

10. The Price of Duplicity

Biblical material: Gen. 25:19–29:30.

Quotes

- We are only falsehood, duplicity, contradiction; we both conceal and disguise ourselves from ourselves. *Blaise Pascal*
- Dishonesty, cowardice and duplicity are never impulsive. *George A. Knight*
- The great majority of us are required to live a life of constant duplicity. Your health is bound to be affected if, day after day, you say the opposite of what you feel, if you grovel before what you dislike, and rejoice at what brings you nothing but misfortune. *Boris Pasternak*
- Nothing more completely baffles one who is full of tricks and duplicity than straight forward and simple integrity in another. *Charles Caleb Colton*

Questions

How do we affect ourselves when we operate from falsehoods? And others? Why is truth so important in God's way of running the universe? Why are the lies of the Devil so dangerous in the great controversy? How did Jacob, with Rebekah, seek to subvert the system, and why? What were the inevitable consequences? How was each affected by this major example of a lie?

Discussion/ Comment

As Graham Maxwell has rightly observed, we become like what we worship and admire. Our aims and objectives greatly affect our character, especially in terms of implementation and methods. If we choose to adopt questionable ways to get what we want, not only will we not be truly satisfied, but more significantly we distort and destroy any of our laudable objectives. Like an evangelist who uses underhanded tactics to achieve baptisms, even though the goal is good, we can taint and pervert it by our methods.

There are always consequences, actions have inevitable results. In Lucifer's plan of deception, he chose to use lies and innuendos to achieve his goals. He may have even believed that he had "right on his side" at some time, early on. However wrong this perspective was, it is possible it could have been held in sincerity. That was why God spent so much time trying to convince Lucifer of the errors of his thinking. But once Lucifer chose the path of determined rebellion, even though he understood the likely consequences of his actions, and also chose to consciously misrepresent God, then God had no choice but to expel him from heaven.

Why? Because lies are corrosive, corrupting truth and trust. God's response well illustrates his total commitment to truth, emphasizing its importance in his government. The consequences of believing lies and choosing "alternate realities" reveal the inevitable and ultimately permanent damage caused.

When Jacob followed his mother's plan to steal his brother's blessing from his father—after already buying Esau's birthright—he started a chain of actions that could never be called back. Through deception he attempted to take what was not his. While Esau's action in "selling" his birthright for lentil stew suggests he was dismissive and careless, yet it was clearly wrong for Jacob—"the supplanter"—to steal what did not belong to him.

Some may even argue that since Jacob already had that name, he was supposed to use deceit and treachery in supplanting his brother, and that God endorsed that! But we must emphasize free will and choice once again. Trying to do things according to our own defective methods ends up in disaster—and Jacob and Rebekah had to learn this. The consequences were enormous. Imagine the thoughts and feelings of Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob. Think of what happened as a result. Then ask, was it worth it?

Isaac loved his “tasty meat”—a true and unconverted carnivore! A definite weakness, from a vegetarian perspective, that was exploited by his scheming trickster wife Rebekah. Jacob was a mother’s boy who was very “smooth” in his dealings, quite ready to go along with the deceit. Esau was an impetuous hunter, ready to indulge his passions, contemptuous to the point of disregarding his sacred birthright to satisfy his immediate hunger for a bit of stew!

The characters involved are all too human—we see our own frailties illustrated here. There is much to say that is of direct relevance, but little time to cover it all. Just a few instances: Esau sees that his parents don’t care for his Hittite wives, so just to please them he marries one from his own race. Just keeping in with the parents.

The two parents have favorites: Isaac loves Esau, Rebekah loves Jacob. A sure recipe for disaster, but how common such attitudes are today. Esau blames Jacob for “taking” his birthright, even though he knew he actually “sold” it. Blaming, making others responsible—again familiar family woes. Jacob directly lies to his father in response to Isaac’s question “Are you really my son Esau?” Rebekah uses her culinary skills to deceive her husband...

A sorry tale of deception and its consequences—another illustration of the issues and events in the great controversy. Sad, disappointing, but enormously important and relevant.

Ellen White Comments

But there must be no duplicity, no crookedness, in the life of the worker. While error, even when held in sincerity, is dangerous to anyone, insincerity in the truth is fatal. {CH 35.1}

Go to those supposed to be in error, talk with them, not working with duplicity and hypocrisy, meeting them day by day with apparent friendship, and at the same time plotting against them in perfect unity with the satanic agencies at work to uproot, to tear down, to remove from the institution the ones the unbelieving element wants removed, while not a word is spoken with the brethren or sisters in the faith to redeem them, to heal them, if they are in error; and if they are not in the wrong, to vindicate the right, and put the rebuke where it belongs--upon the plotters of an evil work, because Satan is behind the scene. The Lord Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, likening them to sepulchers that do not appear, hidden from sight, but full of corruption. The Lord hates all deception, secrecy, and guile. This is Satan’s work; the work of God is open and frank. No one will work against a child of God on the strength of the testimony of the Lord’s enemy, and work after Satan’s manner—concealing himself, yet suggesting, instigating, planning in perfect unity with the Lord’s enemies. {TM 274.1}

Rebekah was acquainted with Isaac’s partiality for Esau, and was satisfied that reasoning would not change his purpose. Instead of trusting in God, The Disposer of events, she manifested her lack of faith by persuading Jacob to deceive his father....

Jacob and Rebekah succeeded in their purpose, but they gained only trouble and sorrow by their deception....But like many who now profess to be children of God, they were unwilling to leave the matter in His hands. Rebekah bitterly repented the wrong counsel she had given her son; it was the means of separating him from her, and she never saw his face again. {CC 62}

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