

# Excuses

A Sermon By  
R. A. Torrey



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Author: R. A. Torrey

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*“And they all with one consent began to make excuses.”*  
Luke xiv. 18.

In these words our Lord Jesus Christ sets forth the manner in which God's invitation of love and grace and mercy would be received, and that is precisely the way in which God's invitation of mercy is being received by the people of London to-night. When you come to men and extend to them God's wonderful invitation of grace to His royal banquet, one and all, instead of accepting it with glad alacrity, begin to make excuses for not coming. In the parable from which the text is taken our Lord Jesus Christ represents that the Gospel invitation is an invitation to a banquet. So it is. Never was there such a glorious banquet spread on earth as this which God spreads for you and me in the Gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ. God's table is just groaning with good things. Now, when men are invited to a royal banquet they begin to cast about for some way to get to it. But when the great King of Kings spreads His table and invites His guests, so great is the blindness and madness of the human heart that men try to find some excuse for not going.

If at the coronation, a few months ago, King Edward had given a great banquet in this city, and sent out invitations to his guests, every person who was honoured by an invitation would have moved Heaven and earth to get to that banquet, because they were so honoured that the king had sent them an invitation. But when the great King, the Lord God Almighty, sends out His invitation by His Gospel messengers to His royal banquet, in the desperate wickedness of the human heart, and in your stubborn rebellion against the Lord who loves you and gave His Son to die for you, instead of trying to come to the banquet, you try to find some excuse for not coming. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the parable, gives us three illustrative excuses, and each one of these excuses is perfectly absurd; and that is the point of it. Our Lord Jesus wants us to see how utterly irrational and absurd are all the excuses that men make for not coming to Christ.

The first excuse was this: “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it.” How utterly absurd! It sounds rational at the first hearing, and looks rational at the first glance, but when you look at it, how absurd it is. If the man had already bought the ground, where was the need of hurry in going to see it? He could have waited until the banquet was over. Furthermore, who ever heard of going out at supper-time, after dark, to see land. He was just making up an excuse, and his excuse, like most of yours, was a lie. If the man had been a real sensible business man he would have gone and seen the ground before he bought it. The idea of a man buying a piece of ground and then going to see it! I know of a man in America who did that once. It was up in Minneapolis. The man bought some real estate in that city, and instead of going to see it first, or sending some one to see it, he had bought it, and months after he thought he would go and see it. He went up there and found his land was at the bottom of Lake Harriet. Very good soil, but too wet!

The second excuse was equally absurd. The man said: “I have bought five yolk of oxen and I go to prove them.” How absurd! There is no hurry; the oxen were already purchased; he might go to the banquet first and try the oxen afterwards, and if he had been a real sensible business man he would have tried the oxen first, and bought them afterwards. Anyway, day-time is far better than night-time to try oxen.

The third man's excuse was the most absurd of all. He said, “I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” I would like to know why not? If it had been a funeral there would have been some sense in his excuse, but it was a feast. Who ever saw a bride that was not willing to go to a feast? Why did he not bring her with him? There was plenty of room at the feast.

You laugh at those excuses, but I want to ask if there is any one here to-night with a better excuse? I am going to take up the excuses men bring forward to-day for not coming to Christ, and show you the utter absurdity and unreasonableness of every one of them.

The first excuse is this: there is too much to give up. That is absolutely unreasonable. You say, "Do you mean to say there is nothing to give up if one comes to Christ?" No. I say nothing of the kind. I never knew any one to come to Christ yet that did not have to give up something. The drunkard has to give up his drunkenness, the gambler his gambling; people who are following the frivolities of the world have to give them up. I am not saying there is nothing to give up, but still that excuse is absurd. You say, "Why?" For three reasons. In the first place, the only things God asks you to give up are the things that are doing you harm. We read in Psalm lxxxiv. 11: "The Lord God is a Sun and Shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." God has given to each one of us a guarantee that He will never ask us to give up anything that is for our good, and that guarantee is His own Son. As we read in Romans viii. 32: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" I do not think if God has given His Son to die for us, He is going to ask us to give up anything that is good for us. I remember once in an after-meeting, I was talking to a young lady about coming to Christ. She said, "Well, I would like to be a Christian." "Then become one now." "Oh, no," she replied. "Why not?" "There is too much to give up." I said, "See here, do you think God loves you?" "Why, I know He does." "How much do you think God loves you?" "God loved me enough to give His Son to die for me." "Well," I said, "do you think that God, if He loved you enough to give his Son to die for you, will ask you to give up anything that is for your good to keep?" She said, "No, He will not." I said, "Do you want to keep anything that is not for your highest good?" She replied, "No." "Then do you not think you would better come to Christ right now?" She said, "I will," and she did.

