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The War Goes On

The war that began in heaven continues to this day.

In fact, the battle is heating up as the Saints prepare for the return of the Savior.

Anyone who follows international news will agree that we live in a time of “wars and rumors of wars” (D&C 45:26). Fortunately, everyone on earth is a war veteran. We have been battling the hosts of evil in an ongoing war that began in the premortal sphere before we were born.

Because we had not yet received physical bodies, we fought the War in Heaven without swords, guns, or bombs. But the fighting was just as intense as any modern war, and there were billions of casualties.

The premortal war was fought with words, ideas, debate, and persuasion (see Revelation 12:7–9, 11). Satan’s strategy was to frighten people. He knew that fear is the best way to destroy faith. He may have used arguments like these: “It’s too hard.” “It’s impossible to make it back clean.” “There’s too much risk.” “How do you know you can trust Jesus Christ?” He was very jealous of the Savior.

Thankfully, God’s plan triumphed over Satan’s lies. God’s plan involved moral agency for mankind and a great sacrifice. Jehovah, known to us as Jesus Christ, volunteered to be that sacrifice—to suffer for all our sins. He was willing to lay down His life for His brothers and sisters so that those who repented could come back clean and eventually become like their Heavenly Father. (See Moses 4:1–4; Abraham 3:27.)

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In the War in Heaven, we loved and supported our Father in Heaven. We wanted to become like Him.

The other advantage that helped Jehovah win the hearts of God's children was the powerful testimonies borne by His supporters, led by Michael, the archangel (see Revelation 12:7, 11; D&C 107:54). In premortality, Adam was called Michael, and Satan was called Lucifer, which means the "lightbearer."¹ That may seem like a strange name for the prince of darkness (see Moses 7:26), but the scriptures teach that Satan was "an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God" before he fell (see D&C 76:25–28).

How could a spirit with so much knowledge and experience fall so far? It was because of his pride. Lucifer rebelled against our Father in Heaven because he wanted God's kingdom for himself.

In his classic talk "Beware of Pride," President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught that Lucifer "wished to be honored above all others" and that "his prideful desire was to dethrone God."² You have heard too that Satan wanted to destroy man's agency, but that was not the only reason he fell out of favor.

He was cast out of heaven for rebellion against the Father and the Son (see D&C 76:25; Moses 4:3).

Why did you and I fight against the devil? We fought out of loyalty. We loved and supported our Father in Heaven. We wanted to become like Him. Lucifer had a different goal. He wanted to replace the Father (see Isaiah 14:12–14; 2 Nephi 24:12–14). Imagine how Satan's betrayal hurt our Heavenly Parents. In the scriptures, we read that "the heavens wept over him" (D&C 76:26).

After a heated campaign, Michael and his armies prevailed. Two-thirds of the heavenly hosts chose to follow



the Father (see D&C 29:36). Satan and his followers were cast out of heaven, but they were not sent immediately to outer darkness. First, they were sent to this earth (see Revelation 12:7–9), where Jesus Christ was to be born and where His atoning sacrifice would be carried out.

Why were Satan's hosts allowed to come to earth? They came to provide opposition for those who are being tested here (see 2 Nephi 2:11). Will they eventually be cast into outer darkness? Yes. After the Millennium, Satan and his hosts will be cast out forever.

Satan knows that his days are numbered. At the

Second Coming of Jesus, Satan and his angels will be bound for 1,000 years (see Revelation 20:1–3; 1 Nephi 22:26; D&C 101:28). As that deadline approaches, the forces of evil are fighting desperately to capture as many souls as they can.

John the Revelator was shown the War in Heaven as part of a grand vision. He was shown how Satan was cast down to earth to tempt mankind. This was John's reaction: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Revelation 12:12).

So how does Satan spend his days, knowing he has no time to lose? The Apostle Peter wrote that "the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

What motivates Satan? He will never have a body, he will never have a wife or a family, and he will never have a fulness of joy, so he wants to make all men and women "miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27).

The devil targets all men, but especially those who have the most potential for eternal happiness. He is clearly jealous of anyone who is on the pathway to exaltation. The scriptures teach that Satan "maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasseth them round about" (D&C 76:29).

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President Brigham Young (1801–77) prophesied "that the Church would spread, prosper, grow and extend, and that in proportion to the spread of the Gospel among the nations of the earth, so would the power of Satan rise."³

I think all of us would agree that this prophecy is being fulfilled as we watch evil infiltrate the societies of the world. President Young taught that we need to study the enemy's tactics in order to defeat him. I share four of Satan's proven strategies and some ideas on how to resist them.

Satan's Strategies

1. Temptation. The devil is brazen when it comes to putting wicked ideas into our minds. The Book of Mormon teaches that Satan whispers unclean and unkind thoughts and sows thoughts of doubt. He nags us to act on addictive urges and to entertain selfishness and greed. He doesn't want us to recognize where these ideas are coming from, so he whispers, "I am no devil, for there is none" (2 Nephi 28:22).

