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MAKING EXCUSES

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Luke 14:15-24, *"And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. 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 hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."*

Introduction: Our Lord was a great storyteller. His stories were simple and to the point. He never told a story for amusement--simply to make people laugh. His stories illustrated spiritual and eternal truths. His stories were taken from nature and everyday life and applied for warning, or comfort

or instruction.

He would go to a big dinner and see folks rushing to get the higher seats, and teach a lesson on humility. He said it was better to take a low seat and be invited higher than to take the high seat and then be told that it is reserved for someone else. And then he would make the application in relation to God: *"For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."*

And when he would see who the guests were, He would tell the host that he ought to invite people who could not reciprocate with a dinner for him. He would tell him to do something with eternal blessings in mind. Feed the poor so that he might be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. Brethren, how little we do for eternal reward!

Our Saviour would draw a parable--tell a story--from watching a man sow seed, and make a comparison with preaching the Gospel. All the seed sown did not produce a harvest. And so all the gospel preached does not bring results in salvation of sinners.

Some of our Lord's stories were unnatural--like the one before us. It had to be like this to illustrate the excuses men give for not believing the Gospel, or for failure to come where the word of God is preached. He had to represent men as doing the unnatural or foolish thing to truly represent why men reject the blessings of God.

Let us look at the story:

A man made a great supper and invited many. It was no ordinary feast, but a royal feast. It was a great honor to get such an invitation from such a royal person. This was a big occasion--a

great supper.

The response to this invitation was the most unnatural thing: everybody invited began to make excuse. Nobody ever heard of such a thing. If there is anything people generally like to do it is to go to a big feed. But, in this case, nobody wanted to go. What insult to the great man who made the supper! The man regarded it as an insult and was angry. The lesson to be learned from the story is that it is an insult to God to reject the Gospel invitation. God is angry with those who do not want His Son. The sin of unbelief is a terrible sin.

We have the excuses given by three men, but these excuses must have been a sample or pattern of all the excuses given. One man asked to be excused because he had bought a farm and must go see it. Had he bought the land without seeing it? Of course not. Another had bought five yoke of oxen and wanted to go prove or test them. He must have known whether they would work or not before he bought them. Another man sent word that he had a wife and could not come. He did not even ask to be excused. He thought the fact he had a wife was sufficient explanation. This was the most unnatural explanation of all. Think of a wife keeping a man from a feast, when she is invited too. It is usually the other way round. The wife is always ready, but the man may prefer to lounge in robe and slippers than to be in a crowd. The whole story is unreasonable, for it is to teach the unreasonableness of rejecting Christ and His salvation.

The lesson:

God has provided a great supper at tremendous cost and everyone who hears the gospel is invited. How unnatural and unreasonable it is to refuse to

come! And that is the heart of the story. Lost people do not act naturally--they do not act like sensible men--their nature is so ruined by sin that they do the strangest things. Think of God providing the Gospel table, loading it with everything necessary to salvation--having on it the bread of life which a man may eat and never die--never be condemned by God, and then see men refuse to come and eat. How is such conduct to be described? With what folly can it be branded? What greater insult can be shown to God? It is like a man refusing to leave a burning building. It is like spitting in the face of a friend. The men in the story were lying and the whole thing was a sham. They didn't go simply because they did not like the man who made the supper. The lesson he wanted us to get is that all the excuses men give for not believing the Gospel are just so many lies. The trouble is not in the intellect, it is in the heart.

Modern excuses:

1. Someone says, "There are so many things in the Bible I do not understand. There are deep things in the Bible." I am glad there are things I cannot understand. If I could understand everything in the Bible I would know it was a human book. But the Gospel is not hard to understand. It is so plain and easy that many who cannot write their names have understood it. I Corinthians 15:3, *"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."* John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* Ephesians 2:8-10, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."*

It is one thing to understand what the Bible says and another thing to believe what it says. It is rejected because it is understood intellectually. Unbelief is in the heart not the head. The man who loves sin hates God, and

the man who loves sin cannot love the gospel of God. A man does not want to be saved from something he loves. He may want to be saved from the consequences of sin but not from sin itself.

