

Title: The Offense of the Cross

Text: Galatians 5: 6

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Galatians 5: 11: And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

The apostle Paul did not preach that there is some work the sinner must do to be saved. It is obvious, he did not, because he was greatly persecuted. He said, "And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased."

Paul preached the cross of Christ. He preached the cross of Christ because he was sent of Christ for that purpose as is every true ambassador for Christ, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect...For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor 1: 17; 2: 2)

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

To preach the cross of Christ is to preach who Christ is. He is the eternal Son of God and the Son of David after the flesh; the GodMan; the chosen of God; sent of God; the King of his people; the Savior of his people; the Bread from heaven; the Way, the Truth, the Life.

To preach the cross of Christ is to preach why Christ came. God sent Christ to manifest the righteousness of God, to fulfill the law, to declare God just, to declare God the Justifier, to put away the sin of those the Father gave to him in eternity; to redeem us, to reconcile us, to make us one with God in him.

To preach the cross of Christ is to preach what Christ accomplished. He finished the work the Father gave him to do: Christ glorified the Father, Christ entered in once into the holy place having obtained eternal redemption for us.

To preach the cross of Christ is to preach where Christ is now. When he had by himself purged our sins he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; he is risen and his people are risen in him, seated together with him.

To preach the cross of Christ is to preach what Christ is doing now. He is reigning, ruling with all power, over all, in heaven and in earth; calling out his people, filling all in all; will not lose one!

To preach the cross of Christ what Christ shall do. He shall come again; he must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet, the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death; then he shall deliver up the kingdom to God.

You see, to preach the cross is to preach Christ's person and Christ's work.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST OFFENDS

I have friends that profess faith in Christ. They are sincere. Most attend their church regularly. Some are familiar with scriptures. They are moral, benevolent people. Most even speak of God having the glory, of salvation by grace and of faith in Christ. Yet, most of my friends become offended when they hear me preach the cross of Christ. We have mutual friends with whom they differ in doctrine and practice but they are not offended at their preaching. Yet, both, are offended at the gospel I preach.

In doctrine and practice, the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes all differed greatly from each other. They all received the other. Yet, all were offended at those who preached the cross of Christ. When Paul was Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee of Pharisees, he offended at the gospel. He persecuted those who preached the cross of Christ right along with his religious friends.

But when Paul was converted, as soon as he began preaching the cross of Christ, his old friends were offended and persecuted him. On one occasion, as Paul told them what Christ had done for him, they “lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.” (Acts 22: 22) Over forty religious men, said, “We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.” (Acts 23: 13-14) Paul said of himself and fellow preachers, we stand “in jeopardy every hour?” (1 Cor 15: 30) Paul was: imprisoned for preaching the gospel. He said, “of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned.” He was persecuted by his “own countrymen, by the heathen, and by false brethren”; “in the city, in the wilderness, and at sea.” (2 Cor 11: 23-26) It was simply because he preached the offense of cross.

Our subject is “The Offense of the Cross.” What is the offense of the cross? The preaching of the cross is offensive to sinners because it gives all glory in salvation to God.

Someone reading this may think, “I want God to have all the glory.” Yet, when you hear me preach the gospel of the cross of Christ you are offended. Why? I only preach the scriptures; I show you in the word of God; I give all the glory to God. So why are you offended if you want God to have the glory? Have you ever thought maybe your heart is fooling you? God says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer 17:9)

THE GENERAL OFFENSE

In general, the preaching of the cross is offensive because it gives the sinner nothing to do; leaving no room to boast, “That no flesh should glory in his presence.” (1 Cor 1: 29) It is offensive because it declares Christ has done it all, “That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” (1 Cor 1: 31) Not only does the cross remove all room for boasting, it abases us, declaring us to be exactly what we are, sinners in need of a sovereign, victorious, Savior.

No matter how religious, when the natural mind, hears the gospel, it offends his pride of wisdom; his pride of ability; his pride of merit; and his pride of superiority because it puts no distinction between him and the worst sinner.

If Paul would have given sinners just one thing to do he would not have suffered persuction. But then the gospel would have ceased also. Paul said, “And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.” (Gal 5: 11)

OFFENSIVE BECAUSE CHRIST ALONE JUSTIFIES

First, the gospel offends the man who thinks he is justified by his own works. Paul said, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified...For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 20: I am crucified with Christ:... (Ga 2:16-20)

Be sure your Bible makes the distinction between the “faith of Christ” and “faith in Christ.” By Christ’s faith, as Head and Substitute of his people—by his obedience—Christ justified his people from our sins.

Now, through the law—through Christ’s obedience to the law, through Christ dying by law, through Christ fulfilling the law—all who were in Christ when he was crucified were crucified with Christ and are now dead to the law. The law does not recognize them as alive but as executed. Therefore, through the law, I am dead to the law because I am crucified with Christ.

Now, if that is offensive to you, it is because you have not ceased from your own works. You are not resting in Christ. You are yet trying justify yourself before God by your own obedience to the law.

