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### The Fight of Your Life

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# THE FIGHT OF YOUR LIFE



## THE BATTLE

In the summer of 2015, I spent four weeks as a Bible worker for an evangelistic series in San Antonio, Texas. One afternoon, I, my visiting partner, the local pastor, and an evangelist went to visit a house. We hopped out of our cars and knocked on the door of a house toward the end of the street. A shy woman named Maria answered the door. She had asked us to come to her home and pray that certain disturbances would leave. She was afraid her house was haunted by supernatural forces.

We sat around her kitchen table and she described how the lights would flash on and off even though no one had touched the switches. The television would turn on in the middle of the night while everyone was asleep. Items around the house would suddenly fall from counters or tables even though she was careful that nothing was placed near the edge. She told us she was concerned about her adult son's strange music and violent and evil video games.

Maria asked us to pray over her and her house that the demons would leave. She took us to her bedroom and the five of us knelt around her bed. We prayed, claiming God's promises from Scripture, praying that the devil be rebuked in the name of Jesus and that Maria would have the courage to follow Him.

As we stood to leave, a few trinkets fell off the shelf and one of us nonchalantly placed them back, not thinking anything of it. Maria showed us to the door with a smile and an expression of deep peace on her face. As we headed for the door we heard a loud crash outside. We all rushed out to see what had happened.

Maria's experience was just one manifestation of something bigger going on in our world. The interaction between the physical world and the supernatural is real and ongoing, but sometimes we don't even see it. This story points us to something bigger: God and Satan were struggling over Maria's life and her allegiance. Just as a supernatural enemy invaded Maria's home, he has also invaded the world and caused it to plunge into a great controversy between good and evil, a battle for the soul of every human being. Sometimes

it is as dramatic as what happened to Maria, but other times the devil uses more subtle tactics to tempt us away from God.

## THE ENEMY

In the parable of Matthew 13:24–30, Jesus tells the story of a farmer who instructs his servants to sow wheat in the field. But while the servants are not looking, an enemy sows tares among the wheat, plotting to destroy the crop. Wondering what to do, the servants explain the situation to the master. The master replies, "An enemy has done this!" Ellen G. White tells us "the teaching of this parable is illustrated in God's own dealing with men and angels."<sup>1</sup> From this story we can learn an important lesson on how God deals with His people.

Who is this enemy? Like the curtain being pulled back to open a play, the beginning of the Bible opens to reveal the main character: God Himself. The scene is creation. God creates the world to be good—very good! Enter stage left: Adam and Eve, our first parents—the first humans to exist in all of time. As any good romantic drama unfolds, they fall helplessly in love with each other and with their God. But lurking in the shadows, just out of view, is the villain—the enemy.

We can read the story in Genesis 3. Eve finds herself face-to-face with the most beautiful serpent with the most sinister suggestion: "God doesn't want what's best for you." But Eve had a choice. She could believe the serpent's lie or believe in the one who spoke truth. I'm sure she looked at that tree long and hard. But here, that first seed was planted—that bad seed among the wheat.

So where did this enemy come from? Who was this serpent hanging out in a tree? We turn to Ezekiel 28:12–17 for the answer. God had created this perfect being. Speaking of Lucifer before his fall, God said: "You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you."

God had created this person with a seal of perfection and beauty and he was anointed as a cherub. Lucifer (Satan) was blameless in all his ways (v. 15), until unrighteousness was found in him. He was a trader and trafficker of deceit (vs. 16–17). Verse 16 says that Satan was filled with violence and he sinned. His heart was lifted up because of his beauty, but he chose to go another way.

God had the power to squash the devil to pieces. And wouldn't that have been great for us all! We would never have had to live a life of sin. However, if God had eliminated Satan immediately, the whole universe would have questioned God's love. Ellen G. White adds,

Satan is a deceiver. When he sinned in heaven, even the loyal angels did not fully discern his character. This was why God did not at once destroy Satan. Had He done so, the holy angels would not have perceived the justice and love of God. A doubt of God's goodness would have been as evil seed that would yield the bitter fruit of sin and woe. Therefore the author of evil was spared, fully to develop his character.<sup>1</sup>

Pulling out the evil too soon would end up hurting the good seed too soon. Sin must be allowed to take its full course for the character of God to be vindicated. The great controversy is not about power, it's about the character of God—namely, His justice and love. And there is more to this controversy than God.

### THE STRUGGLE

Paul tells us, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:12). We see this played out in Paul's own life. In Romans 7:15, he talks about his inner conflict. "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." As we go back and forth debating with ourselves, there is something bigger going on: both God and Satan want our hearts, our allegiance and loyalty.

The prophet Jeremiah says our hearts are desperately wicked (Jer 17:9). Not only are we trying to win the struggle in our hearts, but our heart is working against us. We are at a double disadvantage. We have internal sinful desire coupled with external luring temptations. We seem hopeless, doomed by our very nature.

There is good news, however: there is someone who can set us free. In Romans 7 Paul tells us it's Jesus Christ! His death on the cross and resurrection is the source of our victory. In Matthew 28:18 we see Christ

has the power. In Ezekiel 36:2–27 we see that God wants to give us a new heart. It is up to us to accept the power of Christ and the new heart He gives.

### THE CHOICE

So how do we tap into His power? Paul says in Romans 8:11, "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you." We will have victory and triumph over the devil when we choose to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and allow the Holy Spirit to reign inside us, giving us the power to overcome. By our union with Christ we secure the victory. This was evident in the life of Paul, who had made it his life's mission to destroy the kingdom of God. He became a changed man when he encountered Jesus on the way to Damascus and allowed the Spirit to dwell in him, and he spent the rest of his life advancing the kingdom of God. The same God who gave Paul victory will work in our lives and give us the victory too.

As we rushed out of Maria's house that summer afternoon, we saw that a car from across the street had driven in reverse and crashed into a terrace wall outside Maria's house. The car was still running and we hurried to see if the person inside was alright. But there was no one in the driver's seat. The neighbor across the street came over, explaining that she saw her car rolling out of her driveway on its own accord!

We had prayed for Maria and she gave her life to Jesus, but the devil did not want to leave her alone. He had planned another opportunity to discourage her and win her back. Before we left that afternoon we encouraged Maria and prayed with her again. We told her that she had made a choice to commit herself to God, to put Him first. The devil did not like that but God would be with her and protect her. She was visibly shaken, but as we prayed and she determined to continue with her decision, an aura of peace came around her again.

Today, you and I have the opportunity to choose Christ in the middle of the great controversy. In this time of conflict there is a battle going on for your heart, mind, and soul. But you have the choice! Choose Christ and allow the Spirit to live within you so that you might have the victory. It will be the best choice you will ever make. ED

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1900), 72.

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