

The Boar and the Wild Beast

By Rev. Neil Cameron 1854 - 1932

"Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it." - Psalm lxxx. 12, 13.

HIS Psalm is one of the many prayers which the Holy Ghost breathed into the songs of Zion. No other part of the Holy Scriptures contains more of the experiences of the Lord's people than the Psalms of David. They are full of the joys and sorrows of the true Church of God. This caused the people of the Most High to value them exceedingly ever since the Lord gave them to His Church. They valued them for several reasons: (1) because they could not find any words so suitable to express their inward experiences; (2) because the experiences contained in them were those of the "holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost": and (3) because the person, mediation, surety-ship, atonement, and offices of Christ were all clearly held forth in them. The work of the Holy Spirit in bringing sinners to repentance, faith, and salvation, through Christ, makes up no small part of this book. The infinite hatred of God revealed against sin, and His infinite love to holiness and purity, stand boldly forth in it.

Since the days of Abel, the Church has been poor and afflicted. This world has been from that time hating "the poor in spirit," and treating them sometimes with derision, at other times with cruelty. Whenever the Church took sides with the world, the Lord hid His face from her, and immediately troubles followed. At such times the unconverted flowed into her communion, and trampled upon her most precious jewels, and left nothing but ruins within her walls. The true Church deplores this in many parts of Scripture, and very particularly in this Psalm. We find here the voice of the living in Zion raised to the ear of the Shepherd of Israel in their extremity; that He would incline His ear to their cry; that He would shine forth from off the mercy seat; and that He would stir up His strength to deliver them from their backsliding and breach of covenant, as well as from men who, like wild beasts, destroyed all that was dear to them. This leads us to consider the words of our text. In these words, there are four things to be considered: -

- I. - The hedges of the Church.

- II. - The question, Why hast thou broken down her hedges?
- III. - How may it be known when the hedges are broken down?
- IV. - How are the people of God exercised at such times, and under such circumstances?

I. The hedges of the Church of God. In the book of Job, Satan complains that the Lord built a hedge about Job. "Hast Thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" This shows that the Lord's hand in His providence protected Job and all his possessions so that Satan could not touch him. As soon as the Lord withdrew His protecting hand, wicked men, fire, and storms devoured Job's substance and family in one day; clearly showing that Satan got access to the belongings of the "perfect and upright man." The Enemy is never content with having destroyed the substance of the people of God, he desires to lay violent hands upon their persons. Were God to allow it, this is the aim of Satan, and as he needs to work through men, seeing he is a spirit, he becomes a false spirit in the mouth of the prophets of Ahab, and thereby harasses the Church of God. Job had another hedge around his person which the Lord removed also, so that Satan was enabled to harass him in both body and mind; but the hedge which was around his life could not be taken away. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." The men who carried away Job's herds, etc., and slew his servants might be wondering why they spared him so long, but the secret of the case was that God protected His servant; and though men could not see this protection, the Adversary saw it. Satan is termed in Scripture the god of this world, and bears a most bitter hatred to those who do not worship him. There is a warfare between him and the God of Zion who delivers every soul in His kingdom out of the captivity of Satan, and encloses them in His own hand. Angels of light are a protecting hedge about the Church of God. Gehazi rose one morning and saw the hosts of the king of Syria upon Mount Carmel, so that he was quite overcome with fear; but when the prophet Elisha prayed, his eyes were opened, and he saw "the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."

