

Have You Been Deceived?

By Anand Peter

Scripture Reading: Genesis 12:10-20; Genesis 20:1-18; Ephesians 6:11; Galatians 6:1

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:11).

Deception is a malady we encounter almost daily. At times, we indulge in it ourselves; at other times, we are its victims. When we indulge in self-deception, we are both the deceiver and the deceived. The worst form of deception is when the perpetrator appears honest, religious, sincere, and convincing. Sometimes it is done in the mistaken belief that it is harmless, and would not affect anyone. Some believers give it no more than a passing thought, and dismiss it as a minor sin. Yet any departure, minor or major, from the standard set by Jesus is indeed sin. Satan has been, and continues to be, at this work, seeking to undermine Christ by using weak mortals such as you and me. Deception compromises the grace and protection available to all believers in Jesus Christ.

To deceive is to mislead by giving a distorted impression or a false sense of reality; to trick; to cheat; to beguile. When truth is extended to encompass a falsehood, the entire expression becomes a deception; a half-truth, in such cases, deserves no leniency. I encountered, to my utter surprise, such a deception recently from someone I had trusted. It left a lingering discomfort in my heart. The dilemma we normally face in such a situation is whether or not to confront the person concerned, and call his or her bluff.

Scripture tells us of many instances of deception. Eve was deceived, and in turn deceived Adam; the story of deception begins in Genesis, and what we would ordinarily reckon as greater sins followed after this first one. Abraham resorted to deception twice: once in Egypt, when he encountered Pharaoh (Genesis 12:10-20), and again in Gerar, when he encountered Abimelech, King of Gerar (Genesis 20:1-18). In both instances, Abraham employed deception with a view to averting a possible threat to his life. Although Sarah was, in truth, his wife, she was also his half-sister; and when asked to reveal her identity, he spoke a half-truth, saying, "She is my sister." He feared death, should he speak the whole truth. Surely, the fear of God and faith in God were absent from him in that moment; Abraham, the father of faith, chose to lie. Several other biblical figures, among them Samson, Delilah, Esther, and David, likewise practised deception in one form or another.

The only safeguard against deception is to remain alert, in faith towards Jesus. Put on Christ as your armour, as Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:11: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Further, in Galatians 6:1, we read, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

"Before God can deliver us, we must undeceive ourselves" (Augustine of Hippo, quoted in Kent Crockett's Sermon Illustrations, www.kentcrockett.com).