

The Excuses of Sinners - 1

Would you be so honest as to be an open rebel? Do you have the honesty to be an open rebel before God? What am I talking about? I believe one of the reasons Christians continue in the same sins day after day, year after year is that we are not honest with ourselves. See, imagine for a moment that you were presented with a choice – the choice is, do you want to obey God and please Him, or would you like to raise your fist to heaven in defiance, spit in His face and deliberately rebel against God? Well, when you put it like that, it's not much of a choice, is it? We don't want to be like that, we're not open rebels to God, are we? Only the hardest of hearts would say when confronted with sin: "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" "So what – I wanted to, and I did!" "I don't want to hear that, I'm the captain of my own soul" "Who says it's wrong – it's not wrong to me". But I would like to suggest to you that the heart that says these things, is in fact brutally honest. The heart that says, "Yes, I am an outright, deliberate rebel, and I reject the authority of God over my life" is simply calling his sin what it is. That's why I asked, would you be so honest as to be an open rebel. For open, brazen rebels are not making excuses for their sin. They have chosen their path – it's a path that leads to destruction, but there is no double-mindedness about it – "I'm a rebel, and that's it".

Now, by contrast, what do the majority of Christians do? Our problem lies with the excuses we make for sin. We too, sin, and by God's grace we seek to sin less. However, one of the things that slows us down in our progress to be like Christ is the fact that we lack the honesty of the open rebel.

What we do instead, is numb ourselves to our rebellion with excuses. We will not commit ourselves to outright rebellion, and our re-naming of our rebellion allows us to feel that we are not such rebels. The excuses for our sin re-assure us that we are not that bad, that we are just struggling along, and we not rebellious after all. The excuses deceive us into accepting our rebellion. Therefore, because it is not a stench in our nostrils, we are not resolved to change.

"It's not my fault – I sinned because of so-and-so" "I couldn't stop myself, I had to" "It just happened, before I knew it, it was out of my control" "In my situation was unique" "I didn't know it was sin" "They provoked me" "Obedience is too hard"

The excuse says – I am not a deliberate open rebel. I am still righteous. I am not naked.

What is an excuse? An excuse is the skin of a reason stuffed with a lie. An excuse is a lie that part of us believes. An excuse is a way of avoiding the truth.

Why do we make excuses when confronted with our sin? Simply because we are proud. We do not want to feel the humiliation of admitting we once again were deliberate sinners.

We do not want to be standing speechless, defenceless before the judgment of our consciences and of God. So we sow ourselves fig-leaves of excuses. They are meant to cover our nakedness, and make us feel less ashamed.

We hate the idea of being classed as a deliberate rebel as we should. But if we were humble, we'd admit that we had been deliberate rebels again, hate it all the more, and

commit to not repeating the sin. But our sugarcoating of the truth, allows us almost a sense of peace about the sin, and we feel no shame, no urgency to repent, no desire to really change.

I believe one of the reasons Revelation and Daniel records that books are going to be opened on the day of Judgment is that there will be a record of people's deeds, as well as the written Word of God. Comparing the two, God will strip away man's excuses, until he is truly exposed as a rebel.

Now before we look at the excuses that sinners made in Scripture, I just want to emphasise the importance of this by showing you the damage you are doing to yourself when you make excuses for your sin.

1) They rob us of true confession and thus true cleansing

See, God confronts people with their sin because He wants them to get right. However, the Bible places a condition on cleansing "If we confess our sins" (1 John 1:9) The word confess means 'to say the same thing'. Confession takes place when we are in total agreement with God about our sin. We claim total ownership for the sin, and accept it as our own with all that it brings. That's when we are in a state to receive forgiveness. Why? Because otherwise, when we make excuses we are actually blaming God. When you make an excuse for your sin, you are saying to God- it's not me that's wrong. Well, there are only two of you in the equation. You and God. God says, you are wrong. You say, no I'm not. Well, who's left to blame? God.

He didn't sin. But when we say, no, it's not really like that, it's not sin etc etc – we are really saying – God, it's your fault. . Only when we agree with God – are we saying – God you are holy, your law is good, you are justified, I am wrong. Psalm 51:4 "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest"

When we make excuses, we attempt to condemn God and excuse ourselves. When we stop making excuses, we justify God, condemn ourselves, and that's when we have confessed. That's when we can receive forgiveness.

2) They allow a repetition of the same sin

If I make an excuse for my sin, what am I really saying? I am saying that I was justified for doing it. My situation was unique. So the law of God didn't apply to me in my situation. Consequently, it perhaps doesn't apply to me the next time I do this sin. Perhaps, what I do is in fact not sin at all, after a while. See, the moment the excuses come, we re-define sin and thus allow ourselves to continue in it. It's only when you are stripped of excuses, do you have to face the raw reality – it is either obedience or disobedience. Two choices on the shelf – please God or please self. But excuses allow us to deceive ourselves. Our excuses for our sins allow us to continue in them and stunt our growth as Christians. Our excuses will not allow us to commit to calling our sin open rebellion.

