

Popular Excuses to Avoid Salvation

By D.L. Moody

Some people are always making excuses for not doing their duty, and especially for not coming to Christ. If I asked you to come to Christ, you would be ready to give some excuse for not accepting the invitation. I never saw an unsaved man in my life but had some excuse - never! and if you don't have one ready, Satan will be right by you to help you to make one. He is good at that sort of thing. That has been his occupation the last six thousand years - helping men to make excuses.

"And they all with one consent began to make excuse." (Luke 14:18)

Just bear in mind, these men were invited to a feast, and not to funeral. They were not invited to go to prison. They were not invited to a hospital, or to a madhouse; but they were invited to feast. Now, when a man prepares a feast, there is a great rush to see who will get the best seats; but when God prepares His feast, the chairs would all be empty, if His disciples did not go out to compel people to come in. No sooner did the King send out His invitations than the excuses began to rain in. "And they all, with one consent, began to make excuse."

All at it, and always at it. Did you ever stop to think, my friends, what would take place if God should take every man at his own word who wants to be excused? If He were to say, "I will excuse you" and with the next breath take them all out of the world? If every one in this audience should be taken at his word, who makes excuses in this respect, and if God should say, "Cut him down, let him cumber the ground no longer, hew him down," (Luke 13:7) there would be a very terrible state of things in London. If every man in London, and every woman who wanted to be excused, and is saying so, - if God should take them at their word, and say, "I will excuse you," oh! my friends, there would be a great many shops not opened tomorrow.

The public-houses [bars], for instance, would be closed; for I never saw a publican [bar-keeper] in my life, but what wanted to be excused. He knows he cannot go on with his hellish traffic, if he accepts this invitation. He would have to stop that at once. Many of your cabmen [taxi drivers] do not want to come to the feast, because they would have to stop their business on the Sabbath. There would be a great many of your princely merchants that would be gone. They do not want to accept the invitation, because they think, if they do, they cannot make money so fast. They are carrying on some business which would then have to be stopped, because they accepted this invitation. There would be a very sad

state of things taking place. Those that were left would have to be busy burying the dead. It would be a very solemn time, if God should take men at their word, and just excuse them. You let some terrible disease lay hold of a man, and half his excuses are gone at once.

Every kind of excuse is given; but that man does not live who can give a good excuse.

Let any man get an invitation from Queen Victoria to go down to Windsor Castle, to some banquet; and there is not a man but would consider it a great honor to receive such an invitation. But only think of the invitation that I bring tonight! It comes from the King of kings. The marriage supper of the Lamb is going to take place, and God wants every man in this assembly to be present. I cannot speak for the rest of you; but if I know my own heart, I would be rather torn limb from limb - I would rather have my heart torn out of me - than be absent from that marriage supper. I have missed a good many appointments in my time, but, by the grace of God, I mean to make sure of keeping that one.

These men all began to say, "I pray thee have me excused." Let us take up that first man's excuse. What was it? He had bought some ground, and he must needs go and see it. Why did he not, if he were a good business man, go and look at the ground before he bought it? It was not going to make the ground any better for him to go and look at it. He had not made a partial bargain and might withdraw. He was not afraid that some one might step in ahead of him and get the ground from him, and so he would lose it: it was not anything of this kind; but he had bought the ground, and must needs go and see it. It is a strange time to go and see ground, just at supper time. I think the ground would have looked all the better after he had been to the feast. But the fact is, my friends, he did not believe it was a feast; and that is the trouble to-day. Men do not believe the Gospel is a feast.

The second man is approached by the messenger, who says, "My lord has made a great feast, and he wants to have you come to it." "Take back to your lord the message, that I cannot be there. I have bought five yoke of oxen [for plowing], and I have got to go and prove [test] them." Why did not he prove his oxen before he bought them? That is the time to prove oxen; but now he has bought them, let them stand in the stall. The trade is already closed; the bargain is already made; the oxen are bought. They are his, and now he can go and prove them at any time. A queer time to prove oxen, at supper time! He had better have proved them in the morning, and so have been ready to go to the feast in the evening.

