

The Game and the Helper

Have you ever felt like life was a game and every move you made seemed to be wrong? Did you ever wish there was someone who knew more about it than you to help you make the right moves?

I dreamed that I was in an old English Manor House. I walked down a long dark hallway and, passing through massive double doors, entered the study. The room was large with an old-fashioned high ceiling and was dimly lit. Thick draperies hung on tall windows. Wooden flooring showed between the oriental rugs which covered most of the floor area. The walls were covered with wood paneling or book shelves filled with books. Here and there, around the room, were a few chairs and a desk was over in one corner. In the stone fireplace, a fire was burning brightly casting shadows across the room.

But what drew my attention like a magnet was the table at the center of the room. On it sat a chess board, filled with chess pieces set up, ready for a game to start. On either side of it was an empty chair.

A man came up to me whom I hadn't noticed before. He was a middle-aged, very pleasant man, neatly dressed in a gray suit.

"Would you care to play?" he asked.

"Yes, I would," I replied. I had played a few games of chess before and always enjoyed them. I had even won a few times.

"This way," he said, as he motioned with his hand.

I sat down, wondering who my opponent would be. I looked down at the chess board and realized at once that this was no ordinary chess game, played solely for fun. This game was serious. For written across the chess board in letters that seemed to glow, were the words, "THIS IS YOUR LIFE." I had mixed emotions: excitement, anticipation, fear and dread.

But where was my opponent? As I looked up again, there, seated across from me, was a figure in a black robe with the hood pulled up over his head. He also looked up as I did and his hood fell back somewhat, exposing his face. It was evil--his eyes black and sinister. A twisted grin crossed his face and I shuddered. I thought perhaps I heard a low cackle and I wasn't sure I still wanted to play.

It was my move first and so we began our game. At first, it seemed I was doing pretty well, but then, as we got more into the game, I could see how I had been set up and had moved my pieces exactly where he wanted them so he

could entrap me. He seemed to sense my next move and was always one jump ahead of me. Sometimes there were noises or the door would open and I would glance away for a second. When I returned my gaze, it seemed the pieces had been moved. But I never could really catch him at it and so formally accuse him of cheating. Several times, he made moves I didn't think were legal, but I hadn't played that much and so was unsure and couldn't prove that either.

It wasn't long until it became apparent that I was going to lose unless something happened pretty soon to help me. I was getting scared. I had thought I could handle this, but short of a miracle, I would be done for--very soon. I looked around the room - not seeing anyone, but out loud asked anyway, "Isn't there anyone who can help me?"

Then I noticed a figure standing in front of the fireplace. He seemed to be sort of glowing as if He, himself, were part of the fire or had just stepped out of it. I looked imploringly at Him. "Can you, will you help me?" He nodded and came over to stand behind me. I could feel the fire radiating from Him and it was not only warmth, but strength and encouragement. I had hope again. All was not lost.

It was my move. I turned to Him and asked, "What should I do?" He answered and I did as He said. For the first time, my opponent looked upset. Instead of the smirk on his face, there was a scowl. He was not happy about the new situation.

So the game continued. I would ask my helper before I moved and would do as He said. But sometimes He did not answer immediately and I felt I just couldn't wait any longer and had to move. And when I did, the smirk would return on my opponent's face. It seemed the move had been a mistake. But I had done the best I could. I also suspected he was still cheating, but still couldn't catch him at it. I was starting to get frustrated. I could see now that I wasn't going to lose (by depending on my helper, I was an equal match for my opponent), but I wasn't going to be able to win either. The game was dragging on and on and I was getting more tired and more frustrated. It was my life, I was responsible and the pressure was getting to me.

Finally, I turned to my helper and asked, "Isn't there anything else you can do to help me win?"

"Yes, there is," he replied.

"What is it?" I begged.

"Get up and give me your seat," was his response.

"But that would mean you would be running my life. You would be in control, making the decisions."

"Exactly," he stated. "Both the playing and the responsibility would be

mine, and you would be my assistant."

I looked over at my opponent. He was really scowling now. That decided it. I knew he only scowled when I made a good move, so I figured giving up my seat must be a really good move to make him so upset. I got up and let my helper sit down and I stood at his shoulder. When I did, it was as if a heavy load was removed from my shoulders. The anxiety, the worry, the frustration and fear were all gone. He would carry them. And in their place I had peace.

The game resumed. He kept his eyes on the board every second. If there was a noise or distraction, he did not turn to look. I sensed he already knew what it was.

My opponent could not cheat. If he tried a questionable move, he was challenged and lost, with each move my opponent seemed to entrap himself more and more.

I stood quietly at his side and sometimes he would ask me to move a piece and tell me exactly where to place it. Other times, he would do it himself. But always he was the player. I was now the helper. A few times in my excitement, I anticipated where I thought he would move next and reached out and moved the piece myself without him telling me. Then I could see it was a mistake. I hung my head. He looked at me with tender eyes as if to say, "It's O.K. All is not lost." And on the next move, he would use my bad move to gain even more.

Slowly, the trend of the game changed. It was becoming clearer and clearer who the winner would be. My opponent seemed to shrink in his chair and get smaller and smaller as the game went on. Finally the words, "Check Mate." The game was over.

"You've won!" I said to him.

"No," he replied, turning to me with a smile. "We've won!"

Scripture for discussion:

Gal. 2:20

Heb. 4:15-16

Rev. 1:13-18