

# EXCUSES FOR NOT OBEYING THE GOSPEL

Aaron Beard  
Trussville  
Jan 13, 2008

## INTRODUCTION: Scripture Reading ([Luke 14:15-23](#))

- A. From a very early age everyone learns the power of excuses & we continue to use them throughout life!**
1. As a toddler... as a elementary student... as a h.s student... college student... on the job... midlife... retirement age... We may conceal our excuses as “Good Reasons” but we all use excuses!
  2. Sometimes our excuses are legitimate and sometimes they are not (**Illust: Car Wreck Excuses**)
- B. Today I want us to spend our time looking at some excuses people use for not obeying the gospel:**
1. The practice of making excuses to avoid doing right is an old one – Jesus & His apostles faced this:
    - a. When facing the decision of whether or not to follow Jesus, some tried to delay their decision with excuses – Making these excuses showed their decision! ([Lk 14:15-23](#))
    - b. Paul preached to Felix but he chose to wait for a more convenient time ([Acts 24:25](#))
    - c. The way people handle the decision to follow Jesus has not changed – Some upon hearing respond with obedience, blatantly reject Him, or their rejection is more subtle... hidden under the guise of excuses – Eventually the time for excuses will run out!
  2. We have some who regularly assemble with us who haven’t obeyed the gospel... I am not going to hide the fact, romanticize it, or apologize for it... This lesson is for you! My prayer is that this lesson will help your cross whatever hurdles are holding you back from coming to Christ!
  3. This lesson will also help those who are already Christians in teaching others... Often when we present the truth to someone they come back with one of these excuses... what do you say?

## I. COMMON EXCUSES PEOPLE MAKE FOR NOT OBEYING THE GOSPEL:

### **A. I Don’t Believe In That Stuff!**

1. If you truly don’t believe in God, Jesus Christ as His Son, or the Bible this excuse is a legitimate one! Belief is a necessary step you must take to be saved! ([Mark 16:15-16](#); [Heb 11:6](#))
  - a. If a person decides to get baptized and yet they do not have faith either in God, His Son, or even what is being done at their baptism... Then all they are doing is getting wet!
  - b. Why would a person get baptized without believing? Maybe they feel pressure from a spouse; they’re intimidated by a preacher, elder, or other person; as they become a teenager they think it’s just expected; friends are doing it; or for ulterior motives
  - c. While this is a legitimate reason when one doesn’t have faith, sometimes it may be used as an excuse to avoid obeying the gospel when one does believe – A heart problem!
2. For some people the issue of faith is a major barrier to obeying the gospel! ([Romans 9:30-33](#))
  - a. The Jews had faith in God but stumbled over Christ... why? Christ came emphasizing faith & the salvation of the gospel is by faith – They continued seeking salvation by works
  - b. Some don’t believe in God’s existence, others have a hard time accepting the Bible’s incredible stories and the miracles, and some struggle with the Bible’s emphasis on spiritual things & on things not seen → The gospel needing obeyed hinges on these!
  - c. **Illustration:** Girl not obeying till she was 18 or 19 – saw bad things in the hospital and couldn’t believe in God... one day began seeing all the good being done & believed
3. All of these struggles boil down to your decision as to whether or not God is! ([Psalm 19:1ff](#))
  - a. What about accepting the flood, the parting of the Red Sea, David slaying Goliath, the virgin birth of Jesus, Jesus’ miracles, or even His resurrection... If a person believes in God, then accepting these should be easy! So it boils down to if you believe in God!

- b. You can't ignore the question! Where did the universe come from? How did man come to be? Really two options: Some kind of "big bang" with evolution or God created it!
- c. Start by investigating the evidence, ask which one makes more sense & is most consistent with the evidence around us (Illustration: One piece of evidence) **(Psalm 53:1)**
- d. How can some look at the universe, God's word, & Christians and conclude there is no God? Some may be sincere in their unbelief while others may not want to believe because they know it means they respond! Let's be honest... eternity is at stake!

