



“EXCUSES, EXCUSES”

Kevin Presley

Good morning and welcome to Let the Bible Speak. Today, I wish to talk about one of the oldest habits of mankind. We have probably all been guilty of it to some degree or another. It may be common but it's a sure way to not only fail in life but to rebel against God and one day miss heaven. Jesus referred to it in one of his parables recorded in Luke 14:16-24. "Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.' "

Any preacher can testify to the fact that people haven't changed. Making excuses is one of the oldest behaviors there is, and it is also one of the most common tendencies of human beings. Making excuse goes all the way back to the first man Adam – when God called him to account for eating of the forbidden fruit. Instead of simply admitting his sin and immediately correcting his behavior, he pointed at Eve and according to Genesis 3:12 said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

The word 'excuse' has several shades of meaning. It can mean to make apology or to try to remove blame. It might mean to make an exception or show leniency. An excuse is usually a way of justifying some choice that we make, or some deed we commit, or a course of action we pursue. If others or even our own conscience expect us to do a thing or behave in a certain way, an excuse is a way of rationalizing and justifying our decision to do the opposite. Well, most people don't just outright admit

to doing wrong. If they don't want to obey God, most people won't just say that. Instead, they make excuses for not doing what is right. Preachers, elders, church leaders are about like schoolteachers and employers, we've heard nearly every excuse in the book.

Jesus was familiar with people making excuses and he fully expected that many would do just that when given the invitation to enter His kingdom. He likened the gospel invitation to a man who gave a great banquet and invited many to join him. The fact that this man could host a "great supper" implies that he was a man of some wealth. Most of us would consider an invitation like that a wonderful thing. We would be honored by such an invitation. If some wealthy person you admired invited you to their mansion to eat; perhaps a king; maybe the governor; or a president, you would not only be honored, but you would also probably set aside any other plans as being less important to attend such a feast. You would like to think that is the way we all would respond to the grace of God and heaven's offer to be part of Christ's kingdom, but the bible foretold, and history has borne out that that is not the case. Some will outright reject the gospel and tell you they are doing so, but more people will offer a reason as to why they won't obey the Lord. I have sat across kitchen tables and in living rooms through my years of ministry and implored people to obey the gospel and be baptized into Christ. It has been rare for someone to flatly refuse and say they have no interest or intention in doing so. I have invited many people to come hear a gospel sermon in a meeting somewhere. Again, few have had the honesty and boldness (some have) but few have plainly said "I will not". Instead, they delay or evade by making some excuse as to why they can't right then. Perhaps they simply want you to be satisfied, agree with the reason, and leave them alone. Perhaps they are really convincing themselves that they have a legitimate reason. But really, it's just an excuse.

In His parable, Jesus said the master sent out his servant to invite his friends, saying, "Come, for all things are now ready." But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' Now, Jesus was using the parable to expose the unbelief of the Jewish leaders of His day. They were supposed to be the people of God and if they knew God and knew the scriptures, they would have recognized the value of this gracious invitation. But instead, they rejected it. Jesus said those first invited made excuses pertaining to their family ties and obligations, their business interests, their day-to-day responsibilities such as work, and so forth. But the master did not accept their excuses (nor does Christ accept ours) and so he turned to the most unlikely of people to invite to his banquet. "Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'"

Notice that the excuses made by these three people had to do with three important areas of life. One: relationships. The first said, "I have married a wife and cannot come." Two: The acquiring of things. The second man said "I have bought some land and I have to go look it over.". And three: Responsibilities. The third man said "I have bought some oxen and I need to test them (in other words: to examine them and try them out). Marrying a wife is a major event in life. Purchasing property is one of the biggest financial investments a person will ever make. And being able to work your land to make a living is important as well. Nobody would deny that all these things have their place and are important in their

own right. But Jesus considered them all excuses for evading the real issue. The same is true today. Most excuses that people make for not doing God's will fit into one of those categories as well.

