

Therefore I Cannot Come

In Luke 14 Jesus tells the parable of a certain man who prepared a supper and invited many to come. When the feast was ready and he began an attempt to assemble the invited guests, they began with one accord to make excuses for why they could not attend. It seems when the initial invitations went out the excuse makers promised to be there, but when supper time came creative excuses that would challenge those of modern times began to flow. The third man who offered his excuse has always been especially branded as having a most illogical excuse. While some ridicule his unwillingness to take his new bride out to the supper, suggesting perhaps he could put a sack over her head if he was that ashamed of her, these modern day scorners have their marriage that consistently prevents their attendance at the worship services of the church.

The thing we are about to address, if received as it ought to be, would increase the attendance of almost every congregation. On the other hand, if it is not received, it would decrease it. This writer was once riding down the highway with a brother when he just up and said, "I am going to sin Sunday night." When I asked him how so, he said he was playing a round of golf that afternoon and if he didn't finish the round he wasn't going to quit in the middle of it to attend the evening service. My reaction, of course, was that he did not have to wait until Sunday evening, he had already sinned whether he finished the round and made it to the evening service or not. His attitude and intent had him condemned already!

Preacher, how many times have you had a member ask, "Why don't you ever preach on ____ ? Your answer was, "I've preached on that subject five times in the last ten months, but you were not present on any of those occasions." And where was that member? The same place they told you last Wednesday night that they would be the following Sunday instead of at the Lord's day assembly. And where was that? Working. If they had been among the excuse makers in Luke 14 they would have been compelled to confess, "I have married a job and therefore cannot come." To such people one can point out Matthew 6:33; 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25, 62 etc., but to them, these verses are only applicable to those who go fishing or attend a family reunion and forsake the Lord's day assembly; they never apply them, who may miss more worship services than the rest of the congregation combined.

One excuse always seems to lead to another. With those who frequently miss the worship because of work, the next excuse usually is, "But I have to feed my family." It is simply amazing that people with jobs that frequently interfere with attendance to worship do not have enough dependence upon and trust in God to even go out and look for other employment that will not interfere with their attendance. It is also amazing that so many miss the point in Matt. 6 that Jesus was not saying do not put luxuries over seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, but do not put food, water, and something to wear, first. Jesus also makes the point in that passage to let God feed and clothe your family. He is not arguing for not working, but He is raising the question: Where is your faith?

One would be hard challenged to find members of the church with a greater lack of faith in God than those who are at the workplace almost as much, if not more, than they are at the worship place. Some of these members would dare to place themselves among the number often referred to as the faithful few, but Jesus would doubtless differ with their self aggrandizement. Their reasoning is undoubtedly that, "I would be there if I could, makes my excuse exempt from the number of those whose excuses are plain disobedience to the command not to forsake the assembly." The excuse makers in Luke 14 might have engaged in excuse ranking, too, but in the final analysis none of those excuse makers would have been allowed to attend the supper now had they wanted to (v. 24). It was too late for them. It will be too late in judgment to

overcome the excuses of this life, including the one, "I have married a job, and therefore cannot come."

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25). There may be rare occasions when almost every Christian engaged in secular employment is forced to miss an assembly with the distasteful choice of either work or lose his job. If those occasions are frequent though, and the decision is to work, it is suggestive of either a lack of commitment or an absence of faith. Whichever it is, one thing is certain, when one stands before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10), and is called upon to give an account of himself to God (Rom. 14:12), there will be no absences including by those whose custom it has been to appeal to the excuse, "I have married a job and therefore cannot come!"

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