

## Entrapment

**Luke 20:20 So they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be honest, in order to trap him by what he said, so as to hand him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the governor.**

Entrapment is a devious enterprise. The Bible actually does talk quite a bit about entrapment. Three chapters stand out for me. I would invite anyone who reads the Bible to also be looking for this particular theme. To get an idea of what you are looking for, one can start with three chapters: II Samuel 13, Nehemiah 6, and Luke 20.

In each of these chapters, somebody is pretending to be someone they are not, with a certain hidden goal in view. The goal in each of these cases turns out to be harm. In II Sam. 13 Tamar, the beautiful daughter of King David thinks she has gone to serve her "sick" brother, Amnon. It turns out his fake sickness is only a ploy to put her into a position where he can be alone with her and rape her. Most people concentrate upon the rape and fail to see it was Jonadab who set the entrapment in motion. And it was this entrapment that had all to do with the bringing down of King David's kingdom as we read in subsequent chapters. Entrapment sets someone up to make a decision, the outcome of which can affect everything in one's life from that moment forward. Since this is a story of entrapment successfully executed, it helps us see what can happen when someone is blindsided by the pretense and by the lies.

Chapter 6 of Nehemiah shows us another side. Here Nehemiah, the present governor of the land of Judah, is being enticed by his enemies to fall into one of their traps. He has already shown great leadership in calling forth the people of Jerusalem to rebuild the wall around their city. This has happened even though their enemies did much to thwart them. Now their enemies-Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian have turned their attention specifically on Nehemiah himself to undermine his leadership and to kill him if possible. Anyone interested in how entrapment works and what it takes to avoid being entrapped will do well to study Nehemiah 6. It is important to notice that entrapment comes in many guises and varied forms. It can be a simple invitation, it can be in the form of persistence, it can be a twisting of the truth to get a reaction. Fabrication of half-truths often leads to intimidation, provoking fear and confusion. It can come in the guise of wise counsel causing one to abandon one's faith and sin against God with the thought of self-preservation. It can even reach the point of where one's friends find themselves being used in the entrapment process. We can do ourselves a favor by noticing how Nehemiah responded to this dazzling array of schemes plotted to bring his demise.

Luke 20 tells of what scheming was taking place to entrap Jesus into saying something that would get him in trouble with the people or with the religious traditions of the day. He had already entered Jerusalem being received by the crowds with palm branches and loud acclaim. This could not go unchallenged by those in authority. So now we see those who wished him dead coming to him with questions intended to cause him to misspeak. A basic tenet of entrapment is that one does not have to have thought through a full-blown scheme to be successful. What one does do is set up a situation in which that person being entrapped takes one false step, steps on one banana peel. Most of us deceive ourselves by thinking we cannot be entrapped because somewhere along the line we will see what is happening and then extract ourselves from the situation. Good luck! Jesus shows us we have to deal with the presenting question head-on. Once over the cliff, there might not be any tree to grab or time to do so. We are not going to have by ourselves the presence Jesus had. We can turn to him, call upon him, and rely on him who lives within us for ways to escape situations we find ourselves in. This is the key. (See I Corinthians 10:12,13).

As sheep, dealing with wolves is not something we do well. We will do ourselves a big favor by taking advantage of these Scripture passages to build some muscle in the face of entrapping ploys coming at us. Look around and discern how even now people are seeking to weaken, mislead or entice you in some way.

*Spirit of God, give us grace to study these Scriptures that we might be keen in noticing the traps that are set for us. Give us the discernment, courage, and faith to respond in ways which thwart the schemer and keep us safe.. Amen.*