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EXCUSES.

FOR all our faults and shortcomings, for all our weaknesses and sins, a deceitful heart is ever ready to offer plausible excuses and palliations. Duty is neglected; privileges are misused, and still conscience slumbers, or its wakening is fitful and uncertain. Let us note a few of the most common instances of neglect of duty:—

1. You do not make a public profession of religion. You are ashamed of the Cross of Christ; but your self-love disguises the fact under some thin veil of falsehood. Perhaps you seek shelter behind the inconsistency of religious people. Perhaps you boast quietly of the superior purity of your own moral character; and you plume yourself specially on being “no hypocrite.” But conscience when really shaken out of its deadly slumbers, deals very summarily with all such flimsy excuses. The best of them is dishonest and very rotten. Every man is *commanded* to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to “confess Him before men.” No amount of special pleading can ever justify disobedience to this command. God searches the heart.

2. You cannot attend public worship on the Lord’s day. The church is too far off; roads are bad; the day is gloomy and threatening; you are very tired after the week’s work. The minister is but a dull preacher, and very tedious. Five or six miles is too great a distance for such a sermon on the Sabbath. But you think nothing of performing the same journey on business or for worldly pleasure on a week day. The rain or the lowering clouds would hardly keep

you away from an entertainment in a friend’s house. The dulness of the preaching may be more in your head and heart than in the minister’s. An honest and devout hearer can get much good out of any Gospel sermon. Attendance in God’s house on His day never unfitted a man for the duties of the following week.—Time was when Presbyterians, even in these Provinces, would travel ten miles—twelve—twenty—or even more—to hear the word preached. What a change! In many places the minister carries the Gospel to people’s doors, and wears himself out by constant travel and speaking when the people might easily gather to some central church and hear the same sermon. Ministers suffer prodigiously by the popular system of preaching in crowded school-houses and small halls in places by no means far from churches where regular service is held. It is a woful waste of energy, which no considerate Christian should countenance.

3. You cannot attend the Prayer Meeting. It is a bore—so dull—so monotonous, and business is so pressing, especially on the very evening of the Prayer Meeting! Yet conscience whispers that you can spare the time for other purposes of infinitely less importance. And, perhaps, if you attend the meetings regularly, your *taste* as well as well as the meetings may improve. It is extremely discouraging to see small Prayer Meetings; and no excuse short of actual impossibility can justify church members in neglecting this means of grace.

4. You cannot assist the Sabbath School. Others who are better qualified do not take