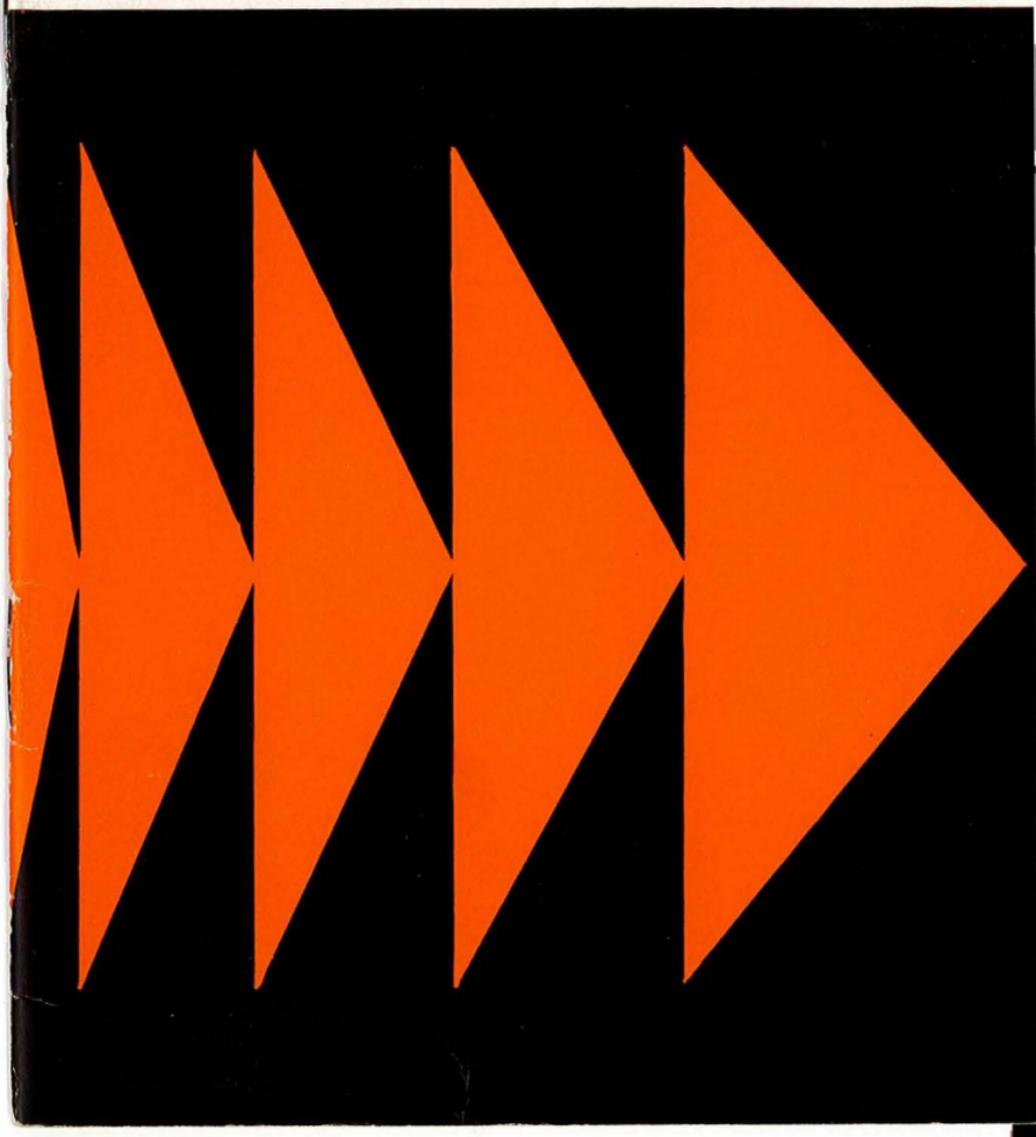


SIX FOOHOLDS OF SATAN

BY W. STUART HARRIS



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*One of a series of messages first given
by the Rev. W. Stuart Harris at the
'Keswick' Convention in Katoomba,
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Six Footholds of Satan

AT THE BEGINNING and end of our Bibles, we see him across the pages of Scripture, from one end of the Word of God to the other, the prince of death! But just as he began as far as this earthly scene is concerned, in the Garden of Eden, so we discover that finally he, himself, is doomed to the lake of fire. What a tragic thing it would be to spend all eternity with the devil and his angels!

