman. The call is to mobilize to evangelize. If we don't evangelize we will fossilize.** When Henry Ford purchased a large insurance policy, the Detroit

newspapers blazoned the fact, since the amount was so large and he was so prominent. The story was read by **one of Ford's old friends**, who happened to be in the insurance business. The old friend went to confront him to see if the story was true. When Ford assured him that it was, the friend asked him why the policy was not purchased from him, since he was a personal friend, and had been in insurance for many years. **Ford's reply was, "You never asked me." The intercessory ministry cannot be divorced from the ministry of Christian witness. How many of our friends would say to us "You never asked me, about accepting Christ"** Pollsters report that 72 per cent of Americans don't know their next door members." And only 15% of church attendees are involved in service. I suggest this is food for thought and reflection. No wonder there is a gap in the harvest.

The prophet Ezekiel continues to tell us that God is looking for someone who will give themselves to

**b. Intercession for His People. Ezekiel 22:30. "I looked for anyone among them who repair the wall (build) the wall and stand before me on behalf of the land..."**

The twofold ministry of restoration and intercession are dependent on each other. They are inseparable. They are two side of one coin. The key words in this verse are **".....stand in the breach before me on behalf of the land...."** Since it is God who calls for this intercessory ministry, it follows that that it was necessary and indispensable. You may remember how Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt and they came to Mount Sinai. It was at Mount Sinai that the most shameful blot stained the record of the journey of the Children of Israel on their way to Canaan. They stopped within the shadows of Mt Sinai. Moses was on

the Mount in communion with God. It was on that mountain that he received the 10 commandments, BUT Moses lingered long on the Mount. Aaron and the Children of Israel grew impatient and decided to build a golden calf and worship it. This idolatrous act angered both Moses and God. And because of their sin, a Holy God was set on deserting them and pouring out His judgment on them. But it was Moses who stood in the gap pleading for the nation that had sinned. Interceding on their behalf, He prayed an incredible prayer. It was totally selfless.

".....please forgive their sin, but if not blot me out of the book you have written." Here was a man standing in the gap before the Lord on behalf of the people. Exodus 32:32. And the Psalmist tells us in Psalm 106:32 that God would have destroyed the people, "had not Moses His chosen one stood before the Lord in the breach to turn away His wrath lest He should destroy them." I believe God is calling is back to this kind of intercession. Andrew Murray in his excellent book "The Ministry of Intercession" writes "that the world with all of its needs is entirely dependent on and waiting to be helped by intercession. There is a world with its perishing millions whose only hope is the ministry of intercession." If we truly and genuinely believe in the power of prayer we would make it a priority. We would let nothing hinder us from participating in it. A tavern was being built in a town that until recently had been dry. A group of Christians in a certain church opposed this and began an all night prayer meeting asking God to intervene. Lightning struck the tavern building, and it burned to the ground. The owner brought a law suite against the church, claiming they were responsible. The Christians hired a lawyer, claiming they were not responsible. The judge said, "No matter how this case comes out, one thing is clear. The tavern owner believes in prayer and the Christians

do not." If we believe in prayer we will be involved in its ministry. God is calling for intercessors. "I sought for man who would stand in the breach before me..." Are we willing to obey that call? God is calling us to a ministry of restoration and intercession. Finally this Divine call has,

**3. A DISTRESSING CONCLUSION. Ezekiel 22:30. "I sought for anyone among them who would repair the wall and stand in the breach on behalf of the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one."**

The key words here are ".....I found no one...." This was a distressing conclusion. There was heartbreak in this discovery. While God cared, his people didn't. That is a reason for heartbreak. This distressing conclusion was a result of two responses. They answer the question, "Why did He not find anyone?" At this point it is a crucial question. Firstly because,

**a. The Urgency of the hour was not realized. Ezekiel 22:30. The nation was on the precipice of destruction and they seemed to be oblivious of it.**

An intercessor was needed so that God would not have to destroy the land. God wanted to save the nation. That is why He sought for an intercessor. While His holy character demanded punishment for sin, the deepest yearning of His compassionate heart was to provide a way of escaping His judgment. In spite of their wickedness and rebellion, His great heart yearns for them. His Holy Love sought for someone to call the nation to repentance in order that they might be saved. The Holy Justice of God on the other hand demanded that the nation be judged for its arrogant rebellion and sinful lawlessness. But it

