

## THE IMMENSE JOB OF THE APOSTLES

Long ago I heard someone tell an imaginary story that illustrated the point of this article. They said that after Jesus ascended into heaven, one of the angels commended Him for the great accomplishment that He had just completed and then asked, what will they do now that you are no longer with them? Jesus answered, I left the apostles to continue what I started. The angel then asked, what if they fail? What is your backup plan? Jesus answered, I have no backup plan! Just think of the immense responsibility that Jesus placed upon those He had chosen. Just prior to His death, He prayed saying, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18).

It was the job of the apostles to spread the message of salvation in Jesus Christ to all the world. Jesus told them, "ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). After promising to build His church, Jesus told Peter, "...I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven..." (Matt. 16:19). Just prior to ascending into heaven, Jesus told them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). Oh what an immense burden Jesus placed on them.

Had it not been for the help that Jesus sent them, they would never have managed success. Jesus told them, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). He told them further, "...he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come" (John 16:13). Paul told the Corinthians that God had revealed to them the things of God by way of the Spirit of God, even the very words used (I Cor. 2:9-13). Later, Paul referred to this revelation from God as "a treasure in earthen vessels" (II Cor. 4:7), and that the apostles were "ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us..." (II Cor. 5:20).

Even with the help of the Holy Spirit sent down from God, the goal set before them was immense. Yet, before he died, Paul was able to write, "which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature under heaven (Col. 1:23). Big men accomplished a big job. *Tilis*

## WHAT IS YOUR EXCUSE?

Both preachers and elders often hear excuses for why various members did not attend worship services and other gatherings of the church. When asked why they have not been involved in the work of the church such as evangelism and benevolence, again excuses are issued. It is true that in some cases a legitimate reason is given, but more often than not, it was nothing but an excuse.

Excuses for not doing as the Lord desires is nothing new. A few renowned examples of excuses offered are Adam and Eve, Moses, Aaron and Saul. God told Adam and Eve to not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). After they disobeyed God, God questioned Adam about his disobedience. Adam's response was, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12). When Eve was questioned, she responded, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat". When God called upon Moses to be the one who would lead the children of Israel out of Egyptian captivity, Moses began with the excuses of why he just could not do it. "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh...?" (Exo. 3:11). "They will not believe me" (Exo. 4:1). "O my Lord, I am not eloquent...I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exo. 4:10). When Moses returned from receiving the law he found that Aaron had fashioned a golden calf that was worshipped as the god that had brought them out of Egypt. And, Aaron's excuse was, "I cast the gold into the fire, and there came out this calf" (Exo. 32:24). And, don't forget king Saul who made excuse for disobeying God concerning utterly destroying Amalek. His excuse was that they brought back the best of the spoils to offer as a sacrifice to God.

When one looks at the excuses made, it is evident that they are nothing but excuses for not doing what God commanded to be done. Most would agree that most of those excuses were mighty shallow to say the least. One would not be able to get a mere human to believe most of those excuses, yet they were basically excuses that they expected God to accept. But, what has any of those long past excuses got to do with us today? The answer is, God has given us commands to be kept just as he had given to each of those just mentioned. God will accept no excuses for disobedience. And, to be quite honest, those excuses most preachers and elders hear; are just as shallow sounding to them as they are to the God of heaven.

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