The third man had married a wife, and therefore he could not come. Why not take his wife along with him? A young bride likes to go to a feast - no one better. He might have taken her: and if she was not

willing, then let her stay at home. You smile, you laugh at this, but you can see plainly what these excuses were. They were simply falsehoods, just manufactured to ease their consciences.

That boy down in the audience sees how absurd these excuses were; for the fact was, they did not want to go to the feast; and it would have been a good deal more honest for them to have said; "I don't want to go to your lord's feast, and I will not go."

Now, I would just like to take up some of the popular excuses of the present day. I do not doubt but there are hundreds of you who say to-night, "If I could accept that invitation, Mr. Moody, I would like to be a Christian; but, sir, I have tried, and I find it is a very hard thing." Well, now let us look at that excuse. Do you mean to say that God is a hard Master? Do you say it is a hard thing to serve God? and do you say that Satan is an easy master, and that it is easier to serve him than God? Is it honest, - is it true? If it is, then I must confess that I have not read my Bible right; because I read it this way: - "The way of the transgressor is hard." (Prov. 13:15)

If you doubt it, young men, look at the convicts in that prison; right in the bloom of manhood; right in the prime of life. He has been there for ten years, and must remain there for ten years more, - twenty years taken out of his life, and the thought that when he comes out of that miserable cell, he comes out a branded convict! Do you think that man will tell you "the way of the transgressor has been easy"?

Go and ask the poor drunkard, - the man who is bound hand and foot, and is a slave to the infernal cup, and is hastening on to a drunkard's grave and to a drunkard's hell, - ask him if he has found the way of the transgressor easy, and the devil an easy master. Go ask the libertine - go ask that gambler - go ask the most abandoned man you have got in London, - ask them all, if they have found the devil an easy master.

Suppose we were to take the most faithful follower of the devil, and put him into the witness-stand, and let him testify; do you think the most faithful follower of the devil would tell you that he is an easy master? Why, there is not a young man here but knows in his heart the devil is a hard master.

The best way to settle this question is to find out by the testimony of those that have served both masters. I do not think any man has a right to judge until he has served both masters. If I heard a man condemn a master, I should be very apt to ask if he had served him; and if he had not, he could not very well testify. I am speaking to many to-night who have served both masters. Many of you have served

Christ; and many of you, before you were brought into the fold of Christ, served the devil. I would like to ask the young men here to-night that are Christ's, - that have served Christ, - I would like to ask you, who have been brought into the kingdom of God and found Christ, - is Jesus a hard Master? [Loud cries of No.] I thought you would say no. I knew you would. I never heard a man say, "I have served Christ for five years, or more, and found Him a very hard Master." You never will say that.

One of the greatest lies that has come out of the pit of hell is, that Christ is a hard Master. It is a lie, and has been so from the foundation of the world. Oh, young man, I beg of you, do not believe the devil when he says that God is a hard Master. It is false, my friends; and to-night let me brand that excuse as one of the devil's own lies, that lie has been retailing up and down the earth for six thousand years.

Look how poor Adam suffered, because he believed the devil's lies! Look at poor Judas! Did he find the devil an easy master? See him throwing down the thirty pieces of silver! (Matt. 27:5) Why, he got so tired of the devil's service that he hanged himself twenty-four hours after he entered it.

Then there is another very popular excuse. I can imagine a good many would say; "Well, Mr. Moody, the fact is, I want to be saved." Of course you do! You would not be coming here at this time - at some inconvenience, many of you - if you did not want to be saved. But you say, "The fact is, Mr. Moody, I don't know that I am elected. If I thought I was elected I would come. I know that I cannot come unless I am elected and I really want to come very much, but I don't know that I am one of the elect." Now, I have heard that till I have got sick and tired of it. I want to say to every unconverted man in this hall to-night that you have no more to do with the doctrine of election than you have with the government of China. I am not saying this in haste; I weigh well my words. I say that no unconverted man has anything to do with the doctrine of election. You have to do with the word whosoever. Now, the invitation is, "Whosoever will, let him come to this feast." (Rev. 22:17)

To-night, my friends, let me say that you are invited, every one of you; and if you don't come, it will be because you won't, not because God does not want you, or has not given you the power to come. With the invitation there comes the power. Christ said to the withered man, "Stretch out thy hand." (Mark 3:5) The man might have said that he had not the power; but with the invitation there came the power. And so it is here.

