

W O R D A T W O R K

VOLUME XLI NUMBER VI Weapons of Our Warfare III Righteous Deception and The Art of Concealment

SATURDAY, JUNE 1

Scripture: James 1:5

Perhaps we've heard the old song *The Gambler* by Kenny Rogers, which is best known for the chorus, "You've gotta know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em." It's obviously dealing with a questionable subject but offers a stark piece of instruction on the need to discern one's situation or surroundings and act appropriately. To succeed in any endeavor, we have to know the rules of the "game" we are navigating (via God's voice) and adapt our behaviors accordingly to give ourselves the greatest chance of success. Believe it or not, this phrase has serious application for believers, especially as we appear to be entering an age of greatly increasing persecution. The word 'deception' is a word Christians frown upon but there are two synonyms for deception that are worth looking at. One is the word 'ruse' meaning 'a deceptive maneuver, especially to avoid capture.' The other synonym is 'stratagem' which 'implies a ruse used to entrap, outwit, circumvent or surprise an opponent or enemy.' Our subject today deals with developing the wisdom and cunning to walk safely through supernatural landmines. We should be continually asking the Lord to give us the wisdom we need in order to make good decisions, and to make use of all of the weapons in our spiritual arsenal in order to achieve victory!

SUNDAY, JUNE 2

Scripture: II Corinthians 10:4

Many of us have always enjoyed the freedom to share our faith and our views on culture, politics and morality, even when we may not have taken advantage of that freedom as often or as thoughtfully as we should have. But as persecution ramps up in the latter days, we will need to exercise more wisdom about what we say, when we say it, and to whom. On the other hand, those who may have grown up behind the Iron Curtain, in China, or in a South American communist dictatorship know all too well what we are talking about. Try finding a Christian from China, or an Islamic country who HASN'T experienced some type of persecution. Most likely we won't find a demonstrative, effusive individual or a drama-queen type who wants to shout from the rooftops. In countries where the government actively persecutes Christians, we are more likely to find people who have a deep passion for Christ and the Word, but who have, by necessity, learned how to live for Christ while exercising wisdom and stealth. In short, many have had to learn the art of concealment or righteous deception which are this month's topics!

MONDAY, JUNE 3

Scripture: Matthew 10:16

How did radical Marxists manage to infiltrate our educational, judicial, and media institutions and turn us in less than 40 years from a country who disdained communism and socialism into a country that mocks and disdains Christians? Back in the earliest days, they did it by hiding who they were. In the 1950s, no one who was an open or admitted communist would ever be considered for a position teaching impressionable children. These days it seems

the reverse is true. Communists are regularly hired to teach kids, and Christians who want to be teachers have to hide their faith, not just from their students, but from HR and employee intake teams. Gradually, these evil men and women infiltrated higher and higher into various cultural institutions and took control of the human resource departments in those institutions. Once ensconced in those positions, they could ensure that only people who thought like them would be considered for important positions in a company or agency. If we want to be as gentle as doves but as wise as serpents, we must consider a way of thinking that up until this point has been abomination to the church. We must learn to be cunning with divine stratagems/tactics without being deceivers!

TUESDAY, JUNE 4

Scripture: Genesis 3:4-5

The pronouncements against lying and liars in the Old and New Testaments are many. The Ten Commandments include the commandment against bearing false witness against one's neighbor. While it might be tempting to look at this as a general prohibition against lying, it is not. It specifically applies to speech about someone else, and speech that has a morally corrupt nature. But it isn't just the Ten Commandments. After all, Satan used lies and manipulation to goad Eve into eating from the Tree of Knowledge, making lies a bridge to the first human sin that separated man from God. This was not misdirection or base duplicity. This was a lie which was designed by Satan to separate us from our Creator!

