



STANDING IN *THE* GAP

“So I sought for a man among them who would 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.” Ezekiel 22:30

Standing in the Gap

Return Church

Sunday, July 6, 2025

This was a metaphor used by the prophet.

Stand in the gap in the wall

Your priests have violated my instructions and defiled my holy things. They make no distinction between what is holy and what is not. And they do not teach my people the difference between what is ceremonially clean and unclean. They disregard my Sabbath days so that I am dishonored among them. Your leaders are like wolves who tear apart their victims. They actually destroy people's lives for money! And your prophets cover up for them by announcing false visions and making lying predictions. They say, My message is from the Sovereign Lord, when the Lord hasn't spoken a single word to them. Even common people oppress the poor, rob the needy, and deprive foreigners of justice. **I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall** so I wouldn't have to destroy the land, but I found no one. *Ezekiel 22:26-30 NLT*

What caused the gaps in the walls

- Corrupt and rebellious priest
- Deceitful teachers
- Greedy leaders, murderers
- Lying prophets
- Common people who:
 - Oppress, mistreat and rob the poor and needy
 - Oppress the stranger and deprive the foreigners of justice

God was looking for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land, and to stand in the gap in the wall.

Dress and keep

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. ***Genesis 2:15 KJV***

Dress – Abad, (*awbad*), to work, to serve, to labor, to be tilled.

Keep – Shamar, (*shaw-mar*), to keep, to guard, keep watch, watchman, to keep within bounds, to protect, to hedge about.

Adam should have built a wall around the garden, a wall around his and Eve's hearts, to keep the serpent out.

Walls

- The truth is a fence.
- We all need a fence of truth around our own hearts.
- People don't like the fence.
- The grass is always greener on the other side.
- Mankind is always contemplating jumping the fence.
- The more signs that say do not touch this fence, the more you want to touch it.

Salvation

You are saved by grace, (no fences) come as you are. God unmerited, underserved, unearned favor saves us.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, ***Ephesians 2:8 NKJV***

But then you need the fence of truth:

- To protect you from the enemy
- To save you from yourself
- To help you foster great relationships
- To help conform you into the image of Christ

Walls

- We need a wall around our own hearts.
- We need a wall around our marriages.
- We need a wall around our families.
- We need a wall around our church.
- We need a wall around our city.
- We need a wall around our state.
- We need a wall around our country.

There are breaches or gaps in the walls everywhere. God is looking for someone who will rebuild the wall of righteousness and fill in the gaps in the walls. Who will stand in the Gap and fight.

Gaps

- Gaps are breaches in the walls. They are places of vulnerability, danger and weakness.
- The enemy can easily get in through a gap in the wall.
- Broken hearts and broken societies can occur when people push God out of their lives.
- Racism, neglect of the homeless, no prayer in schools, human trafficking, gang violence, illegal drugs, and much more are rampant in today's world.
- God values justice, mercy and love. When we neglect these things, our culture suffers devastating gaps.

Gaps in the walls

Maybe there is a gap in the wall of your personal spiritual life.

- Have you lost your first love?
- Are you back-slidden?
- Are you drinking and drugging again?
- Are you cheating on your spouse, or even thinking about it?
- Do you not study and pray every day anymore?
- Are you looking at pornography?
- Do you have open sin in your life and are you not repentant.

Do you need help? Do you need for somebody to step up and stand in the gap for you to get you back on track again.

Gaps in the walls

- **What about a gap in the wall of your family?**
 - Are your kids rebelling?
 - Do you need marriage counselling?
 - Are one of you unfaithful to the other one?
 - Is there an abusive husband or dad?
 - Are you in financial trouble that is putting pressure on the relationships.

Gaps in the walls of our city

- Look at how many people who are in deep poverty.
- Look at all of the mentally ill people that have no one, that are living on the streets, homeless.
- There are 48 ½ million drug addicts in the USA today.
- Thousands of addicts trying to get sober, but have very little support or help.
- Look at all of the gang violence.
- Look at how much prostitution is right here locally.
- People coming out of jails with no jobs and no help getting plugged back into society. 68% of them will return to jail again within 3 years and 79% of them will return to jail within 5 years.
- Foster kids being put on the streets as soon as they turn 18 years old is a huge problem in the USA. It is estimated that over 20 % of them become homeless on their 18th birthday.

Literal gaps in the wall of our country

The immigration problem has been out of control for years. It's conservatively estimated that 10 to 12 million illegal borders crossings accrued during the past administration. Many criminals such as murderers, gang members, drug dealers, sexual offenders all were allowed to simply walk right across our border. Countries emptied their prisons and sent them to America.

The current administration is trying to find them all and deport them. This has caused rioting in the streets over disagreements on how to handle this issue.

