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### Alma 12:3, “But Thou Hast Lied unto God”

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## **Alma 12:3, “But Thou Hast Lied unto God”**

When Zeezrom challenged Alma, the prophet responded:

Now Zeezrom, seeing that thou hast been taken in thy lying and craftiness, for thou hast not lied unto men only but thou hast lied unto God; for behold, he knows all thy thoughts, and thou seest that thy thoughts are made known unto us by his Spirit (Alma 12:3).

The indictment in those words, “for thou hast not lied unto men only but thou hast lied unto God,” is an invitation to walk through the gates of hell. It was the reality of the invitation that struck Zeezrom to the core of his being.

The alternative to keeping one’s covenants is a spiritual disintegration—a profoundly withering, devastating blow to the soul’s capacity to know truth and do good. (Beginning with verse 9 in this chapter, Alma explains how and why that is so.)

The reason that not keeping one’s covenants is so spiritually, emotionally, and mentally debilitating is easy to discover. One cannot lie to God without first lying about one’s Self to one’s Self—squeezing one’s Self in a vice of contradictions. In order for one to accept the lie, he must create an artificial Self to replace the one that is consistent with the eternal law of his own being. The reason that not keeping one’s covenants is so spiritually, emotionally, and mentally debilitating is easy to discover. One cannot lie to God without first lying about one’s Self to one’s Self—squeezing the real Self in a vice of contradictions. In order to accept that lie, he must create an artificial Self — first as a facade, then as a replacement for the Self that is consistent with the eternal law of his own being—perpetuating and justifying a mask he tries to hide behind. Then one’s dominant personality has become a meaningless facade—like a termite-infested building with a new brick face that will present only the pretense of stability—and like the proverbial tree that looks strong on the outside but is rotten on the inside will eventually collapse upon itself because the outer shell can no longer hold up the height, weight, and “surpassing beauty” of the tree’s rich green foliage. So the shell implodes, and foliage turns brown and dies.

When one chooses to cease keeping the covenants he has made with God, there are two ways that open to him as alternatives. They appear on the outside to be different, but

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to the inner consequence they are the same.

One may try to demonstrate the correctness of his choice by seeking to show that the covenants were never valid. Such people often try to justify their actions by asserting that the covenants themselves were a fraud. The idea seems to be that their own part of the covenant is void because when the covenants were made God was off somewhere else. Elder Maxwell once discussed this phenomena:

The Prophet Joseph spoke of how apostates often bring severe persecutions upon their former friends and associates. "When once that light which was in them is taken from them they become as much darkened as they were previously enlightened, and then, no marvel, if all their power should be enlisted against the truth, and they, Judas like, seek the destruction of those who were their greatest benefactors" alone!<sup>790</sup>

Strange, how often defectors *leave* the Church, but they cannot leave it alone!<sup>791</sup>

Jeremiah described these sorts of apostates and intertwined his description of their actions with his own understanding of the waters of life:

11 Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.

12 Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord.

13 For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water (Jeremiah 2:11-13).

The Lord used that same kind of analogy when he said to the Prophet Joseph:

22 And now, verily I say unto you, that as I said that I would make known my

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<sup>790</sup> Smith, Joseph. *History of The Church*, 2:23.

<sup>791</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 108.

*In the Book of Mormon.*

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will unto you, behold I will make it known unto you, not by the way of commandment, for there are many who observe not to keep my commandments.

23 But unto him that keepeth my commandments I will give the mysteries of my kingdom, and the same shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life (D&C 63:22-26).

The other way to lie to God is to remain “active” in the Church while selectively keeping the *convenient* covenants and covertly disregarding those that are not convenient. As time passes, the disregarded ones will grow in numbers and strength, and the poor ill-defined self will be swallowed up in a morass of duplicity. The Savior said: described that kind of apostasy as follows:

27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.

28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (Matthew 23:25-31).

The result is not different for those who openly rebel and for those whose rebellion is a quiet subversion.

Each of us tends to look upon our Self with a prejudiced eye, having a too-intimate relation with our own imperfections. Those who do not wish to project a counterfeit of themselves seek to uncover the sterling nature of their own reality, but that requires a good bit of honesty. If applied, its return will be greater honesty. One of the surest ways to know whether one is being true to the law of one’s own being is to observe one’s Self and ask: “How much wiggle room do I need in order to be content with the notion that I am keeping all of the *necessary* covenants?” The answer will reveal that the wiggle room may be a problem, but if some of the covenants are thought of as unnecessary, that is a problem indeed!

If the question is asked often enough, and with real intent, the question’s own relevance will shrink until one has no pretenses left to hide, and the answer will become, “Oh, I mostly just go about being myself—I keep my covenants with an unassuming rectitude that is as unconscious as breath, as clean as charity, and as free as happiness.” When that is the answer, one has become free of self-disparagement, because one’s Self has come to be in perfect accord with the eternal law of one’s own being.