Our excuses allow us to deceive ourselves. Did you ever stop to think about that concept? Self-deceit? Think about it. When you deceive someone – you know the truth, but

conceal it from the one you are deceiving. You then give them a lie, to lead them astray. Now, apply that to yourself. You know the truth, you now what is a sin, but you conceal those truths from yourself, when you want to sin. You pretend with yourself. You choose to act on what you already know is a lie, and you suppress the truth till it is a faint whisper in your mind. That's self-deception. Jeremiah 17:9 We practice this to allow us more sin. We practice self-deception to give us liberty to sin.

Those are the two main reasons why excuses for sin are so dangerous. They prevent true confession, and they prevent true repentance. God wants us to be stripped of excuses. That way, we will see the ugliness of sin. Then we are left with the simple choice – confess and repent; or harden your heart and continue.

Jesus said of His mission “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.”

The Holy Spirit's mission today is to convict of sin, righteousness and judgment. Excuses are the lies we tell to avoid being called guilty before God. John told us, if we say we have no sin – we lie and do not the truth'.

So I'd like to show you some of the excuses that sinners made in Scripture. You'll often laugh at them, but it will be a knowing, guilty laugh, the laugh of personal experience. As we see how futile they are, perhaps we will be reminded to avoid them when dealing with our own sin in future. Perhaps that way, the sin in our lives will be that much more vile to us, that much more obviously wicked, that much blacker, darker and evil, that much more needful to repent of. If you're serious about sanctification, then allow the Word to demolish your excuses as you see them coming out of the lips of another sinner.

Excuse #1 – It's Not My Fault – Genesis 3:9-13

First excuse – it's not my fault. God asks Adam, what have you done – not because he needs the information, but because he wants Adam to confess. Does Adam admit to being a deliberate rebel? No, he says, I sinned, because of the woman. Oh, and by the way, it's the woman you gave me. So ultimately, whose fault is it? God's. The woman copies the man – it's the serpent's fault – he tricked me. The only silent one is the serpent. Satan is an open rebel, he makes no excuses for his sin.

In Scriptural interpretation, there is something called the law of first mention. It means that the first time you see something in the Bible, it kind of lays the foundation for all the rest of the times it will appear, like a prototype. For example – the tower of Babel in Genesis 11 really explains what Babylon will stand for in the rest of Scripture – unbelievers uniting against God, false religions coming together with political power to unite man. Now here is the first mention of an excuse for sin, and it really sets the tone for all that will come. It's not my fault, is the basic premise. I do not accept responsibility for this thing. Yes, I know I did not do what God told me, but – I'm not the one in the wrong – it's God.

Why are you so mean to your children? Because of my father. It's his fault. And it's God's fault for giving me that father. Why are you so tight-fisted and stingy? Because of my upbringing. It's the fault of my upbringing – the conditions we lived in. Ultimately, it's God's fault for letting me grow up in those circumstances. Why do you sin with your body? It's the body's fault – the body that God gave me – I can't control it. It's His fault.

The **skin of truth** behind this lie is that we are tempted to sin – from outside and from within.

The **lie** behind this excuse is that the temptation *caused* me to sin. But the **reality** is it is simply blame-shifting. It's a diversion tactic, get the spotlight off me, and onto another. What does your father's treatment of you years ago actually have to do with your choice to obey God or disobey Him with regard your children right now? Nothing. It is trying to divert attention away from the simplicity of the choice, obey or disobey. We cannot equate temptation with the **reason you disobeyed!** There is no connection.

Adam, it's true you were tempted. But you're lying if you say that's why you ate. You ate because you desired the sin more than obedience. You deliberately disobeyed God for your own interests. The reason you disobeyed is because you wanted to!! Politicians may campaign and influence you with their speeches, but ultimately, you go to the booth, put an x on the voting card, and drop it in the box. No one forced you. God will judge us individually. Someone tempted you – then they will be judged for that sin. But it will not get you off the hook from yours.

You know what words God is looking for? – “Yes, I deliberately disobeyed”. The English word *deliberately* comes from the Latin. In Latin it refers to a scale. That pictures deliberate well. You have two options – you weigh them up, and choose in favour of one. Trying to pin the blame on someone else is foolish. You cast your vote in favour of sin. Before the words are out your mouth –stop. If you sinned – it is your fault. Period.

Excuse #2- I was scared Genesis 3:10 Genesis 20:9-11

Abraham and Isaac find themselves at different times in a foreign land, with a very beautiful wife. It was not uncommon for men to be killed for their beautiful wives. So, Abraham and Isaac repeat exactly the same sin – they lie that their wife is their sister in front of the king to protect themselves. God almost judges the king and warns them. The king confronts them. The excuse – I was scared. Adam – I was hiding because I was scared.

