

## Chapter 3 – So Who Will Stand in the Gap?

### *Some Biblical Case Studies*

God wanted someone to stand in the gap between a great society turned sour and the new beginning He intended for the human race. So God called Noah to preach righteousness to his generation and build a craft that would take a remnant into the post-Flood world. Later, God wanted someone to stand in the gap between His gracious resources for all nations and their fullest distribution everywhere. So He called Abraham and Sarah to leave their home, to go into a land of promise, to believe that God could give them children in their old age to receive the inheritance that would one day bless as many as the stars of heaven. When God wanted someone to stand in the gap between a nation of slaves and their deliverance, He called Moses to leave Egypt's comforts. Moses, Aaron and others led Israel into God's plan to make them a nation of priests, and as a result, directly changed the course of history for all peoples everywhere.

In one sense the entire Old Testament might be viewed as a series of case studies on different forms the Gap took through the centuries, and of those who responded to the call to stand in it, and what that stand meant for them.

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But it wasn't just others called to stand in the Gap. The mystery and majesty of our God is that ultimately He Himself stood there! Jesus forever became God's way home across the Gap. He fulfilled all the efforts of those who stood there before Him. He became the foundation for all the new efforts of those whom He drew forth to stand in the Gap with Him, to finish the reaching of the Unreached in a way no Old Testament saint ever could or ever dreamed possible!

Here's a major theme of the four Gospels: Jesus was progressively breaking His disciples out of the boxes that prevented them from believing they could effectively help close the Gap with Him.

In the last forty days following His resurrection, the parallel passages of Luke 24:36-53 and Acts 1:1-8 tell us that Jesus concentrated on three areas of the disciples' faith: their faith in His *person* ("everything written about me;" "many proofs"); their faith in His *purpose* ("that . . . forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations;" "be my witnesses to the end of the earth"); and their faith in His *promise* ("you shall be my witnesses;" "you are clothed with power;" "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you"). Jesus knew that if their faith focused on these three truths, they would be free to stand in the Gap with Him and to close it. In fact, that's precisely what happened. Through them the gospel penetrated much of the first century world.

Some Christians have the mistaken notion that when we're redeemed we cross *over* the Gap between us and God and out of it to live safely ever after on the other side. But that isn't altogether accurate. Jesus, in bringing us back to the Father, calls us to lose our lives with Him in this world, stating that "if anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also" (John 12:26). Where is Jesus right now? In one sense, He is at the right hand of the Father's

throne. But He is also active in the Gap! The living Mediator *remains* the mediator! If He wants His people to be where He continues to work then we must serve Him in the Gap.

The attitude that was in God's Son when He entered the Gap for our salvation is the same He wants for all His disciples (see Phil. 2:5-10). We're to stand with Him as He stood and stands there. According to 1 John 1:1 that means Christ's approach, and ours like Him, is to be "heard" (speaking good news so that others understand it clearly), "seen" (available to people because we come to where they are), "looked upon" (visible to those we want to reach, being a living model by which they can discover God's love for them), and "touched" (directly and personally involved in bridging the distance between God and specific unreached sinners somewhere in the world). That all adds up to standing in the Gap.

Paul understood this. He claims to be personally "appointed" to stand in the Gap (1 Tim. 2:7). According to his own testimony, that appointment came the very day He met Christ on the Damascus road. In that hour Jesus called him to "rise and stand" for a "purpose:" to "serve and bear witness" not only among his own people but "the Gentiles— to whom I send you" (Acts 26:12-23).

But then, Paul turns around and instructs all of us Christians to "be imitators of me, as I am of Christ . . . as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved" (1 Cor. 11:1, 10:32). Of course, we're not all called to be apostles. But like Paul, we should testify about the focus of our conversion: "But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, [He did so] in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles" (Gal. 1:15-16). God desires the whole Church to imitate Paul's sense of priority and purpose, each of us saying of our lifelong journey in the Gap: "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19).

### *Two Important Questions*

Will I *stand* in the Gap? That is, will I fully assume the privilege the Lord Jesus has given me to serve His global cause? A second question is of equal concern: In *what part* of the Gap will I stand? That is, what will be the width of the Gap where I serve Christ and His grand mission? At what geographical, cultural, and theological distance from a clear witness to Christ are the ones I will reach with God's love? Who will have an opportunity to hear of Christ for the first time because I care?

God is looking for people to stand in the Gap. He's looking for people who believe the Gap exists, that Christ can close it and that they must be in it with Him. He's looking for people to walk in it with Christ, making a strategic impact for His saving mission among all nations, especially among those at the widest end of the Gap.

God is looking for people to stand in the Gap not only because they love Christ but because with Christ they love those on the other side. Only the toughest love will take the kind of action that brings lost sinners home.

**To stand in the Gap means to place no limits on how fully  
Christ may use you, or for whose sake.**

God isn't looking first of all for missionaries. No! He's looking for Christians who are willing to be changed, wherever that may lead. He wants disciples who will stand in the Gap humbly, knowing that what is wrong with the world is also what is wrong with them, who are willing to be broken and remoulded until they fit strategically in some needy part of the Gap, as God chooses.

God is looking for the change I saw illustrated in India as I watched seven workmen rebuilding part of a collapsed stone wall, about fifty feet down the road. The wall had a hole in it that ran from top to bottom and about six feet wide. Their supply of stone to fill the hole came from some nearby boulders. First, they dynamited the boulders to break them down into chunks. Then they chiselled each chunk to form a stone that would fit perfectly in the next layer of the hole. Slowly the break was closed as one stone after another was fashioned and laid in its exact place.

Like a foundation stone Christ has been set in the Gap. No one else could ever be that rock. But God is looking now for “living stones” to be built on top of Him. He is preparing stones that He has broken and remoulded to close the Gap like a “royal priesthood” that “declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). God has a place for disciples like us who will allow our plans, gifts and abilities, schooling and training, our most intimate relationships, and even our hopes for future Christian service to be broken and remoulded so that our lives can count most strategically for the reaching of earth’s unreached billions.

To stand in the Gap means to place no limits on how fully God may use you, or for whose sake. It means that, as God directs you, you’re willing to take on any role, any time, any place, by any means, with anyone, and at any cost that will help close the Gap, even at its widest end. After all, that’s precisely what it meant for Jesus to stand in the Gap.

So, who will *stand* in the Gap? And, *where* will they stand?

There’s nothing ho-hum in all of this! It truly is an adventure. To stand in the Gap means to discover all that we are meant to be in Jesus in this moment of history—to discover the cause for which God has placed us at this hour in His world and then called us to a decisive devotion to the reign of His Son.



**Update Note:** To explore how my thinking has expanded the past thirty years – in terms of how I see Christ, His global cause, the hope He sets before the nations, what it means to be a World Christian in today’s world, how to mobilize a renewed missions movement – be sure to look at my most recent book (by visiting [www.ProclaimHope.com](http://www.ProclaimHope.com)): **CHRIST IS ALL! A Joyful Manifesto On The Supremacy of God’s Son** (New Providence Publishers).