

## **What's Your Excuse?**

We generally think of an excuse as a reason whereby we may not be held accountable, or by which we are excused, for our actions. For example: A parent keeps a child from school because of illness - this is an excused absence.

Concerning our relationship with God, we have no excuse for sin. If I steal from my neighbor, there is no excuse for my sin - there is no reason whereby my behavior is justified. There may be a reason for my actions, but my actions are inexcusable.

Jesus teaches concerning the cost of discipleship. In Luke 9:57-62 we read: "Then He said to another, 'Follow Me.' But he said, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.' And another also said, 'Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.' But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'"

The cost of discipleship is that we may offer no excuse for refusing to following Christ. Thankfully, following Christ includes caring for our family. But our family cannot stand between us and following Jesus. Nothing excuses us from following Jesus.

But for those who follow Jesus and pay the cost of being His disciple, they are excused from eternal damnation. A synonym for "excuse" is "justify." Those who follow Jesus are justified (excused). We have no excuse for refusing to follow Christ, but Christ's faithful disciples are excused from the penalty of their iniquity.

In Matthew 22:1-14, Jesus tells a parable about a wedding feast. A man responds to the second invitation and goes to the wedding feast without making preparation thereby neglecting to wear his wedding garment. Interestingly, the wedding garment was often provided by the king. If this be the case, the action of the man is blatantly inexcusable - all had been prepared for him, he had to expend little effort to cloth himself in a garment previously provided. Jesus says: "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless. 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.' For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:12-14).

God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). God desires all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). And God calls us through the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:14). Some folks desire to attend the feast, but do not desire to make preparation - to these will be eternal damnation. But for those who make preparation by clothing themselves in Christ (putting on Christ, Rom. 13:14), they are given an eternal reward. They are justified through faith in Christ - not because of themselves, but because of Christ who paid the penalty for sin in the flesh (Rom. 3:21-26).

Think about this: Are you ready for the wedding feast? Have you made preparation? Are you wearing your wedding garment? If yes, glorify God with all of your being. If no, today is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2).

**- by Allan McNabb**

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## **Born Again?**

In John 3:3, Jesus told Nicodemus that a person must be born again to see the kingdom of God. In response Nicodemus asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (vs 4) From this response we can see that Nicodemus thought that Jesus was referring to a physical birth. To this misunderstanding Jesus responded, "Most assuredly, ...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (vs 5) When Jesus said, "...born of water..." He was not referring to the physical birth. The water which Jesus referred to was baptism. One is born of the water and the Spirit when he obeys Mark 16:16 and other such passages. How do we know that the baptism mentioned in Mark 16:16 was water baptism? Consider some bible examples: The eunuch in Acts 8:36 knew that water was necessary. He asked, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?"

In Acts 10:47, Peter asked the question, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized...?" Lest someone think that it is the water that saves a person, we must remind ourselves of what Peter said. Peter explains that it is not the water that saves a person; instead, it is his obedience to God's command. (1 Pet. 3:21) A person is saved by the grace of God when he is born again of the water and the Spirit. If you have not been born again, then please choose to be born of the water and of the Spirit.

**- by John Duvall**