

84. Confronting excuses

July 9, 2017

The first human excuse goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden by Adam and Eve: "The woman you gave to be with me..." and "The serpent deceived me..."

It has been said, an excuse is a skin of the reason that stuffed with lies. George Washington said once, "It is better to offer no excuse than bad one."

We find the same kind of lame excuses from the religious leaders of Israel to Jesus and how He confronted them. May we never come up with any excuses in following our Savior and Lord.

A. EXCUSE OF REFUSAL

Matthew 22:1-10 And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: 2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, 3 and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. 4 Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding."' 5 But (1) they made light of it and went their ways, (2) one to his own farm, (3) another to his business. 6 And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. 7 But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' 10 So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

The parable is rather simple to interpret: The 'Certain King' is God the Father; 'his son' is "God the Son Jesus Christ"; the 'Marriage' is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb; his 'servants' represents the OT prophets; the 'people' who were invited originally were Jewish people; and the outcast ones were the Gentiles.

When the first invitation went out, everybody agreed to be at the wedding. However, when the second and the third invitation went out, they were coming up with flimsy excuses which only brought insults to the king.

These are the same excuses people still use why they wouldn't come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. I asked you to underline three phrases:

1) They made light of it and went their ways – People think that they are righteous and good enough to get to heaven without accepting Jesus as their Savior and Lord. They don't take God's warnings in the Bible seriously.

2) One to his own farm – People think that their wealth is more valuable than their eternal destinies. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?

3) Another to his business – People think that their careers are more important than their eternal lives. What a tragedy! For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

The marketing agency Mediakix calculated the average time spent per day on YouTube (40 minutes), Facebook (35), Snapchat (25), Instagram (15) and Twitter (1) and projected those figures out over a lifetime, arriving at a total of five years and four months. Social media use trailed only watching television, at seven years and eight months, and it came in well ahead of eating/drinking, grooming, socializing, and doing laundry. As this statistic mentioned, more and more people spend their limited lifetime in the things that don't mean anything in the scope of eternity, while they don't even give a moment of time for the things that would change their eternal destination or rewards in heaven.

Jesus is looking for men and women who would follow Him through thick and thin, not just 'fair weather followers.'

2 Chronicles 16:9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.

It is the Holy Spirit's job to bring people to Christ. Whenever people reject the invitation of the Holy Spirit, they are rejecting the very invitation of God and someday it will literally haunt them.

B. EXCUSE OF "GOOD ENOUGH"

Matthew 22:11-14 But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. 12 So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

The man considered his own garment good enough, and refused the garment freely offered by the king. Like the majority of people around the world, he thought that there is more than one way to get to heaven. But this man is finding out that he was dead wrong. And notice that he could not come up with his excuse in front of the king. This will be like the Day of Judgment for the unbelievers.

There are many people who call themselves Christians in America. But not everyone who claims to be a Christian will go to heaven. Because their hearts are not for Jesus. Indeed, many people are called to be Christians, only few are chosen, because they refuse to follow Him. Listen carefully, please. Heaven is not for good people, rather heaven is for forgiven people.

C. EXCUSE FROM POLITICAL SIDE

Matthew 22:15-22 Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. 16 And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. 17 Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" 18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? 19 Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius. 20 And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" 21 They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 22 When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.

Here are the Pharisees and the Herodians working together. This is a testimony to their great hatred of Jesus, because they are willing to put aside their own bitter differences for the sake of uniting against Jesus.

Jesus' dilemma with this question is simple. If He said that taxes should be paid, He could be accused of denying the sovereignty of God and making Himself an enemy of the Jews. If He said that taxes should not be paid, He declared Himself an enemy of Rome.

Again, with His wise answer, Jesus shows that He is in complete control. He rebuked the wickedness and hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Herodians. Jesus affirmed that the government makes legitimate requests of us. We are responsible to God in all things, but we must be obedient to the powers that be in things civil and national. Yes, it means that we need to pay our taxes.

D. EXCUSE FROM THEOLOGICAL AND INTELLECTUAL SIDE

Matthew 22:23-33 The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, 24 saying: "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. 25 Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. 26 Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. 27 Last of all the woman died also. 28 Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her." 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. 31 But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 32 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." 33 And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

Since all seven brothers were dropping like flies, somebody should have checked the food she had cooked for these brothers.

The Sadducees were the ancient equivalent to modern liberal theologians, only accepting the first five Books of the OT as known as 'Torah' or 'Pentateuch.' The Sadducees asked Jesus a hypothetical question, hoping to show the idea of the resurrection is nonsense. Based on the law of marriage described in Deuteronomy 25:5-10, if a married man died childless, it was his brother's responsibility to impregnate his brother's widow and account the child as the deceased husband's descendant.

Jesus didn't say, "I was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Rather, He was quoting, "I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," from Exodus 3:6, one of the Books these Sadducees believed. Jesus was telling them these ancestors' spirits are alive and God is their God in heaven and earth.

Jesus' reply stunned the Sadducees, the most highly educated men of His day. We can be highly educated, still be ignorant of the most important things in the world – God's Word and God's power.

E. EXCUSE FROM JUDICIAL SIDE

Matthew 22:34-40 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 "Teacher, which is the great

commandment in the law?" 37 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

The scribes had determined that there were 613 commandments in the Old Testament. 248 were positive injunctions and 365 were negative prohibitions. Hoping that Jesus' answer would spark a controversy, the lawyer asked Jesus which of the 613 was the greatest commandment.

Jesus went right to the heart of the law: the Shema. *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,"* according to Deuteronomy 6:5. The Jews knew this was the Great Commandment. Orthodox Jews wrote it out and put it in their Mezuzahs – the small, elongated boxes they fastened to their front door posts. They wrote it out and put it in their Phylacteries – the leather pouches they wore on their foreheads in obedience to the command to keep the Word always on their minds. They would do outward obedience, but the inside of their hearts were a different story.

There has been much confusion about what it means to love your neighbor as yourself. This doesn't mean that we must love ourselves before we can love anyone else. It means that in the same way we take care of ourselves and are concerned about our own interests, we should take care and have concern for the interests of others.

Jesus painted a picture when He said that the law and the prophets hang on the principles of loving God and loving our neighbor. As I look to heaven and love God; and I look to my right and left and love people, I see the picture of a Cross. Who hung on the Cross? The very One who loved His Father with all of His heart and soul, mind, and strength; the very One who loved us enough to give Himself up for us.

F. CONFRONTING EXCUSES

Matthew 22:41-46 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David." 43 He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying: 44 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool" ' 45 "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?" 46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

This time Jesus asked them a question regarding the identity of the Messiah from Psalm 110:1. The Pharisees identify "the Son of David" as the lineage of the Messiah. In the Jewish culture, one would never call his offspring "Lord". Truly, David is referring to Someone greater than himself. If Christ is merely the Son of David as they supposed, David would never have called him Lord.

The scribes and Pharisees, who prided themselves on their deep knowledge of Scripture, were stumped. Using the written Word, Jesus Christ who is the Living Word had beaten them at their own game.

The Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees tried to corner Jesus, so that they could come up with excuses of the reason why they would not believe in Him. But Jesus systematically eliminated their lame excuses.

G. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Remember that whenever we try to come up with an excuse why we didn't obey what the Bible tells us to do, we must realize that we are in sin. Don't make it worse by blaring our excuse to the Lord and to others. Stop there, and repent.
- 2) Our Lord knows that we cannot be perfect. He knew that He was getting flawed people. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't strive for excellence in our obedience to Him.
- 3) The Bible verses should not be in our heads only, but they should be in our lives.