2. Another says, "I just don't have time to go to church. I have to work seven days a week. I don't have time to consider the Gospel." This excuse is being overworked today. You did not use to hear it so often when men worked 12 to 16 hours a day. People who make that excuse can find time for many things--time to do what they really want to do.

3. Sunday is my day--the only day I have to visit and find recreation. That shows hatred of God. The Bible says Sunday is the Lord's Day. The Bible commands public worship, and the man who loves God will welcome the Lord's Day as a day when he can meet with God's people.

4. Another says in his heart, "I cannot give up all the pleasures of life to become a Christian." But the pleasures a man holds on to keep from coming to Christ are not real pleasures--they are only sorry counterfeits. The pleasures of sin are only for a season. Sin never satisfies, except momentarily. The idea that a man has more pleasure away from God is one of the devil's lies.

It is sometimes asked if it is not a very hard thing to live a Christian life? The true answer is an emphatic, No! It is impossible to live a perfect life, but a Christian life is not a perfect or sinless life. The believer still has a sinful nature--the flesh is still in him--and it gives him trouble--he cannot live the perfect life he would like to live. But the Christian life is a life of faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord. It is not hard to trust Christ as the one and only Saviour. The saved man does not even consider any other Saviour. The Christian life is in keeping the commandments of God, and they are not irksome to the born again person who loves God. It is not hard for the man who loves God to get to church, if he is physically able. John told the truth when he said God's commandments are not grievous. Tell me just what commandment of God is grievous to the saved person? The command to be baptized? To partake of the Supper? To go to church? To bear one another's burdens?

It is the way of the transgressor

that is hard. The life of sin is the hard life.

It is not denied that the wicked man may prosper in material things. A wicked man may have a lot of money, but money is a false measure of prosperity. The Bible says it is God that satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness, and I believe it.

5. Sometimes a man will say, "I am too wicked to be saved." This is like saying, "I am too sick to have a doctor, or too hungry to eat, or too thirsty to drink." Christ came to save sinners. Suppose the prodigal said, "When I am better off I will go to my father." No, it was his poverty and rags that brought him to his father. Nobody but a self-conscious sinner can come to Christ for salvation. Others may come to Christ for a compliment or to be admired, but such people will neither get a compliment or be admired by Christ.

It is only the ragged sinners who open God's wardrobe.

6. "There are too many hypocrites in the church," is the excuse many give. That has been overworked too. That excuse has been worn threadbare. But what has a hypocrite got to do with anybody's salvation? Salvation is a very personal matter between the individual and God. Salvation is through faith in Christ, and He is no hypocrite. God does not tell any sinner to trust any hypocrite for salvation.

A man once said to a preacher: "I can't believe." "Whom?" the preacher replied. "I can't believe," the man repeated. "Can't believe whom?" the preacher repeated. "You do not understand my case," the man replied. "I tell you I can't believe. I have intellectual difficulties. I tell you I can't believe." And the preacher said again, "Can't believe whom?" The man was embarrassed and smiled and said, "I can't believe myself." The preacher said, "Thank God that you have got that far." A man is headed towards Calvary when he admits he cannot trust himself. But there is one we can afford to trust and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray:

O God, this story shows us that sin is in the heart. We cannot give anyone a new heart, but Thou can't. Thou wilt have to work if men are saved. As Thou

didn't open the heart of Lydia in the long ago, Thou wilt have to open hearts today if men and women are to attend to the things we speak.

DOING IT THE RIGHT WAY...

Our church recently received the following letter from Pastor Tom Ross, pastor of the Providence Baptist Church in Xenia, Ohio:

..."I am writing to thank you for the faithfulness and generosity you have shown to my family and our church through the years. You all have been a great source of blessing and encouragement to our church. Thank you for your support.

I am requesting that you drop your monthly support of our church. We desire to do some mission work and I feel it would be unscriptural to receive someone else's mission support and then turn around and support missions at the same time. Please pray that God would direct us in a manner that would honor and glorify Him..."

I appreciate the work and faithfulness of Brother Tom Ross and the church there. What they have requested in this letter is according to what should be done. The church should support their own pastor first--other churches can help if needed. But when they begin to support other missionaries, the supporting churches should cease to support that pastor. Churches, support your pastor first. He is the best missionary you have!

--Al Gormley