

Making Excuses

By Everett Hardin

Excuses are often made by people who fail to do what is right. For example, in I Samuel 15:20-22, we have the account of Saul being anointed king over Israel. God gave Saul a commandment to destroy Amalek, and “*utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not.*” Saul, instead of hearkening to God’s voice, “*spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and of the lambs, and all that was good and would not utterly destroy them,*” I Sam. 15:9. Thus God appeared unto Samuel and told him Saul had sinned, so he was to take the kingdom from Saul. When Samuel approached Saul, he asked him why he did not destroy the king and the livestock, as God had commanded him? Saul’s reply was, “*But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord in Gilgal.*” Saul used the excuse that he wanted to sacrifice the animals to God, and for that reason he did not obey the command of God. Notice the reply of Samuel to Saul, “*Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*”

Adam was wrong when he ate the forbidden fruit. He used the excuse that the woman gave it to him, Gen. 3:12. The woman’s excuse was that the devil beguiled her. You see how easy it is to make excuses for our wrong doings. It is according to human nature to justify one’s own conduct by hiding behind another.

One thing about excuses is that they do not justify us before God. Did Saul’s excuses justify him before God? What about Adam and Eve? Did their excuses justify them before God? No! Both were cursed by God. When I think about excuses, I think about the parable that Jesus gave in Luke 14:15-24. The reason Jesus gave this parable was to convince the Jews that the kingdom would be a heavenly kingdom and not an earthly one. The Jews thought that the kingdom would be ushered in by a grand supper and that Jesus would enter by a natural birth. This parable also was given to correct that erring thought.

Excuses Made

Jesus said, “*A certain man made a great supper and bade many...And they all with one consent began to make excuse,*” Luke 14:16,18. The excuses show that the people were concerned about physical things instead of spiritual things. This is an indication of the esteem in which they held the one inviting them. In Matthew 11:28, Christ gives us an invitation, “*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*” We do not regard salvation highly if we neglect it, Heb. 2:4.

The first excuse was made by a man who said, “*I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it.*” It seems that the man had bought the field without looking at it, and now he wished to see it. I am sure that most of us would believe that this was pretty foolish on his part to buy a field which he had never seen. We could wind up with swamp land, or some dump yard. So people today turn down the invitation of the Lord on account of their interest in material affairs. Love of lands and houses fills the heart until there is no room for the kingdom.

The second excuse was made by a man who said, “*I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them.*” To “*prove*” them meant to see if they would work together so as to serve his purpose. It would be foolish for one to buy oxen before he tested them out to see if they were capable of doing the job. There are people today who excuse themselves from their obligations of the kingdom on such poor grounds.

The third excuse was made by a man who said, “*I have married a wife, and therefore I*

cannot come.” This changes the excuses from the material interests to that of the social realm. He was more interested in his new wife than in the supper to which he was invited. His wife probably would not have left him if he had gone, not to mention the fact that he could have taken her with him. When we allow social duties to keep us from serving the Lord, we prove that we love these things more than the Lord.

Not Obeying the Gospel

There is a tendency in the world today to make excuses. Many people make excuses for not obeying the gospel. Let us observe some:

1. I am afraid of what people will say. Too many people don't want to obey the gospel because they are ashamed of being a Christian. People of the world look upon Christians as being peculiar. In reality, we who are Christians are peculiar people. We do not engage in worldly acts characteristic of the world. We live for Christ and not for the world. Our speech, doctrine, our worship and manner of life is different from the world. One should not be fearful of what their family or friends might say. *“If any man come to you, and hate not (love less) his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple,”* Luke 14:26.

2. I am not good enough, I am too mean. Some people believe that they have committed horrible sins, so therefore they are not good enough to obey the gospel. This is nonsense. No matter what sins one has committed, one can still obey the gospel. In I Cor. 6:9-11, these people were adulterers, homosexuals, fornicators, etc. Now to those people who make this excuse, is our life worse than those mentioned in I Cor. 6:7-11? These people changed their lives, obeyed the gospel and became Christians. How long do you think it would take you to be good enough? As long as one serves the devil, he will never be good enough. If one is already good enough Christ need not have died. He came to *“seek and save the lost.”*

3. I could not hold out faithfully. Some people defeat themselves before they get started. What if Paul or the rest of the apostles had the same attitude? If one has the attitude that he is weak and cannot maintain spiritual life, he is defeated already. First of all, God will not demand something that is impossible for us to do. *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as it common to man, but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it,”* I Cor. 10:13. You see, after one becomes a Christian, he has the assurance from God that He will help us live and maintain our Christian life as long as we try and make every effort to maintain our Christian life ourselves. All God requires of us is our best.

4. I don't know enough. Some people believe that they have to be a Bible scholar to obey the gospel. This is not so. If you have heard one sermon, and in that sermon you were taught the plan of salvation, then you know enough to become a Christian. After one obeys the gospel, that person should grow and become more intelligent in the Bible. God will help you to increase your knowledge as long as you study and make an effort to learn. One of the downfalls of some Christians is a lack of studying God's word.

Forsaking The Assembly

Why do Christians absent themselves from the assemblies? Is it really because of the excuses they offer? I attend the morning services, isn't that enough? I had company, I overslept. My children do not like to attend often. I need to work overtime, I was just tired. Absenteeism says many things about us, though we do not like to admit it. Despite what you may tell yourself

and others, your actions indicate that God is not first in your life, Matt. 6:33. He knows you aren't there and He knows why you aren't there. Let us declare war on absenteeism. Heaven depends on our being victorious! Where do you as an individual fit into this picture? If you have been attending only a part of the services, won't you start attending every service possible? The next time you are tempted to forsake the assembly, ask yourself how you would feel if Jesus were to come back at that time? If the brethren were meeting together to worship God and you were at home in bed or watching TV, or playing golf, or visiting friends, or fishing, how would you explain to Him that you loved Him with "*all your heart, soul and mind?*" Matt. 22:37.

None of those who rejected the invitation would enjoy the feat. "*None of those bidden shall taste of my supper,*" Luke 14:24. This impresses us with the seriousness of rejecting the invitation of the Lord. How often do people reject Him because they love the material things of life, are engrossed in social, financial, or political affairs so that they have neither the time nor desire to be as faithful as they could be. Consider ye well!