THE UNCRUCIFIED FLESH

Now may we turn to the Scripture of I John, chapter three, verse eight, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." Who would want to be a partner with him? Who would want to be recognized as the son of the devil? Our Lord spoke to the people of His day, and referred to the devil as being their father. But God is our Father, through faith in Jesus Christ. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." Oh, may God create within us hatred for all sin. Whenever we find in the Bible something that we know is unholy in the sight of God, and then we discover it in our own hearts, may we say to the Lord: "Away with it!" God grant that into our hearts there may come this hatred for sin. "He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning." "For this purpose the Son

of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” We are told also in the first Epistle of John that: “The whole world lieth in the wicked one.” And this is one of the amazing aspects of the miracle of our conversion, that we have been taken from the hand of Satan and now we are in the Hand of God. If we would list carefully what we were and what we are, it would be a tonic to our souls. We would then be left in no doubt that conversion to God is an amazing miracle, one of the greatest of all time. For not only have we passed from death unto life, but we have passed from the grip of Satan into the very Hand of God. We are now alive in Him. We are no longer under the domination of darkness, of the prince of death, but we are under the domination of the Prince of Life, Jesus Christ our Lord. Who would want to return to the dominion of darkness? But let us heed the warning; we shall return to that control if there is any uncrucified flesh; if there is any foothold in our life that Satan can discover. For the ground of Satan’s operation is sin, and if there is any uncrucified flesh in us, Satan can still work havoc in our life.

The Lord is decisive in His dealings with us. We are reminded that we died with Christ. Now it is declared that Satan was destroyed at the Cross. We could have read a Scripture something like this: “That through death He might deliver us from the power of death”, and Satan’s name could have been omitted. But the Spirit of God does not omit the name of the devil. The devil is mentioned here for he is a person. He is the prince of death. He is the prince of the power of the air, and he is the prince of this world, but Christ has removed the ground of Satan’s operation because He has dealt with sin. The Lord has rendered Satan powerless by the all-conquering victory of His death. Satan is rendered powerless! We read it here, “that He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil”. But he is still at large. That is why we must be decisive and definite. We have died; then we must acknowledge that we have died. We see now the possibility of complete emancipation, that the reigning

life of Jesus may possess the throne of our hearts, so that Satan may come to us and find nothing in us, because we are reckoning upon the righteousness of the holy Son of God. Yes, Christ has removed the ground of Satan’s operation. Notice these words very carefully, “that through death” (that is the death of the Cross, for He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross), “that through death He might destroy” (or that He might bring to nought, bring to zero) “him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”

The Word of God declares that at Calvary’s Cross Satan was defeated and that his destiny is the lake of fire. “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I referred in the previous message to the pure, holy life of the Son of God which has been imparted to us. And I am thinking of that just now, as I remember these words in John’s Gospel, chapter fourteen, verse thirty: “The prince of this world,” said Jesus Christ, “cometh, and hath nothing in Me.” Oh, those words just produce a “Hallelujah” in my soul, that when the prince of this world came to my Saviour, to our Saviour, he found nothing in Him. Nothing upon which he could put even a little finger. No foothold in the life of Jesus Christ, the pure, holy, spotless Son of God Who was made sin for us, “Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (*II Corinthians 5:21*). The prince of this world comes to us. Can we say: He has nothing in me, for I died when Jesus died and I am reckoning myself at this moment, dead to sin, separated from sin, and “alive unto God”? I enjoy the fellowship with my Lord Jesus Christ, the risen, ascended, glorified Lord.

May I make a plea for a clear cut decision on this matter, that we will stand with our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, knowing and acknowledging that when He died, we died, and may we reckon on this fact, in a very clear and decisive way, because this is so vitally important. Let us allow the

Word of God, therefore, to be applied to our hearts. This is not something at which we should look with a long face and a dismal spirit. Rather, there should be joy in our hearts with the knowledge that Christ has defeated Satan, and dealt with sin, and delivered us from death—He has abolished it. So, as we look at the Cross, we remember that when Jesus died, we died, and we died in Him. Let us acknowledge this in our hearts—not half dead, but completely so! “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (a rich harvest). There is no life without death. The death of Christ was our death, as He took the judgment for our sin on Calvary’s Cross.

