

Thought for the Day 21st August - John Reed

Read Proverbs 16:11-13

I was struck by two stories in the news today, both about men being charged with taking money under false pretences.

First, in far north Queensland, Peter Foster (sometimes described as a notorious conman) was arrested (yet again), apparently as he planned to buy a luxury yacht in Port Douglas and sail it out of the country to continue his “business” elsewhere, outside Australia jurisdiction. The “business” is Sport Prediction, a gambling scam in which he promises to take people’s money and place bets on sporting events, but where the money was (allegedly) never used in that way. It simply found its way into his pockets.¹

Second, in America, Steve Bannon, former advisor to Donald Trump, was arrested and charged with fraud over a crowdfunding campaign aimed at helping build a wall along the southern US border. Apparently, a fair proportion of this money ended up in his own personal pockets, rather than going to the stated cause.²

It must be stressed that both cases are yet to be tested in the courts, so at this stage these are merely allegations. But, clearly, allegations the police feel strongly enough about to arrest those involved.

We rage against the unfairness and injustice of those who take money from us under false pretences. We crave a system where everyone is treated justly, and gets what they deserve.

Of course, none of us completely unbiased in this. I suspect in most of our minds, *I* am the good guy who deserves good things and nice rewards; and people like *them* deserve bad things and punishment. These are our just rewards.

And it is reassuring that God, the great king and judge of the universe, is unstintingly fair and just. According to verse 11 here, *“A just balance and scales are the LORD’s; all the weights in the bag are his work.”* That is, all true justice comes from and is approved of by God.

Even those in authority will be called to account by this higher authority for their actions. As verse 12 says: *“It is an abomination to kings to do evil, for the throne is established by righteousness.”* That is, not even kings are above the law. In fact, the implication is, they will be judged more harshly because of the trust that has been placed in them.

¹ <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/dog-of-a-day-for-king-conman-peter-foster/news-story/a313c9774727043c2cdda31b06ca1b6a>

² <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/world/former-donald-trump-aide-steve-bannon-arrested-in-donor-fraud-case/news-story/28389227acc1f83a1b9446bfa9a04aa7>

But while we cry out for justice within our governments and legal systems, for kings and judges to be fair, for retribution against the conmen of the world, let us pause for a brief moment and reflect on what we would get if we all got what we deserve.

Psalm 130:3-4 says:

*If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.*

If we all truly got what we deserve, none of us would pass the judgment of God. But, by his grace, he offers us mercy and forgiveness.

I am not suggesting for a moment that Peter Foster or Steve Bannon should be excused from having to defend themselves in court, and if convicted face the consequences. But I am suggesting that we should all throw ourselves on the mercy of God while we have the chance.