

Excuses

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald emphasizes the importance of taking the Bible literally and rejecting common excuses that undermine its authority in our lives.

Duration: 47:39

Scripture: Matthew 6:19-20, Matthew 6:24, Matthew 6:27, Matthew 6:33, Luke 14:33, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 2:13

Topics: "Excuses"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by expressing confusion over CNN's positive portrayal of a system that promotes all religions leading to God. He emphasizes the need for a strong movement of the Spirit of God in our time. The preacher then references the story of Joshua encountering a man with a drawn sword and discusses the importance of recognizing God's authority. The sermon also touches on the belief in the inerrancy and inspiration of the Bible as the Word of God. Additionally, the preacher mentions the different phases of the kingdom of God and how the Sermon on the Mount applies to believers in the present time.

Transcript

Good morning. I don't know how you felt as we were singing that last hymn, but I feel there's a real tug to it. Did you sense that this morning? The Spirit of God is really pleading with hearts to come.

I felt if I wasn't Savior, I think I'd get saved today, if I wasn't saved. Well, we read a scripture this morning, and I want to lay a foundation before we get to it. I have a lot of other scriptures, but I'd like to lay a foundation, and the foundation has to do with this book we hold in our hands today, the Word of God.

And I believe that most of the people here in the audience would agree that this really is the Word of God, that it's the inspired Word of God, that it's the inerrant Word of God, no mistakes in it, no errors in it, really God-breathed. Actually, we bet our whole eternities on this Word. Without it, we have nothing.

But you know, it's possible to believe all of that about the Holy Bible and yet have 60 theological excuses why it doesn't mean what it says. I'm just going to go over a few of them, not the 60 this morning. People say, yeah, well, it is the Word of God, but when we come to difficult things, we say it couldn't mean that literally.

Have you ever heard that? It couldn't mean that literally. When you say that, you've lost the power of the scriptures in your life. It does mean it literally.

You say, well, aren't there things in the Bible that you can't, like, literally, yes, there are. Jesus said, if you're right, I offend you, pluck it out. You don't take that literally.

Why? Because it's contradicted by some other scripture, if you took it literally. Other scriptures say your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. You're not to deface it.

You're not to injure it purposely. So, we have no trouble with that. We take that figuratively.

But when you come to the hard sayings of the Lord Jesus, take them literally. I think back to the days when George Verwood was first saved. He was discipled by Dale Roton, and they came to verses like this.

Whosoever he be of you that forsake, if not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. And Dale would say to George, what does that mean, George? And George said, either the Bible means what it says, or we ought to throw it away. Well, you know, at first that sounds almost blasphemous, doesn't it? Either the Bible means what it says, or we ought to throw it away.

But you know, God heard that in heaven, and God wasn't offended by it. And God used that fellow because he took the Bible as the word of God, meaning what it said. And the gospel has gone out throughout the world as a result of that fellow.

That's what God is looking for today. He's looking for people who will say the Bible means what it says. I don't see people living that life today, but I'm going to do it no matter what anybody says or does.

That's the spirit that God really wants. We take a doctor's advice literally. We take the pharmacist's advice literally.

We take a dead person's will literally. Why don't we take the Bible literally, too? Well, that's one way we have of explaining it away. A second is we've never done it that way.

That's the argument from tradition. We've never done it that way. Well, of course, the answer to that is why don't you just start doing it, if that's what the Bible says.

There are some traditions that are good. And before you throw them away, you should go back and find out why they became traditions. Maybe the reason still exists.

There are some good traditions. Paul taught Timothy to hold the traditions that had been handed down to him. And when he said that, he was speaking about the word of God, the sacred precepts of the word of God.

There are some bad traditions and they should be rejected. Some traditions are bad. Paul, I mean, the Lord Jesus rebuked the scribes and the Pharisees for being so wed to their traditions that they made void the commandments of God.

Illustration. Here's a Jewish family. Grandpa and grandma, they don't have social security.

They don't have Medicare and their funds have run out. And they go to their son who's very wealthy. He's a lawyer and he's making a lot of money.