The Church, in this Psalm, is compared to a vine brought out of Egypt, planted, room made for it, the heathen cast out, taking deep root, and filling the land. The hedge protected the vine. This similitude is used by our Lord to represent the

Church under the New Testament. The vine is what needs protection; the hedge is what protects. What is it that needs protection in the Church of Christ? "The ministry of reconciliation-to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." The Word of God and the ministry of that Word are always attacked by all the powers of the kingdom of darkness. Therefore, the true ministers of Christ, unto whom He has committed this trust, have been like hedges around the truth, protecting the poor sheep of Christ, and keeping outside the foxes and wolves. False prophets had the woe of God pronounced against them, because they did not fill the gaps in the hedges. "Thus, saith the Lord God, Woe unto the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord." At the siege of Saguntum in Spain, when the Carthaginians broke down the walls of the town, the men of Saguntum, seeing that everything was to be lost, made a wall of their own bodies to protect their wives, children, homes, and all that was dear to them, and died in the act of defence. The faithful witnesses of Christ, when the armies made gaps upon the walls of Zion, stood in the gaps, and died at stakes, in prisons, and upon the scaffold, protecting the truth of God, and the doctrines and principles contained therein. Why did men and women die in Scotland in defence of the crown rights of Christ! Because they were hedges round about the vine in this land, so that only by the blood of their testimony could they deliver their souls. They set us a noble example, inasmuch as they preferred to die, rather than be like the children of Ephraim, turning back in the day of battle. The enemies of Christ in every generation are endeavouring to set up their own ensigns as signs in the Church, and who can find fault with us for keeping the Word, which He has commanded for thousands of generations, as we have received it from them who spilt their heart's blood bringing it to our hands. Better bear the reproaches of men than one frown from the lovely face of Christ on our deathbeds. I would not, for the favours of all the men of the world, venture to face the deathbeds of some men in this land. The old landmarks of the widow and the fatherless have been removed in Scotland, and may we not expect the curse if we connive at such sacrilege. Are we, "encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," going to allow men to lay weights and burdens upon the consciences of the poor of Christ, which neither we nor our fathers were able

to bear? "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them." Let us go round about Zion, mark well her bulwarks, count her towers and palaces, that we may tell it to the generations following.

II. Why hast Thou broken down her hedges? We have endeavoured, however feebly, to point out the hedges of the Church. Let us now consider some of the reasons why the hedges are broken down. When the farmer takes the crop from off the fields, and secures it in his barn, he allows the cattle full liberty through all his parks. Gates are thrown open, and you meet with the same beasts outside and inside the hedges. During the winter months the hedges are broken down, and unless the farmer decides to sow seed in his fields, he never thinks of making up - the fences. The Church has opened her gates to ungodly men; and the same men are met with in the Church, and the vanities of this world. Her ministers, elders, and members are today in the pulpit and in the pew, and tomorrow in the theatre or the ball-room. Inside the Church are Sabbath breakers, atheists, scoffers, such as glory in denying the inspiration of the Bible, the Bible history of creation, the fall of man, the atonement of Christ, the necessity of the regenerating work of the Holy Ghost, the sovereignty of the love of God to sinners, and the need of the Word of God, or the means of grace, for the conversion of sinners. This black list only touches the outskirts of our departures from the truth as it is in Jesus. She lavishes all her honours upon the man who outstrips his fellows in abandoning her former mode of worship. Hymns, organs, and anti-Christian forms are sung, played, and practised within her gates. She has been pleaded with for over thirty years to turn to her first love, but she refused to listen. She, at last, formed a creed for herself to bind all her departures upon all within her communion. The Lord cannot countenance deceit and lies. These are the things He abhors. Therefore, He took away the hedges. He brought home to their everlasting rest the few who were dean-handed, and who sought the praise that comes from God alone. Many are not even yet believing that their strength has departed, and that they are blind-folded grinding corn for the Philistines of this land. The first hedge, which is the Lord's own presence and protection, has been removed; for He says, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." What is the value of any human protection when He departs? She may glory in human learning, in much of this world's riches, and in receiving hortours

and approbation from the profane people of the land; but her protection and usefulness are gone; for the Lord says, "Woe to them when I depart from them!" When she had her eye single for the glory of Christ, she prospered, and was a light in the land; but when she set up her own glory as her highest aim, her sun went down at noon.