### **B. I'm Not Good Enough To Become A Christian or I Am Not Able To Live The Christian Life**

- 1. Shows a lack of understanding about the Christian life & why we seek salvation: **(Romans 5:6-8)**
  - a. When a person becomes a Christian he is not saying he is good enough or that he can perfectly live up to God's standards... In fact, the exact opposite of this is true!
  - b. When a person obeys the gospel of Christ he is saying that he is not good enough, that his life is plagued by sin, and that he cannot live up to God's standards
  - c. As one goes through the steps of salvation he's saying he's lost & pleading for salvation!
- 2. If a person feels he must wait until he is good enough or until he is able to live the life, he is putting himself in a position where it's impossible to be saved! **(Rom 6:17-18, 22-23; Gal 3:26-27)**
  - a. How many sins does it take to make us lost? ONE! From that point on we can never be good enough to be saved! To seek to be is to seek salvation by works... a lost cause!
  - b. Think about it – How can a person live a Christian life without Christ? It's impossible!
  - c. Plus, it's only through the blood of Christ which cleanses us from sin and the strength he gives us to overcome sin that we can live the life! If you are waiting to get your life in order first you'll never be ready! You're trying to get the cart before the horse!
- 3. If you use this excuse, remember that being a Christian is a growth process: **(1 Cor 3:1ff; Heb 5:13)**
  - a. The moment you come up from your baptism you won't be as strong as one who has been a Christian for 50 years or free from the allurements of sins you once practiced
  - b. Those who are new Christians are called "BABES" → This means that at least for a time it's not wrong to be immature, struggle with things, & not be as strong as Paul or Peter!

### **C. If I Obey The Gospel, I Will Be Condemning Someone I Love**

- 1. Sometimes people know what the truth is but will not act upon it because they understand that doing so would be saying that someone they love is wrong:
  - a. This problem is only amplified if the loved one has died & their eternal destiny is sealed!
  - b. "What momma whispers in the cradle is carried to the tomb!" Many people, when faced with the truth, will not act upon it because it goes against what they've been taught
- 2. This was just as much a problem in the first century as it is today! Jesus knew the gospel would be a point of division in families so how did He say to handle this? **(Matthew 10:34-39)**
  - a. Jesus saw this personally... most His family rejected Him until He was resurrected! Many Jews who became Christians did so even though family and friends rejected them.
  - b. He said He is bringing a sword and that families would be torn apart – The gospel would be this sword. It's not that the gospel would inherently divide families, but because some in families would obey the truth & some wouldn't... Families would be divided!
  - c. This is why it is essential that Jesus comes first... We have to love Him more than anyone else... Even our closest loved ones! Even if they don't do what's right we must!
  - d. Jesus knew this would be hard to do so He speaks of carrying our cross (the instrument of

- death) right after it... It is very painful, but it's a cost one will pay who puts Jesus first!
3. If your loved one has passed away already, what would they really want you to do? Consider the mindset of the rich man after he died: **(Luke 16:25-31)**
    - a. Before he died the rich man's focus was not on spiritual things for himself, much less for his family... But once he died he could not escape the truth & his focus is changed!
    - b. His final plea is for someone, anyone, would go and speak to his family! No longer in a position to save himself he wants to make sure his loved ones do what's right!
    - c. I won't say your loved ones who've died are saved or lost... But if you discover through studying God's word they were wrong... what would they really want you to do?
  4. Remember that you are going to stand before the Lord! You will not be able to answer for your loved ones and they will not be able to answer for you! **(2 Cor 5:10; Phil 2:12)**

#### **D. I Don't Know Enough To Become A Christian:**

1. Sometimes people feel they don't know enough of God's word to obey the gospel: **(Acts 16:29-33)**
  - a. This excuse can be very sincere – For those who have always had God's word taught to us we need to remind others why we know all we do... It can be very intimidating!
  - b. If you have to have vast knowledge, how were the apostles & others in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century able to teach so many with little to NO knowledge & baptize them within the same day!
2. As we've pointed out before, the Christian life is a life of continual growth – This isn't just true about our ability to resist sin but is also true about our knowledge of the truth! **(Matt 28:18-20)**
  - a. Notice the pattern Jesus gave His apostles – You teach them, you baptize them, and then you continue to teach them – They were to learn “All Things” after their baptism!
  - b. If you find yourself thinking this you need to understand that most of what you will learn will come after you obey the gospel... not before! It's okay to not know a whole lot!
  - c. Having a great knowledge of God's word is very important... but being saved, being in Christ, having your sins forgiven... is a GREATER need – Don't put that off any longer!
3. How much does a person really need to understand before they obey the gospel? **(Acts 8:30-38)**
  - a. Understanding that you believe in God, one must realize they are lost in their sins
  - b. One must Jesus died on the cross & His death paid the penalty for their sins
  - c. A person would need to understand that after Jesus was buried, God raised Him up from the dead... That He is both Lord and Christ – the Son of God
  - d. Then a person would simply need to know what he needs to do to be saved!

