

Ecclesiastes

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Preacher: Dawson, Herbert (1890-1969)

[0 : 01] As the Lord shall be pleased to help me, I shall call your attention to a subject you will find in the book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 10, and the second half of the eighth verse.

And whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him. Chapter 10, the book of Ecclesiastes, and the second half of the eighth verse.

I have no doubt whatever that Solomon, who was inspired of God to record the book of Ecclesiastes, could have told us a great deal about this truth, which I have read to you to be the subject to give you an address on.

For when he pursued after vanity and worldliness, seeking to find out all things beneath the sun, he broke through many hedges.

And he found to the truth of it, what is recorded here, Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.

[1 : 46] And now, I want to look at the subject from one or two viewpoints, as grace is given. And you will understand that the language is metaphorical.

You all know what hedges are. You all know there needs be four hedges. The husband man must needs have hedges round about his farmland, that his stock and all that he possesses may be protected.

And now, there is a deep that coucheth beneath here, and God, in the word of his grace, has set up hedges.

Hedges to do with our everyday lives, and which concern us in our journey on through life.

And it is wisdom to seek the help of God, to keep inside the hedges, that he has in his kindness toward us, set up to help us to live our lives, arrived.

[3 : 14] And so, that is the first viewpoint of the subject. I would look at some hedges, which the word of God sets forth.

And the first hedge that was broken, oh, the breaking of it, let in a calamity untold.

You often hear the pastor and other preachers speaking about the Adam fall. And now, strictly speaking, the Adam fall, was indeed the breaking of a hedge God had set up.

The word of God tells us, dear young people, you are all aware of this, are you? You should be. And yet, you can hear about it, and not be aware of it, to get some good, in attending to what is set forth in the sacred pages.

And now, when God, in his infinite wisdom, planted a garden in Eden, and placed Adam and Eve therein, they were in the midst of all conceivable happiness, that such creatures, as they were, coming in perfection from the hand of the creator, could enjoy.

[4 : 50] And yet, God, in placing them in the garden, tells them there is a hedge, which they must keep inside. Otherwise, there will be a very solemn recompense for disobedience.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden, thou mayest freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.

For in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. And now, here is how the hedge was broken.

Follow this along. I do not want it to be too sermon-like. Now, the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made.

And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree, which is in the midst of the garden, God hath set a hedge about it.

[6 : 08] God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die?

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, little g gods, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and the tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

And now what was the outcome? God came down into the garden, to deal with what had taken place.

And as I sometimes tell you in preaching, sermons from Union Chapel Pulpit, there is this tremendous declaration.

[7 : 20] Then the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken. Sin entered into the world, death by sin.

So death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. The Adam Paul had taken place, the hedge was broken. Of a truth, a serpent had bitten Adam and Eve.

And here is the outcome. So he drove out the man, and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden, cherubims and a flaming sword, which turned every way to guard the way to keep the tree of life.

I have just read that as a kind of approaching to the subject, as to when the first hedge was set up, and the breaking of it. And you and I are suffering from that hedge being broken, and all mankind from Adam's day to this, and until time shall be no more, will suffer from the effects of it.

Because for every one of us, a grave will have to be digged. And it will not be just the grave digger who digs it.

[8 : 45] It will be sin which digs it. You could put that on every death certificate and tell the truth.

Cause of death, the one who died was a sinner. Go back to what I said. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

And it says, the serpent beguiled Eve. And that is what you dear young people, old people too, but as this is the young people's address, I address you personally.

You dear young people have got to watch against being beguiled by the serpent. And you know the serpent sets forth the devil, for that is who it really was, who beguiled Eve.

And you need to be on the watch in your everyday life, for he is as wily as a serpent. And it is a great word to consider, whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.

[10 : 07] In other words, be sure your sin will find you out. And now, I want to show you some hedges, which God has set up in his infinite kindness to help poor sinners to live aright.

And it will be well if you find in your hearts some concern to live inside the hedges that God has set forth in the word of his grace, some of which I shall seek to refer to and say a little about.

Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him. And you might remember that all these hedges I refer to will begin with the letter C. Therefore, you can memorize them and seek the help of God to reduce to practice what it is to keep inside such hedges.