Gaps in the walls of our country

- The nationwide drug addiction problem is still out of control.
 - Thousands of people are dying from overdosing.
- Human trafficking is a very real problem right here in the USA.
- Antisemitism is rampant throughout our country, especially on liberal college campuses.
- Our country is divided like never before. There is a deep hatred between the right and the left.
- Men are participating in woman's sports, all in the name of gender equality.

Gaps in the walls of our society

- The USA is the richest nation in the world, but one in six Americans live in poverty.
- Over 750,000 people are homeless in the USA.
- 1 in 6 adults in the USA engage in binge drinking.
- 25 % of Americans use illegal drugs.
- 50% of Americans say they have tried illegal drugs at least once in their life-time.
- Most woman become prostitutes in the USA before they are 18 years old.
- 92% of them say they can't leave the life-style because they lack money and food.
- According the FBI, there are 1.4 million gang members in the USA.
- Many states have now passed laws legalizing marijuana use.
- All states in the USA now allow same sex marriage.

Gaps in the walls

- Over 3 million kids drop out of high school each year. Many who graduate can barely read.
- We used to bemoan that one in two marriages end in divorce, but now, many couples don't even bother to get married. They change partners like they trade cars.
- There have been 63 million abortions in America since Roe Vs Wade.
- A few decades ago, our nations focus was on civil rights, today it is on protecting gay rights.
- In the 1950's, 76% of high school students said they feared God. Today only less than 20% say they fear God.
- A recent survey showed that 27% of Americans looked at pornography within the past month, while 58% of Americans have looded at it at least once.

Gaps in the walls around the world

- About half of the world's population lives on less than \$2.50 a day.
- Malnutrition affects almost 1/3 of the children in 3rd world countries.
- In the world today there are about 20 million slaves. Some are forced into child labor and many of them are sex slaves.
- And we could go on and on.....

Gaps in the walls

- Because of sin our society is breaking down.
- There are millions of hurting, broken people right here in the USA.
- The enemy comes to kill, steal and destroy.
- It might look like he is winning. But don't despair.
- *Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.*
- *No weapon formed against you will prosper.*
- I've read the end of the book, we win!
- But in the mean-time, God wants His church to go to work, to stand in the gaps in the walls.

What are we to do?

- Identify the gaps in the walls and ask God which one does He want you to fill. We are all called to do different things.
- Remember sins of omission are just as great as sins of commission.
 - **Commission** – sins that you commit.
 - **Omission** – sins that you omit, or things that you wouldn't do, even though God asked you to do it.
- If God is calling you to rise up and stand in the gap, then you need to stand up and go to work.
- You can always start by just reaching out to help somebody.
- When we started Return Church, God told me that we were to be like the good Samaritan.

The Good Samaritan

Jesus replied with a story: A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here. ***Luke 10:30-35 NLT***

The Good Samaritan

Our mission was to find the people that the devil has beaten up. Those that he has stripped of their spiritual garments, those that are wounded, broken, and beaten.

We are to find them then to minister to them. Help them get well and find healing. We are to feed them and clothe them both naturally and spiritually. We are to minister to them until they can find rest, health, and peace in Jesus Christ.

This is how we stand in the gap.

Jesus said you did it to Me

Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You? And the King will answer and say to them, Assuredly, I say to you, in as much as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me. ***Matthew 25:37-40 NKJV***

When you do it unto the least of these, you do it unto Jesus.

Biblical heroes that stood in the gap

Noah – saved the human race and the animal kingdom.

Moses – interceded on the behalf of Israel over and over again.

Caleb – He had the faith to go in and possess the land and drive the giants out of the land.

Gideon – defeated the enemy with just 300 brave men.

David – defeated the giant when Saul and the entire Israelite army was too terrified to fight.

Nehemiah – rebuilt the literal wall around Jerusalem. He and the people had a hammer in one hand and a sword in the other.

Esther – one brave girl became queen and saved the Jewish race.

Barnabas

I want us to look at the life of Barnabas as a man who stood in the gap.

Barnabas – Son of Encouragement.

To encourage means to put courage into someone who is weak and vulnerable. Greek, *paraklesis* – to come alongside and help, comfort.

So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing. ***1 Thessalonians 5:11 NLT***

Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, ***Hebrews 10:24-25 NLT***

Barnabas – Son of Encouragement

All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need. For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means "Son of Encouragement"). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus. He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles. ***Acts 4:32-37 NLT***

He knew that his possessions were not really his, but rather God owned everything. He was incredibly generous to the brotherhood. Here Barnabas stood in the gap for many needy people.

Barnabas

And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought *him* to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. ***Acts 9:26-27 NKJV***

One of the greatest Christian leaders the church has ever known was the Apostle Paul. Early in his Christian life, he found himself in a gap, a place of weakness, vulnerability and danger. **He desperately needed someone to stand in the gap for him, and Barnabas did so.**

Barnabas sent to Antioch

However, some of the believers who went to Antioch from Cyprus and Cyrene began preaching to the Gentiles about the Lord Jesus. The power of the Lord was with them, and a large number of these Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord. When the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw this evidence of God's blessing, he was filled with joy, and he encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord. **Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith.** And many people were brought to the Lord. ***Acts 11:20-24 NLT***

Here he stood in the gap for the Saints at Antioch, by encouraging them and helping bring many others to the Lord.