The second reason why the excuse is absurd is this: what you give up is nothing to what you get. It is very easy to give up tin when you get gold, and it is very easy to give up sin when you get God. It is very easy to give up painted glass when you get diamonds and rubies and emeralds and pearls instead. And it is very easy to give up the baubles of the world when you get the real jewels of Heaven in exchange. I do not think that anybody ever gave up more for Christ than did Paul, and yet, when he was sore tried and in prison, writing about what he gave up, he said, "What things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." He said, "What I gave up is nothing to what I gained." You cannot find a Christian on the face of the earth that will not tell you that what he gave up for Christ was nothing to what he got. Suppose there was some young woman in this town with a pretty face; a bright girl, but without very good sense after all, with a good deal of vanity, and being poor and unable therefore to buy real jewelry, she bought imitation. She had a brass ring, which she thought people would think was gold, but no one ever thought so. Then she had another ring, with two bits of green glass and a bit of white glass in the middle, and thought people believed it was a diamond and emeralds, but they did not. Then she had a string of white beads round her neck, and thought people believed they were real pearls, but no one ever dreamed it. Then she had a pair of earrings made of brass, with two bits of white glass, and wished people to believe that they were real diamonds; nobody ever thought of such a thing. After a while a fine, intelligent, bright, sensible young fellow falls in love with her. You say that no sensible fellow would fall in love with a girl like that. But you cannot tell what a man will do when he falls in love. One night, after they have become well acquainted, he says to her, "Mary, I wish you would throw away that brass ring, and that ring with the bits of glass in it, and that white bead necklace, and those pieces of brass and glass in your ears. To tell you the truth, I am ashamed of them when I go out with you, and I wish you would throw them away." She says, "Oh, John, I think ever so much of you, and would

do a good many things for you, but I can-not do that. They are the best I have, and I really think people believe they are genuine.” “No, no, Mary, they do not; they make you a laughing stock, and I wish you would throw them away.” But she says, “Well, John, I love you, but I really cannot do it.” A few nights after John comes again. He has a big Russian leather box; he presses a spring, the cover falls back, and inside it is lined with the very best of satin, and there is a real gold ring with two beautiful emeralds, and a beautiful diamond, there is a necklace of real pearls, and there is also a pair of real diamond earrings. “Look there, Mary;” and, oh, how her eyes sparkle! “Why, John, are they not beautiful! Who are they for?” “Well, Mary, they are for you if you will throw away that brass and glass of yours.” How long do you think it would take Mary to throw away her imitation jewels? Oh, men and women, Cast all the baubles of this world’s pleasures into the fire, and receive the gold and emeralds and rubies and diamonds and pearls of Heaven.

In the third place, the excuse is absurd, because what we give up for Christ is nothing to what Jesus Christ gave up for us. Oh, friends, when we stop to think what Jesus Christ gave up for us, how Heaven and its glories and came down to earth and its shame, how He left the songs of praise of angels, and the archangel, and cherubim, and seraphim, and came down here to be despised and rejected of men, to be spat upon and buffeted, to wear a crown of thorns, and to bear the nails in His hands and feet for you and me, how ungrateful, how unreasonable, how base, how black it is for you and me to talk about what we give up for Jesus Christ when we think of what He gave up for us.

2. Another man says, “I have an excuse and a good one. There are so many hypocrites in the church.” What shall I say to that excuse? I say without hesitation that that is the most absurd excuse a man can make. “What” you say, “Are there no hypocrites in the church?” Of course, there are. The Bible tells us that there will be hypocrites in the church. In the passage which I read to-night Jesus said that there would be hypocrites right up to the judgment day. “Many will say unto Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works?’ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me ye that work iniquity.”

Of course there are hypocrites in the church, but I would like to know how that is an excuse for your trampling under foot the Son of God. The fact that another man is a hypocrite is no reason why you should trample under foot the Son of God, God’s own Son, Jesus Christ. What would you think of a man here in London refusing his allegiance to King Edward, and saying, “No, I will not have him for king; I have got a good reason.” “What is it?” “Because there are so many people that profess to be loyal to King Edward who are not.” What would you think of that for an excuse? You would think of that man as a fit subject for a lunatic asylum. But that is the way you reason. There are so many people that pretend to be loyal to Jesus who are not, that it excuses you from even professing to be loyal. Bah!