A PROUD SPIRIT

Turn now to I Peter, chapter five. Satan is spoken of there as “a roaring lion”. I would like to read verses six and seven, that we might notice this most enlightening context here: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty Hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time; casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” And I do not think we can cast all our anxiety upon Him until we have humbled ourselves. It is only from the lowly place, at the foot of the Cross, that we can cast all our care. No proud spirit can cast anxiety. Somehow or other the very anxiety gets interwoven with the proud spirit of man, and we feel a sense of frustration, almost of bitterness about it all. But when we humble ourselves “under the mighty Hand of God”, we can throw aside all our anxiety, because we know, “it matters to Him about you”. “Be sober, be watchful, because your adversary . . .” Notice the words, “Your adversary”. He, of course, is the adversary of Christ. He hates Christ with a bitter hatred. And because we are in Christ, he hates us. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

I believe it is quite true that a “roaring lion” is a hungry lion. Generally speaking, the lion kills to eat, and does not just kill for the pleasure of it. And, therefore, here we have

a “roaring lion”, meaning a hungry lion, and Satan is relentless in his pursuit of everyone whom he has lost from his grip to get each one back again under his domination. “Be sober”, therefore, and “be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”, and the word “devour” means to swallow up. “Whom resist steadfast in the faith”, for some people have thrown the faith aside. “Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” So we are to resist him.

James tells us this in another way, when he writes about resisting Satan. On one occasion at Keswick (England) when the Rev. John Stott was giving an address to the Ministers, he told us from his heart that in times of great pressure, when the enemy seems to come in “like a flood”; when the heavens are as brass, and everywhere seems so dark, there is a passage in the Epistle of James to which he turns. Three thoughts are expressed in verses seven and eight of chapter four, but we will read from verse six: “But He giveth more grace. Wherefore He saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” That is a wonderful sight, to see the heels of Satan! “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.” But first we must submit ourselves to God, if we are to resist the devil. Then draw near to God, into the fullest fellowship with Him. Having submitted ourselves, having resisted Satan, we may know that he is now on the move away from us, for he is not omnipresent. We draw near to God and He draws near to us. And on the ground of that wonderful victory, there is now a fellowship which is enjoyable, emancipating and glorious.

There is another passage, however, that I would like to turn to; it is in Matthew, chapter twelve, verses twenty-eight and twenty-nine. Our Lord has been speaking about the casting out of devils by the Spirit of God, and He says; “Then the Kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except

he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.” First, “bind the strong man”. First stand on victory’s ground, the ground of Calvary where Satan was brought to nought by Jesus Christ, and then you can spoil his goods. He is operating in the minds of the disobedient to-day. Satan’s work continues in an amazing way, but we are to stand on victory ground, the victory of Calvary’s Cross, for we have a stronger Man than this strong man, Satan, and we must believe that he is bound.

A SELFISH SPIRIT

Having had this wonderful emancipation, we now discover that Satan seeks a foothold in our lives. Let us notice, therefore, some of the passages that refer to this. We turn first of all to one of the oldest books of the Bible, the book of Job. And there in the first chapter of the book of Job, we find these words, beginning at the sixth verse. “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?” Now notice Satan’s question, the first thing he says in reply to this word from God. “Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?” Is he only a religious man because of what he is going to get out of it? And if we are Christians because of what we are going to get for being Christians, beware; because we are providing a foothold for Satan. “Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thine Hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face.” Could Satan say that truthfully about you, or

about me? If all our prosperity suddenly vanished; if everything we hold dear on this earth we should suddenly lose, as many of the pastors and believers have done, who are in the prison cells of the Soviet Union and China to-day, would we still say: “Give me Jesus, only Jesus. I am standing complete in Him”? This is a way by which Satan can get a foothold in our lives when we are serving God for what we can get out of it. We came to Christ, maybe, for eternal life, and we wonder why sometimes our hearts get so cold and we find ourselves slipping away from God. But if we came to Christ because we knew we were guilty, lost and helpless sinners in the sight of God, and that Jesus died for us upon the Cross to deliver us from our sin, what a difference. The sweetness and the joy of the forgiveness of sin come to our hearts, and then we discover, as an over-plus, that we have everlasting life!

