

Jan. 19, 1911

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SATURDAY NIGHT SERMONS BY REV. SAMUEL W. PURVIS, D.D.

THOU SHALT NOT.
Text, "Whoso breaketh a hedge a serpent shall bite him"—Ecc. x, 8.
"Thou shalt not!" Who said so? God. But why shalt not? There's a reason. You need not know it—possibly couldn't understand. When you tell your little three-year-old that coffee isn't good for children you don't bother explaining about caffeine, the active and dangerous alkaloid of coffee. You might as well read Kant's "Critique." Butler's "Analogy" or Browning's poems. Her nervous system will become just as strong by obeying your "thou shalt not" as if you had tried to explain. It ought not to embarrass you to learn that you must believe first and be taught afterward. You knew your multiplication table long before you could prove it. Most of your knowledge came that way. The "thou shalt not" is a hedge. The purpose of a hedge is not to annoy, but to protect. Uncle Sam maintains 3,000 beacon lights, 6,000 buoys and signals along his coast. Each one says, "Thou shalt not!" No mariner is quite such a fool as to think Uncle Sam a bullying policeman with a big stick.

"Don't Go Out the Gate!"
Fendal days had moats with draw-bridges. Then came walled cities, then houses with brick and stone walls. Our colonists built stockades; after the Indians had gone, board fences, then the picket and almost invisible wire or a bed of geraniums—now none! "Johnny, don't go out the gate," mother used to say. Now Johnny plays on the street. Whether he did better among the illacs and the old fashioned sweet williams protected by the hedge or out in the street dodging automobiles and flipping cigarette pictures is a question. It's an age of transition. Following the trend of things, we are tearing down many fences. They're so old foggyish! There was a time when folks got married and they said, "For better, for worse, till death us do part." That was the understanding, and they meant it. If they had a tiff they made it up long before communion Sunday at the old church. But the marriage fence seems tottering. Only one in eight stands. Reno has a permanent settlement, and our wives get circulars mailed from there at the breakfast table. They are busy tearing down the old Sabbath fence our forefathers thought was so necessary for the safety of the republic. Even the theological professors are feverishly removing the barriers about the Bible. Stars! We can remember when mother used to read those wonderful Bible stories to us. We thought they were true, but it seems not. Of course fences are antiquated and outlandish. That verse about "Remove not the ancient landmarks which thy fathers set" must be all folderol.

SUNDAY SCHOOL. Lesson IV.—First Quarter, For Jan. 22, 1911.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.
Text of the Lesson, I Kings xvi, 15-33
Memory Verses, 25-30—Golden Text, Prov. xiv, 34—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

Today we are introduced to two of the worst kings in all the history of the ten tribes, Omri and Ahab. Of the former it is written that he wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord and did worse than all that were before him, and of the latter it is written that he did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him and did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him (verses 25, 30, 33). What a record of increasing iniquity and how great the long suffering of Jehovah that could bear with it! But we must consider that ever since the serpent tempted Eve, and how much longer we do not know. God has patiently borne with the devil and will continue to bear with him till the time of Rev. xx, 1-3. While there is no hope for that great adversary revealed in Scripture, as to men it is written that the Lord is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (II Pet. iii, 9).

The greatest sinner may be saved if he will only turn from his sin to God, but for all who will not turn there is naught but the flaming fire and vengeance of II Thess. i, 8, 9, the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone of Rev. xxi, 8. If any will not receive the truth God will let them believe a lie, and for all who will not bow to the word of God there is no morning for them (II Thess. ii, 11, 12; Isa. viii, 20, margin and R. V.). In all the history of the ten tribes there was not one ruler who feared the Lord, but all walked in the way of Jeroboam, the son of Nabat, who made Israel to sin (verses 26, 31).

During the forty-one years of the reign of Asa over Judah, who was on the whole a good king and most of the time did right in the sight of the Lord, six of the kings of the ten tribes either reigned or began to reign, and each one is mentioned by name in connection with the year of Asa's reign when he began to reign (xv, 25, 28, 33; xvi, 8, 10, 15, 23, 29). No less than eight times do we find Asa mentioned in connection with the names of these kings, and it is to me suggestive of the wheat and tares of one of our Lord's parables, concerning which He said, "Let both grow together till the harvest." In this case it was not difficult to distinguish the righteous from the wicked, but often we cannot tell here, wheat and tares in some stages of growth look so much alike.

The wicked prosper, are not in trouble like other men, they are proud and lofty and very often die peacefully (Ps. lxxiii, 2-12), and Asaph is not the only one perplexed thereby. The righteous and the wicked die, and often their bodies lie side by side in the cemetery, and where is the difference? The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning of the first resurrection, when only the bodies of the righteous shall rise from the dead (Ps. xlix, 14). When we return with Christ then shall we more fully discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not (Mal. iii, 18).

Rulers like Omri and Ahab will flourish greatly at the end of this age under the patronage of the antichrist and his companion the false prophet who will not hesitate to blaspheme God and His name and make war with the Lamb and His people, but they shall be suddenly overthrown (Rev. xiii, xvii, 14; xix, 19, 20). Then shall be fully fulfilled that which had a fulfillment when Christ was here in humiliation: "Why do the nations rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed."

The Lord shall have them in derision, speak unto them in His wrath, and His king in Zion shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Ps. ii). "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth" (Isa. ii, 11, 17; xxiii, 9). This woman Jezebel, whom Ahab married and of whose desperate wickedness we shall hear more in future lessons, reminds us of another Jezebel of Rev. ii, 20-23, some of whose relatives are working great mischief and leading many astray in our own day. This form of iniquity will be consummated in the woman of Rev. xvii, Babylon the great, and great will be her overthrow both as a system and a city.

As truly as the ten tribes were carried away into captivity because of their sin after God had borne long with them so surely will God punish the world for their evil and the wicked for their iniquity in the day of His fierce anger (Isa. xlii, 9-13). A strong word of warning for every individual sinner is found in Prov. xxix, 1, "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

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THE COVERED BRIDGE

This beautiful little poem was written by David Barker, a writer born in Maine in 1816, and who died in 1874. A collection of his poems contributed to periodicals was published in 1876

Tell the fainting soul in the weary form,
There's a world of the purest bliss,
That is linked as that soul and form are linked,
By a covered bridge with this
Yet to reach that realm on the other shore.
We must pass through a transient gloom,
And must walk unseen, unhelped

and alone
Through that covered bridge—the tomb.
But we all pass over on equal terms,
For the universal toll
Is the outer garb which the hand of God
Has flung around the soul.
Though the eye is dim and the bridge is dark,
And the river it spans is wide,
Yet Faith points through to a shining mount
That looms on the other side.
To enable our feet in the next day's march,
To climb up that golden ridge,
We must all lie down for one night's rest
Inside of the covered bridge.