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God Is Looking for a Man

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So I sought for a man among them who should make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one (Eze. 22:30).

Men look for men, but God looks for a man. God looks for a man among men who will stand in the gap—who will prevent the unleashing of His wrath upon men—but He found none in Ezekiel's day. One man could have prevented the destruction of Israel and the final deportation of the Jews from Jerusalem to Babylon, but God could not find that one man.

The architects of religion or the institutions of religion of the sixth century B.C. could not produce one man who could stand in the gap and make up a wall that God would not destroy the land. Institutional religion was strong during that period. It could produce and did produce masses of worshipers, but it could not produce one man who would stand in the gap and prevent the outpouring of God's wrath. During this same time period, the high priest could summon thousands of believers to come to Jerusalem to worship, to pray, to praise and to sacrifice at the temple any time of the year, particularly at this time when Jerusalem was under siege. High quantities of people were available, but quality was lacking.

Where do you think God began His search to find a man to stand in the gap? He first searched among the prophets—but there was no one. He then searched among the priesthood—but there was no one. He then continued to search among the spiritual laity—but there was no one. He continued His search until every heart had been examined—but there was no one to stand in the gap. There were plenty of religious people, but there was no one good enough, holy enough, consecrated enough to meet God's standards as an intercessor or savior for the people of Israel. There was no man whose heart was perfect toward God. Do you think that churches today are suffering from this same condition?

Consider who was doing the searching in Ezekiel's day. God assigned His angel, Gabriel, to announce the birth of His Son to Mary, but the task of

finding a man who could stand in the gap was not given to anyone. It became God's own prerogative. He, so to speak in human terms, rose up from His throne and performed the search Himself. He did not rise from His throne to "count the numbers," but to seek for a man. I am convinced that God's search is still continuing today for a man *who should make a wall, and stand in the gap...* so that He will not destroy the land!

God was moving to destroy the land. Almighty God, whose throne is heaven and whose footstool is the earth, moved to destroy the land. However, before He raised His sword, He was looking for a mortal who would *stop* Him. He was hoping that some man or woman would stop Him from executing justice. He was hoping a soul could be found somewhere whose heart was righteous, whose lips had the petition for mercy. He was looking for a man who would stop His wrath and fiery indignation, but He found none: *Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath...* (Eze. 22:31).

God was going to destroy Sodom and He did. His justice demanded it. But because God is full of mercy and compassion, He first looked for a man to stand in the gap to stop Him from doing what He knew had to be done. If He could find a man who could unlock the treasures of mercy and compassion within Him, He would not have destroyed Sodom! God is always looking for men who will use the keys to unlock His storehouse of mercy and compassion. God wants to give these keys to those who are worthy to stand in the gap. Abraham was one of those; Moses was one of those; the Apostle Paul was one of those and Jesus was one of those. At Calvary, Jesus took the key of mercy and unlocked God's forgiveness to cancel out God's wrath to all mankind!

So God, the immortal, invisible, only wise God, told mortal Abraham what He was going to do to Sodom so Abraham could be a candidate to stand in the gap. Abraham took up his position between righteous God Almighty and wicked Sodom. Abraham had the power to prevent the fire of God's wrath as he stepped into the gap and began to intercede. God loved it! As Abraham took his stand, he began to make his case. Heaven, the multitude of the heavenly host, looked on in silence as Abraham pled with God, as Almighty God allowed Abraham to appeal to the mercy locked up within Him! This had never happened before in the history of mankind. The angels learned something new. It must have been the show of all shows to them in God's drama with man: God allowing one man to stop or delay Him from doing what His justice demanded to be done.

Abraham began his intercession on behalf of 50 righteous, then he went to 45, then to 40, then to 30, then to 20, then to 10 and there he stopped. God would have let His justice and His wrath towards thousands be stopped for the sake of 10! God wanted justice to be kissed by mercy. Either one of two things could have prevented God's destruction of Sodom: 1) if Abraham had penetrated even deeper into the mercy of God (perhaps he did not yet know the depths of God's divine mercy), or 2) Sodom would not have been destroyed had Lot convinced nine others to become righteous. The tragedy of Sodom was that Lot had not convinced at least nine others to fear God. Since Lot was living in the wrong place (Sodom instead of Ur), his witnessing was unable to win any converts. The other part of the tragedy of Sodom from this perspective is that Abraham feared to enter any further into God's mercy than he did. As I said, Abraham did not know the depths of God's mercy and the vastness of it. Jesus revealed that years later at Calvary.

Abraham was a man in the gap because he had the power to stop God's justice and usher in God's mercy. Moses was also a man in the gap at another time when God was going to destroy Israel. God told Moses He would, but Moses prayed God out of it! God allowed Moses to unlock His mercy (Ex. 32:11-14).

God told Ezekiel that He was looking for one man to stop the destruction of Jerusalem, its populace and the temple. A hundred thousand soldiers with chariots of iron could not have driven back the armies or wrath from the north, but one man, who would have stood in the gap, could have! God is looking for a man to unlock His mercy. You could be that man or woman who would be able to suddenly unlock God's mercy for all kinds of situations.

Just wanting to be a pianist or just enjoying music does not make you a pianist. Sacrifice is required: *present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to the God...* (Rom. 12:1). You do not become a pianist by just making loud noises on the piano. You do not become a man or woman in the gap by being without fear and suddenly bombarding heaven with bold prayers. You need to sacrifice and learn your lessons: doing God's will second-by-second, crucifying all your selfish desires and dreams, rejoicing evermore and loving all persons. These lessons require that you discipline your body, mind and spirit by being in God's school of prayer and inner suffering.

Where is the school that trains men and women to be one of those who will stand in the gap? Do they have many students who have enrolled and started? Will there be any graduates? To satisfy God's justice, the fire of His wrath

continues to fall on many people, cities and nations. The prayers of men and women in the gap can prevent God from pouring out His wrath where justice demands it. God is merciful and desires that our churches be places where many are standing in the gap. Their obedience can open all the mercy channels of God: the salvation channels, the sanctification channels, the healing channels, the miracle channels, the revelation channels and the love channels.

But almost every man has disqualified himself from his position of being a man in the gap by joking and jesting, by criticism and resentment, by murmuring and complaining, by using flattering words and speaking words out of season, by prayerlessness and praiselessness, by looking over the wall or by sparing Agag and the best of the sheep, by counting the troops or by rebelling against God's anointed ones. You can gather together all the finest gospel singers, all the finest of preachers and programs, but the church will not be able to hold back destruction or spiritual sickness until there are men or women standing in the gap! Everyone is called to stand in the gap, and until you take your place and stay there day-in and day-out, you have missed the very purpose for which you have been born again. You can stand in the gap as you daily read the Bible, pray, witness and obey the Holy Spirit.

God is looking for a man or woman who will stand in the gap so that He will not destroy the land. Become that man or woman!

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