

The Price of Trying to Deceive People



SABBATH—DECEMBER 2

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Genesis 25:19–29:30.

MEMORY VERSE: “I [God] am with you [Jacob]. I will watch over you everywhere you go. And I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you” (Genesis 28:15, NIV).

FRENCHMAN JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712–1778) WAS ONE OF THE FREE THINKERS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.¹ He argued that “there is no original sin in the human heart.” He also said that all humans are basically good. He said it is society that polluted people. He argued that if we were to follow our own feelings and conscience,² we would naturally do the right thing. (Imagine, all this came from a man who fathered many children and dumped them all at an orphanage.)

But the Bible teaches that the “human heart is more dishonest than anything else. It can't [cannot] be healed. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9, NIV). Or, as other verses explain, “But Jesus did not fully trust them. He knew what people are like. He didn't [did not] need others to tell him what people are like. He already knew what was in the human heart” (John 2:24, 25, NIV).

This week, we will study more about how wicked and dishonest people really are. Pride, passion (lust), and selfishness rule, even when people try to do God's will.

The bright spot? God still shows His love, His patience, and His forgiving grace to weak sinners.

¹French Revolution—from 1789 to 1799. The revolution began when the king wanted money for his government, which had run out of money. This made many people angry. Many rich people were killed. The king and queen also were killed.

²conscience—a knowledge or sense of right and wrong with an urge to do right; moral judgment.

SUNDAY—DECEMBER 3**ESAU AND JACOB (Genesis 25:19-34)**

Esau was a twin. But he was born first and so was older than Jacob. Because Esau was older, he was to receive the special promises and rights that came with the covenant³ God first made with Abraham. “Esau and Jacob knew these promises well. They were taught to honor the birthright⁴ as something very important. The birthright included an inheritance (gift) of worldly wealth and spiritual excellence. The person who received it was to be the priest of his family. Through his family line, the Savior of the world would come. But, there were responsibilities for the keepers of the birthright. The person who should inherit (receive) its blessings must devote his life to God’s service. He must be obedient to God’s requirements. In marriage, in his family relations, in public life, he must obey God’s will.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 177, 178.

With Ellen White’s above comment in mind, read Genesis 25:19-34. How do her words help us understand why Esau acted as he did? What lessons can we learn from this? Also read Hebrews 12:14-17.



Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew.

Genesis 25:27 shows the big difference between Jacob and Esau. The Hebrew word describing Jacob is *tam*. *Tam* means “complete,” “perfect,” or “morally⁵ innocent.” *Tam* is the same word translated in Job 1:8 as “perfect.” This word is used to describe Job’s character. Jacob might be described as perfect. But he still was willing to take advantage of Esau’s weakness. So Jacob could “steal” the birthright for himself. Perhaps God’s promises given to his mother (Genesis 25:23) made Jacob think he had to “own” the birthright. Then those promises would be fulfilled. Whatever Jacob’s reasons were, he clearly valued the birthright as something he wanted to have.

Esau showed he was unworthy of the birthright, because he traded it away carelessly (Genesis 25:33, 34).

³covenant—a promise or agreement between God and His people.

⁴birthright—rights and responsibilities belonging to a person because he is the oldest son.

⁵morally—knowing right from wrong.

Jacob valued the birthright. But he tried to get it through a dishonorable method. How can we protect ourselves from getting honorable things by using dishonorable methods?

MONDAY—DECEMBER 4

ISAAC AND ABIMELECH (Genesis 26)

There was a famine⁶ that caused Isaac to move to a new location. Perhaps the move could have caused Isaac to become discouraged. For this reason, God renewed with Isaac the same covenant promises He had made with Abraham (Genesis 26:1-5).

Read Genesis 26:7-11. Where have we seen this before? What lesson can we learn from this story?

Sometime later, Isaac's wealth grew to the point that it caused the Philistines to become jealous. So, to keep peace, Isaac moved to the valley of Gerar and later to Beersheba (Genesis 26:12-23). This shows the hardship and problems that believers experience in this sin-darkened world.

