

Florida Baptist Convention Cyber-Scammed for Over \$700,000

The enemy is constantly seeking new ways to slither into the workings of a church and sabotage it from the inside out.

Just like he did with his infiltration of the Garden of Eden and the catastrophe that stemmed from the fall.

Now, Satan is seeking every opportunity and willing soul he can muster to attack, steal, deceive and scam churches in the hopes of rendering them ineffective.

The Florida Baptist Convention (FBC), affiliated with the South Baptist Convention (SBC), announced last week that it was a target of fraudulent emails claiming to be from the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, which partners with the FBC for missions.

The emails were fake, and as the FBC thought they were donating money to an account thinking it was going to the mission field, it instead went straight to the scammers.

“The Florida Baptist Convention continues to work with federal and state investigators, our internal and external auditors to recover over \$700,000 in funds stolen from the convention through cyber-targeting,” the FBC announced on their website.

The FBC is now beefing up their cyber security and training to ensure this type of deception does not happen again.

“Despite existing security protocols, training, regular information systems upgrades and advanced detection software, we are working to further reinforce our level of information technology security. We remain prayerful that some of this loss may be mitigated through insurance and/or the recovery of

stolen funds," the statement continues.

These fraudulent cyber attacks are ramping up in frequency against Christian churches in America.

As Charisma News reported back in February, another church, Elkin Valley Baptist Church, was caught in a similar trap by a suspicious email that cost the church almost \$800,000.

"Immediately following that email was another email, which we thought was from Landmark," said Pastor Johnny Blevins, the Senior Pastor of the church. "It had cloned basically that email and it gave instructions on payment and included the invoice and everything."

The road of recovery from an event such as this is long and painful for churches such as the United Church of Marco Island located in the Florida gulf coast. As reported by the Roys Report, "The church lost \$1.2 million to fraud in March 2022. About half of the money was recovered, but the church's insurance company declined to cover any of the church's losses, saying the church policy did not cover 'impersonation fraud,' according to a complaint against the insurer filed by the church in state court."

As American culture and society continue to become more anti-God, Christians must use wisdom and discernment and be perceptive in almost every aspect of business and finances, because the enemy is sitting in wait, hoping to catch a church in his snare.

"Any instructions that come by email—they need to confirm them via phone call," says John Hughes III, an attorney representing the United Church of Marco Island. "They just wire the money out and it's gone."

This type of theft and deception can leave a church and community devastated in the wake of losing finances on that scale. Yet trials like this also provide an opportunity amid

the storm.

God can take the very situation that Satan wants to use to demoralize, deceive and destroy the church he has targeted, and switch the narrative to become such a powerful testimony that all who are involved in the matter give God the glory for thwarting the plans of Satan.

Standing firm on the Word of God in the face of a seemingly insurmountable situation is not an easy task for many, that is why prayers of strength and endurance during seasons of testing are as important for these churches as they are for every member of the body of Christ.

As the Christian community at large hears about an attack on brothers and sisters in the body, they are commanded in the Bible to lift up in prayer all people and warfare against the enemy who seeks to undo their relationship with Christ (1 Tim. 2:1; Eph. 6:18; Rom. 8:26-27; Phil. 4:6). {eoa}

James Lasher *is Staff Writer for Charisma Media.*