And they said, son, really, the time has come. We'd appreciate a little help from you. All that son had.

This was a tradition. All that son had to do was utter one word, Corban. And that when he added that, that meant anything that I might have to give to you has been dedicated to the temple.

It didn't mean that the temple ever got it. All he had to do was say the words. All he had to do is say that word Corban, anything that I might have that I may be able to give to you, it's been dedicated to the temple, the argument from tradition.

And Jesus said, you make void the word of God, the commandments of God by your traditions. Three. I know that's what the Bible says, but in my case, he wants to make an exception.

No, he doesn't. No, he doesn't. He means it for you and for everyone else.

You know, that argument, that argument can be used to justify an unscriptural marriage. It can be used to justify an unscriptural business partnership, almost any other violation of the word of God. It can be used to violate it.

Really, you've got a decimated Bible when you start introducing arguments like that. The simple path is to accept the word of God. Do it.

God knows what he's doing. He knows what he's saying. Don't try to get around the word of God for that was just for Paul's day.

That doesn't apply to us today. Isn't that convenient? This is known as what I call the argument from culture. Be careful when you take that argument and start applying it elsewhere.

And incidentally, that's often the case. It's just an entering wedge to justify all sorts of behavior that was just for Paul's day. The culture is what gives meaning to the word of God.

That's what it's saying. You could use that to do away with baptism. That was just for Paul's day.

You could use that to do away with the breaking of bread. The communion service was just for Paul's day. I say once again, you can use that argument to apply generally to anything in the word of God you don't like.

Rather than trying to make the Bible agree with culture, we should be trying to make the culture agree with the Bible. Although we won't be able to do that, but at least we can take a stand. We can swim a tide.

We can be true to God, though all the world might deny it. Argument five. God knows I have to live, doesn't he? You know, some hard saying of the word of God.

First Timothy chapter six, Paul says, and having food and covering, let us be there with content. God knows I have to live, doesn't he? Yeah, he knows you have to live. And he promises how you can live a carefree life if you follow his word.

He promises that. We'll come to it. Charles Spurgeon was talking to a young man one day, and he was suppressing upon him the claims of the Lord Jesus.

And that's exactly what the young person said. He said, God knows I have to live. Spurgeon said, I don't grant that.

You have to obey God. There's nothing in the Bible that says we have to live. And we're not going to live, all of us, unless the Lord comes in the meantime.

That leaves you with a Bible devoid of power. And, dear friends, that's what's killing the church in the United States today. People have got away from the Bible, away from the teachings of the word of God, away from obedience to the word of God.

And the Christian faith today in the United States is a boring habit rather than an acute fever. And we'll have more to say about that as we go on. Here's another one.

Well, I know that's what the Bible says, but you have to be prudent, don't you? You have to use common sense, don't you? How would you answer that? Well, of course, the answer is easy. That assumes that man's wisdom is greater than God's. That even assumes that human reason is greater than God's.

Human reason is not the ultimate. The word of God is the ultimate. That's what really counts.

What God says is higher than common sense. It's higher than human reason. Dear friends, human reason would never have brought the Christ of God down to this world to die for us.

Never would have. That's higher than human reason. So we mustn't judge the word of God by human reason or human wisdom.

The truth of the matter is that faith in the word of God leads you to heights that makes reason dizzy. Let me say that again. Faith, the faith that's found in the word of God leads you to heights that makes reason dizzy.

Number seven. These verses show that Paul was a woman hater. And I can tell that some of you know the verses I'm speaking about.

They say he was a male chauvinist. He was prejudiced. You know, that's a frontal attack on the inspiration of the scriptures.

Would you say that? To suggest that Paul was not speaking by divine inspiration, but by his own wisdom. Would you please turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 13. I'd like you all to turn to that if you have a Bible.

In this chapter, Paul is telling how the word of God, the New Testament especially, was revealed to him and the other apostles and prophets of the New Testament period. He talks about inspiration. He talks about revelation.

And he talks about transmission. Here he's talking about how he transmitted the truth of God to us. And he says verse 13.