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5

Scripture: Proverbs 6:16-17

Proverbs 6:16-19 include a strong prohibition against lying, listing it as one of the seven things that are an abomination to God. But as with much of Scripture, we need to dive deeper into the original Hebrew words in order to determine a clear meaning. The prohibition against a lying tongue in Proverbs 6:17 says, "*Haughty eyes, a lying(H8267) tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood,...*" The Hebrew word for "*lying*" here is Strong's Hebrew #8267, שָׁקֵר pronounced **sheh'-ker**, and has many meanings, including deceit, deceiving, deception, lies, and lying. But it also includes two aspects that are listed in Strongs, and those are "without cause," and "wrongfully." As we will discuss later, it is interesting that these aspects are included in the word **sheh'-ker**, as there are numerous circumstances in which lying or deception might not be done wrongfully or lacking cause. Do some situations exist where deception could be used for a just cause? This might be a season to study some important distinctions! Doing so may save a life some day!

THURSDAY, JUNE 6

Scripture: Proverbs 6:19

Proverbs 6:19 includes false witnesses who utter lies among the list of things that God hates, but the context is limited to criminal or civil actions. The Hebrew word for "*lies*" that is used in Proverbs 6:19 is Strong's Hebrew #3577, כָּזָב pronounced **kaw-zawb'** and means falsehood. Proverbs 6:19 is interesting because it uses both **sheh'-ker** and **kaw-zawb'** in the same sentence. It essentially says, "A **sheh'-ker** witness who utters **kaw-zawb'**" is one of the things that the Lord hates. In the Psalms, many of David's pleas to the Lord involved being saved from the lying tongues of his accusers, and from those who were bearing false witness against him. Of these two words, **sheh'-ker**/lying is used far more frequently, with 113 uses in the Old Testament, to 50 for **kaw-zawb'**/lie. Of the uses of **sheh'-ker**, the majority are used in proclamations against bearing false witness, or swearing to something which is not true.

FRIDAY, JUNE 7

Scripture: I Kings 22:19-23; II Chronicles 18:20-22

Though all of the Kings of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, one of the worst Israel ever had was King Ahab. This man was wicked to the core and compounded his natural wickedness by marrying a pagan Philistine and allowing

her to bring Baal-worship into Israel. God had to deal with Ahab's evil by raising up one of the most powerful prophets that Israel ever had. That prophet was Elijah! There is a story of God dealing with Ahab that is relevant to our discussion of deception found in I Kings 22:19-23. This was part of God's final plan for removing Ahab from power. King Ahab and King Jehoshaphat of Judah took counsel together about whether to go up to Ramoth-gilead and retake it from the King of Aram. We are then told that all of the 'prophets' and oracles around Ahab have told him that the Lord will give him victory in the battle. It is tempting to think that Ahab had nothing but prophets of Baal surrounding him due both to his unholy marriage to Jezebel, and the story of the battle that Elijah waged against the Prophets of Baal. But I Kings 22:24 tells us there were people who believed themselves to be prophets of God in his circle of advisors, even if they were *false* prophets.

SATURDAY, JUNE 8

Scripture: II Kings 10:18-19

Jehoshaphat was wary of the prophets that Ahab surrounded himself with, and demanded that someone who was more respected as a prophet of God be summoned to offer counsel. Ahab could only think of one local person who qualified and thus reluctantly summoned Micaiah who had previously called Ahab out on his idolatry. A man like Ahab who had persecuted the prophets of God and murdered people to get his way probably SHOULD be nervous about summoning a prophet. When the two kings asked Micaiah about their chances for success in Ramoth-gilead, Micaiah told them in I Kings 22 15-16: *"When he came to the king, the king said to him, 'Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we refrain?' And he answered him, 'Go up and succeed, and the LORD will give it into the hand of the king.' Then the king said to him, 'How many times must I adjure you to speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?'"* We see here that Micaiah did not tell King Ahab the truth up front. He told Ahab what Ahab wanted to hear. And Ahab, not lacking ALL discernment, demanded that Micaiah tell him the truth.

