



SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD
Tuesday, February 9, 2021
Scripture: Ephesians 4:17-19
TITLE: How to Avoid the Sin Prank

I recently saw a meme of a person sitting next to a gift. The gift was wrapped in gold paper with a red bow on it. When you saw the gift, you knew immediately what it was - it was a bicycle. But under that picture of the gift-wrapped bike was a picture of the present opened. What appeared to be a bike was really a bunch of junk, strategically placed to fool the gift recipient. The caption on this meme said this is what sin promises (the bike), while in reality, it delivers heartache and trash.

If you're like me, you've approached sin the same, thinking it's a good thing. It's worth the price of admission, but in reality, you come away hurt and disappointed. Well, if this has been you, the Apostle Paul has some practical advice for us as we continue our 5-minute studies of Ephesians:

Ephesians 4:17-19 (NLT) says, [“With the Lord’s authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. ¹⁸ Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. ¹⁹ They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.”](#)

I remember having a discussion with a family member about their work environment. This person said, “My coworkers are driving me nuts. They lie. They steal. They are constantly talking about their illicit sex lives and the abuse of drugs and alcohol. Why do they act this way?” I laughed and said, “Why do nonbelievers act like nonbelievers? It’s because they are nonbelievers!”

That’s what Paul is saying here. Don’t act like Gentiles, in other words, non-Jews, or we’d simply say, nonbelievers. Why? Because their lives are bent towards sin and destruction.

If you read Paul’s letters, you see some common themes, such as: we are bought with a price. We are slaves of Christ. We are free from slavery to sin. There is a visible and real difference before and after Christ. Christ transforms us. And so on.

So many of us are spiritually stuck, because we keep going back to our old sinful ways. We see those sins wrapped up in some beautiful worldly package, and either forget that what’s inside is really garbage, or fool ourselves and say, “No, not this time. This time it’ll really be the bike.” But it never is.

One theologian once said, “sin is meeting a legitimate need in an illegitimate way.” God says, “Trust me. I’m not a liar. My ways and my provision are best. You have all you need in Me and through Me. Just trust and obey.”

Today, my challenge for you is to ask yourself, “Where have my old habits and sins crept back in?” “Why have these appeared to be good, when I know they’re garbage?”

Then, ask God for help to both recognize sin for what it is, and to avoid it. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, “God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.” God has freed us from bondage, so let’s stay near to Him and let Him keep us away from sin.