These things also we speak. We there is refers to the apostles and prophets of the New Testament. These things we speak not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but supply the word words, but words which the Holy Spirit teaches.

It says comparing spiritual things with spiritual. I believe that means conveying spiritual truth with God given words. That's what it was.

That's what Paul did. He conveyed the word of God to us with God given words. I believe in the verbal inspiration of the scriptures, don't you? That God gave Paul the words to speak.

Well, you say that's dictation. So what? Doesn't have God a right to do that? Don't be afraid of the word dictation. They use it in offices, but God can't use it according to men.

You shouldn't do it if it would offend somebody. That's common today. That's a common argument against the word of God today.

You shouldn't do it if it would offend somebody. Dear friends, that means you'd never share the with anybody. That's what it means.

Because the gospel is an offense to people. Instead of filling them with self-esteem, it tells them they're sinners. They're lost.

They're on the way to hell. They cannot save themselves. There's only one way of salvation.

That's by the Lord Jesus Christ. That's offensive to people. I think John 14, 6 is probably the most hated verse in the Bible today, in our culture today, where Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, of the life.

No one comes to the Father but by me. People hate that today. You fundamentalists, you conservative religious people, you think you're the only ones that... We didn't say it.

Jesus said it. No one comes to the Father but by me. Christ is an offense.

He's a rock of offense. It says that explicitly in 1 Peter. The cross is an offense.

Galatians 5.11. So don't let people close your Bible by saying you shouldn't do it if it would offend somebody. If it says it in the Bible, do it, even if you're the only person who's doing it. Here's another argument against the teachings of discipleship in the New Testament.

The word disciple is only found in the Gospels and the Acts. It's not found in any of the Epistles. That means it's not for us today.

Well, sorry, friends, but I believe the whole New Testament is for us today. The fact that the word disciple or discipleship is not found in the Epistles doesn't prove anything. The teachings are there just as strongly as they are in the Gospels.

The teachings of discipleship are there. Paul says, I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them as rubbish that I might win Christ. That's discipleship, friends.

That's discipleship. The life of faith is all right for a single person, but when you're married and have six children, that's a different story. How do you like that? You know what I say to that? Your God is too small.

Your God is not big enough for me. If he can take care of one person, but he can't take care of eight. But you hear that when you come to some of these hard sayings of Jesus, you hear that people say, man, it's all right, McDonald, you're single, and it would be a lot better if you had a household like I have.

A God like that is too small for me. He's not able to take care of my problems, to handle my problems. Another one that we've heard some of us in our childhood is that the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, they're for Israel, not for the church.

They don't apply to us. Teachings of the kingdom. Kingdom teaching, that's for Israel.

It doesn't apply to us. Sorry, wrong. The kingdom is found in several different phases in the scriptures.

In the Old Testament, you have the kingdom prophesied very clear that the Lord Jesus is coming back and he's going to reign on earth. He's going to sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem, reign for a thousand years. The kingdom prophesied.

The kingdom is found at hand in the gospels. John the Baptist said the kingdom of God is at hand. The king was coming.

Kingdom of God is found present in the person of the kingdom. In the person of the king, Jesus said, the king is among you, referring to himself. Then the kingdom is found in a mystery form.

Matthew chapter 13. You say, what does that mean? It means the king is absent. The king has gone back to heaven.

He's been rejected on earth. The Holy Spirit has been sent. But we as believers acknowledge the rule of Christ.

This is the kingdom in mystery form that was never prophesied in the Old Testament. That's why it's called a mystery. Then you have the kingdom and manifestation.

That's when Jesus comes and takes universal reign and righteousness covers the earth as the waters cover the sea, a thousand year reign of Christ. And finally, you have the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So I say the kingdom exists in those phases.

We are in the mystery form of the kingdom. That means the Sermon on the Mount applies to us too. You don't get rid of the word of God like that.

You just don't accept it. Here's a final one. If all people live, as you say, is taught in the New Testament, who would provide funds for the work of God? If all people lived, as taught in the New Testament, that is simply and sacrificially, who would support the work of the Lord? Of course, the answer is God would.

