

## Hedges

Job 1:9-12; Isaiah 5:4-6

You have heard of or maybe even prayed a hedge of protection around folks but you may not know where the idea comes from.

In the time of the Old Testament, wild animals were much more prevalent in the Middle East than they are today. The Bible mentions Lions (*Judges 14:5*), Wolves (*Jeremiah 5:6*), Bears (*1 Samuel 17:34*), Leopards (*Hosea 13:7*), and even Hyenas (*Isaiah 13:22*).

Although stone walls could keep predators away from living areas and livestock, the walls would have to be very tall and would take a long time and cost to make. Wood big enough to use as lumbar was not plentiful enough to waste on a perimeter fence.

Instead, a hedge of thorn bushes could be planted to grow around a living compound. Thorn bushes would be too dense to crawl through, too sharp to chew through, and planted too wide for all but the most determined predator to jump over. A hedge would also be a deterrent to the sheep and goats seeking to escape their pen.

So in scripture, as Satan is compared to a "*lion looking for someone to devour*" (**1 Peter 5:8**), a thorn hedge is an appropriate metaphor for the protection God gives His followers.

We like the idea of a hedge of protection because it gives us great comfort.

However, hedges can keep danger out or keep us imprisoned, depending on what they are made of, why they are there, who put them there.

The best example of a hedge of protection in Scripture is in the book of Job.

### **Job 1:9-10 (NKJV)**

Now Job was a righteous man, honoring God and was doing quite well in life. You know when God uses you for an example to Satan, as a man God approves of, you have to be quite a remarkable man.

Of course, that angered the devil and he accused the Lord of buying Job's love and devotion. Satan claimed that God hedged Job in from all the trials and tribulations of life so that's why he loved and served God.

### **Job 1:11-12 (NKJV)**

I want you to notice that God never agrees with Satan's accusation. God never said he treated Job differently than anyone else. Quite the contrary.

Job had been merely reaping the rewards of a righteous man versus ending up with the hard life and way of an unbeliever or backslider.

Many people still charade as Christians, play church and wonder why their lives are embattled while others seem to always be blessed by God.

**Proverbs 13:15 (NKJV)**

Nevertheless God in this instance, allowed the devil to go after Job.

If God did not have a hedge around Job before He certainly did now. He placed a small one around him so that Satan could not take his life. That was a good hedge to have for the trials Job was about to go through. And it was impregnable since God placed it there.

You know that some hedges we put up ourselves and they are not so wonderful.

**Proverbs 15:19 (NKJV)**

Have you ever heard someone complain about how they can never seem to get ahead in life?

They can never catch up on their bills; keep a good job, have healthy relationships and a long list of other problems. Their life is hedged in by thorns of their own making.

We all know it is much easier to steer a moving vehicle than one that is parked.

People often want God to tow them to the ideal job or keep feeding them like fledglings in the nest.

**Isaiah 5:4-6 (NKJV)**

God did hedge in for protection, His people Israel when they were obedient. However, there were times when He tore the hedge down and allowed the heathen to conquer and punish them for their sin.

Habakkuk questioned how God could use the wicked to chastise those that were more righteous.

Look what the Lord told David about when Solomon took over Israel;

**2 Samuel 7:14 (NKJV)**

The wicked belong to God as well as the righteous and He has the right to tear down the hedges if He so desires. What is praiseworthy is that His actions are for redemptive purposes or we would have no hope.

**2 Samuel 7:15-16 (NKJV)**

I believe that America's hedges have been torn down due to our sin and turning from God and at this late stage in timeline of man there may not be any return or real redemption for our country.

Individually, all we can do is come before Him and to be sure that our relationship with Him is right, that He does not have to take down our hedge and allow Satan to pollute and damage to get us to return to Him.

### **1 Corinthians 5:3-5 (NKJV)**

God looks and expects to find Christians to be as a protective hedge and often He can't find any.

Abraham was hoping for enough souls to be present to be a hedge for Sodom and Gomorrah and had he been able to find one righteous person they could have been spared.

Sadly, God often looks to those who are called his to be the one who stands in the gap to protect the nation and in the book of Ezekiel we see he did not find someone.

He was going to use them to fill up the gap to make the hedge and they failed so Israel fell. All the prophets had left the Word of God and began preaching what people wanted to hear for their own popularity and gain. They had the titles and position of prophet but they were actually opportunistic foxes.

In the desert they created by not using the water of God's Word to irrigate they caused a spiritual drought and they set up the country for God's judgment.