How can we resist this direct temptation? One of the most effective tools is to simply send Satan away. That's what Jesus would do.

The New Testament account of the Savior on the mount of temptations is instructive. After each temptation the devil presented to Him, Jesus used a two-step defensive technique: first, He ordered Satan to leave; then He quoted scripture.

Let me give you an example: "Get thee hence, Satan," commanded Jesus, "for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). The next verse records, "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him" (Matthew 4:11). The Savior's defense was very effective!

The biography of President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945) gives insight into how President Grant, as a young man, resisted the devil. When President Grant recognized that Satan was whispering to him, trying to plant doubts in his heart, he simply said out loud, "Mr. Devil, shut up."⁴

You have the right to tell Satan to leave when you are confronted with temptation. The scriptures teach, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

The other part of the Savior's defense was to quote scripture. There is great power in memorizing scripture, as Jesus did. Scriptural verses can become an arsenal of spiritual ammunition.

When you are tempted, you can recite commandments such as "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy," "Love your enemies," or "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly" (Exodus 20:8; Luke 6:27; D&C 121:45). Scripture power not only intimidates Satan, but it also brings the Spirit into your heart, reassures you, and fortifies you against temptation.



2. Lies and deception. The scriptures reveal that Satan is “the father of lies” (2 Nephi 9:9). Don’t believe him when he whispers messages such as “You never do anything right,” “You are too sinful to be forgiven,” “You will never change,” “No one cares about you,” and “You have no talents.”

Another of his oft-used lies is the following: “You need to try everything at least once—just to gain experience. One time won’t hurt you.” The dirty little secret that he doesn’t want you to know is that sin is addictive.

Another effective lie that Satan will try on you is this: “Everyone else is doing it. It’s OK.” It’s not OK! So tell the devil that you don’t want to go to the celestial kingdom—even if everyone else is going there.

Although Satan will lie to you, you can count on the Spirit to tell you the truth. That’s why the gift of the Holy Ghost is so essential.

The devil has been called “the great deceiver.”⁵ He attempts to counterfeit every true principle the Lord presents.

Remember, counterfeits are not the same as opposites. The opposite of white is black, but a counterfeit for white might be off-white or gray. Counterfeits bear a resemblance to the real thing in order to deceive unsuspecting people. They are a twisted version of something good, and just like counterfeit money, they are worthless. Let me illustrate.

One of Satan’s counterfeits for faith is superstition. His counterfeit for love is lust. He counterfeits the priesthood

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by introducing priesthood, and he imitates God's miracles by means of sorcery.

Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God, but same-sex marriage is only a counterfeit. It brings neither posterity nor exaltation. Although his imitations deceive many people, they are not the real thing. They cannot bring lasting happiness.

God warned us about counterfeits in the Doctrine and Covenants. He said, "That which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness" (D&C 50:23).

3. Contention. Satan is the father of contention. The Savior teaches, "He stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another" (3 Nephi 11:29).

The devil has learned from centuries of experience

that where there is contention, the Spirit of the Lord will depart. Ever since he convinced Cain to kill Abel, Satan has influenced siblings to quarrel. He also stirs up problems in marriages, among ward members, and between missionary companions. He delights in seeing good people argue. He tries to start family arguments right before church on Sunday, right before family home evening on Monday night, and whenever a couple plans to attend a temple session. His timing is predictable.

When there is contention in your home or workplace, immediately stop whatever you are doing and seek to make peace. It doesn't matter who started it.

Contention often begins with faultfinding. Joseph Smith taught that "the devil flatters us that we are very righteous, when we are feeding on the faults of others."⁶ When you think about it, self-righteousness is just a counterfeit for real righteousness.

Satan loves to spread contention in the Church. He specializes in pointing out the faults of Church leaders. Joseph Smith warned the Saints that the beginning step to apostasy is to lose confidence in the leaders of the Church.⁷

Almost all anti-Mormon literature is based on lies about the character of Joseph Smith. The enemy works hard to discredit Joseph because the message of the Restoration hangs on the Prophet's account of what happened in the Sacred Grove. The devil is working harder today than ever before to make members question their testimonies of the Restoration.

In the early days of our dispensation, many priesthood brethren, to their regret, did not stay loyal to the Prophet. One of them was Lyman E. Johnson, who was excommunicated for unrighteous conduct. He later lamented having left the Church: "I would suffer my right hand to be cut off, if I could believe it again. Then I was full of joy and gladness. My dreams were pleasant. When I awoke in the morning my spirit was cheerful. I was happy by day and by night, full of peace and joy and thanksgiving. But now it is darkness, pain, sorrow, misery in the extreme. I have never since seen a happy moment."⁸

Think about those words. They stand as a warning to all Church members.

I am a convert to the Church. I was baptized when I was a 23-year-old young single adult attending medical school in Arizona, USA. I know first-hand how Satan works on investigators to confuse them and discourage them when they are seeking truth.