He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. Actually, what's lacking today is not too little money in the work of the Lord. You'd think that was a great thing today, too little money.

No, I think Hudson Taylor was right. He said that the problem is not too little money, but too much unconsecrated money. It says concerning the Macedonians, they gave beyond their ability.

How can you give beyond their ability? Well, it means they gave more than could be expected of them. But more than that, they first gave themselves to the Lord. Isn't that something? That's consecrated money.

They first gave themselves to the Lord. God can supply for his work and does supply for his work, too. So, what I'm saying is that if you accept some of these excuses, you have Christianity light.

Powerless, resorting to all kinds of cosmetic things to make it look big, but lacking the power of the Holy Spirit. I'd like to say this. God doesn't have much blessing for people who explain away the word of God.

I say that's why the church in the United States is so powerless today. We resort to seeker-friendly mega churches, to a gospel without Christ, a gospel of self-esteem, to a new interpretation of the Reformation. The trouble with the Reformation was that it was God-centered instead of man-centered, as one of them has said.

That's a verbal quote. It's a gospel without the precious blood of Christ. It's a gospel where you don't talk about sin.

They'll tell you that. If you're talking to somebody and you make him feel bad because of his sin, you have sinned. What does that do to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit of God? Would you please tell me? Lame excuses have left us with a church where leaders, Christian leaders, call a man Holy Father.

I want to tell you, friends, that's sheer blasphemy. Holy Father is a title of God. It's found in John chapter 17 in the high priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus before he went to the cross.

He addressed his father, Holy Father. It's not a title to be attributed to any man or to be accepted by any man either. I want to tell you, we have religious leaders, Christian leaders, evangelical leaders today, who speak favorably about a system that is drunk with the blood of saints.

A system that is under the double curse of God because it preaches another gospel. Galatians chapter 1, twice the Apostle Paul said, if anyone comes and preaches another gospel, let him be accursed. And yet we have leaders today, I won't mention their names, all you have to do is listen to CNN and you'll get them.

They say that, they speak favorably of that system. I do not understand it. They speak favorably of a system that speaks favorably of all religions lead to God.

All religions lead to God. No, no. No wonder we don't see mighty movements of the Spirit of God in our day.

Now everything I've said up till now is by way of laying a foundation. I want to now consider some verses of scripture with you. And the first are the verses that Mike read at the beginning of the hour.

It came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho that he lifted up his eyes and looked and behold a man stood opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said, are you for us or for our adversaries? So he said, no, but as commander of the army of the Lord, I have now come. Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, what does my Lord say to my soul? This is one of the Old Testament appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was not an incarnation. That is, he did not come in flesh. That took place in Bethlehem, but it's one of many appearances of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament.

And it's full of meaning for us. Dear friends, you know what it says? It says when God came and saved your soul through the Lord Jesus Christ, he didn't come as auxiliary. He didn't come as an inoffensive pal.

He came to take over your life and my life. That's why he came. That's what he says.

No, but as commander in chief, am I come to you? You know, when you go into the army, you really lose a lot of power of choice over your life. Don't you? That's what happens too. When you get saved, the Lord Jesus wants to control you.

He wants to take over for you completely. He guides your life. Why? Because that's the best way because he knows best.

But oh, how we struggle so hard to accept the words of the Lord Jesus and to do something about it. I say Jesus didn't come to you as a private. Here you have the God of the universe, the God who built the skies, taking a personal interest in you as he did in Joshua.

This passage tells me that it's not a question of being of his being for me or against me. It's a question of obedience to his commands. Paul wrote to Timothy that a soldier on active duty doesn't entangle himself in the affairs of this world, and neither does the one that Christ rules.

Will you fall on your face in worship and say, Lord Jesus, here I am, take control. You've never done it before. Did you know that the highest form of worship is total commitment to Christ.

And when we meet together to break bread, we hear him say, this is my body given for you. The only conceivable proper response is, Lord Jesus, this is my body given to you. And he knows when you give him your body, you give him everything.

