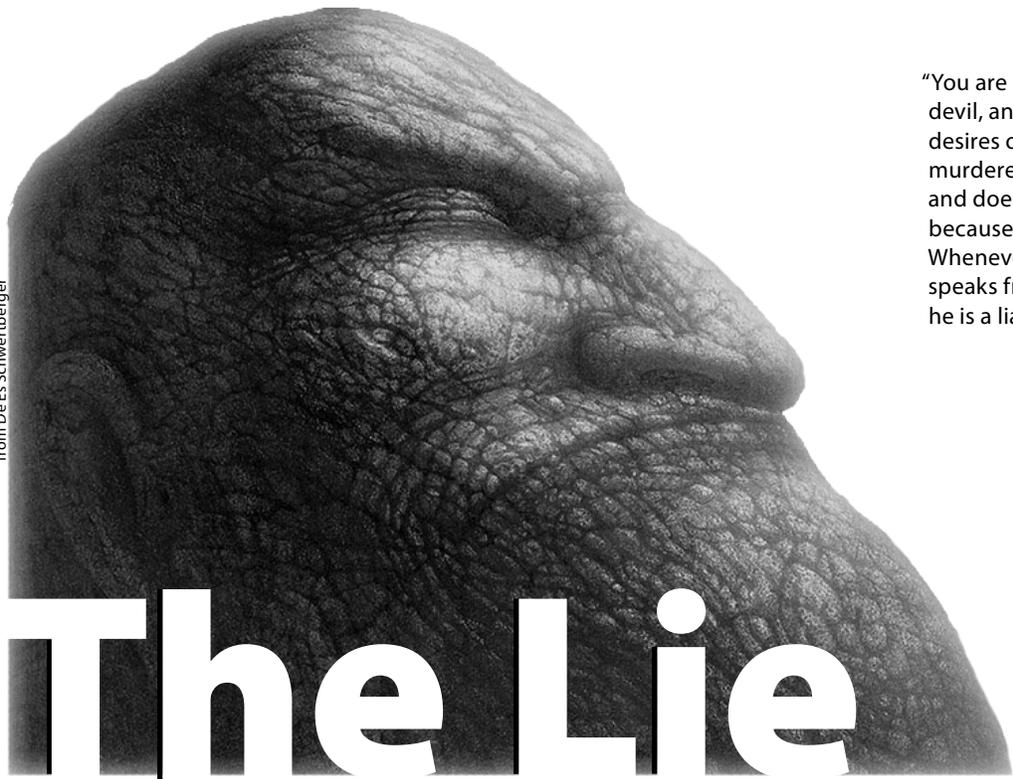


from De Es Schwertberger



# The Lie

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

*John 8:44*

**T**HERE IS A LIE THAT DWELLS IN our world and percolates through our culture. It purports to speak from wisdom, and is often mistaken for profundity, but represents, in fact, the height of ignorance.

The lie is that God (if there even is a God) cares nothing for man. He is utterly impersonal, only a mindless cosmic force. The lie includes the idea that man has been left on his own to stumble through his brief, futile existence—and then he dies into nothingness. Society thus concludes that man, by extension, does not *need* God. Since He (if He even exists) has no regard for us, we need not have any regard for Him.

This is quite often the default position on those rare occasions when man permits his mind to float even imperceptibly above himself. An all too convenient (if self-delusional) detachment between heaven and earth is assumed. This comfortable philosophy fits nicely with that old valedictory canard by William Ernest Henley, which concludes with

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll.  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul.

The truth is that God not only exists, but He has an intimate, loving regard for man. The ancient, inflicted Job expressed this in negative terms, wondering why God doesn't just leave him alone for once.

“I waste away; I will not live forever.  
Leave me alone, for my days are *but* a breath.  
What is man that You magnify him,  
And that You are concerned about him,  
That You examine him every morning  
And try him every moment?  
Will You never turn Your gaze away from me,  
Nor let me alone until I swallow my spittle?”

Have I sinned? What have I done to You,  
O watcher of men?  
Why have You set me as Your target,  
So that I am a burden to myself?"

*Job 7:16-20*

Even in the throes of his pain-riddled despair, in which he considers God's attention oppressive and unwanted, Job describes a God who is *involved* in his life. He declares that God "magnifies" him and is "concerned" about him. Even though couched in the negativity of pain and loss, here is the picture of a God who draws man up close to Himself because He has a deep regard for his well-being. Like a diligent parent He attends man, supervising his life, and regularly tests him to produce necessary maturity.



Penned many centuries later, the psalmist David expressed a similar thought in not just a positive, but an *exalted* context. He begins by painting a beautiful, glorious picture of *Jehovah adonai*:

O Lord, our Lord,  
How majestic is Your name in all the earth,  
Who have displayed Your splendor above the  
heavens!

*Psalms 8:1*

We can easily picture the young shepherd lying on his back in the open field, gazing up into the night sky after putting to bed his flock of sheep. He marvels at the handiwork of his God, and after itemizing the celestial components of His creation he is suddenly struck by what seems to be a paradox.

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your  
fingers,  
The moon and the stars, which You have  
ordained;  
What is man that You take thought of him,  
And the son of man that You care for him?

*Psalms 8:3-4*

*Why do You care so much for us?* David inquires of Jehovah. *In this vast and limitless tapestry of Your creation, why have we been given such a place of prominence?*

God does not answer in this psalm. The question of *why* is left open, but there is no question to the fact that the one who created everything that is, and who holds it all together in sovereign majesty, loves man and has assigned him a place of responsibility and honor within His creation. And David repeats his question in another psalm, this time in the context of praising Jehovah God for not only training his hands for battle, but protecting and delivering him, subduing his enemies beneath his feet.

O Lord, what is man, that You take knowledge of  
him?  
Or the son of man, that You think of him?  
Man is like a mere breath;  
His days are like a passing shadow.

*Psalms 144:3-4*

God created the universe, this world, and mankind which holds dominance over it. But He also created the humility that asks in wonder and awe, "*Who am I, Lord, that You should love me so?*"

The penitent knows the sublime paradox that in himself he deserves only almighty God's wrath, but because of His compassionate grace, embodied in the person of Christ Jesus, God actually *loves* him instead.

The God of heaven could be a cold, impersonal sovereign who rules from high above with detached contempt, demanding fealty through anger, loyalty through power alone. But He is not such a sovereign.

The true God of heaven—not the one conjured and caricatured by modern society, but the one accurately portrayed in His written word—is not a disinterested lump of rock, but a winsome Spirit who weaves Himself in and through the lives of those dear to Him. He stoops to conquer their hearts, but He does so with tenderness and compassion. He listens to their weeping, and hears the music of their rejoicing. He answers their cries for rescue, and anticipates tomorrow's needs. He loves them so much He even disciplines, and sometimes chastises wrong—as any good father would.