Why did you sin? Because I was scared.

Why did you lie? Because I was scared of what would happen if I told the truth. Why did you exaggerate on your report? Because I was scared of what would happen if I didn't make my target for the month. Why did you sleep with your boyfriend? Because I was scared I would lose him. Why did you sin? Because I was scared.

Seems like a valid excuse. I mean, who would press the issue when someone admits they are frightened. You know, someone confesses, I'm scared, and we put an arm around them, and say to their timid hearts – ‘It'll be OK’. So, it becomes an excuse which we think is supposedly unassailable. Surely God will not attack us when we admit how fearful we are? I mean, you don't kick a man when he's down, do you? The **skin of truth** in this excuse is that fear often prompts sin.

But this, like the previous excuse, is a smokescreen. The **lie** that we believe is that fear itself was the cause, like some sort of impersonal third force. You were just a poor timid creature controlled by your fear. Again, we are trying to blame.

It's designed to again, draw attention away from the act of rebellion. The **reality** is, like with Adam, Abraham and Isaac, their fear itself was rooted in pride – in a self-protective love of self. Fear is a symptom of your sin, not the cause. See the fear of God, and the fear of man cannot co-exist. One will drive out the other. See Abraham and Isaac did have cause to be concerned. But the lie that they believed was that it was OK to lie to save their skin. The reality is they deliberately disobeyed God as they loved themselves and did not trust Him. They didn't trust that keeping His laws would bring great reward, and that God would protect those who obey, even under pressure.

No, your pride loved yourself so intensely, that you feared any threat to yourself, and chose to sin. Your fear was not a valid excuse for your sin, it was the symptom of your selfishness, of your pride.

When you're about to use this one, stop. The only justifiable fear is the fear of God. When you fear God, you leave yourself in His care, and your life, protection, reputation become His problem. The fear of man brings a snare. Ultimately ungodly fear is rooted in a selfish love of self. It's not an excuse, it's another sin.

Excuse #3 – They deserved it. Genesis 34:31

Well, here we have a good example of justifiable sin, right? Dinah is defiled by the men of the land, so Jacob's sons trick them into a circumcision rite to secure her hand in marriage, and then when the men are incapacitated, they spring out and slaughter them. Hatred, ungodly revenge, pre-meditated murder, cruelty, cowardice, lies and deceit rolled into one. What's the excuse – "should they insult us like this? They deserved it".

Why did you hit your brother? Because he hit me first. Why do you speak to your wife like that? Because she provokes me. Why did you attack him? He deserved it. Why did you trick your colleague? He deserved it.

Once again, the blame is shifted isn't it? Whose fault is it? The person we sinned against. They provoked us! They forced our hand! So our sin is not sin, it's justice! They had it coming, and we paid them in full.

Skin of truth – every sin should be punished. **The lie** – I am authorized to carry out that punishment. I wasn't being selfish, I was evening the scales of justice.

Now, **the reality is**, God didn't appoint you to be His agent of vengeance- He said, vengeance is mine, I will repay. That means when you retaliate – you are a self-loving rebel striking out for your own pleasure in defiance of God.

Regardless of whether it's replying to a sarcastic comment with your own one, whether it's cold shouldering the gossip at work who slandered you – it's deliberately disobeying God. Whether it's raising your voice to your spouse, or crushing your opposition in the church – it's sin. You cannot shift the blame to them. Their sin is theirs. You have to cast your vote now, you have to choose which side of the scales to tip and God forbids you to exact revenge on another. Jacob's sons, it's true what those men did to your sister deserved justice. It's a lie to say that's why you did it.

The real answer to why'd you kill those men? Because you loved yourselves more than God, and it gave you sinful pleasure to punish those men in retaliation for hurting you. Same for your angry words, your bitterness to others, every sin that you explain away with 'they deserved it'. Or, let's flip it around. Why don't you forgive that person? Because they don't deserve it. Why aren't you kind to them? Because they don't deserve it. Same principle. God has not authorised you to decide what people deserve and to give

them that. Our judgement is warped anyway. He has commanded you to act graciously to everyone, as He does. God tells His children – I will deal with revenging you – leave it to me. When you don't, you are raising a fist to heaven, deliberately disobeying His command, and saying, no – I will revenge myself. It has nothing to do with the other person, and everything to do with your trust in God.

We still have three more excuses to deal with next week. Please bear with me as we get brutally honest with our sin, and more resolved to stop sinning. Let's end the self-deception, and make the choice to obey or disobey God as clear cut as it truly is. Let's wipe away all our self-imposed wisdom, and come to that fork in the road every moment of our lives – please God, or please self.