And now, the first hedge is the hedge of conscience. Conscience is very difficult to define in words.

But everyone under Union Chapel roof, whatever age, has got a conscience. you dear young people possess one, each of you.

[11 : 37] And how can I bring it home to you? It is a power that God has lodged in us that will always give us a warning when we are going to break through a hedge.

When we are about to do something which is not right to do, you remember, dear young people, you are now teenagers, many of you, and more than that.

But you go back to your childhood life and remember, even when you were a child, you were just going to take, shall we say, a lump of sugar from the basin or to look into mother's cupboard and take something that attracted you.

There you did it, something inside you said you were doing wrong and you know that you were doing wrong because you looked around to see if anybody else was looking on to see what you were about to do.

And now that principle within us that makes you feel like that is our conscience. And one great preacher said, although I should be unable to help you dear young people to understand exactly what he was setting forth by it, he said conscience was God's vice-regent in our soul.

[13 : 09] What he really was setting forth was that conscience will always speak for God until it becomes what the word of God calls a seared conscience.

And you may say, how does a conscience become a seared conscience when the hedge is been broken so many times that there is no hedge left. And you have done wrong so often that you are immune to any warning given because you are determined to do wrong and just live as you were born so that you are deaf to every warning that is given.

And just to make this a little plainer go back again to when you were a child. And it was not so long ago with some of you. Do you remember that when your mother could have been your father, more often your mother, set up a hedge regarding your behavior, what does she say?

if you do this, now I have warned you, if you do this, I shall have to punish you. And that is all straightforward and just as it should be.

Be sure your sin will find you out. And it found you out many a time. And you got the consequences. you knew what punishment was because you had broken through a hedge regarding your behavior.

[14 : 56] Either in your disobedience in not doing what you were told to do, or behaving otherwise. Contrary to good counsel given as to your behavior.

And now there is this hedge of conscience. conscience. And remember, when you begin to break through a hedge, you break it a little at a time.

And this hedge of conscience, as you dear young people, have to fight the battles of life, you may break through that hedge here a little, there a little, until there is a mighty gap in it.

And you will turn your back on all that you have been told that is good and right to do. Good counsel in your home life, and good teaching in the Sabbath school, and an interest in the prayers of those that love you, you have set it aside, because you were breaking through the hedge of conscience, which God set up in you when you were born, and you were determined to live as worldlings do.

Whoso breaketh an hedge, the serpent shall bite him. What does that mean? He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.

[16 : 28] Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. It will be a wonderful mercy, it is what we do try to ask God to bestow upon you dear young people, some of you I hope possess it already, godly fear, to govern your conscience, keep it in working order, as an unctuous light to what is right and to bar to what is wrong, the hedge of conscience.

and as I pondered this subject a little, a strange illustration came to my mind.

I thought about a lad many, many years ago who used to be a Sunday school scholar at our course of truth at the Dicker.

and there he was for a while as a scholar and then he went out into the world he had heard about the hedge of conscience and he had memorized some good things which were told him, warnings it would be well to heed.

But he broke through the hedge of conscience and he went on into the world and built up a business and became a great financier and he published a magazine that was given an amazing circulation and then he found the word of God to be a reality who so breaketh an hedge a serpent should bite him.

[18 : 29] he was brought in guilty of defrauding tens of thousands of people of their LSD and he had made away with it and he had a spell in Maidstone jail as the outcome and he died a most miserable death died deep down in poverty's veil yet in his day he was a member of parliament and a great man in the publishing world and the financial world too.

