



The World's Worst Excuse

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He said to Aaron, “What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?” “Do not be angry, my lord,” Aaron answered. “You know how prone these people are to evil. They said to me, ‘Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.’ So I told them, ‘Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.’ Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!” Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, “Whoever is for the LORD, come to me.” And all the Levites rallied to him. Exodus 32:21-26

Have you ever been caught doing something wrong and tried to come up with an excuse really fast? Maybe a broken lamp. A missing cookie. A messy bedroom. Sometimes when we know we did something wrong, we try to think of a reason why it wasn’t really our fault.

Back when schoolwork was done in notebooks and worksheets, the excuse frequently made fun of was the silly, sad lie claiming, “My dog ate my homework.” Most people knew that excuse wasn’t true. But excuses aren’t just for homework. We all make excuses when we don’t want to admit we did something wrong.

When we are young, we may not realize just how wrong our excuses sound. As we age, maybe we get a little wiser in the ways of this sinful world, but still our excuses all fall flat. Because we have a sinful nature, we face a lifetime of struggle with our natural tendency to excuse or minimize our sins. “It wasn’t me. She started it.” “Everybody else was doing it.” “I didn’t mean to.”

How easily these excuses still come to us.

Consider what took place in Exodus 32. Moses came down the mountain with two stone tablets engraved by God himself. On them were written the Ten Commandments. God told Moses what the children of Israel had done while he was meeting with God. The children of Israel had made a golden calf and worshipped it as if the idol had led them out of Egypt.

That sin, like all our sin, is obvious to our all-knowing God. God had done so much for his people, so they would know he loved them and would protect them: the plagues, the Passover, the parting of the sea, a visible presence in cloud by day and fire by night. But still they built an idol and worshiped it. When caught in this sin, how does Aaron, the brother of Moses respond? He blamed others. He minimized the sin and came up with the sad, silly lie: “I threw it in the fire and out came this calf!”

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Can you imagine that? Aaron wanted Moses to believe that he tossed some gold into a fire and—poof!—a golden calf just appeared all by itself. It was a pretty ridiculous excuse.

Moses knew from his own life how dangerous it is to make excuses and minimize sin. When the people sinned—and when we sin—God didn't stop being their God. Instead of answering our excuses, God, in love, gave us the only answer for our sin. God used Moses to call them back. God had promised the people the perfect substitute who would shed his blood so God's people would go free. Jesus came to be the only answer for our sin. He is our sinless sacrifice. We don't need excuses, but honesty. Confess our sins and hear God's forgiveness for us in Jesus. Share it and speak it to one another.

No excuses, just honesty from our holy and loving God.

Questions to Consider:

- When is the last time you heard the words, "I forgive you"?
- When is the last time you said the words, "I forgive you"?
- Why can it sometimes be hard to say, "I was wrong" or "I'm sorry"? What are some of the ways we are reminded of God's forgiveness in our worship service?
- Is the fact that God knows all things about us sometimes scary, sometimes comforting, or both? Why?
- Can you recall and talk about with the whole family when being honest and admitting fault right away would have been far better than making excuses?
- God had shown his love in vivid ways to the children of Israel. What are some of the ways you know God has shown his love to you that you can be sure of God's forgiveness?