Allow me to notice briefly a suggestion made above, "that the farmer never thinks of repairing his fences until he has made up his mind to sow seed in the field." Has the Lord begun to build the hedge anew in this land? It may be a day of small things, but don't despise it. Settle for ever in your mind that Christ is able to build His own Church; and that He is more than a match for all the builders that refuse the corner-stone. It is true of the Lord's people that "their strength is God alone." Are the old foundations of truth brought to the light in our midst once more? It cannot be gain-said and you rejoice in it with all your soul. Then let me suggest that Christ is not willing to leave this land, nor to deliver the soul of His turtle unto the company of the wicked. O may this land be called "Thy land, O Immanuel." The kingdom is His by right according to the eternal decree of the Father, and may He arise to plead His own cause. The severest chastisement is better for our beloved land than that Christ Jesus should remove His candlestick from our midst. Again, He has not set up this hedge in our midst but for the purpose of sowing seed in the ground. We think that this should be a cause of joy and thankfulness that there are indications that God intends to build the cities of Judah, and save Zion.

III. How may it be known when the hedges are broken down? Three things are noticed in the context to guide us in our inquiry. (1) "All they which pass by the way do pluck her." Those who, in former times, used to pass on their way to eternity without interfering with her privileges are now busily plucking her leaves. The leaves of outward profession which men had, in the days of Zion's prosperity, are plucked off and men live scandalous lives who enjoy her highest privileges. Our godly forefathers would not have put among the dogs of their flocks the most of her professors. Discipline is clean gone, because there are no hedges to keep clear the line of demarcation between the Church and the world. The leaves of the Bible are being plucked off, so that her members declare that there are errors and immoralities contained in that sacred book. Doubts are cast upon the authenticity of the most of the books of the Bible, and that not by atheists

outside, but inside, the Church. One plucks away the leaves of the books of Moses, and another lays his filthy hands upon the book of Job and calls it a fable, whilst a host of others cast out the book of Psalms, and introduce hymns of human composition into its place. The Song of Solomon is a secular song in their opinion, and therefore no part of the Word of God. Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel share the same fate at their profane hands. The New Testament does not get off a whit better. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, they say, reveal many discrepancies, and are only imperfect records, from the memories of the writers, of the sayings and doings of Christ. The Gospel of John is entirely discredited. But let this suffice, though much more could be said. Does the above not clearly prove that the hedges are broken down? If anyone declares that he doubts some part or other of the Word of God, he is elevated to the highest position in the Church, so that he may have a better advantage to pluck as many leaves from off Christ's vine as he may choose. Christ may say to the churches of this land, "These are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

The second sign contained in our context is: "The boar out of the wood doth waste it." We are not strangers to the habits of this unclean beast. He sets his snout to the roots, and razes the vine from its very foundations. Are there not many at this work in our day? The very foundations must be removed. The Scriptural connection between the Church and the State will be taken away if the Lord permits the boars of this land to see their desire upon Zion. Nations, as nations, are bound to confess Christ, His truth, and His Church, "For the nation and the kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." They have raised a loud cry for religious equality, so that idolatry might be set up, and true godliness banished forever from our coasts. Do they imagine that there is to be concord between Christ and Belial, and between light and darkness? Surely, in the words of the godly Samuel Rutherford, the bottom has fallen out of the reason and consciences of many in this land. Christ will have all or nothing. But we are like the Gadarenes, we prefer our swine rather than Christ. Therefore, we are beseeching Him to leave our coasts. If the doctrine of Establishment is in the Word of God, though only one man stood for it in Scotland, he alone would be right, and the great multitude wrong. The strength of the Church is not in the number of her followers, but in Christ, her living Head. "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I

should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto Him; but their time should have endured forever."