You give him everything. Will you give yourself to him in complete surrender to do whatever he asks. Second, Matthew, this is the second verse, Matthew 6 and verse 33, but seek ye first the kingdom of God, that his righteousness of all these things shall be added unto you.

The previous chapters are describing a man who worries about what he's going to wear and what he's going to eat 20 years from today. And the Lord Jesus in this verse is saying, if you have to worry about your future, you won't have time to serve me. So I want to make an agreement with you.

You seek first the kingdom, kingdom of God and his righteousness. I'll take care of your future. Will he? He said he would.

Is he lying? No, of course he's not lying. He wants to do it. He wants to do it.

He wants you to give the best of your life to him, not the tag end. And incidentally, young people, youth is God's best chance with the soul. Give him your youth, your young years before the metal has become hardened.

This is a command and a promise. The command, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteous promise. All these things shall be added unto you.

And he has never gone back on this, on this promise. I say again, if you have to provide for your old age home and first of all, you can't do it. You know what a dollar, how much gas a dollar will buy today.

How much will it buy 20 years from today? You can't do it. And the Lord Jesus says that in Matthew chapter six, which of you by thinking can add a cubit to his stature? You can't do that. You can't add 18 inches to your height by thinking.

And then he says, you can't provide for your future either. And you don't have to. I'll provide for it.

If you'll just let me. The Lord Jesus is calling us to a life of faith where we work hard for the supply of our current needs and the needs of our family. And we trust him for the future.

Romans 12 and one, I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. We don't come to God with dead animal sacrifices the way they did in the old Testament. We come with our bodies.

It's a priestly act. We come with our bodies and say, here I am, Lord Jesus. Here I am.

If you are the mercies of God, there's nothing else I can do. Nothing else I can do in view of Calvary. It's the most reasonable thing in the world.

You know what the Lord Jesus did at the cross of Calvary is so astounding, so mind-boggling, so breathtaking. The God of the universe dying for McDonnell? So unthinkable. Only one proper response.

Oh Christ, your sacrifice for me demands my life for you. Oh Christ, thy bleeding hands and feet, thy sacrifice for me. Each wound, each tear demands my life, a sacrifice for thee.

Think it through. Don't let the busyness of life rob you of the overwhelming significance of what happened at that cross many years ago. Second Corinthians chapter 5 verses 14 and 15.

For the love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then we're all dead. He died for all that those who live, get this, he died for all that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again. And you know what this verse says? It says we were dead in trespasses and in sin.

Dead in trespasses and sin. We had no motion toward God at all. And the Lord Jesus came and he died for us that we might live.

But he didn't die for us so that we could live our petty little lives the way we want to live them. And I'm so glad of that. He knows better than we do.

He knows options that we don't know. And the most reasonable thing is to turn your life over to him. He died for us that we might live for him.

Why do we resist total surrender? Why do we resist it? Fear of God's will. Fear of God's will. I'd like you to just think with me what an insane thing that is.

I know from experience. It's insane. Here's a God who loves us beyond compare.

Prove that love on a wooden cross. It really is mind-boggling. God's will is good and acceptable and perfect.

He does the very best for those who leave the choice with him. We have an old hymn that said, "'Tis his great delight to bless us." That's what he wants to do. He wants to bless us.

Present your body to him. Why do we resist total surrender? Fear of what God will take. When he didn't come to take, friends, he came to give.

I am come that they might have life and they might have it more abundantly. Fear of God's denials. We're afraid of what he will deny us.

Yeah, he does deny us. He denies us sin. He denies us a wasted life.

That's what he denies us. He denies us from spending the greater part of our lives doing what an unsaved person could do just as well. He denies us from being like a little gerbil on a wheel, a monotonous life.

Why do we resist surrender? Fear of losing your independence. He wants to change our life motto from, I do it my way, to, not my will, but thine. Be done.

Fear of loss of status. I'm afraid he might call me into his service. Well, he already has called you.

But what that's saying is, I'm too good for the work of the Lord. That's pretty sad, isn't it? I'm too good for the work of the Lord. It's good for other people's children, but not for mine.

It would be beneath my dignity to be in the work of the Lord. Huh. It wasn't beneath his dignity to have his face covered with spit, to suffer shame and abuse.