What practice did Isaac follow after the second promise was given to him? Why is this practice important? What does it symbolize? Genesis 26:24, 25 (also read

Ephesians 5:2; Revelation 13:8).

Abraham entered into a treaty with Abimelech, the ruler of Gerar. Almost a hundred years later, another Abimelech invited Isaac to enter into a sworn peace treaty.

Notice what Abimelech says two times to Isaac (Genesis 25:29). How do these words show what it means to be a witness⁷ to God? What parts of your life could someone look at and say, "You are now blessed of the Lord?" In what ways are you blessed of the Lord? Write a prayer thanking God for all He has done for you.

TUESDAY—DECEMBER 5

FAITHLESS SCHEMES (PLANS) (Genesis 27:1-7)

In Genesis 27:17, Isaac permitted his tastebuds to influence his heart and conscience. He decided to give the birthright blessing to his older son Esau. He did so, even knowing the following: (1) what the Lord said about the two sons (Genesis 25:23); (2) Esau's uncaring attitude⁸ toward the birthright (Genesis 25:29-34); and (3) his bad choice of wives (Genesis 26: 34, 35).

"Rebekah foresaw Isaac's purpose. She believed it did not follow God's will. Isaac was in danger of making God angry and of preventing Jacob from

⁶famine—not having enough food over a long period of time.

⁷witness—when your life is an example for God.

⁸attitude—how we feel or think about something or someone.

having the position to which God had called him. She tried and failed to change Isaac's mind. So she decided to use a trick."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 180.

Read the rest of the story in Genesis 27:8-29. Notice in verse 20 how Jacob answered his father's question. Why does this show even more just how wrong this trick was?



Jacob and Rebekah tricked Isaac.

Isaac smelled the clothes Jacob wore. At the same time, Isaac's mind was carried from the present to the future. The smell of the fields suggested to Isaac plenty of crops, grain, and wine (Genesis 27:27-29, 37). Jacob was promised full control over the nations. It was a plan that was

repeated and made clearer by later prophets and poets of Israel. With the Holy Spirit's leading, Isaac foresaw the full victory and success of God's people.

Read carefully the blessing Isaac gave to Jacob (Genesis 27:28, 29). What parts does the blessing have that would make Jacob want the blessing so badly?

There is so much in the blessing that could be used for good or for bad. God gives gifts and blessings. But that does not automatically mean that people use these blessings for His glory. What kind of gifts and blessings has God given you? How are you using them? What changes might you need to make in how you use what God has given you for His glory?

WEDNESDAY—DECEMBER 6

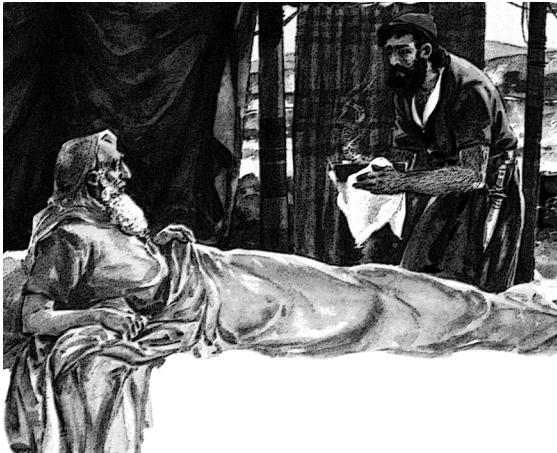
THE PRICE OF TRYING TO DECEIVE PEOPLE (Genesis 27:30-46)

Two times we have seen Jacob take advantage of the weakness of others to get what he wanted. What a sorry example. Jacob did wrong. But his experience should teach us a lot about God's grace for those who truly repent.⁹ However, the Bible shows many times that the forgiveness of sin does not automatically remove the results of sin.

⁹repent—to say you are sorry for your sins and then to turn away from your sins.

Jacob's and Rebekah's trick was very foolish, because it should have been clear that Esau and Isaac would find out later what had happened. But Jacob and Rebekah seemed firm in trying to get what they wanted, no matter what the cost would be. What an important lesson for all of us. Think through carefully what you are about to do!

Perhaps the saddest thing about this story is that there are no innocent people. Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau were all guilty of wrongdoing.



