

Series: Come Boldly to the Throne

MAKING UP THE HEDGE

EZEKIEL 22:23-31

Text: Ezekiel 22:30

Ezekiel 22:30

³⁰ *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.*

Introduction:

Paul in his letter to the church at Ephesus encouraged the believers to:

Ephesians 6:18

¹⁸ *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*

This verse speaks of Intercessory prayer, praying for others not merely ourselves.

We read in Phillipians:

Philippians 2:4

⁴ *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

We need to be praying for one another.

Note also: 1 Timothy 2:1

1 Timothy 2:1

1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

I want to share some thoughts this evening on the Importance Making Up the Hedge when it comes to Intercessory Prayer.

Read text:

Ezekiel 22:30

30 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.

Note three things as we consider this passage:

1. THE SEARCH (VS. 30)

Ezekiel 22:30

³⁰ 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.

Note:

A. This Was a Focused Search

God searched among the prophets, the priests, the princes, and the people of the land.

This word search means to: *strive after*: - ask, beg, beseech, desire, enquire, get, make inquisition, procure, (make) request, require, seek (for).

He was looking for a person who could make up the hedge and stand in the gap.

B. This Was a Fruitless Search

Note some of the conditions of that day:

- The Conspiracy of the Prophets (vs. 25, 28)

Ezekiel 22:25

²⁵ **There is a conspiracy of her prophets** in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof.

Ezekiel 22:28

²⁸ And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken.

There were many who conspired together and false prophets.

- The Corruption of the Priest (vs. 26)

Ezekiel 22:26

²⁶ Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

It was a time when the lines of distinction had been erased.

It was a time when the preachers had confused holy things and profane things.

It was a time where there was difference between the unclean and the clean, a day when the Sabbaths or the Lords day was minimized.

- The Crimes of the Princes (vs. 27)

Ezekiel 22:27

²⁷ Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.

This was a time of dishonesty.

- The Character of the People (vs. 29)

Ezekiel 22:29

²⁹ The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.

I received an invitation today to attend a seminar next week that the tag line on the invitation stated: Growing a church is only possible with a strategy not a sermon.

Remember:

While we're looking for better methods; God is looking for better men.

While we're looking for a new recipe; God is looking for quality ingredients.

Note not only "The Search" but also:

2. THE STANDING (VS. 30)

Ezekiel 22:30

³⁰ *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.*

A. Standing In the Gap Is Intercession

The word gap means: a breach or a broken creating a gap.

This is an image of interceding between the people and God.

Psalms 106:23

²³ *Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.*

Moses as a warrior covers with his body the broken part of a wall or fortress besieged a perilous place to turn away the wrath of God.

This is what an intercessor does – he stands between a person and God and intercedes for that person on his behalf.

God sought for a man who would stand in the gap that He might not destroy it.

B. Standing In the Gap is Imperative

Why is it so important that someone “stand in the gap”?

Because there was a breach

God saw the breach made in the moral state and feelings of the people. God's blessings could not be realized as long as the breach remained. Why must someone stand in the gap?

Why is it so important?

- Because It Is Sin Not To Intercede For Others

1 Samuel 12:23

²³ Moreover as for me, **God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you:** but I will teach you the good and the right way:

- Because It Is Selfish Not To Intercede For Others

Notice not only “The Search” and “The Standing” but also:

3. THE SADNESS (VS. 30)

Ezekiel 22:30

³⁰ 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.**

Why none could be found:

A. The People Were Corrupted

There was not a person in Israel that had the moral qualities to lead the nation rightly.

From the prophet to the priests to the princes and down to the people God could find not one worthy to stand in the gap. As a people they were:

- Defiled (Ezekiel 22:1-12)

Ezekiel 22:1-12

1 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou shalt shew her all her abominations. 3 Then say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD, The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come, and maketh idols against herself to defile herself. 4 Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries. 5 Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, which art infamous and much vexed. 6 Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to their power to shed blood. 7 In thee have they set light by father and mother: in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow. 8 Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. 9 In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness. 10 In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. 11 And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his

daughter in law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter. 12 In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD.

The people were:

- Doomed (vs. 13-22)

Ezekiel 22:13-22

¹³ Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. ¹⁴ Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken it, and will do it. ¹⁵ And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee. ¹⁶ And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I am the LORD. ¹⁷ And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, ¹⁸ Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. ¹⁹ Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. ²⁰ As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in

mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. ²¹ Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. ²² As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you.

The people were:

- Debased (vs. 23-27)

Ezekiel 22:23-27

²³ *And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,*

²⁴ *Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation.*

²⁵ *There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. ²⁶ Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. ²⁷ Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.*

The people were:

- Deceitful (vs. 28)

Ezekiel 22:28

²⁸ *And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken.*

The people were:

- Disappointing (vs. 30-31)

Ezekiel 22:30-31

³⁰ *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.*

Their corruption is so widespread that no one could enter the gap as a righteous person and divert God's judgment by intercession.

Not only were the people corrupt but not also:

B. The People Were Careless

It was bad enough that the people were so corrupted that no one could be found to “make up the hedge and stand in the gap,” but it was even sadder still that no one seemed to care!

Illustration:

Refer to the Parable of the man who was beat and left to die and those that passed by him.

Close:

The Lord is still seeking men and women who will take their stand for the moral law of God, stand in the gap at the wall, and confront the enemy with God's help.

As you read history, you meet godly men and women who had the courage to resist the popular evils of their day and dare to expose the breaks in the wall and seek to mend them.

Illustration:

Program of those who hid and took care of the slaves knowing it wasn't right for them to not be free.

The Lord is looking for intercessors:

Isaiah 59:1-4

¹ Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

² But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear. ³ For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. ⁴ None calleth for justice, nor *any* pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

Isaiah 59:16

¹⁶ And he saw that *there was* no man, and wondered that *there was* no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

The question before us tonight is, “Will I make up the hedge and stand in the gap?”