The foundations of the Church itself, as a jurisdiction independent of any connection with states or nations, are being uprooted also. She is built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. The Word of God through the apostles and prophets, and Christ the elect, tried, and precious stone laid in Zion for a foundation, are, combined, the foundation of the Church. Whenever a church or an individual takes any other foundation, that church or that individual is no longer a part of the Church of Christ. Are churches in this land built upon the doctrines and principles of the Old and New Testaments? No. They have drawn up creeds for themselves which have no foundation in the truth, and therefore such creeds are mere spider-webs and tissues of falsehoods. Arminianism, Pelagianism, and Popish doctrines and tenets are decreed as foundations, and the true foundations have been uprooted. The Church is the pillar and ground of truth, and when the Church allows lies to enter into the ground, and sets them up upon the pillar where the banner of truth should be unfurled, Calvin says, "It is as if a knife were thrust into the entrails of a man - he must die." What has the Declaratory Act done in the Free Church of Scotland? It has set up lies where the truth ought to be held forth before sinners, and therefore that Church has left the foundation. All this came to pass as a result of the work done by the boars of this land.

The third mark that the hedges are broken down is: "And the wild beast of the field doth devour it." I understand by the wild beast, unconverted man. "Ephraim is like the wild asses' colt." Who would trust his vine to wild beasts? It would be as reasonable to leave a vineyard open to wild beasts as to leave this vine the Lord brought out of Egypt in the hands of carnally-minded men. This vine covered the hills and valleys, and stretched forth her branches to the sea. Was there not a time when this was true of the Church in our beloved land? Why has it been devastated, and left to the mercy of wild beasts? Because we have had the day of our merciful visitation; but our love to the Egyptians, men great in flesh, caused Christ to withdraw and to leave us in darkness. "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone." When the gospel came to this land it found us gloating in superstition, heathen sports and lawlessness. Do you not perceive that we are going back again

to the same works of darkness? Don't you see men trusting in an arm of flesh, and not in the arm of Jehovah, God of Israel? Is that not the height of superstition? Don't you see the heathen sports, of which you have been reading in the history of this land, and which were abolished by the light of the gospel, revived, and members of the Church taking a leading part in them? Does not this prove that the sun of the gospel is going down upon this infatuated people? Do you not see the members of the Church foremost in Sabbath desecration, in relishing everything carnal, and in abhorring and loathing everything spiritual? Does that not prove that the wild beasts of the field have come forth from their dens ; and that the men of God have gone home, from the fields of time, to enjoy their everlasting rest with Christ under the eternal light of His countenance? Crying peace, peace, at such times will not keep our garments clean of their blood; therefore, we offer these humble warnings. Let us, therefore, care nothing for scoffing; but let us walk circumspectly, redeeming the time because the days are evil. Let us not be ashamed of Christ nor of His Word in this sinful and adulterous generation; but let us, in dependence upon His grace, "hold fast the form of sound words." The Lord have mercy upon His own Church, pour the Spirit of promise upon her, and turn her captivity as streams of waters in the south.

IV. How are the people of God exercised at such times, and under such circumstances? The Psalmist, in the 102nd Psalm, declares that he ate ashes for bread, because the Lord was hiding His face from his soul. The Spirit of adoption rules in the children of God in this world, and He unites them in their desires and affections to Christ, to His cause, and people. When the Church is brought low, the true child of grace is fed with tears of sorrow. When the bondage of Zion is brought back, the mouth of the gracious is filled with laughter. Under iniquitous laws in this land, families were evicted and had to go to foreign lands to seek another home. Did not the children share the grief of their parents? When Christ cannot get where to lay His head in our midst, His children fast and mourn in those days. This feebly represents the feelings of every true child of God, when Christ and His bride-the Church-their mother- are cruelly dealt with; the foundations of their house razed to the ground, and no room left for them, in some places, but the open fields or the sea shore. At such times bread loses its taste, and becomes like ashes to the poor and needy in Zion. When the harps are hung upon the willow trees, and scoffers demanding mirth, and the singing of the