All began through breaking through the hedge of conscience because on one occasion he actually published in the magazine that he sent around with its amazing circulation what he thought about little about Zorchapel the dicker and those who went there and he esteemed them for who they really are some of the excellence of the earth and he put that down in black and white and he refused to publish anything that was written or said against any of our people in our denominational life so you see he had a conscience but he broke through the hedge of conscience and his end alas who so breaketh an hedge a serpent shall bite him and now the next hedge is the hedge of commandments and now

God in his great wisdom when Israel went into the wilderness to journey to the promised land they had not gone very far before they came to mount sinai and there God promulgated his holy law under which Israel as a people were to live and in that law he gave many commandments but to help you understand what the preachers often talk about you often hear them referring to the law sometimes it seems to be taken for granted you all know just what the preacher means which is not really the truth about it when God promulgated his law it was threefold in its nature follow this along one feature of the law was a civil law and that was only to abide for a time and then it was not needed then there was another feature of the law and that was called the ceremonial law which was the Mosaic ritual to offer sacrifices and such like things and that law ceremonial law was to abide till

Jesus came and when Jesus was born at Bethlehem then the ceremonial law was abrogated because the word of God says Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone which believe it in him was fulfilled all the law ceremonial law but this is what I want to emphasize the other section of the law is called the moral law and that is for all time remember that so that it is no use for you to argue if you feel like it that the ten commandments were just for Israel as a nation to abide by and you as Gentiles or whatever your nationality might be can do as you like you cannot do as you like because there is the moral law which God looks to you as his creatures to keep before him as your creator remember that the law was proclaimed at Sinai but it was not formulated there think of what a tremendous scene that must have been when God promulgated and proclaimed his law from Mount

Sinai the word of God tells us something about it which will just refresh your memory if I read it to you and it came to pass on the third day in the morning that there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud so that all the people that was in the camp trembled remember two millions are trembled everyone all the people that was in the camp trembled and Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God and they stood at the nether part of the mount and Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace and the whole mount quaked greatly and when the voice of the trumpet sounded long and wax louder and louder

[24 : 52] Moses spake and God answered him by a voice and God spake all these words and then followed what are called the ten commandments and they remain the moral law our magistrates and judges when people have to be tried for breaking for breaking the law of our land pronounce a fitting punishment for whatever the crime is and the law of our land is based on the moral law that God spake at Mount Sinai otherwise there could be no authority and civilization could not exist it would just collapse altogether God has given these commandments to be a hedge and if you say

I do not mean you under Union Chapel roof I am just arguing this if you say as thousands do on the Sabbath day there is no need to remember thou shalt remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy but you can make a holiday of it do that and live like that and you will know whoso breaketh the hedge a serpent shall bite him you will be lost at the end of life's journey and there is one more consideration if it could be that people could suspend one of the Ten Commandments then there is no argument that you should keep the other nine you dear young people might think of that God in the scriptures to reveal his will has condescended what he said there he'll fulfill though man shall be offended and you might like to remember that

Sinai where the law was promulgated as I said is a plain that is twice the size of our largest county of Yorkshire and it was easily capable of accommodating two million people you can go and see it if you would like to and got the means to do the journey where it was where God descended on the mount and spake all these words hey but you do not like commandments do you oh you know if your mother or father gives you some counsel and it becomes in the nature of a command what do you do do you shrug your shoulders and turn your back and kick over the traces and go out and think I should do as I lie who so breaketh and hedge the hedge of commandments whether it be in home life or business life any commandments the word of God records who so breaketh and hedge a serpent shall bite him yes you see dear young people people nowadays some of them so called religious people some of them supposed to be teachers but the devil servants not God servants they are designated modernists and they undermine the word of

God and in your grammar school life your college life there are those who should be scripture teachers who instead of teaching what saith the scriptures minimize its usefulness and seek to undermine its divine authority this is very very solemn the fact remains he that rejecteth me and my words hath one that judgeth him the word that I have spoken it should judge him at the last day the words that I have spoken are recorded in the holy bible book divine and very solemn if you dear young people should think that you can break through the hedge of these commandments and set them aside as nowadays of no special value to attend to

I say again if you should behave like that and you know as well as I do the hedges nowadays to do with a moral law are by no means kept as they should be alas how often they are broken through by many who know what the word of God declares but they reject its teaching a very solemn consideration who so breaketh a hedge a serpent shall bite him the next hedge I will touch on is the hedge of conduct and the word of God gives us quite a few commandments about what our conduct should be and what you do proclaims who you really are when you are where you are under