Many allow familial relationships to keep them away from the truth. If the truth comes between them and their spouse or them and their parents or grandparents, they give priority to those people instead of doing the will of God. Jesus, on another occasion, plainly rebuked the one who would put kin and earthly family before the truth. He said, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW'; [36] and 'A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD.' [37] He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." (Matthew 10:34-37). Jesus wasn't saying it's wrong to love our family. We should love our family. But blood should not be thicker than water. We should not care more about keeping peace and pleasing our parents or our wife or husband or our children than we are doing what the bible teaches. This can be as seemingly small of a thing as allow worldly family members to keep us away from the worship and work of the church to refusing to give up a false religion or false doctrine because it's what mom and dad or grandma and grandpa believe. Some of the greatest decisions made for God involved people having to sacrifice the kind of relationship one has had with certain friends and family. Ruth had to leave her home, her family, her friends, to follow Naomi out of Moab to the Promised Land and follow God. She had to leave the religion of her family in order to worship God. Abraham had to leave the life he knew and the friends he had made in Ur to follow the call of God to go to a new land. Can you imagine the rejection that the Apostle Paul felt when he gave up the religion of his countrymen and his own family to follow Christ? You see, allowing family concerns to hinder us from giving God our all is a flimsy excuse and one who makes such an excuse, Jesus said, is not worthy to be His disciple.

And then there are possessions. It's not wrong to possess things until things possess us. Things have a place of lower and even minimal importance in our life and can quickly become idols. You don't have to bow down and literally worship something for God to consider it an idol. You simply must give it more of your devotion, love, affection, and concern than you do the kingdom of God. Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these THINGS will be added to you." You see, we can so clutter our lives with things and stuff that God is left on the outside. Was it wrong for this man to buy and inspect his property? No! But it was wrong for him to allow that to keep him from being where the master of the house wanted him to be. It was a poor and inadequate excuse.

The same must be said for our responsibilities. I realize we have day to day responsibilities. A man is required to provide for himself and his family and if he doesn't, the bible says he's worse than an infidel and has denied the faith. But feeding your family, believe it or not, is not more important than feeding your and their souls. That's your first responsibility. Again, "seek first the kingdom and God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you." That takes faith. That takes courage. And it doesn't mean that we just sit down and wait for God to rain down manna from the skies and make our house payment, but it does mean when we put Him and doing what is right and according to the will of God FIRST that He will make a way for us. "I have never seen the righteous forsaken, not his seed begging for bread." (Psalm 37:25) Do you have enough faith to believe and trust that and do what is right first or are you using what Jesus called "cares of this life" and daily responsibilities as an excuse for not obeying God? God won't accept that excuse. It may require a bold step of faith to tell an employer that I won't do this or that or to tell them that as a Christian you have an appointment on the first day of the week to meet with the church and break bread (Acts 20:7, Hebrews 10:25) but if we don't enough

conviction to do THAT, why should we assume that we would have conviction to serve Jesus in even more difficult and uncertain circumstances? No, as important as all these things are in their own right, they were excuses for failing to do the proper and right thing and the master of the house said “none of these will taste of my supper! Instead, go to those who are desperately realize their need and are willing to lay aside the world to seek the eternal.

Now, then, in our remaining few moments, let’s consider some of the other common excuses that people make for not doing the will of God. Some people make the excuse, “I don’t have time.” We’re a busy people today. But what are we busy doing? I’ll grant you, there are those who must work long and hard hours to make ends meet. But what about the 168 hours we have in every week? Are you giving even a fraction of those to Christ and His church? If we’re honest with ourselves, I think we’ll acknowledge that we find a way to do what we really want to do and that a lack of time is really just a pitiful excuse for not obeying God. We use most of our time to keep up a lifestyle, to pursue recreation and entertainment, or for other temporal concerns, but as Jesus said in the parable of the seed and the sower, these things choke the seed and deprive us of a spiritual life.