Suppose I walked up the street to-night, and I stepped up to the door of this Camberwell Hall to go in, and a man stopped me, and I said to him, "Why not let me in?" "Where's your ticket?" "I have got none." "But no one is admitted without a ticket." "Then I cannot go in, I suppose?" "No; it is for a certain

class - those that have got tickets." I go along farther - up to the Exeter Hall and there is an anniversary meeting of some society. I step in, and a policeman pushes me back. I say, "I want to go in"; and he says, "You cannot go in here unless you have got a ticket. None but members can be admitted to-night." I do not happen to be a member of the society, and I cannot go in. I go on along a little farther, and come to another meeting; and there, perhaps, they are Quakers. The policeman stops me, and says, "Nobody admitted but Quakers." I am not a Quaker, and cannot go in. Farther on I find a soldiers' meeting. I cannot go in because I am not a soldier, and none but soldiers are admitted. But I go farther on, for I find written up in great big letters, "Whosoever will, let him come in." In I go: that means me. Now God has headed His invitation with whosoever, in great burning letters; and if you will go in, God will receive you to-night. He wants you to come this hour - this very minute.

"Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." I have an idea that the Lord Jesus Christ saw how men were going to stumble over that doctrine of election; for, after He had been back in heaven for thirty or forty years, and John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, in the Isle of Patmos, Jesus came to him and said, "John, write this," and he wrote. Again He said; "John, before you close the book, put in this - The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17) That for ever has settled in my mind, the doctrine of election.

Another excuse is: "I can't understand the Bible." Men are giving that as the reason why they do not accept the invitation to be at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Now, I want to say I never met a skeptic or infidel who had read the Bible through. I heard a man say the other day to another man, "Have you read such a book?" "Yes." "What is your opinion of it?" "Well, I only read it through once, and I would not like to give my opinion without reading it more carefully." But men can give their opinion about God's Book without reading it. They read a chapter here and there, and say, "Oh, the Book is so dark and mysterious!" and because they cannot understand it by reading a few chapters, they condemn the whole of it. The Word of God tells us plainly that the natural man cannot understand spiritual things. It is a spiritual book, and speaks of spiritual things; and a man must be born of the Spirit before he can understand the Bible. What seems very dark and mysterious to you now will all be light and clear when ye are born of the Spirit.

You say, "If that is so, how am I to understand how to be saved?" I will tell you. When God puts salvation before a sinner, He puts it so plain that a man who runs can read, and a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. There are a great many things in the Book which are dark and mysterious; but when it comes to the plan of salvation, God has put it so plain that that little girl ten years old can understand it, if she will.

You understand what it is to come. "Come unto me, all ye that labour." (Matt. 11:28) You know what it is to take a gift. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." (John 1:11-12) "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." (Rom. 6:23) You know what it is to believe in a man. Well, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:31) You know what it is to put trust and confidence in a man. Now, put your trust and confidence in the living God, and you are saved. You are saved by casting yourself unreservedly upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

When God puts salvation before a man, He puts it so plain and simple that if he is willing to come as a little child, he can come.

Suppose I should send my little boy, five years old, to school to-morrow morning, and when he came home I should say, "Can you read, write, spell? Do you understand all about arithmetic, geometry, algebra?" The little fellow would look, at me, and say, "Why, Papa, why do you talk that way? I have been trying all day to learn the A B C." Supposing I replied "If you have not finished your education you need not go to the school any more," - what would you say? You would say; "Moody has gone mad." Well, there is about as much sense in that as in the way that infidels talk about the Bible. They take it up, read a chapter, and say "Oh, it is so dark and mysterious, we cannot understand it."