Then again, if there are hypocrites in the church (and I have no doubt of it), there are a great many good people in the church. Of course I use the term church not meaning any one denomination, but the whole body of believers in Jesus Christ. There are a great many good people in the church; in fact, all the best people are there. But if there were a church or chapel consisting of a hundred members, and ninety-nine were good, straight, upright, downright, Christian men and women, and there was one poor, miserable hypocrite, you would overlook the ninety-nine good straight members, and fix all your attention on the one poor, miserable hypocrite. Yes, you would! And do you know why that is? It is because you are a hypocrite yourself. You are a hypocrite outside the church, and therefore you are looking for hypocrites inside the church to hide behind. Did it ever occur to you that you cannot hide behind a thing which is smaller than yourself? You must be a mighty small man or woman to be able to hide behind such a mean hypo-

crite as that. God will have you out of that hiding-place. Do you know what He says about these men who are always talking about hypocrites in the church? Turn to Romans xiv. 12: "So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God." You won't have to answer for the hypocrite, but you will have to answer for yourself. A friend of mine was walking in Chicago one night when a young fellow of about thirty walked up, and my friend said to him, "Are you a Christian?" He replied, "No, sir, I am not." "Well, why are you not?" He said, "Because there are so many hypocrites in the church." My friend said, "I want to show you something," and he opened the Bible at Romans xiv. 12, and said, "Read that." The man read, "and every one of us shall give account of himself to God." My friend said, "Who have you got to give account of?" The man replied, "Of myself." He said, "To whom have you to give account?" The man replied, "To God." He said, "Are you ready to give an account of yourself to God?" and the man sank down on his knees in one of the busiest streets of Chicago, and did what some of you here to-night ought to do; he cried, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

One more word before I leave this matter. All the hypocrites are going to hell. The Bible says so, and if you keep on rejecting Christ you are going there, too. Now I will ask you a question: Which is better, to spend a few years with the hypocrites in the church here on earth (and with all the good people at the same time), or spend eternity with the hypocrites in hell, with all the bad people? "Well," you say, "that excuse is absurd, and I will never make it again." I hope you never will. You will not if you have any common sense.

3. But another man says, "I have a good excuse. I am a pretty good sort of a man; I do not profess to be perfect, but I think the good in my life will more than balance the evil in my life, and I think God will accept me on the ground of the good I have done and the character I have maintained." What shall I say to that man? I say this to every man and woman in this building to-night who is out of Christ, "You are a very wicked man; you are a very sinful woman." I know you will say, "I am not at all." Yes, you are; and I will prove it to you. I will prove to you that you are so sinful that you have broken the very first and greatest of God's commandments. You may differ from some of your fellow-men and women on the minor moralities, thank God you do. Some men swear, and you do not; some men lie, and you do not; some get drunk, and you do not; some commit adultery, and you do not. On these minor moralities you differ from some of your fellow-men and women, and are better than they. But, on the great question of the treatment of the infinite God, before which all the minor moralities of our treatment of men sink into utter insignificance, you are all on the same plane, you have broken the first and greatest of God's commandments. Turn to Matthew xxii. 37 and 38: "And Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." Have you kept it? Have you loved God with all your heart and soul and mind? Have you put God first in everything, God first in business, God first in pleasure, God first in politics, God first in social life, God first in study, God first everywhere. Have you done this? You say, "No, I have not." Then you stand convicted before God of having broken the first and greatest of God's commandments, of having committed the very worst sin that a man or woman can commit. One night after a meeting like this, a friend of mine, a pastor in Chicago, came to me and said, "I have a young man who wants to enter the ministry. I want you to talk to him." He brought up the young man, and I said to him, "The pastor says you want to be a minister." He said, "Yes, I do." I said, "Are you a Christian?" He answered, "My, of course I am. I was brought up as a Christian, and I am not going back on the training of my parents." I said, "Have you ever been born again?" He said, "What?" I said, "The Word of God says 'except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.' Have you been born again?" He replied, "I never heard of that before in all my life." I said, "Do you know that you have committed the greatest sin a man can commit?" He said, "No, I never have." "What do you think is the greatest sin?" He said, "Murder, of course." I said, "You are greatly mistaken. See what the Lord Jesus Christ says about it." And I opened the Bible at Matthew xxii. 37, 38, and he read: "Thou shalt love the

Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is -the first and great commandment." I said "Which commandment is that?" He replied, "It is the first and great commandment." I said, "Have you kept it? Have you loved God with all your heart and soul and mind? Have you put God first in every-thing, God first in business, God first in study, God first in pleasure, God first in everything?" He answered "No sir, I have not." "Well, what have you done?" "I have broken this commandment." "Which commandment is it?" "It is the first and great commandment." "What have you done?" He said, "I have committed the greatest sin a man can possibly commit; I have broken the first and greatest of God's commandments, but I never saw it before in all my life." Probably you never saw it before, but you see it tonight. There is no difference. Every man and woman out of Christ has broken the first and greatest of God's commandments, and there is no hope for you outside the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, shed on the Cross of Calvary. When I was in Sydney, I said that at a meeting, and the next day I received a note from a lady, who said, "I wish you would pray for me. I have been trusting in my morality but you showed me last night that I was a very wicked woman." Oh, may God grant that some of you here to-night, that have been trusting in your goodness, may see that in God's sight you are very wicked men, very sinful women, for you have broken the first and greatest of God's laws.

