

No excuse

This week I had two almost identical conversations with two different men on two different days. Both conversations ended with my appealing to them to believe Jesus Christ, but both, claiming to be agnostic, politely declined. One of the men, with honesty, said he couldn't buy this "faith" stuff—he wanted some proof first. I said to him, "You aren't going to get proof first. God will not prove Himself to you. He requires that you believe Him first, then you will get your proof."

Afterwards I felt grieved. Saddened by their hardheartedness, frustrated by my lack of ability to convince them, and frankly, grieved about their insult to God. "Who do we think we are?" I thought. How insulting for us to sit in judgment on God, demanding God to justify Himself! We should tremble at our arrogance.

In both conversations, each man excused his agnosticism on the bad behavior of Christians. What could I say? I agreed that I could not nor would even try to excuse or defend that behavior. You reading this article, if you are a Christian, what do you say? Jesus Christ is on trial in the court of public opinion and we are called as witnesses on His behalf, yet we often deny Him by our bad behavior! Judgment must begin with the household of God. The Word of God says, "Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did" (1 Jn 2:6).

Now granted, the world does not understand that we came to Christ as sinners, then, having been justified by our faith in Him, we began to GROW in Christlikeness. And who among us has been made perfect yet? To one of the men, I did say, "Without excusing our bad behavior, Christians do grow. You should not conclude that there is something wrong with Jesus Christ because you see His followers struggling. After all, I might have trouble doing calculus problems, but doesn't mean that the Calculus is the problem!"

To my fellow Christians: Are we purposefully walking in love? Listen to the Word of God: "Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for any honest work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all men" (Titus 3:1). We are not going to be perfect, but we can learn to sincerely apologize when wrong and we can certainly learn to "speak evil of no one," and to "show perfect courtesy toward all men."

To those not believers: Do you understand that blaming others' bad behavior is your excuse for avoiding what you know you must do—submit yourself to God? It is stylish in some intellectual circles to be "agnostic." That might win the admiration of some, but do you realize what an affront that is to God—to demand the God of the universe to prove Himself to you? I would not want to face God with that attitude. "No proof" will be no excuse.