Barnabas went to find Saul

Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to look for Saul. When he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching large crowds of people. (It was at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.) ***Acts 11:25-26 NLT***

Barnabas could have just stayed in Antioch, but instead he went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him back to the church in Antioch. He knew God had his hand on Saul, and that it was time for him to begin his ministry, so he went to find him. He stood in the gap for Saul (Paul) again.

The church in Antioch trusted Barnabas and Saul

One of them named Agabus stood up in one of the meetings and predicted by the Spirit that a great famine was coming upon the entire Roman world. (This was fulfilled during the reign of Claudius.) So the believers in Antioch decided to send relief to the brothers and sisters in Judea, everyone giving as much as they could. This they did, entrusting their gifts to Barnabas and Saul to take to the elders of the church in Jerusalem. ***Acts 11:28-30 NLT***

Here Barnabas stood in the gap for the believers in Jerusalem to help bring them money for food in the time of famine.

John Mark

When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission to Jerusalem, they returned, taking John Mark with them. ***Acts 12:25 NLT***

Paul and Barnabas were then sent out on their first missionary journey. They took John Mark with them.

Paul and his companions then left Paphos by ship for Pamphylia, landing at the port town of Perga. There John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. ***Acts 13:13 NLT***

Barnabas encouraged many believers on Paul's 1st missionary journey

After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God. Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. Then they traveled back through Pisidia to Pamphylia. They preached the word in Perga, then went down to Attalia. Finally, they returned by ship to Antioch of Syria, where their journey had begun. ***Acts 14:21-26 NLT***

A sharp disagreement

After some time Paul said to Barnabas, “Let’s go back and visit each city where we previously preached the word of the Lord, to see how the new believers are doing.” Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in their work. Their disagreement was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus. Paul chose Silas, and as he left, the believers entrusted him to the Lord’s gracious care. ***Acts 15:36-40 NLT***

Their disagreement was so severe that Paul and Barnabas, the worlds greatest missionary team, split up.

Barnabas stood in the gap for Mark

What was Barnabas doing by separating from Paul? He was standing in the gap for Mark. He saw something in Mark, he knew God would use him.

Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you when you come, for he will be helpful to me in my ministry. ***II Timothy 4:11 NLT***

Aristarchus, who is in prison with me, sends you his greetings, and so does Mark, Barnabas's cousin. As you were instructed before, make Mark welcome if he comes your way. ***Colossians 4:10 NLT***

Later Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark. Most scholars agree that Mark's gospel was Peter's account of the life of Jesus.

Barnabas stood in the gap for the poor

In fact, James, Peter, and John, who were known as pillars of the church, recognized the gift God had given me, and they accepted Barnabas and me as their co-workers. They encouraged us to keep preaching to the Gentiles, while they continued their work with the Jews. Their only suggestion was that we keep on helping the poor, which I have always been eager to do. ***Galatians 2:9-10 NLT***

All of the apostles stood in the gap for the poor.

Barnabas, son of encouragement stood in the gap for Paul, Mark, the poor, and the Saints in Jerusalem and Antioch, and the churches from their 1st missionary journey. His entire Christian life was helping people.

Return Church is doing our best to fill gaps in the walls

One way to stand in the gap is to commit to helping us here at Return Church.

- We take seriously the ministry of **teaching and preaching the Word of God**. This will do more for your soul and spirit than anything else we can do.
- We feed the meal in **Portland** every Thursday. We have been doing this for 9 years now. We are averaging over 100 people per week.
- **The Clothes Closet** gives away clothes to hundreds of people. Every Monday. They also come to Portland every other week to give away clothes. We are now also giving clothes to the Recovery Class guest on Thursdays.
- We have an amazing **Life Recovery Meeting** every Thursday night. Where we help addicts with their addictions, mainly by introducing them to Jesus Christ.
- We have a **van ministry** where we bring people to church. Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. What better way to help someone get their life changed than by bringing them to church.
- Children's ministry, Youth ministry, worship ministry, men's ministry, ladie's ministry, and on and on.
- **Get involved, stand in the Gap.** Help someone else, be a Good Samaritan.

Jesus stood in the gap

- On the cross of calvary, Jesus stood in the widest gap of them all.
- He was the only one who could possibly fill that gap. The gap between God and mankind.
- Sin created this gap. Sin caused the separation between God and man.
- When Jesus went to the cross, He reconciled mankind with God. He closed the gap.
- Jesus left heaven and came to earth, so man could leave earth and go to heaven.
- Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.
- Put your faith and trust in Jesus today!