

## From The Herds Boy 's Whistle

### Living a Lie

I had worked with my former boss for 4 years when he called me into office one day and gave me an offer for a job abroad. His argument was that the new job will give me the status I deserve and that I will be so much better off; otherwise, staying on in the job I had will be to continue "living a lie".

It was that last phrase that got me. Initially I received it with both appreciation and excitement. Finally, someone had thought about me, finally someone had seen that I had not got the status or salary I deserve, I was more worthy than I was being accorded. We all want to be that person- the person who is seen to be more worthy than he is being accorded by any system including church settings, our job places, family setting, and social settings- don't we? On further reflection, my boss's last statement made me very frustrated- had he known this for 4 years without reviewing my job or even telling me? I took the offer. But whether the promise ever materialized is a story for another day.

The pressure to make us look more worthy than we really are in this day and age is so intense. There are apps and other electronic and even physical devices to help us pomp our status, and it is now a socially accepted practice to amplify our image by selecting what to post on social media, or even what to wear for what occasion. The celebrity image has become a status for wealth and fame and so something to aspire for even when the real-life situation of the celebrities may be far from the posted images. There have been countless accounts on social media revealing that many **live a lie**.

However, turning to the Bible, for Jacob, Isaac's son, there was no celebrity status to aim for, it was the birthright that was his problem. The struggle started while he was in the womb. Though Jacob was born co-twin with Esau, it was Esau who came out first thus making him the first born. In an attempt either to wrestle the status out of him or reach the same status, Jacob held Esau's heel at birth.

The struggle continued into their adult life and the Bible has it that one day the father asked his elder son Esau to go out and hunt for some game meat which he would then prepare and serve the father in a birthright blessing ceremony (Genesis 27: 1-2). His father was blind and frail then and he depended more on the sense of touch and perhaps some help from the people around him. Jacob's mother overheard all this discussion and determined to help her son achieve his lifelong dream. He wore Esau's clothes, made some choice lamb meat and even mounted some fake hair on his body so that he feels and smells like Esau his brother (27:14-17).

When he presented the food, his father could smell and feel Esau, but it was clear the voice was Jacob's. To be sure, Isaac his father asked him: who are you (27:32)? Jacob had a choice at this point to redeem himself and own up or tell and live a lie from there on. He chose the latter and for 20 years thereafter, he lived a lie as a fugitive tending his uncle's sheep. It was not until he encountered an angel in an overnight wrestling match on his way back to make things right with his brother that he owned up. At dawn, the angel asked him, who are you and Jacob answered I am Jacob- thus owning up he is a liar, and a birthright swindler that the angel gave him a new name and blessed him. He said to him: from now on, you are no longer Jacob, but your name will be Israel (32:22-32).

You may identify with Jacob at some point in your life. You may have acted and or lived a lie to attain status, a job, or even a simpler objective in your life. Perhaps some of us may have identified as Christians many years ago but our real-life situations reflect someone else.

To others though, it is not a question of attaining a celebrity status but rather, it is the only way of dealing with prevailing or past circumstances. You have to act strong for your family even when deep inside you are an emotional wreck, you act brave even when deep inside you are scared to death because of past traumas, or even act happy when your actual circumstances are ripping you apart.

Whatever the state you are in, like Jacob, God understands us in our true identities-and we can therefore approach the throne of Grace with confidence and full honesty of where we are so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16).