

Those Pesky Telemarketers

By adminlen On April 25, 2013 · Add Comment

I just hung up on a telemarketer. Sometimes I feel badly when I do that, because I know these folks are just doing their job, and they take a lot of flak. I usually try to be polite, tell them I hope they have a nice day, and thank them for their efforts even though I'm not interested. It's kind of fun to hear the surprise in their voices when they try to take it in that someone is being nice to them.

Then there's the one a few minutes ago. It was one of those calls that started off pretty well, actually. I was being offered a \$100 gift card I supposedly could use anywhere online and a pharmacy "lifetime discount card" in exchange for trying out sample products. I asked, "What's the catch?" and was told there was no catch, it was totally free. All I had to do was try out the products, keep them if I liked them, and send back a brief review of what I thought of them. Simple enough. The word "free" was repeated often, and my little cautionary antenna started going up. Then we started down the path of verification, and getting my address...and learning that this was only going to cost me a small "shipping and handling fee" for every sample they would send to me. That's when I hung up. They didn't get my address, or any other information. I didn't even say "Goodbye," or "No thank you," or point out that their pitch was a lie. I just hung up. And I don't feel badly about it at all.



Sin (the breaking of God's rules) is just like that phone call. There are lots of temptations out there to avoid doing things the way they're supposed to be done: shortcuts and substitutions we make up rather than submitting to our Creator's holy will. Instead of working, we think stealing would be easier; instead of purity, we think adultery will be more fun; instead of accepting the Lord's reality in our lives, we lie to create our own version of reality. You get the idea. It's all a bunch of lies. This sort of thing started shortly after creation, in the Garden of Eden. You can read it for yourself in [Genesis 3:1](#): "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?"'" That's the appeal of sin: it just seems like we're missing out on something great if we obey God. But the results of Adam's sin in the garden were disastrous for all of us. All the pain and suffering that has ever plagued this world is an outgrowth of that sin of discontent and deceit.

A couple of passages in the Gospels come to mind, where Jesus is teaching the disciples through the use of parables. In Matthew 13 he likens the hearts of men to different kinds of soils. Verse twenty-two reads,

"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful." When you put your priorities above the Lord's priorities, it may seem like a good idea at the time. You want that pleasure, that prosperity, and are willing to do anything to get it. Where's the harm in that? Luke's gospel records another parable where Jesus tells them what the harm is in startling terms:

And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." ([Luke 12:16-21](#))

Clearly, there's no such thing as a free lunch when it comes to ignoring or rebelling against your Maker. The other night I spent the graveyard shift riding shotgun in a police cruiser to observe and learn about police work in preparation for some upcoming chaplaincy training I'll be doing. It was a terrific night. Among other things we had a rather high speed pursuit of some known drug dealers. They managed to elude us eventually, much to our disappointment. The officer's attitude was great, though. He said, "These guys have to get lucky every single time;

we only have to get lucky once.” He went on to talk about the foolishness of the criminal mind that thinks it’s easier to get rich by breaking the law, yet never seeming to figure out that the constant jail time, fines, always looking over your shoulder that comes with the territory never really pays off like they think it will. All three of the young men in that car we were chasing had spent more of their lives in jail than out of it, and yet the leader is known to be arrogantly boasting that he will never be caught. Believing himself to be smarter than anyone else, he does stupidly wicked things thinking he is invincible. The writer of the book of Hebrews warns, “Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” (3:12, 13)

So don’t hesitate to hang up on those “telemarketers” in your life: friends who lure you into wickedness; entertainments that dull your sensitivity to the things God hates; desires for comforts, position, and pleasures that become your chief passion instead of your Lord; false saviors and mediators that try to take the place of the Lord Jesus Christ as the object of your faith. No matter how good the pitch sounds, no matter how much they cry out that there’s no cost to you, it’s a lie. The cost is not just your present happiness; it’s your eternal life. Rather, “Seek first the kingdom of God, and its righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” ([Matthew 6:33](#))