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THE DIVINE QUEST

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"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."

Consider what the Word declares of the conditions existing at the time and among the people with which these words are related. The charge God lays against them, through the prophet Ezekiel, reveals that they were guilty of extreme wickedness. "Thou has despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my Sabbath." The precepts of God had been rejected, and, as a consequence, there was widespread and reckless indulgence in sin. Domestic relationships, business transactions, and national affairs, were alike suffering from the contaminating influence of the unchecked operations of evil forces. The entire land, the whole life-system of the nation, was sinking in moral corruption and decay.

This unhappy state of affairs was further aggravated by the unfaithfulness of the priest and prophet. The eyes that were supposed to recognize these dangerous developments were closed. The ears that were intended to hear the warnings of the Almighty against whom men were sinning, were stopped. The voices that were designed to cry aloud and spare not, to sound the trumpet of warning showing the people their transgressions and sins, were silenced. The priest and the prophet, the ordained messengers of God, were guilty, not only of failing to warn the people by drawing a line between the holy and the profane, the clean and the unclean, but were joining in a conspiracy to plunder the people to their own selfish gain. Furthermore, they daubed them with the untempered mortar of soft and soothing words saying, "Peace, all is well" claiming that the inspired message of God was one of good-will. Under these deplorable conditions, sin flourished, and Satan ruled with a free hand. Following their depraved inclinations, lulled into a sense of false security by the soothing messages of an unfaithful priesthood, men rushed violently down the steep slopes of moral degeneration.

While appearances seemed to agree with the declarations of the prophets, and all seemed well, the Divine displeasure increased daily. Infinite mercy, capable of amazing and almost unlimited strain, was near exhaustion. He who is angry with the wicked ever yday, and maintains an unchanging attitude of intolerance toward sin of every kind and degree, foresaw the necessity of judgment, the pouring out of His indignation, the recompensing of their wicked pursuits by the burning of His consuming wrath. Such judgment appeared inevitable. The course which God is forced to take when men refuse every other mode of effort and every other method of approach, that course which results in man's suffering the dreadful consequences of his wilful and wicked ways,

seems now the only way to bring the nation to repentance.

But wait—there is one final hope! There is yet one possible alternative! And, though the people fully merit the suffering of judgment, behold how Divine love seeks to spare them from that painful scourge! See with what careful diligence and earnest desire He endeavours to quench the fires of His indignation. It is not His good pleasure that men should suffer, for "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." And so the compassionate God grasps at this last hope, and looks for a man to make up the hedge and stand in the gap for the land, that He might not destroy it. If a man of suitable character could be found, one who, qualified for the mediatorial ministry, would surrender himself to this vicarious effort, judgment could be averted. A man could save a nation! An individual could become the redeemer of the multitudes! And so, with judgment sustained, and with the hope that this undesirable and fearful judgment-course might be abandoned, the Divine quest began. Into every town and city, into every home and every heart, He hopefully, patiently enters and pursues His search. Through the length and breadth of the land He travelled, to every inhabitant He makes his mission known, and seeks a favourable response. But sadly He returns, and heavy with the disappointment of His fruitless quest He records to the shame of that hapless people, "I sought for a man . . . to make up the hedge, and stand in the gap . . . for the land, that I might not destroy it, but, I found none." And He "wondered (was amazed) that there was none to help." And what the consequence of this unsuccessful search? There could be but one—judgment. "Therefore," it is written, "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."

Have we not in our world, in our own land, conditions that are all too nearly a parallel to those which existed in Ezekiel's time? What does a careful and candid examination of things reveal?

Sin has broken forth with violent and destructive fury. It sweeps from sea to sea, engulfing homes, communities, nations, and whirls them away to disaster and ruin. Drunkenness, sedition, murder, Sabbath desecration, greed, and moral laxity are prevalent. People are rushing rapidly and recklessly into the ways that are forbidden, and the "broad road" is jammed with a gay and godless multitude who think only of pleasures sensual and pursuits sinful. Hell hath enlarged herself to make room for the ever-increasing multitudes that are so hastily moving toward its dark confines. The call of the Gospel, the kind providences of God, and the grim tragedy of pestilence and war have failed to bring a halt. Rather, the momentum of selfish and sinful living seems to have reached a new high in

speed. The home has been blighted, the community infected, and the nation has become morally degenerate. The dance hall, liquor store, and movie show are doing a record business, while the house of God and the habitations of the righteous are neglected and forsaken. Moreover, the voice of warning is stilled, and the trump of the watchman gives a most uncertain sound. While men follow the inclinations of their depraved natures, while they yield themselves more fully to the domination of Satan, priests and preachers talk of their good (?) qualities, their wonderful strides of progress, and the improved conditions under which we live. Those who should be fully aroused to an awful sense of danger, are soothed and quieted by the soft words, and pleasant messages that avoid any mention of their sins, and magnify beyond all true proportions what may deserve some approval. The consequence of these conditions? JUDGMENT IS UPON US! The scourge is lifted, and is ready to fall. While outward appearances may seem to verify somewhat the false doctrines of those who bring a message of peace, Divine justice is moving to mete out the reward that is due the nation that persists in its sin. The vials are filled with the wrath of God, and His fiery indignation is ready to break forth upon a disobedient people. There is only one hope for us in these times. That hope lies in the possibility of the Almighty being able to find some who, realizing the seriousness of the situation, will lay themselves out before Him in earnest and sacrificial intercession. While judgment is once more temporarily sustained, God searches the earth and the church for men to make up the hedge and stand in the gap. Never in the history of the world and the church has there been a more urgent need for Spirit-filled, consecrated saints who, forsaking every desire and inclination to the soft and pleasant ways of the nominal Christian, will "pour out their souls unto death" in behalf of their fellow men.

"The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth." They are upon us. He carries His quest to our denomination, to our churches. He is at your heart and mine. With the death knell ready to toll, and awful judgment just ready to break upon us, He searches for intercessors. This is our only hope, and His only hope. What this world needs most of all today is not a democracy armed with death-dealing might, but a church armed with life-giving power. The greatest threat to civilization today is not in the rise of governmental tyranny, but in the threatening increase of moral and spiritual decline. THE ONLY SALVATION FOR THIS GENERATION IS A MIGHTY, HOLY GHOST REVIVAL. And this can only be realized as God is successful in His quest for intercessors. Does He find you ready and willing for this great ministry? Here am I Lord, use me!

"Repent ye."—Matt. 4:17.