songs of Zion in idolatrous Babylon, grace says, How can we sing the Lord's song? Millions may bend their knees to every kind of music, and to idols of man's invention; but the children of the living God prefer the hottest furnace the earth can invent rather than deny Him who loved them, and redeemed them with His own blood. "Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and gavest them tears to drink in great measure." As water quenches the thirst of the body when it is dry, so tears relieve the burning heat of grief in the soul. This was why Jeremiah prayed, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" Tears would alleviate the burning agony of his soul for Zion, the joy of all the earth, brought to ruin by the wickedness of false prophets, and priests doing violence to the law. How few in number they are who shed tears for the state of the cause of Christ in Scotland! Woe unto us for the hardness of our hearts, and the dryness of our cheeks, when Christ is banished from the land, and immortal souls are perishing eternally with a lie in their right hand! False teachers will be of all men the most miserable at the day of judgment. Christ will refuse them; and those who were deceived by them will curse them for ever and ever "in that place where the fire is not quenched, and the worm dieth not." The Church of Christ in Scotland appeared "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Why has she become the laughing-stock of fools? "Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High." My dear fellow sinners, let us cleave to the cause of truth and let us not entertain any doubts regarding the path of duty, seeing we are thoroughly convinced in our consciences that we are standing in defence of eternal truth, and against all kinds of innovations and inventions of ungodly men. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee in the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the face of the earth." "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them ... I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land ... and five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight."

The last thing to be considered is: "Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours, and our enemies laugh among themselves." Do we desire strife? We appeal to the Searcher of hearts that, had they adhered to the creed and constitution of the reformed Church of Scotland, unity upon that basis would gladden our hearts, but

peace and unity at the great expense of losing truth and a clean conscience are much worse than any divisions. The man that cannot see any difference between truth and error has his conscience seared with a rod hot iron. Christ says, "I came not to send peace upon the earth, but a sword." Why a sword? Because since the fall there has been no peace between the world and the Church. The world, like Cain, think they can worship God according to their own notions and theories; the Church, like Abel, endeavour to worship Him according to His revealed will. The strife rages in the bosom of the world, and often breaks forth into open persecution. Dear friends, let it be true of us that we shall be for peace when they are for war. I don't mean peace with the actions of those who rob Christ of His glory, and His Church of her beautiful garments. Martin Luther wrote Erasmus that it were better that heaven and earth should be overturned than that one iota of truth should be lost. Samuel Rutherford said that the enemies of Christ were casting lots about what was of more value than Christ's coat, and again, that the hand which would not be raised to keep the crown upon Christ's head would be broken from the shoulder blade. It is marvellous to us that some who bravely fought against innovations in the past, when those spurious doctrines and principles were sanctioned as laws in the Church turned the point of their swords against our throats. We cannot believe that they had the glory of Christ and the salvation of perishing sinners in view, but glory from their fellow-creatures. Popularity and carnal ease deceived them, and, like Issachar, they "couched down between two burdens; and they saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant and bowed their shoulders to bear, and became servants to tribute." It is by hard striving that the cause of Christ has been hitherto maintained in the world. He fought many a battle for His poor Church, and surely, we may take courage, and count the accusations of men of little moment, when we know that Christ will settle the contention when He shall appear "in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Word of God is worth contending for, for let men take from you all you possess, but if you keep the word of His testimony, He may bless it to your eternal salvation; but lose the truth, and though you should gain the whole world, you will lose your soul. The Spirit tells us in this Psalm that the enemies were laughing at the calamities of the poor Church. Never mind the laughing, which will be like the crackling of branches under a pot. Keep your thoughts fixed upon eternal laughing in the exceeding joys at the right hand of

Christ. Don't be ashamed of Him. Don't allow your countenance to blush before His enemies. Who will be ashamed of Christ or His Church at the last day? There shall be no laughing or mocking Him then. Christ and His bride are going through the land of Moab now, and you need not expect liberty to walk upon the king's highway except by the strength of His arm. But "the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their head; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Arise, O Lord, and plead the cause that is Thine own!