

# EXPOSED POSITIONS

By

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The battle of Calvary: The conflict of Gethsemane closed around the first hour of the fourth watch and the last conflict began immediately in an offensive personal encounter between one of the awakened body guard of Jesus and a servant of Caiaphas. The battle went on with heat and vigour when the High Priest asked Jesus, "Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of Heaven." The cross is reached. Though pressed on all sides by Hell, Death and Demons, He provided for His mother. At 2: 59 p. m., April 7th He seemed to have lost the battle and said, "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit. It is finished. "He conquered Satan by seeming weakness. He gained the battle of Calvary by a surrender of His life. This is Scriptural. "Through death he deposed him who had the power of death and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."—*H. W. Hodge.*

THERE are positions and conditions which lie open to the attacks of Satan. These points must be guarded by sleepless vigilance. The devil is a remorseless, cruel and mighty foe. To watch him with unsleeping eye, is not only a duty, but safety to life, deliverance from hell, certainty of heaven, all, and more, if more there can be, are involved in overcoming the devil. Stupidity, neglect, being off guard in the conflict, with Satan are much more than mistakes or indiscretions. They are fatal undoings, eternal and remediless losses.

The apostle places his Corinthian brethren on the vantage ground in the war with the devil by declaring, "We are not ignorant of Satan's devices." Ignorance is always an exposed condition. Ignorance is open to attack and surprise by day and by night. To be ignorant of the existence, character and ways of the devil, is the prelude and prophecy of fatal results in the fight for heaven. If this be true, how hopeless is the case of one who is not only ignorant of the temptations, but denies or ignores the existence of the tempter. The devil's great device, his masterpiece of temptation, is to destroy faith in his own existence. God's struggle is to establish faith. The devil's great work is to eradicate all spiritual facts, principles and persons, good or evil, God and devil. He who denies or ignores the existence of the devil, puts a fatal bar to ultimate salvation, paralyzes all efforts in that direction, and gives one over, chained hand and foot, to the merciless foe whose existence has been denied and derided. Nothing advances Satan's work with more skilful and readier hands than to be ignorant of Satan and his ways. To escape his snare, we must not only have a strong faith in the fact that Satan is, but also must have a most intimate knowledge of him and of his plans and manysided ways.

Much akin to the foregoing exposed position is the one which makes light of Satan. Frivolous

views of him, his works, or his character, light talk or dishonoring epithets in the line of jesting—are all detrimental to any serious views of life's great work, its solemn engagements, its serious conflicts and its weighty hindrances. Presumption, self-will and foolishness are the characteristics of those who thus deal with these weighty concerns. The existence and work of the devil is a serious matter, and it is to be considered and dealt with from the most serious standpoint, and none but serious people can deal with it. And with this well accords the iterated and reiterated New Testament exhortation and note of warning, "be sober." That which gives it point and arousing power is, "Be sober, for your adversary, the devil," etc.

How germane to this attitude is Jude's nervous, incisive, and almost rough handling of these sacrilegious characters, who make light of sacred things and sacred persons.

"Likewise also, these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But these speak evil of those things which they know not; but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves."

Peter takes the same class of flippant irreverent talkers to task somewhat after the same manner: "Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the daytime. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with; their own deceivings while they feast with you."

A paralyzing attitude, a staying to talk, a listening to Satan's insinuations, are all fatal. This was Eve's mistake. His tongue is smooth as oil, his words circulate and inflame like poison. Bristling opposition, embattled for war, no inlets, no down bars, no open gates, no low places; all fenced, and high, and shut against the devil, is the only safety.

An unforgiving spirit invites satanic possession. His favorite realm is the spirit. To corrupt that, to incense or provoke to retaliation, revenge or unmercifulness—that is his chosen work and his most common and successful device. Paul puts it to the front so as to thwart Satan: "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also; for if I forgive anything, to whom I forgive it, for your sakes forgive I it in the person of Christ; lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices."