SUNDAY, JUNE 9

Scripture: I Kings 22:19-23

Prophets of the Lord deceiving the enemy? Lying even? Say it ain't so! Well, actually it is so. And it isn't the only example in Scripture. The story continues in I Kings 22:19-23: 19 saying *"Then Micaiah said, 'Therefore, hear the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left. The LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said this while another said that. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.' The LORD said to him, 'How?' And he said, 'I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then He said, 'You are to entice him and also prevail. Go and do so.' Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you.'" It is reasonable to assume that the spirit that stood before the Lord was an angel, and likely one of the heavenly host. Of the fallen angels, only Lucifer, the accuser, is said in Scripture to have to give account of himself to the Lord. Notice that God Himself gave the final command to this angel to go and deceive the false prophets! Was Micaiah simply lying when he told this story to Ahab? I Kings 22:28 says: *"Micaiah said, 'If you indeed return safely the LORD has not spoken by me.'" It is not a surprise what happened next... Ahab perished in the battle of Ramoth-gilead after donning a disguise, while sending Jehoshaphat forward in full royal regalia. Ahab indeed did not return safely, and despite the protestations of the false prophet Zedekiah, Micaiah's words were indeed true.**

MONDAY, JUNE 10

Scripture: I Kings 22

What does it mean that the Lord commanded one of his angels to sow deception amongst the false prophets of Ahab? What does it mean that Micaiah was willing to deceive Ahab until Ahab pressed him for the truth? God is not a God of lies, and the Bible makes it abundantly clear that God hates the lying tongue. So how do we reconcile God's nature with this Bible account? The key is in the meaning and context behind the Hebrew word **sheh'-ker**. One

of the main contexts of this word for lying or falsehood is something that is done in a wrongful manner. In other words, deception, when done for an unrighteous reason is the kind of falsehood that God hates. And this especially being the case where it is done in a context where you have promised up front to tell the truth, or where telling the truth is important, such as a court case where a judge or jury needs access to a full set of facts in order to see that **justice** is done. Deception in and of itself does not appear to be strictly prohibited, it merely requires the right circumstances and a righteous heart. We need to mediate on II Samuel 22:26-27 which says, *“With the merciful You will show yourself merciful; With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; With the pure You will show Yourself pure; And with the **devious** You will show Yourself **shrewd**.”* Perhaps it is the right season to read the entire chapter of II Samuel 22 sung by King David and then memorize these 2 verses!

TUESDAY, JUNE 11

Scripture: II Kings 10:18-19

Another example of deception being used to further righteousness can be found in the Old Testament in II Kings 10. In it, God has given the command to Jehu to fulfill the judgments which God had pronounced against Ahab's descendants as well as Jezebel, and the wicked followers of Baal who she had brought into the land. II Kings 10:18-19 tells us: *“Then Jehu gathered all the people and said to them, ‘Ahab served Baal a little; Jehu will serve him much. Now, summon all the prophets of Baal, all his worshipers and all his priests; let no one be missing, for I have a great sacrifice for Baal; whoever is missing shall not live.’ But Jehu did it in cunning, so that he might destroy the worshipers of Baal.”* Don't be fooled by the writer of II Kings 10 calling this *“cunning,”* deception is precisely what Jehu engaged in. When he told the people that Jehu would fully serve Baal, he was lying. He had no intention of serving Baal nor killing those who were absent. He had every intention of gathering the Baal worshippers in one place to make the slaughter more convenient, and make it more difficult for the targets to organize or escape. Again, this deception was authorized by the Lord, or at the very least, Jehu fell under no condemnation from the Lord for engaging in it!

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12

Scripture: I Corinthians 10:11

It's clear from studying the Old Testament that not all deception is equivalent. Some instances are more akin to cunning plans than they are to lying lips, and the Lord may use His angels to deceive when dealing with deceivers in order to accomplish His purposes. But what does the New Testament say and how did Jesus, the Apostles and the early church treat this topic? Jesus Himself doesn't speak as much to the sin of lying as we might think. The two places that He did specifically mention lying are in John 8:44 and 55. The first occasion was in discussion of the fallen state of man, and that men are like Lucifer in that they do not have the truth in them, but instead are children of Lucifer since he is the father of lies. I Corinthians 10:11 says of our Old Testament examples, *“Now all these things happened to them as examples and they were written for our admonition on whom the ends of the ages have come.”*

THURSDAY, JUNE 13

Scripture: I Corinthians 6:9-10

Paul's list of those who will not inherit the Kingdom of God in I Corinthians 6:9-10, interestingly does not specifically include a place for the false witness or the liar. The closest word used in Paul's admonition is *“swindler,”* which is the Greek word **har-pax**, meaning greedy extortionist. This is not exactly the deceiver or liar that is warned of in the Old Testament. That does not mean that lying is not condemned in the New Testament, however. Perhaps the strongest warning against lying comes from the Apostle John in the book of Revelation, and John's Gospel is the only one of the four which relates the story of Jesus exhorting the Jews over who He was and why He had come, which includes the description of Satan as the father of lies.