It wasn't beneath his dignity. He endured the cross, despising the shame. Why should we make a full surrender of our lives to him? Because of the work of Calvary.

The work of Calvary demands us. There's only one response. That's all for Jesus.

Then in 1 Corinthians 6, he points out that we're not our own. At the cross of Calvary, the Lord Jesus bought us. We don't belong to ourselves.

Here I am, hugging my little life as if it was mine. It's not. It's his.

He bought it there at the cross of Calvary, and he wants it. His wisdom is greater than ours. If he said to you today, now I just want you to sit down and take a little sheet of paper and write down what you think would be the best life for you, you'd flunk a test.

You wouldn't be able to think of anything as good as he thinks it. As I say, he knows the end from the beginning. He knows options that we don't know anything about.

He would make you hilarious, really, with joy. And you know, it's not reasonable to trust the Lord Jesus for your salvation. I believe, I believe that he's able to save me, save me from hell, save me from sin.

I believe that. But I don't think he could manage my life as well as I can do it. Crazy.

It's ridiculous, isn't it? Absolutely ridiculous. And you know, it's the way to get power in your life. Do you feel that your life is as powerful as it could be? Well, let me tell you something.

When you submit yourself to him in full and glad surrender, let me put it this way. You have to put yourself in a position where you have to trust God, where if God fails you, you're sunk. And if you do that, there'll be a power in your life.

And when you touch other lives, something will happen for God. That's worth repeating. You have to put yourself in a position where you have to trust God, where if God fails you, you're sunk.

And if you do that, there'll be a power in your life. And when you touch other lives, something will happen for God. I tell you, the mercies of God demand my life.

The love of Christ demands my life. Simple gratitude demands my life. It really does.

How do I do it? Okay, no big deal. Every morning of his life, Bishop Taylor used to get down by his bed, say, Lord Jesus, this bed your altar, myself your living sacrifice. Beautiful, beautiful.

Or the little girl, the girl in a meeting, and we're talking about full surrender, total commitment to the Lord. And she took a blank piece of paper, and she just signed her name at the bottom. She let God fill in the details.

She wasn't so dumb, was she? Oh, Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to thee. For thou and thine atonement, it's give thyself for me. I own no other master.

Thyself shall be my throne, my life I give. Henceforth to live alone for thee alone. After all he's done for me, after all he's done for me, how can I do less than give him my best and live for him completely? After all he's done for me.

We don't think when we sing these hymns, thus might I hide my blushing face while his dear cross appears. Dissolve my heart in thankfulness and melt my eyes to tears. Beautiful.

Dissolve my heart in thankfulness, melt my eyes, but drops of grief can ne'er repay the debt of love I owe. Dear Lord, I give myself away, it is all that I can do. You do that, you do it for the first time, then you do it every day of your life.

Every day in your life, you get down like the bishop. Lord Jesus, my bed, your altar, myself, you're a living sacrifice. You say, well, that's pretty hard, isn't it? Well, I tell you, after he did it, Livingston, David Livingston said, it's a pity I didn't have more to give.

It's a pity I didn't have more to give. Yeah. That's what you feel like.

You're not going to regret it. Just wish you had more. I tell you, I stand before you today, April 17th, as a servant of Jesus Christ.

We had the gospel in that last song we sang. Beautiful. I think that's the greatest decision in your life.

The second greatest is. There I am, Lord Jesus. You bought me with your precious blood.

I belong to you. I give you my all. Lord Jesus is here today like the commander in chief.

And he's saying, my son, my daughter, give me your heart. Nobody knows if he has your heart. He has all of you.

What will your answer be? Shall we pray? Lord Jesus, it's also reasonable to us when we think of Calvary, when we think of the Christ of glory, the son of God coming down to this world and dying for guilty, unclean sinners, because he loved them and because he wants them with him for all eternity. Oh, Father, hold back. We hold back our will to you, but we give it to you this morning.

Help us to deal with whatever makes it hard to say thy will be done. We commit ourselves to you in your worthy name. Amen.

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