### **Ezekiel 13:4-9 (NKJV)**

God always judges correctly. Not by man's standard but only by His own.

### **Ezekiel 22:30-31 (NKJV)**

When God found the prophets were unworthy, we see Him saying He sought for a single Godly man. Sounds like when the leadership failed, God looked for another Amos that He could call though he was not a prophet or a son of a prophet.

God just wanted an obedient man and He found none.

One righteous man was all that was needed to spare the country and none was found.

In chapter (14:20), we see God finally got to the point where His anger would no longer spare them even if Daniel, Noah and Job were there. They would be spared but not the country.

We are doomed if we have no one God can use to make a hedge to fill in the gap for our country or our people.

We are in an age where we definitely need to dare to be a Daniel or resist evil like Job if we hope to have an ark to run to when the flood of God's wrath comes down on the nation that blatantly disregards Almighty God.

Sometimes we do not see the benefit of God's hedge because we are dabbling in sin or rebellion and we are singing "don't fence me".

It is good to grow up and leave home and find out what life is all about but sometimes we think that means tossing everything we learned or were told in the trash and seeking new things and thoughts. Our eyes catch the glitter of the world and we leave behind or trade our real treasure for fool's gold.

**Hosea 2:5-7 (NKJV)**

Hosea was told to marry an unfaithful woman or a prostitute/harlot.

She represented Israel turning to the pagans and their gods to gain their delicacies and treasures. Their gods seemed to be better than what God had provided.

Yet, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof so all the stuff the pagans had come from the true God they just did not give Him the credit.

Then God said He was going to hedge in her path so that she would come back to Him. He made her life difficult with that hedge of thorns so that there was no place she could go or turn without trouble or pain. He made her allure fade so that those who have loved her no longer found her attractive.

All the things they gave her were taken away or not replaced when she had consumed them. The grand life she was living became not as grand, just as the prodigal son found out centuries later. She, like him, had to come to her senses and say it was better before and thus she returned home.

People run off into various sins because the devil has used someone or something that seems desirable or pleasurable.

To bring them back to reality, their way has to become hard and they have to be broken or heartbroken so that the old 20/20 hindsight can kick in. Then they see the foolishness of their ways and if they are broken enough they will seek the Lord and the life they left.

You see God is the original author of what we refer to as "tough love".

Many people have gotten their life straight because people have prayed for this thorny type of hedge to be placed around their loved ones.

Even a prayer to take their life if it saves their soul.

Sound harsh? That is basically what Paul was saying in *1 Corinthians 5*.

We pray that it would never get to that but we must be aware that it could happen. John tells us about a sin unto death.

**1 John 5:14-17 (NKJV)**

Sometimes a Christian may sin so seriously that God judges that sin with swift physical death. Ananias and Sapphira are cases in point (Acts 5:1-11).

Yet most of the sins which one sees another Christian commit are not of such a nature, as their common occurrence shows. For these, a believer ought to pray, knowing that any sin—if continued in long enough—is a threat to a fellow Christian’s physical and eternal life.

Thus the restoration of another believer may secure a prolonging of their physical life.

The words “*a sin that does not lead to death*” can be easily misunderstood.

All sin ultimately leads to death, but the expression “*that does not lead to death*” should be understood in the sense, “*not judged punished by death.*”

The distinction is between sins for which death is a rapid consequence and sins for which it is not.

When a Christian sees another Christian sin in a way that is not fatal, he is instructed to pray for them and God will give them life. However, John reminded his readers that there is . . . sin that leads to death.

When you think about it, God has the right to expect fruit from His people. We are His vineyard. He has done so much for us than we can’t even comprehend, far more than we deserve. If He has to tear down the hedge and chastise us to get us to return do we have anyone to blame but ourselves?

We are thrilled that once we are saved there is a hedge between us and Hell so why not be grateful and stay within the hedge of His protection by obedience rather than force His hand to deal with our rebellion?

If our way is hard then praise His name as it may be that hedge spoken of in Hosea to keep us from evil and evil from us that we might finally see where our true treasure is and where real love abides.

Prayer

*Father, I ask that indeed you would hedge in your obedient children and keep us from evil and that we might enjoy all that You wish to give us in our relationship with You. Lord may we bring forth much fruit as is only our reasonable service. For those who are straying or about to embark on the wrong path, please hedge them in as well so that they will have no joy or peace until they return to you. Let all that would lead them astray lose interest in them. Let them be deserted so that they can find you in their desert and speak to them as you did Gomer and return them to you in a betrothal of righteousness, faithfulness, judgment, loving-kindness and in mercies.*

*Amen*