FRIDAY, JUNE 14

Scripture: Revelation 21:8

Revelation 21:8 says, *“But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars (G5571), their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”* The word for “liars” here is pretty straightforward, it is the Strong’s Greek word #G5571 is **ψευδής** pronounced **psyoo-dace**, meaning a person who is false or a liar. This certainly seems straightforward. Again, how do we reconcile this with the fact that righteous men, and even angels have engaged in deception on the orders of the Lord, or to further God’s purposes? To answer this question, we must look at some historical examples and discuss the circumstances surrounding them.

SATURDAY, JUNE 15

Scripture: Psalms 64:2, Psalms 143:9

Few people are still alive who vividly remember the Second World War. Of the many horrors and atrocities from that period, few events have burned such a long-lasting scar into the human collective consciousness as the Holocaust. Before the trains, the camps, and the gas chambers, the Nazis first began a campaign to dehumanize the Jews in the sight of ordinary German citizens, so that no one would be willing to stand up for them. While the Jews might have heard “Judenschwein” or “untermench” coming from their neighbors then, today a number of conservative people are hearing things like “bigot” or “homophobe” as arrows to pierce and single-out straight-thinking people. But even with the campaigns to strip empathy and sympathy from the German people, we know that there were those who resisted the hate, and some who secretly defended their Jewish neighbors or other Jews in the community. Israel has a special garden which commemorates these people called the Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations. In this garden, two of the most well known names among Western audiences would be Oscar Schindler, and Corrie ten Boom, the latter of whom was well known by Christians grew up in the 1970s or 1980s.

SUNDAY, JUNE 16

Scripture: Psalms 32:7

The story of Corrie ten Boom is one that evokes important questions for Christians. These are questions that were significant in the early church amongst the destruction of the great Roman persecutions. These questions were powerful during the Nazi persecution of the Jews in the Holocaust, and it looks more and more like they will eventually be essential again in the coming days as persecution is directed at us more frequently. Are all lies sins against God? Is it ever God’s will that we lie, or be deceptive? Will lies keep us out of heaven? Is there a red line? How about a grey area? Considering what some heroes of the faith of past generations had to do, the answers are probably less black and white than we would like, but at the same time clearer than our human nature would want to admit. Corrie’s autobiography called *The Hiding Place* is worth reading. And many lives were saved due to her family’s ‘righteous ruse.’ Is it possible that God will use someone’s unorthodox deception as His saving grace for his righteous cause? Psalms 32:7 says *“You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance”*

MONDAY, JUNE 17

Scripture: Psalms 18:1-6

Corrie ten Boom’s family had to lie in order to help save Jews from capture and deportation to the death camps. They had to deceive, not only their neighbors, but government officials, including police and those overseeing the food rationing programs. Corrie ten Boom told an account of how she convinced a local official to give them extra ration cards by lying to the German provisional government. The Garden of the ‘Righteous Among the Nations’ is filled with the names of people who all had to lie, cavort, cheat, steal, manipulate, and deceive! Doubtless in the cemeteries surrounding Wittenberg Germany there are headstones of those who lied about their continuing fidelity to the Pope in order to spare themselves or their families from being burned alive as heretics. Were they condemned to hell? Are we

to also assume that Corrie's father Casper went to hell for the lies he told the Nazi conquerors or their Dutch sympathizers in order to keep the Jews he was protecting safe? He was the first of the ten Boom family to be killed in a summary execution for aiding Jews. Would Oscar Schindler be cast into the lake of fire simply for falsifying records in order to keep his Jewish workers safe from extermination? Not a chance! It's very possible that some of these warrior individuals had to wrestle with their conscience over the issue of right and wrong or ethical versus unethical. Proverbs 21:2 says, "*Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, But the Lord weighs the hearts.*" This last phrase is translated this way in the Amplified Bible, "*...But the Lord weighs and examines the motives and intents of the heart and knows the truth.*" As God-fearing warriors, God used them as pioneers of shelter and salvation.