4. Another man says, "That excuse is not a good one. I wonder that any intelligent man should ever make it. But I have a good one. I am too great a sinner to come to Christ." Now, I believe people make that excuse honestly. I believe there are a great many people who would like to come, but think they are too bad. What shall I say to them? What God says in 1 Timothy i. 15: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." I remember one Sunday morning in my church, one of the deacons walked down the aisle to a man of about thirty-five years of age, who was standing up. My deacon turned to him and said, "Are you a Christian?" "No," he said, "I am not." "Why not become one now?" He replied, "I am too great a sinner to be saved." My deacon said, "Thank God." Then he turned to me and said "Come here, Brother Torrey. Here is a man who is too great a sinner to be saved, thank God." The man stood in amazement, wondering what it all meant. But I understood, and I went down and said, "Is that true?" He said, "Yes, I am too great a sinner to be saved." I said, "Let me show you what God says," and I opened the Bible at 1 Timothy i. 15: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "Well" he said, "I am chief." He was a hardened sinner; he had run away, from his wife, and gone up to the North-West; had gone in for gambling, had laid down 35,000 dollars just a week before, and was it desperate man. "Well," he said, "I am chief." I said, "It means you, then." I said, "Will you accept Jesus Christ right now?" and he said, "I will," and he dropped down on his knees and accepted Christ then and there. He stayed with us about two weeks, and went up to the North-West, and came back again, and every night was in the meeting leading others to Christ, sent for his wife, set up a new home, and was so happy that he adopted a little child out of the orphan asylum to make his home complete. He was "too great a sinner to be saved," but he was saved in five minutes.

5. Another man says, "My excuse is different. I cannot hold out." Well, that excuse is perfectly absurd. "Why is my excuse absurd?" Because God does not ask you to hold out. Holding out is not your business. That is the business of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read in Jude, verse 24: "He is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Ah, men and women, there is not a man who is able to hold out in his own strength. But, thank God, there is not a man or woman so weak that Jesus Christ cannot keep him or her. A man in New York one night was on the verge of delirium tremens. He had had it again and again. He had committed 139 forgeries, all against one man. He went to the Cremorne Mission, and heard Jerry M'Auley tell how the Lord Jesus Christ had saved him; and when Jerry said, "If there is any one wants to be saved to-night, let them come to the front," he went up the aisle, and said, "Pray for me." Jerry said, "Pray for yourself," but he did not know

how to pray; he had forgotten how; the man had gone away down through drink, and was an outcast. Jerry said, "Pray for yourself." And Sam Hadley cried out, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and before he got up he was a transformed man. Some years after I was in Washington, presiding at a conference. Mr. Wanamaker, then Postmaster-General of the United States of America, was there, and he said to me, "I want you to come round to my house to dinner," and I went round. And when I was ushered into the drawing-room, who should I see sitting there but Sam Hadley and his wife, honoured guests in the home of the Postmaster-General of the United States of America-the former forger! And there is not a more honoured man in New York City to-day than Mr. Samuel Hadley, as he is now called.

Oh friends, thank God there is not a man or woman so weak, so helpless and hopeless, but Jesus Christ can hold them if they put their trust in Him to-night.

6. Just one more excuse. Another man says, "My excuse is a little different. God won't receive me if I come." People make this excuse in different ways.

