

Being Defrauded 08-08-21

In August 2019 a local man was nearly defrauded of \$15,000 when he fell prey to a lottery scam¹. He had already attempted to send to the scammers \$25,000, but his bank had stopped the transaction. Such scams tell people that they have won a great amount of money, but need a small amount to secure their winnings. Scammers often pose as fake organizations, fake family members, or pretend to be offering something to someone else. Why do people fall for these lies?

One of the most common reasons is the lure of easy money. The opportunity to get rich quick is often pushed more by the fear of missing out of a once in a lifetime opportunity for wealth. Fear is another motivator; someone is attempting to exploit ignorance or threatens someone with dire consequences if they do not participate. Another common con is to appeal to someone's emotions; describing terrible circumstances or situations in order to urge someone to help. Scammers know that between greed, pride, fear and ignorance there is a great opportunity to rob others.

The same is true of being defrauded of our spiritual rewards. We who are in Christ have a great promise of inheritance. We are told that it cannot be taken away (John 10:28). But we are repeatedly warned that we can surrender it; this is the ultimate case of being defrauded.

Paul repeatedly warns us of the dangers of being defrauded by false teachers (Eph. 5:6, Col. 2:4, Rom. 16:18). These men appeal to our flesh, telling us that it is okay to break God's law and walk according to our own desires. Much as the "get rich quick" scheme, they offer easy rewards instead of faithful duty to eternal life. This is why we are told to put all teachers to a test; *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world"* 1 John 4:1.

Another danger of spiritual fraud is the danger of believing false doctrines. We find repeated warnings of this in places like 2 Thes. 2:3 and 1 Tim. 4:1. It is all about false trust; false doctrines confuse us with half-truths and false confidences. As with false teachers, we must *"Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil"* 1 Thes. 5:21-22

Appealing to our emotions (or our flesh) is another way in which we can be spiritually defrauded of our inheritance. Paul said *"Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize"* by means such as self-abasement and glorying in visions of the fleshly mind in Colossians 2:18. Jeremiah warned the people that the prophets of his day were "prophets of the deceit of their own heart" (Jer. 23:26); the problem was rooted in the idea that "the heart is more deceitful than all else" (Jer. 17:9). Playing on emotions, making choices based on feelings, or choosing what seems right often leads to losing our reward. This is why we are told to *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding"* (Prov. 3:5).

Scriptures constantly warn us not to be deceived (Gal. 6:7, 1 Cor. 15:33, 1 Cor. 6:9). Our adversary the devil is called the Father of Lies, which he used in the beginning to defraud Adam and Eve of their eternal life. He still uses the same methods to seek to take from us our reward. Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 11: 3 *"I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ"*. Be wise, and hold on to your inheritance, which has a great reward.

¹ https://www.kgw.com/article/news/crime/washington-county-man-nearly-loses-15k-in-lottery-scam/283-9ca52f89-2d6f-4359-9fa3-6c0d768ff5a0?fbclid=IwAR2dJoMZVUa7vGTvt_d4atjlpHvALzgJ-coPZHlyUfcAQrAffXFzEA1F01s