TUESDAY, JUNE 18

Scripture: I Kings 21:1-16

Those who are unrepentant in their evil, having rejected Christ, will eventually meet the lake of fire! The context in which the prohibitions on lying and bearing false witness in the Old Testament are made make it clear that it has to do with two primary categories. The first is in the administration of justice. Lying or deceiving in a context which creates an injustice, or prevents justice from being meted out. This is why there is a clear prohibition on lying or deception in this context. God is just. In fact, He abhors injustice! When a judge is trying to reach a fair and impartial decision to ensure that justice is done, he or she must have an accurate record of facts. Look at the story of Naboth's vineyard. Ahab and Jezebel schemed to obtain Naboth's vineyard, and settled on having false witnesses accuse Naboth of blasphemy. The assembly who stoned Naboth did so based on falsified evidence. The lies that were told by "*worthless men*" recruited by Jezebel were responsible for the blood of Naboth being upon every person who threw a stone that day.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19

Scripture: Joshua 2:1-6

The next category suggested by the context of the Hebrew word **sheh'-ker**, suggests that deception and lying may specifically be wrongful. If the concept has a modifier which makes it wrongful, that implies that there is a type of deception which is not wrongful, a kind of lying that does not involve the "practice of lying." In making this implication, we must be very careful not to insert our own thoughts and feelings, or create excuses for our bad behavior. The examples in scripture and historical instances should serve as a framework. We must, above all else, never be practitioners of unrighteous lying or deception. And this wiggle room would certainly seem to apply more freely to the art of deception than it would to outright lies, but consider this. Imagine for a moment that we are neighbors living beside a resistance member in Poland during World War 2. We know they've been harboring Jewish families at great personal risk and helping them to escape the country. In fact, we suspect they have a family scheduled to be moved out of the city at some point that evening. While walking home from the grocery late after work, we are stopped by two Gestapo agents flanked by a handful of Nazi soldiers. They pull out a picture of our neighbor and ask if we know this man or know where he lives. They say that he was seen talking to Polish resistance members, and that they suspect him of being a Jew-sympathizer. We know that if we are honest with the agents that they will march straight over to his home and catch not only our neighbor, but the entire Jewish family and possibly even the wife and children of the protector. On the other hand, if we lie to the men and they find out, we could be arrested for being complicit. What would we do in such a circumstance, and how would we justify it? Would we answer honestly to knowing the man, but refuse to give them his location, risking torture and death to keep our integrity in check and risking that they will catch not only him, but the Jewish family he is harboring when people in the neighborhood quickly identify us to the agents? Would we outright refuse to talk to them and endure the resulting torture? Would we lie about knowing the man, or misdirect the agents to a different part of town, so that we could warn the neighbor, potentially giving him and the Jewish family time to escape? If we did the latter, would God condemn you for being a liar, or a practitioner of lies? Let's ask this question: Rahab the harlot lied to the soldiers of Jericho, telling them that she had no idea where the Jewish spies were, when she had hidden them on the rooftop of her home. Was Rahab condemned by God for being a liar? No. Instead, she is counted among the righteous!

THURSDAY, JUNE 20

Scripture: Joshua 2, James 2:25

In Joshua 2 we read the account of the two spies who searched out the Promised Land in preparation for the Israel's possession by the Israelites. Rahab the harlot played a central role in aiding the two spies and helping them escape undetected to safety. No doubt, her heart had heard of the power and might of the One True God of the Israelites and she had become a God-fearer! God used her to provide shelter and aid to the spies. She was used by God to mislead and deceive in sending those intent on capturing the spies in the wrong direction. The book of James 2:25 specifically notes that Rahab was justified by her works. James, the brother of Jesus, was implying that righteous deception is self-justifying! Please note that we are not suggesting taking up deception or lying as a practice. Far from it! Our human, fallen nature is to take the boundaries that God has given us and to twist them until they are unrecognizable in order to justify our actions. If we are going to engage in righteous deception, it must be done righteously, as Jehu did when he prepared the worshippers of Baal for slaughter, or it must be done by the leading of the Holy Spirit, just as God sent the deceiving spirit to Ahab, and we may never engage in deception where it would impede the administration of justice. As we see the political and social climate change, we are learning that every weapon of God's warfare is essential! We must use our freedom in Christ to navigate Deception and Concealment so we can use our weapons to accomplish God's will, no matter the circumstances.