Perhaps I should not mention examinations—I am sure that is just what we want to forget! But I remember years ago when I studied Shakespeare’s ‘The Merchant of Venice’, that I was intrigued by those three caskets and by Portia, who was looking for the right husband. It might give some indication as to how to find the right husband! There were those inscriptions on the gold, the silver and the lead caskets, to which there came the three suitors. The inscription on the gold casket was: “Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.” One of them thought that was quite applicable to him; he was just the man! The words on the silver casket were: “Who chooseth me will get as much as he deserves.” And on the lead casket: “Who chooseth me must give, and hazard all he hath.” It was the man who chose the lead casket who became Portia’s husband. And the play here is on three words: ‘Gain’, ‘get’ and ‘give’. Did we come to Christ just to gain? Did we come to Christ just to get, or did we come to give? I believe that unless we have come to the point where we have come to Christ, not only to receive, but to give, acknowledging that all we have has been purchased by His blood and sealed by His Spirit, we are opening the door for Satan to get a foothold in our lives.

AN UNFORGIVING SPIRIT

Now please turn to II Corinthians, chapter two, where Satan is referred to again, and we see something here of his subtle attack on the life of the believer. Reading from the tenth verse: "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also; for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ. Lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices." An unforgiving spirit can provide a foothold for Satan. The Apostle says he is forgiven, and he is forgiven in the Person of Christ. How magnanimous God is in His forgiving! And we do not have this ability yet, that when we forgive a person, we can forget. But that is God's ability. And when God forgives us, God forgets the sin. We stand justified by faith, clothed in the pure righteousness of the Son of God. In the sight of a holy God, in the Person of Christ, we appear just as if we had never sinned. Now, says the Apostle Paul by the Spirit: "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also; for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the Person of Christ." Ah, but we say, "I do not have an unforgiving spirit. There is not anybody whom I have not forgiven for any injury done to me." But would we like to meet that person right now or are we glad that they are at the other side of the world? Has any cold indifference settled in our hearts? Do we ever pray for them? Remember that Job was asked to pray for his friends before he had the final victory. Do we ever talk about them to other people in a derogatory way? How easily we can have a cold, unforgiving spirit that robs us of that intimate fellowship with a forgiving God. How can we expect to walk in fellowship with God Who is so rich in grace and forgiveness, if we have an unforgiving spirit?

RESISTING THE WORD OF GOD

Now turn to Mark's Gospel, where Satan is referred to again, in the eighth chapter, this time by our Lord Himself. Reading from verse thirty-one: "And he began to teach them,

that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He spake that saying openly." Now note the words: "And Peter took Him." What does this mean? "And Peter took Him." Can we imagine Peter coming to our Lord and putting his hand upon Him? He "took Him" and then he "began to rebuke Him." Could anyone have the audacity to rebuke the Son of God? Peter did! He rebuked Him. But of course he had a reason for doing it, because he loved Him, and he did not want what our Lord had spoken about really to happen to Him. But when the Saviour "had turned about and looked on His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind Me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." When we resist the will of God, we provide a foothold for Satan. I wonder whether we are resisting the will of God for the life of another? Is there a father or a mother who is not willing to surrender a son or a daughter because it might mean the foreign mission field, and separation? Is there any resistance to the will of God in our lives because it is different from what we would have planned? As I understand my Bible the will of God is very often different from what we would decide. Choosers are losers. And here is Peter, who, because of sheer love for Christ, does not want Him to "be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed." He does not want this to happen. He does not understand what it is all about, and so he takes the Lord and he rebukes Him. And when God's clear word of direction comes to our lives, we may not understand all about it. It might be entirely different from what we had thought and planned; and certainly it might be different for a young man or a young woman from what father and mother would have expected. But I would not want those words to be said of me, would you? "Get thee behind Me, Satan." Jesus looked beyond Peter and He saw Satan, and He said: "Get thee behind Me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men."

REFUSING THE THORN IN THE FLESH

Let us turn to one other place, II Corinthians, chapter twelve, reading from the seventh verse. "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee . . ." Now notice, our Lord did not say to him, "Do not pray about this any more." What our Lord said to him was: "My grace is sufficient for thee." And the Apostle Paul saw the light, saw the purpose of it all, and in his heart he said: "This shall not be a messenger of Satan, but this shall be an instrument of God." "For My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." He had seen a wonderful truth. But if Satan gets his hand on that thorn, what a havoc he can bring about in your life and mine. Have we not met believers to-day who are so discouraged, so disheartened, yes, and even embittered, frustrated and defeated? Something has happened in their lives that they do not understand, and because of this they have never accepted it. They have never submitted themselves to God. They have forgotten altogether that it is recorded in the Bible: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

Be sure to stand in the victory of Calvary's Cross. Let us believe with all our hearts that when Jesus died, we died, and now we are alive unto Him. Through His death on the Cross of Calvary, He has brought to nought him that had the power of death, which is the devil, to deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

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