

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## “Stand In The Gap”

By John D. Cotham

*“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” (Ezek. 22:30).*

The Israelites constantly grieved God with their rebellion. God sent prophet after prophet to warn them. Eventually they became so like the nations around them that God gave up on them. He arranged for their captivity and bondage. As stated by the great prophet Ezekiel not a man could be found to stand on God’s side. Our American society represents the greatest rebellion against God’s word. The religious denominations represent the greatest mockery of God’s word. As we look at the condition of the Lord’s church today we are witnessing the results of rebellion that began over two decades ago. Just like generations of Israelites and the nations around them, the rebellion continues today. God needs a people who will “*stand in the gap*” against those who insist on constant rebellion to God’s instruction for mankind.

### God Needs Preachers Who Will Stand In The Gap

He needs preachers who will stand against the religious error of denominational preachers and teachers. Such false teachers have done serious damage to the hearts of many people. God’s preachers are those in the front line when it comes to confronting and combating false doctrine in the world. God also needs strong preachers who will “*stand in the gap*” against the invasion of liberal doctrines within the Lord’s church. Those who cry for “change” in the Lord’s church today are guilty of the same digression as those who split the Lord’s church more than a century ago over the mechanical instrument and the Missionary Society. They must be confronted by God’s preachers.

### God Needs Elders Who Will Stand In The Gap

The elders are to feed the flock (church) of God: “*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood*” (Acts 20:28). This is a tremendous responsibility, one for which they will answer in eternity: “*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you*” (Heb. 13:17). Elders must be godly men who not only respect the word of God, but who will take seriously God’s charge to care for His church. Elders must be willing to “*stand in the gap*” to keep error from creeping in among those with whom they are entrusted. They must have the courage to properly oversee every controversy that comes, whether over doctrine or personality. They must make responsible judgments that will both keep peace in the Lord’s church while at the same time refusing to compromise the doctrine of Christ.

### God Needs Church Members Who Will Stand In The Gap

Not only should the elders and preachers be sound enough and courageous enough to stand against error, but so should every child of God. Peter tells us: “*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*” (1 Pet. 3:15). Paul said: “*Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man*” (Col. 4:6). Obviously, God expects us to be able to give answers to religious questions or false religious opinions. Many times the word of God is compromised on the job, in discussions with neighbors or family, because Christians are either too ignorant or are too cowardly to answer. Most

church members expect their elders and preacher to be able to give sound, doctrinal answers to error; however, most of the compromising of God's word is done by members who simply have not prepared themselves to stand strong for God.

May God help us to accept the responsibility given to us to stand strong against the onslaught of society, religious error, and liberalism. When God needs men and women to ***“stand in the gap”*** against rebellion, let us not find ourselves in support of the rebellion through weakness and compromise. Let us not give our God the need to say, ***“But I found none.”*** ■

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## True Obedience!

By Keith Greer

***“You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you”*** (Deut. 4:2).

Truly, reading passages such as Moses' words to the children of Israel develops a clearer understanding of Biblical obedience. Why do we read such admonitions? ***“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”*** (Rom. 15:4-6). Yet, I must wonder whether many of today's Christians have learned this lesson?

Why were Nadab and Abihu destroyed with fire from heaven? ***“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them”*** (Lev. 10:1). These priests of God disobeyed by offering worship that was different from what God had commanded, and it cost them their lives.

What about the great man, Moses? God gave him simple instructions—fetch from the rock, water for the children of Israel. He was instructed to speak to the rock. What did he do? ***“And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock? Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank”*** (Num. 20:10-11). This was a sin of disobedience. Moses lost his right to enter the Promised Land.

King Saul had a similar problem. He was to destroy everything in Amalek that drew the breath of life. But Saul saved the king and the best of the sheep and oxen. He told Samuel he intended to offer the animals in sacrifice to God. But God was not pleased. ***“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offering and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams”*** (1 Sam. 15:22). Because of disobedience, Saul lost his kingship.

These three Bible characters have one thing in common. All disobeyed God and suffered terrible consequences for their actions. Each, by simply obeying God, could have avoided the terrible fate he suffered! God gave man a mind with which to reason and understand His teachings. How could anyone read these passages, and many others we could add, and come away without concluding that God has commanded, and expects from His children, TOTAL, TRUE OBEDIENCE? Let us awake out of sleep and realize that God's commands must be obeyed—not debated! ■

***“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”*** (Heb. 5:8-9, KJV).

Service Times — Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM — Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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