FRIDAY, JUNE 21

Scripture: Proverbs 2:11-12

Participating in 'righteous deception' requires wisdom. Wisdom can take care of many problems without leaving us in a place where we would need to lie. If we spend strategic prayer time concerning the direction from which the enemy may attack, we can plan appropriate defenses. Let's say that we want to keep a certain group of radical people out of our company. Directly discriminating against them by rejecting their applications over their so-called 'gender identity' would likely run afoul of employment laws in a number of states. So instead of rejecting their applications out of hand, make sure we invite one or two of them back for an interview, and perhaps even for a second interview, while the job ultimately goes to someone else. Build a firewall of evidence which speaks against the premise of any anti-discrimination lawsuit. The vast majority of people in that group are activists, and they will have a long history on some social media platform. We could adopt a policy which prohibits the hiring of people who engage in doxing, harassment, or activism on social media. We could also ensure that as many of the finalist candidates as possible are strong Christians. Leaning on the Holy Spirit in hiring practices is important!

SATURDAY, JUNE 22

Scripture: Psalms 141:3

Not everyone owns their own business, or needs to think about structuring their hiring practices to ensure that team members hold a Christian worldview. In a world where Christians are now potential targets of discrimination by the opposition while being forbidden to freely associate with one another, wisdom may allow us to righteously deceive the enemy. In the same context which allowed evil men and women to usurp positions of power and then abuse those positions by discriminating against believers, a Christian may need to supernatural wisdom in job interviews or promotion tests to gain a key position such as in senior leadership or human resources, where he or she can then begin to strategically hire other believers in key positions. This would not mean denying our faith in any way. It would probably include a careful choice of words provided by the Holy Spirit either on the spot or ahead of time. The transformational techniques the enemy has used against the culture to gain advantage over the past seventy years are available to us to fight back if we have the guidance of the Holy Spirit and have the wisdom and the courage to use them! Psalm 141:3 says, "*Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch at the door of my lips.*"

SUNDAY, JUNE 23

Scripture: Isaiah 39:1-8, II Chronicles 31-32, Proverbs 4:20-22

We aren't yet to the point where people are being chided by "pronoun police" or being forced to hand in guns. But the post-pandemic political climate in early 2021 smacks of authoritarianism, and society is rapidly losing its tolerance for people who won't get on board with progressive agendas that exclude God while including many dangerous practices and perversions. We should consider exercising restraint where we share truth even in those situations where we are to boldly proclaim Christ. This restraint may come in the form of carefully chosen words. Our relationship with God is the key. He will guide us through His voice and His inner nudgings and a love for the Word. It may be His direction to use alternative social media platforms that are not overtly hostile to people of faith, or switch from our big corporate bank over to a Christian credit union. As we've suggested in the past, there are alternative platforms to many of the services offered by Big-Tech or multinational corporations. There is no reason to give a dearth of personal data that could be used against you to companies that have every incentive to use your data against you! Proverbs 4:20-22 says, "*My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh.*" We need to be deliberate and intentional in moving forward in our relationship with God! Attending to God's Word is vital!

MONDAY, JUNE 24

Scripture: Psalm 18:2, Psalm 32:7, Isaiah 32:2

The other half of Biblical deception is the art of concealment. This is a form of 'righteous deception' which is frequently found in Scripture, and will likely be a staple of a Christian's arsenal in the last days. References to making God our hiding place or refuge are found throughout Scripture. Indeed, there is no greater fortress in which we can place our hope than in the Lord. Does it mean that we will always be delivered from suffering? Of course not! God has already spoken on that issue. One of Word principles we understand is that in this world believers will have tribulation and that rain falls on the just and on the unjust. Suffering for the Lord appears in many places in the Word and we should be prepared for it. However, learning to hide ourselves in the secret place of the Most High is an antidote as our God's covering so that we won't suffer when God prefers us to use His Presence and His wisdom as a weapon to avoid capture or outwit an evil opponent. We should learn this truth and prepare for God to hide us from evil, untimely assaults and even avoidable adversity, and we should learn how and when to ask God for it!