"I have sinned away the day of grace, I have committed the unpardonable sin, and He won't receive me if I come." What shall I say to this? I will say that excuse is just as absurd as any. Why? Because it is contradicting God's plain statement in John vi. 37, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." Thank God, there is not a man or woman on the face of the earth, not a man or woman in London, or in this building to-night, but if you come to Jesus Christ He will take you and save you. At one time in Chicago I received a letter something like this: "I have a son who thinks he has committed the unpardonable sin. He has been for months in despair, has attempted suicide five times. I wish you would take him at the Bible Institute." That was very touching. Nevertheless, I felt it to be my duty, as the superintendent of the Institute, to write: "I sympathize with you deeply, but I cannot take your son. That is not the purpose of the Institute, which is for the training of men and women for Christian work." He replied, and said, "You must take him; if you do not, we do not know what to do." I wrote again that I had the deepest sympathy with him, but was entrusted with the funds of the Institute, and it was not right to take his son." Then some one else wrote to me -a personal friend- and said, "I want you to take him for my sake." He had been a great friend of the Institute, and I now felt that I was warranted in taking the young man, and wrote telling the father to send him. They sent him under guard -for they dared not trust him alone- and he was brought to me. Mr. Lyon said, "This is Mr. So-and-so. I suppose I can go now." "Yes," I said, "leave him alone with me." I said, "Sit down." He looked at me and said, "I am possessed of the devil." I said, "I guess you are. But Jesus Christ came to cast out devils." He said, "I mean that the devil has entered into me as he did into Judas Iscariot." I said, "That's very likely, but Jesus Christ is mightier than the devil, and can set you free from the power of the devil." He said, "

I have committed the unpardonable sin." I said, "Jesus said, 'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.'" He said, "I was once enlightened and tasted the gift, I fell away, and it is impossible to renew me again." He knew his Bible, you see! But I said, "Jesus says, 'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.'" He said, "I have sinned willfully after having received the knowledge of the truth." I said, "But Jesus says, 'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.' Will you come?" Well, he did not come then. Days and weeks passed, and then one day I met him in the Institute, where he was stopping, in the hall-way on the second floor, and I thought the time had come to have it out. I said, "Sit down," and he sat down beside me. I said, "Do you believe the Bible?" "Yes," he said, "I do, everything in it" "Do you believe John vi. 37?" He said, "Yes, and I can quote it: 'Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.'" I said, "Do you believe that?" "Of course I do; I believe everything in the Bible." "Why do you not come?" He said, "I am possessed with the devil." I said, "The Bible does not say 'Him that is not possessed with the devil if he cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast him out.' It says, 'Him that cometh unto

Me I will in no wise cast out.” He said, “I mean that the devil has entered into me as he did into Judas Iscariot.” I said, “It does not say ‘Him that the devil has not entered into, if he cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.’ It says ‘Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out.’” He said, “I have been once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have fallen away, and it is impossible to renew me unto repentance.” I said, “It does not say, ‘If you have not been once enlightened, and tasted the heavenly gift, and fallen away, I will in no wise cast you out.’ It says, ‘Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.’” He said, “I have sinned willfully after I have received the knowledge of the truth.” I said, “It does not say ‘If you have not sinned wilfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, if you come unto Me, I will in no wise cast you out.’ It says, ‘Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.’” He said, “My heart is as hard as the floor.” I said, “It does not say ‘If your heart is soft and tender, and you come unto Me, I will in no wise cast you out;’ but ‘Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.’” He said, “I do not feel like coming.” I said, “It doesn’t say ‘If you feel like coming, and come unto Me, I will in no wise cast you out.’ It says, ‘Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.’” He said, “I don’t know that I will come the right way.” I said, “It does not say ‘If you come the right way I will in no wise cast you out.’ It says ‘Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.’” And the young man had got to the end of his rope! Now, I said, “Will you come? Get down,” and I put my hand on his shoulder and helped him down. I said, “None of your foolishness; do you believe in the Bible?” He said, “I do.” Then I said, “Follow me,” and I looked up and said, while he repeated the words after me, sentence by sentence, “O God, I am a miserable sinner, and do not deserve Thy mercy. My heart is as hard as this floor; I do not feel like coming; but Jesus says, ‘Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out,’ and I believe that, just because Jesus says it. Lord Jesus, the best I know, I come.” I said, “Did you come? Did you mean it?” He said, “I did.” I said, “Follow me again and he again repeated the words after me, sentence by sentence. “Lord Jesus, Thou hast said, ‘Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.’ I have come, therefore Thou hast received me, and I thank Thee.” I said, “Has He received you?” He said, “I don’t feel it.” I said, “I did not ask what you felt; what does Jesus say?” He said, “‘Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.’” “Did you come?” “I did.” “What has Jesus done?” “He has received me.” “Now,” I said, “go right to your room. The devil will give you an awful fight, I have no doubt. But you kneel right down with both knees on John vi. 37, and fight the devil with it, and you believe what God says, no matter what the devil whispers.” He went to his room, and the devil gave him an awful time, but he kept both his knees on John vi. 37, and came out with the light of Heaven on his face. He soon began to preach and teach the Bible, and is to-day one of the most useful men on earth.

God’s Word is pure, in spite of the devil, in spite of your fear, in spite of everything. And, standing on God’s Word, I proclaim to every man and woman in this room that if you come to Jesus Christ He will take you to-night. Will you come?