was God's Holy love which sought for someone to step into the gap as an intercessor. Divine love was consistently and persistently seeking a way of redemption for God's people. If an intercessor was not found the nation would be destroyed. The words of the Lord are awesome and frightening. In our politically correct pop culture we tend to avoid discussion on the awful judgment of God upon sin. But God says **"I will pour out my wrath upon them and consume them with my fiery anger bringing down on their heads all they have done."** This fact in itself demanded urgency of action. By their wickedness they had merited the judgment of God, nevertheless, mercy and grace was available if someone would step up and fill the gap. A lack of urgency and the presence of apathy was the hindering spirit. I must ask myself the question and so must all of us. **"How concerned am I about souls going to hell."** If I am what am I doing about it? **One has said, "Apathy is the ally of Satan."** W.R Inge wrote **"that we are losing our Christianity because Christianity is a creed for heroes, while we are mainly harmless, good natured people who want everyone to be happy. The world will not be saved by an apathetic church or lukewarm saints. It seems that so many in the church have lost their sense of urgency, their passion and the fire to stand in the gap."** **George Bernard Shaw said that the "worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them."** Robert Bork wrote a book entitled **"slouching towards Gomorrah,"** and I add and on in to hell. Can we be unconcerned about this? Can we be indifferent to it? Are we willing to set aside what we consider to be important activities, to stand in the gap? **Are we willing be part of God's purpose for the saving of men and women?** God is asking us in this critical hour of **the world's** history **"Who will fill the gap?" Are we willing**

to be that someone? The condition of our society is critical and it must be met by the spirit of urgency to bring Christ to the people. This task is NOT the prerogative of a few fulltime ministers. The New Testament bears this out. The early church knew that this task was to be the responsibility of **all the children of God. God's cry is I** looked for a man to fill the gap. But the children of Israel were both apathetic and indifferent. I found none who would stand before me. In Israel the urgency of the hour was not realized. The consequence of this attitude was that,

### **b. The Opportunity of the Hour was not exploited. Ezekiel 22:30.**

While it is true that the nation was under the impending judgment of God because of its wickedness, God had left the door open for them to escape His wrath if only someone would get involved, and fill the gap. Souls are moving through time to an eternity of darkness in hell, and most of them do not know it. But the door is still open for souls to find the Lord Jesus Christ and so is the gap. Jesus said that we must work while it is still day for the night comes when no one can work. **"This is a personal issue and it is between each person and God. It is not between the pastors and congregation, the church or the church board. Ultimately each of us has to answer to God. We are accountable to Him and Him alone. God is saying to us through His word "I am looking for someone to fill the gap."** Each moment of hesitation, each minute of retreating, each hour of delay are moments when men and women are falling into a lost eternity.

My father was a missionary in Africa for fifty years. He was a man of prayer. His prayer lists were revealing. He was an outstanding leader and administrator, but his passion was preaching, teaching and



writing. He was a man burdened for souls and yearned for a mighty outpouring of the Spirit of God in revival power on the church. He did see times of revival during His life time of service. One Sunday morning he told my mother that he was going out among the people to give out some tracts. He was not physically well. He had suffered from a couple of strokes, and a massive heart attack all of which had taken a toll on his body. He walked slowly with the help of a cane. As he moved slowly among the people at the little sea side village of Pennington in Natal, he ministered to them. About an hour later he came back and sat down exhausted. He had given out two tracts. My mother heard **him say "Honey my missionary career is now over."** How he knew this we will never know, because the next day at 2 p.m. on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1983, he went to be with the Lord he had served so faithfully. He had lived His life filling the gap. The day after his funeral I took a group of the students, and drove 400 miles inland to the city of Johannesburg to promote the college and challenge young people to fulltime service. Sunday morning in the tabernacle in the city of Soweto, I preached to a least a thousand people. As I preached I said to them my father, whom they knew, had just gone to be with the Lord. And then I asked them, "who will take his place because there is now another gap in the harvest?" The Lord came in power on the service, and as I remember it, I was still preaching when people with tears streaming down their faces, came from all over that great tabernacle to kneel at the altar. There was a powerful sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the service. People were weeping and praying at that altar, they prayed audibly and earnestly. In some places, as was common, there little pools on the ground where tears had fallen. We estimated that there were at least a hundred people on their knees before

God. It was a service I have never forgotten. As have thought about this it occurred to me that this was the first Sunday my Father spent in heaven. The Sunday before this event, he announced the end of his missionary career as he had given out his final two tracts. The next day God called Him home and he left a gap open. Now on the first of Sunday of his arrival in heaven, a crowd of people knelt at the altar of the Tabernacle he had preached in on more than one occasion, signifying as it were, that they were willing to fill the gap he had left.

God is saying to us through His Word, "I am still seeking for those who will fill the gap. I am still seeking for those who would reach out to the lost." The question is will He find them? Only we can answer that.