[31 : 01] Union Chapel rule things look well the picture is present to look on to see you where we are glad to see you and welcome you in the attitude of worship it but when you are not under Union Chapel rule and live in your everyday lives and your father's eye or mother's eye is not upon you how about your conduct the word of God says he that walketh with wise men shall be wise but a companion of fools shall be destroyed you might think of this hedge of conduct and if sinners entice thee consent thou not another hedge is the hedge of conversation and what drops from your lips will tell other people what you really are like inside the fool is known by a multitude of words how forcible are right words you will read in the book of Job

I think I have told you on one or two occasions lest any of you have forgotten it I will tell you once more to recommend you in regard to your conversation think of three sieves concerning what you are going to say is it kind to say it is it true if it is not true you must not say it for it is lies is it necessary sometimes silence is golden and it says a fool uttereth all his mind and you know sometimes people say

I'm not fitting any caps on here I always speak my mind then you would better think about that scripture a fool uttereth all his mind and way matters up before God lest in doing so you are breaking through the hedge of conversation let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight O Lord my strength and my redeemer the saviour said by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned I remember when I was young in the things of God and one word in the Proverbs looked at me the lip of truth should be established forever the works of man inherit as is just their makers frailty and return to dust but truth forever stands secure and thinking about kindness kind words kind actions and that means to keep inside the hedge of your conduct and your conversation

I was thinking about some lines in cowper that we used to learn when I was at school I would not place upon my list our friends though graced with polished manners and fine sense yet wanting sympathy the man who needlessly sets foot upon a worm and that is how to behave regarding this hedge the next hedge I would just refer to is the hedge of company a man is known by the company he keeps and you know that does not mean only the people among whom you mix I heard a word the other day which set me thinking and it was about some particular person whom

I knew no one to do with Union Chapel and I heard this word said so and so is not a good mix sir and I pondered that in my heart and I just wondered about the impossibility for anyone who was a sinner born again to be considered a good mixer because let Moses tell you choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season you cannot mix with the world so that the world will regard you with any friendly eye if you were helped to keep inside these hedges you will find that as a rule the world at large is on the other side and you cannot break through to be where they are and mix among such people as the world at large really are as people wherever you may meet them you have got to learn if you are a sinner born again to be to this world as dead and alive to that which is to come and the word of

[37 : 41] God sets up this hedge come ye out from among them and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing who so breaketh a hedge a serpent shall bite him and now there is another hedge I just touch on and that is the hedge of contentment as you go about the world and look on the world land and you meet them in the streets and elsewhere you see that the great majority have discontent on their countenances it is discernible restlessness discontent and yet England nowadays is supposed to be a welfare state and there is a great deal of what is termed material prosperity so that the great majority of people are much better off in one viewpoint of it and that is financially than ever our fathers or forefathers were yet there is this tremendous discontent and dissatisfaction and like the horse leeches two daughters ever asking give give and never contented with what is given and now you dear young people you think of your home life and how you have known it since you were born and could weigh matters up from babyhood onwards what comforts have surrounded you and how solemn it is if at any time you break through the hedge of contentment and grumble and complain and wish you could have this and that which cannot be provided it may be at the time you desire it

I have noted down three things here and it is to do with the Save the Children Fund and it says one half of the world's population cannot read or write you can read you can write you have been to school some of you have had higher education and you have been highly favoured with your privileges and God grants you the mercy to make a right use of them and bless you later on when you go out into the world to fight in life's battlefield and that you might fight the good fight of faith and lay hold upon eternal life but you think and that means hundreds of millions in the world who cannot read or write one half of the world's population go to bed every night hungry do you you have never done such a thing surely from childhood's days onward when you have come home and it has been meal time the table has been spread the hand of God has been opened the goodness of God has passed before your eyes do you ever say thank you to God for all that he provides like that and later on when the collection is for the

Save the Children Fund you might remember how many millions of hungry children there must be and just forego something for once make a bigger sacrifice than you intended to do let one of your pleasures go and let the cost of it go to feed some hungry children who are in the world as you are and journeying to eternity suffer that word of exhortation two thirds of the world's population have not yet heard the gospel and now think of the privilege that you have had to listen to the gospel to be in Sunday school have lessons there be under the gospel ever since you were born the pastor said thank you to God for many of you when you were born and here you are still under the gospel say thank you to