This blessed Book is given to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psa. 119:105) to guide the way to those eternal mansions (John 14:2). It never was given to keep men out of the kingdom of God. That is the devil's work - trying to make you believe the Word of God is not true. I tell you the only way we can overcome the enemy of our souls is by the written Word of God; and the devil knows that, and so he comes up, and says - "it is full of lies; it is dark and mysterious; it contradicts itself: don't you believe it." He knows the moment a man goes to the Word of God and believes it, he finds liberty to his soul, and gets beyond Satan's reach; he gets a weapon in his hand with which to conquer the devil; he overcomes the enemy of his salvation.

The devil does not want you to find that out, and whispers this lie; and you believe it rather than the Word of God. Young man, your mother is right: the Bible is true, and you had better accept it.

Keep this in mind : you will never stand up before the bar of God, and say, the Bible kept you out of the kingdom. It may sound very well here, now; you may be satisfied to give that for an excuse down here, to-night; but you will not be satisfied to give it in the Courts of Heaven; - you will not stand up in the great Judgment Day and say the Bible kept you out of the kingdom.

Then there is another class. Some people say "I haven't any doubt about the Word of God; but the fact is, there are some men in the Church who are hypocrites; therefore I don't purpose to go into the Church." I am not asking you to come into the Church - not but what I believe in churches - but I am asking you to the marriage supper of the Lamb; I am inviting you to this feast; we will talk about the Church by-and-by.

We want you to come to Christ first; then we will talk to you about the Church. But you say; "Here are some hypocrites." So there are; and I can imagine you saying; "Oh yes - there is a man up here in one of the churches that cheated me out of £5 a few years ago; you are not going to catch me in the company of such hypocrites," Well, my friend, if you want to get out of the company of hypocrites, you had better get out of the world as quick as you can. One of the twelve apostles turned out to be a hypocrite; and there is no doubt there will be hypocrites in the Church to the end of time. But "what is that to thee?" says Christ to Peter: "follow thou Me." We do not ask you to follow hypocrites, we ask you to follow Christ; we do not ask you to believe in hypocrites, we ask you to believe in Christ.

Another thing - if you want to get out of the company of hypocrites you had better make haste and come to Christ. There will be no hypocrites at the marriage supper of the Lamb; they will all be in hell, and you will be there with them if you do not make haste and come to Christ. That excuse would sound strange, would it not? We very often hear men give it down here, but it would sound very strange before Jehovah - a man saying, "I know You invited me to be at the marriage supper of Your Son, but I did not accept it because I knew, there were some hypocrites that professed the Gospel."

There is another class who say; "I know there are hypocrites. but they don't have any influence over me." If I could go to the door as you go out to-night, and take you by the hand and say, "My friend, why not accept of the invitation to-night?" If you would say, "I pray to be excused to-night; I have not time. I have got some very pressing business to-morrow morning to attend to, and I have to go home to bed as quick as possible, to get my night's rest. You will have to excuse me." And the mothers here would say, "I have to go home and put the children to bed; you really must excuse me";- "very pressing business";- "no time." Thousands of men in London say they have not time. Thanks be to God! it don't take time: it takes decision.

But what have you done with all the time God has given you? Your locks [hair] are turning grey, your eye is growing dim, and that temple of your body is coming down: what have you done with all those years? Is it true you have not time? What did you do with the three hundred and sixty-five days last year? No time? - what have you done with it all? Have not you had time to accept of this invitation? Why, men

spend fifteen or twenty years to get an education, that they may go out to earn a living for this frail body that is soon to be eaten up with worms; or five years to learn a trade, that they may earn a living; and yet they have not five minutes to seek their souls' salvation!

You "have no time." Is it true? You know it is a lie; and if you go out to-night unsaved, it will not be because you have not time, but because you won't accept the invitation. God says, "Seek first the kingdom of God." (Matt. 6:33) That is the first thing to do. Supposing you do not get so much money to-morrow, and get Christ, is not that worth more than money? Better for a man to be sure of salvation than to have the wealth of the world rolled to his feet!

But there is another excuse coming up from some one in the gallery. A man says, "My heart is so hard." Well, that is just the very reason you ought to come. If you had not a hard heart you would not need a Savior. Can you soften your heart? Can you break your heart? Did not God invite the hard-hearted? Did not Christ come to seek and to save that which was lost? It is just because men's hearts are hard that they need a Savior. That is no excuse at all. God invites you, and you won't stand tip and tell the Great King you did not accept His the invitation because you had a hard heart. He invites "whosoever"; and you can come along with your hard heart.