All during my youth, I had watched the examples of Latter-day Saint friends. I was impressed with the way they conducted their lives. I made the decision to learn more about the Church, but I did not want to tell anyone I was studying Mormonism. To avoid pressure from my friends, I decided to make my search a private investigation.

This was many years before the internet, so I went to the public library. I found a copy of the Book of Mormon and a book called *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, by Elder LeGrand Richards (1886–1983) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I began to read these books with great desire, and I found them inspiring.

While my spirit was yearning to learn more, Satan began to whisper in my ear. He told me that in order to be completely objective, I needed to read what was written by the critics of the Church also. I went back to the public library and began to look around. Sure enough, I found a book that discredited the Prophet Joseph.

Reading this anti-Mormon book confused me. I lost that sweet spirit and influence that had guided my investigation. I became frustrated and was about to abandon my search for truth. I was praying for an answer while reading anti-Mormon literature!

To my surprise, I received a phone call from a high



school friend who was attending Brigham Young University. She invited me to come visit her in Utah, promising that I would love the scenic trip. She had no idea that I was secretly studying about her Church.

I accepted her invitation. My friend suggested that we go to Salt Lake City to visit Temple Square. She was surprised by my enthusiastic response. She had no idea how interested I was to learn the truth about Joseph Smith and the Restoration.

The sister missionaries on Temple Square were very helpful. Without knowing it, they answered many of my questions. Their testimonies influenced me to “doubt [my]

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doubts,”⁹ and my faith began to grow. The power of a heartfelt testimony cannot be overestimated.

My friend also shared her testimony with me and invited me to pray and ask God if the Church was true. On the long drive back to Arizona, I began to pray with faith—for the first time “with a sincere heart, with real intent” (Moroni 10:4). At some point on that trip, it seemed that my whole car lit up with light. I learned for myself that light can dispel darkness.

After I had decided to be baptized, the devil put up a final struggle. He worked on my family, who did everything in their power to discourage me, and they refused to attend my baptism.

I was baptized anyway, and gradually their hearts were softened. They began to help me research my family history. A few years later, I baptized my younger brother. The friend who invited me to visit her in Utah is now my wife.

4. Discouragement. Satan effectively uses this tool on the most faithful Saints when all else fails. For me, when I begin to feel discouraged, it helps me just to recognize who is trying to get me down. This makes me mad enough to cheer up—just to spite the devil.

Several years ago, President Benson gave a talk called “Do Not Despair.” In that insightful talk, he warned, “Satan is increasingly striving to overcome the Saints with despair, discouragement, despondency, and depression.”¹⁰ President Benson urged Church members to be on guard, and he gave 12 realistic suggestions for fighting discouragement.

His suggestions include serving others; working hard and avoiding idleness; practicing good health habits, which include exercising and eating foods in their natural state; seeking a priesthood blessing; listening to inspiring music; counting your blessings; and setting goals. And above all, as the scriptures teach, we are to pray always so we can conquer Satan (see D&C 10:5).¹¹

*Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.¹²*

It is important to know that there are limits to the power of evil. The Godhead sets those limits, and Satan is not

allowed to cross them. For example, the scriptures assure us that “power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children” (D&C 29:47).

Another significant limitation is that Satan does not know our thoughts unless we tell him. The Lord explained, “There is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart” (D&C 6:16).

Perhaps this is why the Lord has given us commandments such as “Do not murmur” (D&C 9:6) and “Thou shalt not speak evil of thy neighbor” (D&C 42:27). If you can learn to bridle your tongue (see James 1:26), you won’t end up giving too much information to the devil. When he hears murmuring, complaining, and criticizing, he takes careful notes. Your negative words expose your weaknesses to the enemy.

I have good news for you. The armies of God are larger than the armies of Lucifer. You may look around and think to yourself, “The world is becoming more and more wicked. Satan must be winning the war.” Don’t be fooled. The truth is, we outnumber the enemy. Remember, two-thirds of God’s children chose the Father’s plan.

Brothers and sisters, make sure you are fighting on the Lord’s side. Make sure you are carrying the sword of the Spirit.

It is my prayer that at the end of your lives, you can say with the Apostle Paul, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). ■

NOTES

1. Guide to the Scriptures, “Lucifer,” scriptures.lds.org.
2. Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 5.
3. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 72.
4. See Francis M. Gibbons, *Heber J. Grant: Man of Steel, Prophet of God* (1979), 35–36.
5. See, for example, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “You Matter to Him,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 20; Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Times in Which We Live,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 74.
6. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 454.
7. See *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 318.
8. Lyman E. Johnson, in Brigham Young, *Deseret News*, Aug. 15, 1877, 484.
9. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Come, Join with Us,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 23.
10. Ezra Taft Benson, “Do Not Despair,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 65.
11. See Ezra Taft Benson, “Do Not Despair,” 65–67.
12. William Cowper, in Robert Andrews, comp., *The Concise Columbia Dictionary of Quotations* (1987), 78.