#### **E. I've Already Been Baptized Or Have Accepted Christ As My Personal Savior**

1. With the many religious denominations & beliefs out there, this response is common!
  - a. As a general rule, churches of Christ are the only churches that teach & practice baptism for the purpose of the forgiveness of sins – This is hard for us to believe, but it's true!
  - b. Most of the religious people we talk to will have already been baptized at some point in their life and they will say, “I've already been baptized so what's the problem?”
  - c. Some have only “accepted Christ as their personal Savior” – They see themselves as being saved already and therefore cannot understand why they'd need to be baptized
2. God's word is plain on the necessity & purpose of baptism: **(1 Pet 3:21; Acts 2:38; Gal 3:27)**
  - a. Despite these verses many say it is merely the outward sign of an inward man (you're already saved) & others teach it's to place you into a local group or denomination
  - b. All of the bible examples are of people being baptized immediately – If it was done for the

- same purpose that many religious groups do it for today, why not put it off and do many people at one time like these are doing today? The purpose was different!
- c. When a person gets baptized for any other reason than to be saved then they are not accomplishing the purpose God designed baptism to have... One is just getting wet!
3. But one says, "I still have already been baptized!" – Should a person who has already been baptized be baptized again if the purpose was wrong? YES! (**Acts 19:1-7**)

**F. There Are Hypocrites At Church, I Don't Want To Be A Part Of That:**

1. Can we see any sincerity in this excuse? It's just an attempt to avoid doing right! (**Matt 13:14-15**)
  - a. A person will point to people in the church who struggle with sin and some who may have more serious problems, & say, "I don't want to be associated with those hypocrites"
  - b. Are there hypocrites at Trussville? Probably... Don't ask me to name them though! Every church likely has a person or two, or more, who aren't really trying to do what's right
  - c. We don't let hypocrites keep us from doing what we want – They're at ball games, are business leaders, in schools & organizations → We won't say, "I'm not going to that game, there'll be a hypocrite there!" → Truth is you just don't want to... so say that!
2. The best way to deal with this objection is to ask, "How would Jesus handle it?"
  - a. Jesus did not avoid the synagogues and yet He knew firsthand how corrupt the religious leaders were and in spite of their cunning personal attempts to destroy His influence
  - b. He continued to work with Judas despite the fact that he would eventually betray him
  - c. Who did Jesus most often associate with? It was people whose lives were plagued by sin & problems! He didn't tolerate an insistence on sin, but worked patiently with people!
3. It is unbiblical & illogical to avoid doing right due to the presence of hypocrites: (**Rev 2:24ff; 4:4ff**)
  - a. It's been pointed out: "You can spend a few years in a church with a few hypocrites or you can spend eternity in hell with all the hypocrites of all time" → Which makes sense?
  - b. Let me get this reasoning straight – You say you are going to choose not to do right because others are choosing not to do right? Yes, that makes perfect sense!
  - c. What was Jesus' advice to those in churches with hypocrites? Run away? Quit doing what it is right? Jesus seems to be saying, "Stick it out! Don't give up! Be a good influence and let your light shine!" → This is even in places where the majority are hypocrites!
  - d. It really tears me up to see someone wait on the table or lead a prayer and I know they are either insincere or currently living sinful lives! What if we quit doing right? What if we run away to go find a place where there aren't any? The hypocrisy wins out!
4. We need to be aware that sometimes people aren't really hypocrites:
  - a. Maybe they're spiritually immature! Maybe they are having an intense struggle with sin or reaping consequences sown by bad decisions – Doesn't have to equal hypocrisy!
  - b. Remember Peter denied Christ and was later carried away by hypocrisy... should the other apostles & Christians have written him off? Even righteous people have weak times!