TUESDAY, JUNE 25

Scripture: Genesis 3:8-10, Judges 7, Acts 9:20-23

The first attempt at concealment in the Bible was done for unrighteous reasons by Adam & Eve after their sin. They were ashamed, and attempted to hide themselves from God. Being the opposite of divinely inspired, their attempt to conceal themselves failed, and they had to face the consequences for what they had done! This highlights an important principle. God is rarely going to hide us from the just consequences of our actions. Where we should be asking God for help is in those areas where the consequences we face are a result of injustice, like David sought God's favor in fleeing from Saul's persecution. His life is full of examples of his usage of concealment as a weapon. In fact, David's life provides a perfect point-counterpoint of God's willingness to support our efforts at concealment when our cause is just, versus what He will allow to happen to us when our motivations are wicked. If we have personally fought a powerful enemy, such as David's lion and bear, it could be that God was teaching us wisdom and strength to fight valiantly in His army. Let's look at our own 'lions' and 'bears' as preparational opportunities! Another great example is Gideon. Israel concealed battle tactics under Gideon in order to ambush the Midianites. Gideon's army hid their torches and pitchers and these items became highly unusual weapons of war! And let's never forget that Paul as a new believer was concealed in a basket and lowered from the Damascus wall. That act of concealment allowed Paul, with the help of the church in Damascus, to circumvent their enemies and avoid capture. God kept him alive through a cunning ruse and Paul went on to fulfill his destiny. Are we preparing through a committed relationship with our Father?

Would we be comfortable if need to formulate a plan of righteous deception as the Damascus church did? It's time to press in to hear and know the still small voice!

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26

Scripture: 1 Samuel 24, Numbers 32:23, II Kings 11

David long fled from the wrath of Saul. On several occasions, Saul's men had David surrounded, and God concealed David from Saul, and even allowed David the opportunity to take Saul's life in 1 Samuel 24. When Saul sought David's life unjustly, the Lord hid David. But as we all know, though being a man after God's own heart, David was not one to always live a life of righteousness. In looking at his greatest sin, we can see that the Lord will not always protect us from the consequences of our sins or our mistakes. David's relationship with Bathsheba began in adultery and murder. And David did his best to cover things up. Instead of allowing David to keep it quiet, the Lord used Nathan the Prophet to proclaim David's sin and to pronounce His judgment over what David had tried so hard to conceal. Would the product of David's sin have been spared if David had been forthright with Uriah and paid him recompense for the sin? We will never know for certain, but the one thing we are left with in this story, is that unrighteous deception has its consequences. Numbers 32:23 says, "*...be sure your sins will find you out.*" But in other accounts from David to Elijah, we can see examples of God concealing the righteous from those who wished to do them harm. Another excellent example of concealment is the story of Ahab's wicked daughter Athaliah and Jezebel, who was intent on slaughtering all heirs of the kingly family of Judah. A Godly priest aided Jehosheba, daughter of the then deceased King Joram, along with a noble nursemaid in concealing a very young heir by the name of Joash. This concealment and deception was kept secret by hiding little Joash in the temple for 6 years. Joash was eventually crowned King. He went on to become one of the godliest kings of Judah. He was spared for this purpose because a handful of God-fearers were used of the Lord and moved under the radar for God's divine purpose. Are we preparing to be part of God's under the radar operations should He call on us?