Esau begged Isaac for a blessing, too.

Next to each name, write down the wrong actions they did. What was the reason for all these actions?

Isaac _____

Rebekah _____

Jacob _____

Esau _____

In the end, we see in these people the problem of pure selfishness. People want what they want for themselves. No matter if their actions are right or wrong. What is more scary is that they were doing what they believed were God's wishes. Yet look at the results. For example, in Genesis 27:45 Rebekah tells Jacob to flee, and she will call him back later. But nothing in the Bible shows that Rebekah was ever to see Jacob again.

Go over the list of sins you listed above. What was the reason for each one? Which of these reasons does Satan use with greatest success in your own experience? Why is death to self at the foot of the Cross your only hope for victory in these areas? How can you better make use of the power promised us in the Bible (1 Corinthians 10:13)?



Our only hope

THURSDAY—DECEMBER 7**JACOB'S LADDER (Genesis 28)**

Note Isaac's instruction and blessing before he sent Jacob to Mesopotamia. Genesis 28:1-5. Why should Isaac's words about marriage be so important?

After all his plans to deceive, Jacob flees his family. But it is clear that God is not finished with Jacob. God appears to him in a dream and gives him some wonderful promises.

Read Genesis 28:10-15. Why do you think God would promise so much to a liar like Jacob? What does this tell us about God's grace?

Ellen White writes that, before he slept, Jacob “confessed¹⁰ his sin and asked God for proof that He had not left him” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 183). She also writes that the dream was God's answer to Jacob's repentance.¹¹

The ladder of angels was an example of the plan of salvation. Jesus is the ladder between heaven and earth. No matter how far sin separates a person from heaven, Jesus bridged the gap. Jesus' perfect righteousness (character) was enough to reunite a sinful world to a Holy God (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19). In God's eyes, Jesus' perfect character makes righteous (holy) all those who accept by faith what He has done for them (Romans 3:28-30; Romans 4:5; Galatians 3:24).



Jesus is the ladder between heaven and earth.

¹⁰confessed—admitted to God that you have sinned; to tell God what sins you have done.

¹¹repentance—being sorry for your sins, wanting to stop sinning, and turning away from your sins.

So, many years before the Cross, we see the close connection between heaven and earth. We see that God does not leave us. We see that we are not alone, and that God is closely involved in what happens on earth.

Without the Bible, we would have good reasons for losing hope. We would just be living on a tiny planet in a large, cold universe that does not seem to care at all about us. But the Bible gives us a new way of interpreting what happens in our world. How have you experienced the closeness of heaven to earth? How has God shown you that He is close? Be prepared to share your answers with the class on Sabbath.

FRIDAY—DECEMBER 8

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 177-189; *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, comments on Genesis 25:19–29:30.

“Jacob and Rebekah succeeded in their purpose. But they gained only trouble and sorrow by their wrong action. God had announced that Jacob should receive the birthright. His word would have been fulfilled in His own time if Jacob and Rebekah had waited in faith for Him to work for them. But like many who now claim to be children of God, they were unwilling to leave everything to His care.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 180.

“In the vision about the ladder, the plan of salvation was given to Jacob in a way that was important to him at that time. The ladder shown to Jacob in his dream was the same that Christ spoke about in His talk with Nathanael. Jesus said, ‘You will see the angels of God going up and coming down on the Son of Man [Jesus]’ (John 1:51, NIV). Up to the time of Adam and Eve’s rebellion against God’s government, communication between God and Adam and Eve had been open. But sin separated earth from heaven. Then no person could communicate with the Creator. But the world was not left without hope. The ladder represents Jesus. Jesus is the chosen method of communication. If Jesus’ sacrifice had not bridged the separation that sin had made, the angels could not have had any communication with sinners. Jesus connects us in our weakness and helplessness to His unlimited power.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 184.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ As a class, discuss your answers to the question at the end of Thursday’s lesson.
- ❷ What makes us think that to do God’s will, we can go against what God teaches? Why is it so easy to fall into that trap? What other examples do we have of this happening? How might we be tempted to do the same thing?