



"A lie has speed, but truth has endurance."
—Edgar J. Mohn

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Strangers to the Truth (Part Two)

In [John 8:40](#), Jesus points out that, even though they were physically descended from righteous Abraham, the members of His Jewish audience acted as if [Satan](#) were their real father: "But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from [God](#). Abraham did not do this." Their actions gave the lie to their claim to be heirs of Abraham. Not only did their mouths speak lies, but so did their behaviors.

Our Savior continues in verse 44, providing the spiritual reason for His accusation:

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

In the same breath, Christ identifies Satan as a murderer and a liar. Is lying truly as bad as murder? Was the recently deceased Charles Manson as guilty of lying as he was of murder? They are both sins, and both carry the penalty of death ([Romans 6:23](#)), if a person does not [repent](#) of them. Rather than

implying that they are equal, Jesus is perhaps telling us that the breaking of any commandment is a break with the truth. In any [sin](#), deceit is involved.

Society considers lying as a whole to be harmless. Everyone does it, so it must be okay, right? In an article in *Psychology Today*, therapist Seth Slater writes: "Lying can bail us out of awkward situations. Spare the feelings of others. Preserve or strengthen alliances. Enhance social standing. Keep us out of trouble. Even save our lives." He makes lying sound like a good thing! As he loves to do, Satan has turned wrong into right!

Slater goes on to discuss "the evolutionary biology of cognition," meaning that "lying is . . . a valuable tool in the survival kit of any social species." He cites the example of Koko, the sign-language-speaking, pet-cat-possessing gorilla. She once tore a kitchen sink out of a wall, and when her trainers questioned her about the sink, Koko slyly signed, "Cat did it." To Slater, this is proof that lying is in our evolutionary DNA!

More correctly, we start lying when young to get ourselves out of trouble, and if it "works," we keep doing it and become better at it. Undoubtedly, we have all done it, and we all lie even now to some degree. Do we recognize what we are doing? Are we trying to rid ourselves of this sin? Or are we like the Pharisees, telling Christ that we have never been in bondage ([John 8:33](#))?

We hear daily about "fake news." We hardly know what to believe anymore. Is *anyone* telling the truth? Remember the old saw that goes, "How can you tell a politician is lying? His lips are moving." Sure, it is still funny—because it is true, for the most part—but it is also very sad. To be elected, a politician thinks that he must make promises he cannot keep, he must hide his affairs and dirty laundry—he must lie! A politician these days cannot stand before the voters and tell the truth.

Recall Jack Nicholson's line from *A Few Good Men*: "You can't handle the truth!" In his sermon, "Satan (Part Two)," John Ritenbaugh makes an interesting observation about Satan's deception of Eve and of people in general: "What is so sad is that [Satan] seems to have such an easy time in getting people to swallow the lie that it will somehow be better to disobey God than to obey Him." The whole human race has trouble handling the truth. Lying is so much easier.

It is not difficult to make the case that lying is part of almost all sin. In a broad sense, people tend to lie about their stealing, [adultery](#), murder, and so on. But in a narrower sense, we step over the line into lying when we tell ourselves that our sins are harmless or that they will not hurt anyone or that we deserve whatever we are after. We lie to ourselves:

- "My boss doesn't pay me enough, so I'll just steal some office supplies."
- "I deserve better from my spouse, so I'll have an affair [or watch some porn]."
- "God doesn't bless me enough, so I have to work on the [Sabbath](#)."

We also lie to others:

- "Sure, I sent the check."
- "I gave at the office."
- "No, those pants don't make you look fat."

Such lies start the process toward committing other sins.

This pattern of deceit, prevalent in Western society, will come to haunt us when the Man of Sin appears on the scene. The apostle Paul writes in [II Thessalonians 2:1-4](#):

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord [Jesus Christ](#) and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the [falling away](#) comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Paul warns of a coming apostasy, and we must take care not to be deceived. These days, we have ready, 24-hours-a-day access to what is happening around [the world](#), predicted in [Daniel 12:4](#), that at the time of the end, "knowledge shall increase." The news providers and the myriad talking heads tell us different things, so who can we believe?

The apostle alerts us in verse 9, "The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders."

[Revelation 13:13](#) echoes this, saying that the [false prophet](#) "performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men." We have to ask ourselves, "What will I think when I see a man call down fire from the skies?" Would an astounding miracle like this make us wonder if we have misunderstood Bible prophecy—that this powerful man must be from God? Could we be deceived? We need to consider this seriously and not just brush it off.

In Part Three, we will continue in II Thessalonians 2, where Paul provides some advice for us to take to heart as the end approaches.

- Mike Ford

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Ninth Commandment](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh (1932-2023)

The breaking of God's Commandments has destroyed trust within the national and local communities of modern Israel. The guilelessness, attributed to Nathaniel, apparently was a rarity in Israel, while deceitfulness was something passed through the genes from father Jacob. Israel's national shame derives from its proclivity for deceit and hypocrisy. In stark contrast to Israel's faithlessness, our God is a God of truth, faithfulness and light. It is the responsibility of the preacher to safeguard the morals of the community. Our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, put truth into a visible concrete form, leaving us an example to follow. Unfortunately, most of modern Israel has rejected this example. Jesus desires that God the Father would sanctify the

Israel of God into His truth or reality. In our preparation to become Kings and Priests, we must embody truth as had our Jesus Christ, absolutely refusing to bear false witness in our words, our behavior, and our cumulative reputation. We dare not resist the truth, succumbing to self-deception, or blaming others for our shortcomings, trying to cover up our inadequacies. When we lie, we are vainly attempting to control (or spin) something, producing an escalation of harmful falsehoods, digging a pit into which we will ultimately fall. The heart is deceitful, faithless, insincere, tricky, cunning, double-dealing, treacherous, incurable, and desperately wicked, hopelessly addicted to lying, tuned into the prince and power of the air. We must steadfastly choose to speak the truth, even if it will hurt us in the short run, realizing that truthfulness will enable us to enter into God's presence.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Deceptions of the End Time](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Our world is full of lies and liars, and many in God's church are ignorant of just how much deceit is out there. Jesus tells us, however, that the best way to resist deception is being convicted of the truth.

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