In the North there was a minister talking to a man in the inquiry room. He said, " My heart is so hard, it seems as if it was chained; and I cannot come." " Ah! " said the minister, "Come to Christ, chain and all"; and he just came to Christ, and Christ snapped the fetters, and set him free right there. If you are bound hand and foot by Satan, that is the work of God to break the fetters; you cannot break them. Thanks be to God! He can break the fetters and set the captive souls free to-night. I do not care how hard the heart is: the Lord can save to the uttermost; He bids you come just as you are. Oh, this old excuse - "I am so bad!"; Away with it! Paul said he was the "chief" of sinners; and if the chief has obtained mercy there is hope for everybody else.

The devil makes us believe that we are good enough without salvation, if he can; and if he cannot make us believe that, he says, "You are so bad the Lord won't have you"; and so he tries to make people believe, because they are so bad, Christ won't have anything to do with them. God invites you to come just as you are. I know a great many people want to come, but they are trying to get better and to get ready to come. Now mark you, my friend, the Lord invites you to come just as you are; and if you could make yourself better, you would not be any more acceptable to Him.

Do not put these filthy rags of self-righteousness about you. God will strip every rag from you when you come to Him, and He will clothe you with glorious garments. When our [civil] war was going on, we would sometimes go to the recruiting office and see a man come in with a silk hat, broadcloth coat, calfskin boots - his suit might be worth \$100; and another man would come in whose clothes were not worth a pound; but they both had to strip, and put on the uniform of the country. And so when we go into Christ's vineyard we must put on the livery of heaven, and be stripped of every rag of our own. However bad you are, come just as you are, and the Lord will receive you.

Some say; "I would like to become a Christian; but I have a prejudice against these special meetings, and against Americans, and against a layman too. If it was a regular minister, if it was our regular minister, I would accept the invitation." If that is your difficulty, I can help you out of that. You can just get up, and go out of the hall, and run right over to your minister, and have a talk with him; your minister would be most glad to see and talk and pray with you. And if you say do not want to be converted in a special meeting, there are regular meetings in all the churches throughout London.

But if you say There is a great awakening here in London," and you do not want to be converted in that way; then jump into a train, and go to some town where there is no revival. We can find you some place where there is no revival, and some church where there is not much of the revival spirit. If you really want to go, don't give that for an excuse. How wise the devil is! When the Church is cold, and everything is dead, men say, " Oh, well, if there was only some life in the Church I might become a Christian, - if we could only just have a wave from heaven." Then when the wave does come, they say, " Oh no; we are afraid of excitement, and afraid of these special meetings. We are afraid there will be something done that won't be just in accordance with our ideas of propriety." - My friend, it is God who is working. He prepares the way.

There is another class here who say: "I would like to come, but then I do not feel." That is, I think, the very worst excuse, and the most common excuse we have. I wish sometimes the word could be abolished, - feel! feel! You go into the inquiry room. "Well, Mr. Moody, I do not feel this and that." Why, supposing my friend, Mr. Stone [organizer of the meeting] should invite me to go to his house to-morrow to dinner, and I say to Mr. Stone, "I should like to go very much, but I don't know that I feel right." "Well", he says, "what do you mean? Do you mean you don't want to go to my house?" "Oh no, I want to go." (That is what men say: "Oh yes, we want to be saved.") "What do you mean, Mr. Moody? Do you mean that you do not know you will be well to-morrow? Do you think you will be sick?" "I expect to be well to-morrow, if I live." "Well, what do you mean by feeling?" "Well, I do not know just how I'll feel. I would like very much to go to your house to dinner tomorrow, but I don't know that I will feel just right." "I don't understand you, Mr. Moody - I am not talking about feeling; I invite you to come to my house to dinner." "Well, I would like to come very much, but the fact is, I do not know how I will feel to-morrow."

