

Lightweights

Training for Truth Without Excuse

July 11, 2021

Today we're looking at our *excuses* and trying to figure out how to stop *making 'em!*



So what's your excuse? We only have one or two. And every lie-de-jour that we tell *ourselves* or *others*, however *original*, comes back to the basics of faithfully serving our original sin-of-choice. I grew up in what is now the youth house; that's me with the ball. We moved in when I was two. And about two years later, I decided it'd be far more expedient to do #2 in the yard. Which did not go over too well. Dad said I'd be disciplined if I did it again. But sure enough, I dooed it again.



Dad took me to my sin and asked if I'd done it again. And I said "no". And he asked who did. And I said "a dog". And he said, "What kind of a dog?" And I suddenly realized that our backyard was fenced in. And so, thinking quickly, I said, confidently, "A circus dog!" And I still remember thinking how iron-clad that excuse was. Because circus dogs are *known* for jumping over things. Yet somehow Pops knew, and saw right through, and I got my just due, not only for the #2, but the excuse – which was a lie – which I found to be far worse than the poo. How 'bout you? No matter *what* the excuse, if it's dishonest, it's nothing but a circus dog.



It might make sense to *you*; but I guarantee our Father sees right through it. **We don't get to dictate when or where we'll be obedient. We can either #1 obey, or #2.** So what do *you* do? Obey, delay, or defy? Because **these are our two excuses: delay or defy.** He's given us all truth. **So what's your excuse?** Did you think He came to remove *all* our *burdens*? No. **He came to exchange ours with His.**

Don't you know that ... you are *slaves* to the *one* whom you *obey* — whether you are *slaves* to *sin*, [i.e. disobedience to truth] which leads to *death*, or [slaves] to *obedience*, [to truth] which leads to *righteousness*? But thanks be to God that ... You have been set *free* from *sin* and have become *slaves* to *righteousness*. – Romans 6:15-18 NIV

[For] The Son of Man did *not* come to *be* served, but *to* serve, – Matthew 20:26-28 NIV

[And] *Your* attitude should be the *same* as that of Christ Jesus: who, being in *very nature* God ... made himself *nothing*, taking the *very nature* of a *servant*, – Philippians 2:5-7 NIV

"Come to Me, all you who are *weary* and *burdened*, and I will give you *rest*. [Which only comes as my thoughts and will and actions conform to His. So] Take *My yoke* upon you [joined at the neck, shoulder to shoulder, as an obedient servant of truth] and *learn* from Me, for I am *gentle* and *humble* in *heart*, and [if you'll learn *from Me* to be more *like Me*] you will find *rest* for your souls. [Not by removing the burden of truth, but by strengthening you to help uphold it] For My yoke is easy [to put on, and pleasant to keep on] and *My burden* is light." [in affliction] – Matthew 11:28-30 NIV

Because **He'll carry whatever weight you currently can't** – and even carry you if He has to – if you'll yoke yourself to Jesus, and lean on Him, and learn from Him, and allow Him to. He'll equip you, strengthen you, inspire you, and empower you, through His Word, whenever, wherever, however, and through whomever you can load it in. But understand: **truth is a burden**. Just ask *Isaiah* (13:1), or *Nahum* (1:1), or *Habakkuk* (1:1), or *Malachi* (1:1), who were asked to shoulder:

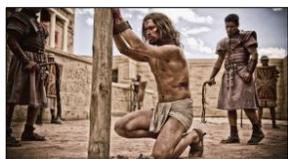


The *burden* of the *Word* of the Lord – Malachi 1:1 NKJ

Not only is truth a burden to bear, but you better be building up your strength to stand under it and uphold it whatever affliction may come.



For our *light affliction*, [which is the Apostle Paul's way of describing the horrific list of his sufferings in 2nd Corinthians (11:23-27)] which is but for a *moment*, is *working* for us a far more *exceeding* and *eternal weight of glory* – 2 Corinthians 4:17 NKJ



So whatever you do, **don't lean on Jesus as an excuse to stay weak**. He's our Savior and Teacher and Trainer. Would you rather have light weights or strength? "*Light weights!*" That's our problem. **When it comes to the truth we're a bunch of lightweights**. When we should be using our light afflictions to allow Jesus to strengthen us to handle the full weight of glory! And for that reason **excuses don't solve problems, they waste 'em!** Our problems are the dark sky against which we're supposed to display our faithworks!



Still, we'd rather delay and defy and deny ourselves than yoke ourselves to a Savior so focused on serving *truth* and transforming *us*, and displaying His power in our weaknesses. So we often look for an excuse to take an easier way out. A shortcut around truth. But I'll tell you right now, **you can't cut corners with the Cornerstone**. Know why? He *is* Truth! And **there are no shortcuts to righteousness**. Only excuses to delay, or to outright defy it. In fact, if it'll *detract* from *perfect truth* it'll *only add* to your burden. Know why? *Brace* yourself. Because ...

"You are the *burden*, and I will cast you off" ... for the *burden* is everyone's own word, and so you *pervert* the words of the living God, – Jeremiah 23:33, 36 NRS

[So] Cast your *burden* on the Lord, – Psalm 55:22 NKJ

For my *iniquities* are ... a *heavy burden* they weigh too much for me. – Psalm 38:4 NAS

[So] "Come to Me, all you who are *weary* and *burdened*, [struggling under a load of self-induced slavery, serving self-inflicted dictates of distorted truth] and I will give you *rest*. Take My *yoke* upon you [and join yourself to Jesus as a slave of righteousness] and *learn* from Me, for I am *gentle* and *humble* in heart, and [if you'll stop making excuses, and learn from Me to be more like Me] you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy [because it's Me!] and My burden is light [compared to yours –because it's you!]." – Matthew 11:28-30 NIV

["So come to Me,"] "If I had *not* come and *spoken* to them, they would have *no sin*, but now they have *no excuse*" – John 15:22 NKJ

So it would appear that **we accuse ourselves when we excuse ourselves**. Because we're called to a *holy* life – being slowly *transformed* into the image of *Christ* – which is *not* an *easy* life, because He's not light weight.