THURSDAY, JUNE 27

Scripture: Genesis 42:7; Genesis 44:15

From a practical perspective, what does it look like to practice righteous deception? If we are going to engage in it at all, we must do so by the leading of the Holy Spirit! Only then can we be sure that our motives are pure and that we are not practicing lies/**sheh'-ker** for the kind of unrighteous reasons that are explicitly condemned in Scripture. For another example of righteous deception, let's look at the story of Joseph and his brothers. When Jacob sent his sons to buy grain in Egypt due to the famine in Canaan, Genesis 42:7 tells us that Joseph disguised himself to his brothers. This Hebrew word, נָכַר (Strong's H5235 – pronounced **neh'-kher**) means to disguise or to pretend not to know something. We often hear about lies of omission when discussing the ethics around truth versus lies. This pretending not to know something that Joseph engaged in when meeting his brothers in Genesis 42-44 was precisely a lie of omission. Joseph didn't stop with a lie of omission, however, he committed a crime level lie which, if he had not intended to reveal the truth, would have constituted a violation of the commandment against bearing false witness. Remember when Joseph ordered the cup to be placed in Benjamin's sack of grain, and then hid it and charged Benjamin with theft? It is notable that Joseph compounded his false accusation with another lie in Genesis 44:15 when he told his brothers that he could practice divination. Joseph's intent in these deceptions was not to take revenge upon his brothers or for self-gain, but to test their hearts and see if time had changed them! While we may not know what Joseph would have done had his brothers proven to be as wicked as they were when they first sold Joseph into slavery, we do know that God's plan for the salvation of Jacob and his family through sending Joseph to Egypt was fulfilled and used righteous deception, and as a result we have one of the most powerful tales of forgiveness as a divine example that we are to reference for our own lives!

FRIDAY, JUNE 28

Scripture: Matthew 5:14-16

Righteous deception for the next generation will likely involve the infiltration of our cultural institutions by young men and women who are committed to Christ and to re-establishing His Kingdom here in the United States and abroad. Just as the cultural Marxists waged a years-long campaign to infiltrate and subvert our major cultural institutions, some of us will need to rely on the wisdom of God if we hope to win them back. This may require unusual cunning and even righteous deception. Keeping our beliefs concealed may seem to run against the grain of Jesus' words in Matthew 5:14-16 where He talks about letting your light shine before men. We tend to conflate this passage with the Great Commission, to synthesize an idea that we must always be in 'Evangelism Mode.' But should we **always** witness to everyone who crosses our path? While we must certainly always be ready to "give a reason to those who ask," winning the country and the culture back from destruction may require concealment and deception which must always be Spirit-led and will no doubt include discernment and discretion.

SATURDAY, JUNE 29

Scripture: Revelation 19:11, Ezekiel 14:4-5

Righteous deception may involve setting tests or traps for people as we saw in both the stories of Jehu and Joseph. There has been millennia-long focus on Jesus as the Suffering Servant. Many believers are reluctant to embrace Jesus as He will be when He returns – the Judge of All the Earth. Because of this, they look at **all** unbelievers as lost sheep who simply refuse to accept their Shepherd. While our ultimate battle may be against principalities and powers, we do have to deal with the consequences of a deceived public, and a few among them who are wolves rather than sheep. Just as Elijah treated the prophets of Baal, so too we must learn to treat the activists who are standing against God and His Word: not as lost sheep who need to be saved, but as opponents who need to be defeated. Righteous deception is just one of the tools in our arsenal that the Holy Spirit may lead us to use in waging war against them! Ezekiel 14:4-5 says, "Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols,..." This passage makes it clear that those who set idols in their heart, God answers according to their idols, confirming their deception to bring them to judgment! They advertise the judgement of God by wearing it!

SUNDAY, JUNE 30

Scripture: Matthew 10:16

In Jesus' commission of the disciples' ministry in Matthew 10, He commands them to be "*shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves*", the word for "*shrewd*" is the Greek word **φρόνιμος** (Strong's Greek #G5429 – pronounced **fron'-ee-mos**) which in addition to meaning wise, also implies discretion or a cautious character. Jesus doesn't want us interacting with a hostile world in a foolish way. It has been a long time since Christians in the West experienced the kind of persecution that Islamic or Communist countries perpetrate on their citizens. As we continue to move in that direction, we must learn not to be frivolous in sharing our faith. It is for a reason that Christ admonished the disciples not to cast pearls before swine. Using Holy Spirit-led discernment in knowing when to share versus when to employ righteous deception will be vital to the end-times church making a continued impact for the Kingdom. Let's learn from those saints in the past who learned to conceal, who learned discretion, and who learned how and when to righteously deceive!

*A righteous ruse may save your life,
Or keep from harm your kids and wife.
It may preserve one's destiny
And chart a path to victory!*