And then there is the excuse “I don’t feel well.” I don’t want to minimize the suffering and difficult circumstances that many people today find themselves in, but we must careful that this doesn’t become an excuse to avoid responsibility. Perhaps some allow aches and pains and maladies to turn them into spiritual malingerers. The headache that keeps them from church somehow doesn’t keep them from work on Monday. That back or knee pain that keeps them from being involved with the church, doesn’t keep them out of Wal-Mart, or away from the theater or the ball game, or from other responsibilities in life. Now, again, there are people who are legitimately incapacitated. I’m not talking about them. God does not expect us to do more than we can do – but God also knows what we truly can and cannot do. Are you making excuse? I recently held a gospel meeting and dear older sister, who had recently had a stroke and brain surgery would not be talked out of coming to the church service on the Lord’s Day. None of us expected her to be there with all she had been through. She had recently come home from a long stay in the hospital. But on the Lord’s Day, there she was and it was a moving testament to her faith and her determination and her love for Christ and for the church. I’m not you and I can’t necessarily judge your physical ability or inability but always remember that God can! And be careful that you don’t merely fall back on an excuse.

Another common excuse people make is to point out the flaws of people in the church. The claim that there are hypocrites in the church and the church sometimes has shortcomings and even scandal is one of the most-oft used excuses for not obeying God. “I’m just as good as some of those people down there in the church”, they say. And morally or as far as your behavior or attitude is concerned, you may be exactly right! But what good is that? What comfort does that bring? Friend, hypocrites in the church are not a new thing. Jesus plainly condemned them in His day. The apostles exposed and condemned them in the early church. Some go undetected and live lives other church members don’t know anything about and that’s a shame. And they’ll answer to God for not only their personal sin but for their being a stumbling block to someone else. But that doesn’t give you a pass with God. In fact, if anybody every had a right to feel that way, it would have been Jesus Himself. You have never encountered hateful and wicked hypocrites any worse than Jesus encountered throughout His life on earth. But yet, He loved the temple. He loved the synagogue. He loved the house of God and He considered it His business to be there and the bible says it was His regular custom to be found there. I’m not justifying the hypocrite. Jesus taught that they will certainly have their reward. But do will you, my friend, if you allow such an excuse to keep you from doing the will of the Lord.

Many years ago, some of the old gospel groups used to sing a humorous song. People would clap and chuckle and at times laugh as the singers hammed it up with the lyrics and their antics. But past the light-hearted approach in the song, a very serious truth was being communicated. It said:

*Excuses, excuses, you'll hear them every day.
And the Devil he'll supply them, if the church you stay away.
When people come to know the Lord, the Devil always loses
So to keep them folks away from church, he offers them excuses.*

*In the summer it's too hot. And, in the winter, it's too cold.
In the spring time when the weather's just right, you find someplace else to go.
Well, it's up to the mountains or down to the beach or to visit some old friend.
Or, to just stay home and kinda relax and hope that some of the kin folks will start dropping in.*

*Well, the church benches are too hard. And, they sing way too loud.
Boy, you know how nervous you get when you're sitting in a great big crowd.
The doctor told you, "Now, you better watch them crowds. They'll set you back."
But, you go to that ball game because you say "it helps you to relax."*

*Well, a headache Sunday morning and a backache Sunday night.
But by worktime Monday morning, you're feeling quite alright.
While one of the children has a cold, "Pneumonia, do you suppose?"
Why the whole family had to stay home, just to blow that poor kid's nose.*

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So to keep them folks away from church, he offers them excuses.*

*Well, the preacher he's too young. And, maybe he's too old.
The sermons they're not hard enough. And, maybe they're too bold.
His voice is much too quiet-like. Sometimes he gets too loud.
He needs to have more dignity. Or, else he's way too proud.*

*Well, the sermons they're too long. And, maybe they're too short.
He ought to preach the word with dignity instead of "stomp and snort."
Well, that preacher we've got must be "the world's most stuck up man."
Well, one of the lady's told me the other day, "Well, he didn't even shake my hand."*

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And the Devil he'll supply them if the church you stay away.
When people come to know the Lord, the Devil always loses
So to keep them folks away from church, he offers them excuses.*

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