When he begets an unforgiving spirit in us, then he has us, we are on his ground. Then wicked men and good men, all kinds of men, are likely to do us harm, sometimes at vital and very sensitive points. Sometimes all unconsciously they wrong us and sometimes knowingly and willfully they wrong us. As soon as a spirit of unkindness possesses us for the wrong done, Satan has the upper hand.

We quote from the Revised Version the warning words of our Saviour: "Again, ye have heard

that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of the evil one." The injunction is against strong oaths in language. Expletives and appeals and declarings added to our words all are wrong, and expose us to the snare of Satan. "In the multitude of words," says Proverbs, "there wanteth not sin.

Satan tempts us to asseverations and declarations to confirm truth which destroy truth. Equivocal words and words by way of substantiating the truth of those already spoken, expose us to Satan's power. "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea, be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." So St. James seals the words of Christ. The devil lies concealed in many words. Simplicity, fewness and seriousness of words, mightily hinder and thwart his ensnaring plans.

It is so easy for the devil to stop us just a little short of a faith that will save. There are many initials, prefaces, preludes and introductions which are sometimes quite taxing, and are a right good advance in the right direction, but which do not bring us ' into the heart of the matter. Like Sarah they start with full intent to go to Canaan, but stop at Haran and dwell there. Like Jacob, Shechem stays their steps and holds them instead of Bethel.

On the other hand, even those who are earnestly striving after that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord," Satan tempts them to go a little too far and their zeal degenerates into party spirit and unhallowed heat. " Strict earnestness degenerates into severity, gentleness into weakness, energetic activity into imprudent meddling and narrowness, calm moderation into careless acquiescence, bold decision maintaining its own convictions firmly becomes intolerant, self -opinionated, narrow, arbitrary, bigoted. Due regard for the peculiarities and convictions of others degenerates into paralyzing indifference and skeptical indolence. Lively trust lapses into presumption and haughtiness, a wise prudence into cowardice and hesitating anxiety," and confession and profession degenerate into and evaporate into aridity. So Satan watches and is alert always, and wary, to hold us back from the goal, or to press us by an impetuous, unkindly or vehement. spirit to go beyond the goal. So all this uncovers often our strongest positions and turns them into exposed conditions.

Yoking with unbelievers in the relationship of life-ties of friendship and intimate and confiding associations with unbelievers, are exposed positions of great peril, and of which the devil takes instant and great advantage. Partnership in business, or the more sacred relation of marriage with unbelievers, is perilous to one united to Christ by close ties.

Satan is called Belial by the apostle, meaning worthlessness, contemptibleness, and wickedness. He and Christ cannot be joined in agreement. No unequal yoking, no fellowship, no communion, no concord, no agreement can exist. All is perilous and mixed. Contamination and impurity result. A maimed enfeebled holiness is the fruit of these voluntary close yokings. Under the law, an ox and an ass could not be yoked together. Under the Spirit, Christ and Satan

can have no concord. Separation, cleansing and perfected holiness are necessary to secure the vantage ground against Satan. How strong, minute, explicit, and comprehensive, is the charge here given against union, communion or intimate association with unbelievers. Unequally yoked, no pulling together, not equal, no fellowship, no sharing, no communion, no intimacy, no concord, no agreement, no part, no portion, no agreement, no voting together.

Commentators have found in this great variety of expression, Paul's fine command of the Greek language. We find in it the fire of impassioned and profound convictions, demanding the most selfdenying abstemiousness in forming intimate and voluntary associations with the unbelieving world in the way of business and pleasurable or social pursuits and intimacies.

This rule he laid down in his first epistle to the Corinthians: "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no, not to eat." Not the casual, courteous Christian intercourse, was he objecting to and barring, but the more intimate, voluntary and social.

St. James locates and defines and opposes these affinities and attachments as not only "exposed positions," but resulting in the most radical and criminal violation of the holiest relationship. I quote from the Revised Version: "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God." By it the marriage vow of God is broken.

Dean Alford, commenting on this passage, says: "Of the world, it means men and men's interest, ambitions and employments, in so far as they are without God. The man who is taken out of the world by Christ cannot again become the friend and companion of worldly men and their schemes for self, without passing into enmity with God. God and the world stand opposed to one another, so that a man cannot join the one without deserting the other. He, therefore, who is minded to be the friend of the world, and sets his mind and thought and wish that way, must make up his mind to be God's enemy."