“Come to Me, all you who are *weary*” – Matthew 11:28 NIV

“For I *satisfy* the *weary*” – Jeremiah 31:25 NAS

“*My people* will be *satisfied* with *My goodness*,” – Jeremiah 31:14 NAS

“Do not *fear*, for I *am* with you [joined to you, shoulder-to-shoulder; and] ... I will *strengthen* you and *help* you” – Isaiah 41:10 NIV

He gives *strength* to the *weary* and *increases* the *power* of the *weak*. – Isaiah 40:29 NIV

[So] “Come to Me, all you who are *weary* and *burdened*, [by your self-inflicted excuses] and I *will* give you *rest*.” [Not by *removing* our problems, but by *using* ‘em to strengthen us and increase our power in His righteousness] – Matthew 11:28 NIV

“For My *power* is made perfect in [your] *weakness*.” Therefore I will boast [*declare*, rather than *deny*] all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that *Christ's* power *may* rest on me. That is why, for *Christ's* sake, I delight in [rather than deny my] weaknesses, [when I must lean *on* and learn *from* the only One I'm yoked to] in *insults*, in *hardships*, in *persecutions*, in *difficulties*. For [just as when we lift weights to fatigue, exhaust, and weary our muscles] when I am weak, [in my hardships] then [what-do-ya-know – before long] I am strong. [For *Christ's* power rests on me] – 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NIV

May the Lord *give strength* to *His people*! – Psalm 29:11 ESV

He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. – Hebrews 12:10 ESV

May you *be strengthened* with *all power*, according to *His glorious might*, for all *endurance* and *patience* with *joy*, giving *thanks* to the Father, who has *qualified* you [to display your faithworks in your darkness, “in *insults*, in *hardships*, in *persecutions*, in *difficulties*” (2 Cor 12:10)] to *share* in the inheritance of the saints in *light*. [So don't be a light weight!] – Colossians 1:11-12 ESV

For our *light* and momentary *troubles* are achieving *for* us an eternal glory that *far outweighs* them all. So we fix our eyes ... on what is unseen. – 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 NIV

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith, – Hebrews 12:2 NAS

[For] I can do *all* things through *Christ* who *strengthens* me. – Philippians 4:12-13 NKJ

For the moment *all* discipline seems *painful* rather than *pleasant*, but *later* it yields the peaceful fruit of *righteousness* to *those* who have been *trained* by it. – Hebrews 12:11 ESV

Whatever the excuse, **you can't take up His yoke without giving up yours**. He only offers it as a trade. Otherwise, Jesus just *adds* to your burden. Two would-be disciples *literally* missed the boat when joining Jesus on a walk to the dock.



[Jesus said] “Follow me.” But the man [thinking that yoking yourself to Jesus is something you can put on pause for high-priority situations] replied, “Lord, *first* let me go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but *you go* [if that’s your choice] and proclaim the kingdom of God.” – Luke 9:59-60 NIV

The man faced two *one-time-only* opportunities. And that’s *tough*. But Jesus knew which he’d most *regret* missing, the *rest* of his life. Because **comfort is fleeting, but true rest is forever**. And it’s not just the big things that distract us. More often than not it’s the common, every day, *little* things that sidetrack us from being strengthened and empowered for the full weight of glory.

Still another [who’d left his family to *learn* from Jesus] said, “I *will* follow you, Lord; but *first* let me go *back* and say good-bye to my family.” [thinking that yoking to Jesus is something that *squeezes into our* schedule] Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” – Luke 9:61-62 NIV

Several times every day we’re given a one-time-offer that expires with our response – or lack thereof. So **don’t settle for seeking mere comfort**. True rest comes from trust; and trust comes from training in truth; and *training* requires *joining* Jesus to shoulder together the burden of light.

His burden is truth; *ours* is excuse. Because **excuses excuse us from working out truth**, by seemingly *freeing* us from sinful situations, without *requiring* us to own up to what we dooed – which *enables* us to feel *okay* about skirting *responsibility* while sadly avoiding *righteousness*. So:

Do not let yourselves be *burdened again* by a yoke of *slavery*. – Galatians 5:1 NIV

“Take *My* yoke upon you and *learn* from Me,” – Matthew 11:29 NIV

“I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” – John 13:15 NIV

To *this* you were *called*, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. [Serving together, shoulder-to-shoulder] – 1 Peter 2:21 NIV

Whenever Jesus asks you to *do* anything, **an excuse will present itself, to prevent you**. So *whatever* you do, don’t do a “circus dog”. Because an excuse is an excuse is an excuse. If you *really* want to *follow*, then like the two on the road, you gotta give *up* the *excuses* and *get* in the *boat*.

Whoever claims to live *in Him* must walk as *Jesus did*. – 1 John 2:6 NIV

Walk *in love*, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an *offering* and a *sacrifice* to God – Ephesians 5:2 NKJ

[Therefore, I urge you] in view of God’s mercy, to *offer* your bodies as *living sacrifices*, [joined to Jesus] holy and pleasing to God—*this* is *your* spiritual *act of worship*. ... be *transformed* by the *renewing* of your mind. – Romans 12:1-2 NIV

And don’t *you* be makin’ excuses, or you’ll be missin’ the boat.