God remember what you used to sing I thank the goodness and the grace that on my birth have smiled and made me in these latter days a favored English child whatever England is as a nation and she is guilty and to a great degree godless but you have got these privileges to prize and use remember that who so breaketh an hedge a serpent shall bite him and now at this point I will remind you of that old time prayer which I want you dear young people to lay to heart you use it in your school life some of you God be in my head and in my understanding God be in my eyes and in my looking God be in my mouth and in my speaking

God be in my heart and in my thinking God be at mine end and in my departing and now that prayer is about 450 years old but whoever felt it well enough in his or her heart for the first time had the grace of supplication given to them it is a wonderfully inclusive prayer and now the next thing is as I come toward the amen how many young people who desire to do so keep inside the hedges God has set up and now the word of God says if any lack wisdom let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and afraid it not and it shall be given him this is the way whereby you will be helped to keep inside these hedges that God has set up and many more

[44 : 25] I dare not take up time to name and remember what is recorded in Jeremiah thus saith the Lord stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths wherein is the good way and walk therein and they said we will not walk therein are you going to say so we will not walk therein we will break through the hedges which have kept us to a great degree all our youth up but now we are young men young women and going forth into life we should do as we like if you do you will find the word of God is a solemn reality who so breaketh an hedge a serpent shall bite him but if when you do it if you should be allowed to do it and then you begin to bethink yourself and say what a fool have

I been made the mariner's blind part I play who sees yet strikes the shelf and now if you should begin to bethink yourself because you are not serpent bitten but sin bitten and your conscience is loaded with guiltiness before God what did I read to you as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life and now you all know that wonderful record that when Israel as a people in the wilderness were badly behaved God dealt with them and in the wilderness there were fiery serpents and hundreds thousands it may be were serpent bitten and soon were dying and then

Moses was commanded by God to make a brazen serpent and set it up on a pole in the center of Israel's camp and the command was given when any man any woman any youth any man if he was serpent bitten he was to look to the serpent of brass and in looking he would live it seems very very simple it is just what is the gospel of the grace of God the word of God says look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is none else and this is a wonderful remedy for poor sinners who feel to be sin bitten and you dear young people do remember the beautiful simplicity of it when any man looked on the serpent then he lived and when a poor sinner is enabled to look to

Jesus then he finds a blessing coming down into his soul he realizes that he heals all them that have need of healing and do seek it yes but there is one point I want to make before I come to the amen and that is that I thought on it many times in my ministerial life when those poor people in the wilderness were bitten by the serpents that they could not look to the serpent of brass only as God wrought a miracle for them to do so because the immediate effect of the serpent bite was blindness insensibility therefore they could not look on their own initiative but only as

God worked in them to will and to do do remember that and you will never be found with a concern to look to Jesus until that miracle happens to you that I read about ye must be born again and when you are then you will have a solemn concern to look to Jesus and find in him all your salvation and all your desire and ere I conclude I will read you two or three verses in our God's Bish hymnal from that wonderful hymn that sometimes is sung under Union Chapel roof that Joseph Hart wrote about the brazen serpent and he says vain was bandage oil or plaster rankling venom killed the faster till the serpent

[49 : 53] Moses took reared it high that all might view it bid the bit and look unto it life attended every look mark that word bid the bit and look unto it Jesus thus for sinners smitten wounded bruised serpent bitten to his cross directs their faith why should I then poison cherish why despair of cure and perish look my soul though stung to death thine's alas a lost condition works cannot work be remission nor thy goodness do thee good death within thee all about thee but the remedies without thee see it in the saviour's blood do then ponder in your hearts some of the things I have tried to set before you and remember the foundation word of the subject and do so break it and hedge a serpent shall bite him and especially remember the remedy for you to live your life if you have it in your hearts to do it inside the hedges that

God has set up in the sacred pages of his word I told you it is godly fear that will help you to live such a life and oh cry we to heaven with one loud accord that to us be given the fear of the Lord the Lord bless you dear young people for time and for eternity amen amen Thank you.