I can imagine my friend saying, "What has come over Moody? I think the fellow has gone mad. I asked him to my house to dinner, and he says he would like to come, but he does not know that he will feel right; he talked about feeling all the time." Of course you would say he has gone mad. But that is the way people talk now. You speak to them about coming to the kingdom of God, and they say; "I do not know that I feel just right." Away with your feelings. God is above feeling. We cannot control our feelings? If I could, I would feel good all the time - never catch me feeling bad at anything! I am sure if I could control my feelings I never would have any bad feelings; I would always have good feelings.

Bear in mind, Satan may change our feelings fifty times a day, but he cannot change the Word of God; and what we want is to build our hopes of the kingdom of heaven upon the Word of God. When a poor sinner is coming up out of the pit, and just ready to get his feet upon the Rock of Ages, the devil sticks out a plank of feeling and says; "Get on that"; and when he puts his feet on that, down he goes again.

Take one of these texts - "Verily, I say unto you, he that hearest my word and believeth on Him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death into life." (John 5:24) My friend, that is worth more than all the feelings that you can have in a whole lifetime. I would a thousand times rather stand on that verse than on the best frame of feeling. I took my stand there twenty years ago. The dark waves of hell have come dashing up against me; the waves of persecution have surged around me doubts, fears, and unbelief have assailed me; but I have been able to stand right there. It is a sure footing for eternity. It was true eighteen hundred years ago, and it is true to-night. That Rock is higher than my feeling. What we want is to get our feet upon the Rock, and then the Lord will put a new song into our mouths.

There is another class, who say they cannot believe. Not long ago, a man said to me; "I cannot believe." I said "Who?" "Well, I cannot believe." I said, "Who?" He stammered and stuttered, and I said; "Who cannot you believe, - God?" "Oh yes, I believe God. I cannot believe myself," "Well, you do not want to believe yourself. Your heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). Put no confidence in the flesh. Don't believe yourself; call yourself a liar, and let God be true. Believe in God, and say as Job said; 'Though He slay me I will trust Him.'(Job 13:15)"

Some men seem to talk as if it was a great misfortune that they do not believe. Bear in mind, it is the damning sin of the world. "When He, the Comforter, is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me." That is the sin of the world - "because they believe not on me." Why, that is the very root of sin - the very tree, and all the fruit! This is the tree that brings forth this bad fruit - it is the tree of unbelief.

I wish I had time to go on with these excuses; for they are as numerous as the hairs on our heads. But if I could go on and exhaust them all, the devil would help to make more. You can just take them, tie them up in one bundle, and mark them lies - the whole of them. Not one of them is true. If your excuse is a good one, if it will stand the light of eternity; do not give it up for anything I have said. Hold it firm, take it to the bar of God, and tell it out to Him. But if you have an excuse that won't stand the piercing eye of God, I beg of you, as a friend, give it up - let your excuses go. Let them go to the four winds of heaven, and accept of the invitation now. It is a very easy thing for a man to excuse himself into hell, but he cannot excuse himself out.

Dare you make light of the invitation? Suppose you should just write out an excuse to the King of Heaven: "While sitting in the Camberwell Hall, July 10th, 1875, I received a very pressing invitation from one of Your messengers to be present at the marriage supper of Your only-begotten Son. I pray Thee have me excused." Would you come up and sign that? Would you take your pen and put your name down to that excuse? I can imagine you saying, you would let your right hand forget its cunning, and your tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth first. I doubt whether there is a man in this room who could be made to sign this excuse: but what will you do? Many of you will get up and go out of this hall, making light of the preacher, laughing at everything you have heard, paying no attention to the invitation. I beg of you, do not make light of this invitation. It is a loving God that invites you; but God is not to be mocked. Go, play with the forked lightning, trifle with any pestilence, any disease, rather than with God. God is not to be trifled with.

Just let me write out another reply "To the King of Heaven. While sitting in the Camberwell Hall, July 10th, 1875, I received a pressing invitation from one of Your servants to be present at the marriage supper of Your only-begotten Son. I hasten to reply, By the grace of God I will be present." Who will sign that? (Many replies of "I will!" "I will!") Who will set to their seal to-night that God is true? Be wise to-night and accept of the invitation. Make up your mind now: do not go away till the question of eternity is settled.

Dwight L. Moody

July 10th, 1875