"But must I not be intimate with my relations, and that whether they fear God or not? Has not His providence recommended these to me?" Undoubtedly it has, but there are relations nearer or more distant. The nearest relations are husbands and wives. As these have taken each other for better or worse, they must make the best of each other, seeing as God has joined them together, none can put them asunder, unless in case of adultery, or when the life of one or the other is in imminent danger. Parents are almost as nearly connected with their children. You cannot part with them while they are young, it being your duty to "train them up," with all care, "in the way wherein they should go." How frequently you should converse with them when they are grown up, is to be determined by Christian prudence. This also will determine how long it is expedient for children, if it be at their own choice, to remain with their parents. In general, if they do not fear God, you should leave them as soon as is convenient. As for all other relations, even brothers or sisters, if they are of the world, you are under no obligation to be intimate with them. You may be civil and friendly at a distance.

But allowing that "the friendship of the world is enmity against God," and consequently, that it is the most excellent way, indeed the only way to heaven, to avoid all intimacy with worldly men, yet, who has resolution to walk therein? who even of those that love or fear God? Whatever it cost thee, flee spiritual adultery! Have no friendship with the world. However tempted thereto by profit or pleasure, contract no intimacy with worldly-minded men. And if thou hast contracted any such already, break it off without delay. Yea, if thy ungodly friend be dear to thee as a right eye, or useful as a right hand, yet confer not with flesh and blood, but pluck out the right eye, cut off the right hand, and cast them from thee I It is not an indifferent thing. Thy life is at stake; eternal life or eternal death. And is it not better to go into life having one eye or one hand, than having both, to be cast into hell-fire? However importuned or tempted thereto, have no friendship with the world. Look around, and see the melancholy effects it has produced among your brethren! How many of the mighty have fallen by this very thing I They would take no warning. They would converse, and that intimately, with worldly-minded men, till they "measured back their steps to earth again!" Oh, "come out from among them!" from all unholy men, however harmless they may appear, "and be ye separate," at least, so far as to have no intimacy with them. As your "fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," so let it be with those, and those only, who at least seek the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. So "shall ye be," in a peculiar sense, "my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

How Satan surrounds us! How strongly he holds us! How he entangles, enchains and fetters us by the worldly association! We lie in the sweet friendship, the embraces and converse of these worldly ones, while they with the whole world lie in the arms of the wicked one.

If simplicity drops out of our faith, our fornications against Satan are weakened. "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. "Here we have Satan recognized in the serpent and his ability in allusion to fall in Eden and intimations that he is still busy at his old tricky trade. Satan has such a dexterous and successful hand at deception that Paul was uneasy. The lack of simplicity would be fatal to their purity and faith, as the taste of the forbidden fruit was fatal to Eve, to her purity and obedience, and to paradise. The loss of a little thing, but with it, all is lost.

An untrained body exposes readily to Satan's assaults. Even the natural, innocent appetites and passions have to be held in with bit and bridle. An apostle was aware of this: "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. "An undisciplined body would hurl Paul from the apostolic heights down to the fearful abyss of apostasy. Two statements are made as to his body. "Keep under" and "bring it into subjection. "The first means that part of the face under the eyes. A blow on that part of the face, a black and blue spot by the bruise of a heavy blow, restrained and suppressed by heavy blows, and its native power is broken.

The second statement means to make a slave of, to treat with severity, to subject to stern and rigid discipline. The apostle sets forth the body as an important fact in the contest for heaven, and teaches us that if it be untrained, without the strong repressing, moulding hand of

discipline, it becomes an easy prey to the assaults of Satan.

After the same order is the direction of Peter: Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." A listless, drowsy, sleepy, stupid state, gives us into Satan's power without a struggle or even a surrender, or the decency of a parley.

To the same end is the strong injunction of Christ to the drowsy and fainting disciples: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

(Taken from "Satan: His Personality, Power, & Overthrown")

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