OFFENSIVE BECAUSE CHRIST GIVES AND SUSTAINS LIFE

Secondly, the man who thinks he can make himself be born again and can live obediently to God by his own strength is offended at the preaching of the cross. Paul said, I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Ga 2:19-20)

Some vainly imagine that sinners are born again by moral reform. They do what the preacher constrains them to do: walk to the front, pray the preachers prayer, learn a church creed, pass a church probationary period, are baptized and join the church. They are told now you are born again.

But the Prince of preachers said, “No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.” (Joh 6:65) The Spirit of God declares, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor 2: 14)

That wounds man’s pride of wisdom and ability. The intellectual is offended that he cannot have life by his searching, that righteousness is revealed by divine revelation. The debater is offended by the dogmatism and authority of the gospel, that Christ is the way, the truth and the life; bow or be damned! The reasoning, scientific man is offended because everything has to be proven to him from things that are and he is ignorant of the fact that faith is the evidence of things not seen. The will-worker is offended because he wants the glory of giving himself life, for being the ultimate reason he’s saved. Yet Christ says, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life.” (Joh 6:63)

In addition, most everyone in religion thinks they live the life of faith by their own wisdom, strength and faithfulness. Paul said, “And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Gal 2: 20)

Once born of God, it is true that believers live our lives abiding in faith in the Son of God. But the only way is by the faith of the Son of God, by Christ abiding in us. Christ said, “I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” (Jn 15:5)

Friend, if this is offensive to you, then why? Do you want Christ to have the glory? He alone must give his people spiritual life; he alone must preserve us throughout the life of faith? The Spirit says to the believer, “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Php 1:6) If we know something of our sin and helplessness then we delight that Christ keeps us. But the man who does not know his own wretched, sinfulness is self-righteous and proud and therefore he is only offended! Please here the apostle Paul, “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” (Ga 2:21)

OFFENSIVE BECAUSE CHRIST IS SANCTIFIER AND SANTIFICATION

Thirdly, most believe that once born of the Holy Spirit, they make themselves more holy, more sanctified, by their own obedience to the law. Paul said, “This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Ga 3:2-3)

We not only became guilty in Adam under the curse of the law, also, our first head gave us a corrupt, dead, sin-nature. We must be justified, made righteous and we must be sanctified, made holy, given a new heart.

When they pierced Christ’s side, two things flowed out—water and blood. Justification is by his blood. Christ made satisfaction to justice by giving his life in place of his people. So we are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:” (Ro 3:24)

Sanctification is represented by the water: Christ washes us clean sending his Spirit effectually into our hearts, creating in us a new, holy nature—making us “partakers of his holiness—without which no man shall see the Lord; Partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (Heb 12: 10, 14; 2 Pet 1: 4)

Both—righteousness and sanctification—are from the same person, the same fountain—Christ Jesus our Lord. The Spirit says, ““But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us...righteousness, and sanctification...” (1Co 1:30) The prophet said of Christ, “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.” (Zech 13: 1) So believers sing,

Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure.

Does it offend you that Christ is both Righteousness and Sanctification, that the works of your flesh profit nothing? God will not receive you as long as you are mad at Christ!

OFFENSIVE BECAUSE BELIEVERS WALK BY FAITH CONSTRAINED BY LOVE

Lastly, sinners are offended because they imagine there is at least one work they must add to Christ’s work. In Galatia it was circumcision. They desired to bring believers back under the law as a rule of life. But you can also include any work you vainly imagine must be added to Christ when you hear Paul say, “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? (Ga 5:2-7)

The believers rule of life is faith in Christ. “The just shall live by faith and the law is not of faith.” (Gal 3: 11-12) Every work believers do is only by the constraint of Christ’s love for us by the Spirit’s power working in us, not because we have to, not by constraint of law. Believers worship and serve Christ because we really want to.

Either salvation is all of grace or all of works but it cannot be a mixture. “If by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no

more work.” (Ro 11:6) Read Paul’s word to Titus and note the work of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, not of us,

Titus 3: 5: Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6: Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7: That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

That is the offense of the cross: all for whom Christ died are justified by Christ, through God-given faith in Christ, not by any work we do; all for whom Christ died, shall be born-again by Christ being formed in us and kept by Christ abiding in us; all for whom Christ died, shall be sanctified by the Spirit of Christ through the hearing of faith, apart from any self-sanctifying works of our flesh and all for whom Christ died shall be saved, without adding even one work to Christ. He is the Author and Finisher of faith, Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End of salvation.

WHY DO SO MANY PREACH LAW AND WORKS?

Perhaps you ask, “Why do other preachers constrain folks to do more and more, using the law, using threats, using promises of reward.” God answers, “As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.” (Gal 6: 12-13)

My friend, if you are offended by the gospel, will you hear me? If I gave you one work to contribute then you would cease being offended. But then the offense of the gospel would also cease. But I have no desire to offend you and no desire to glory in what I constrain you to do. My desire is to see you saved by Christ alone! Therefore I glory only in the cross of Christ because through the gospel of Christ, he saved me and I know this is how Christ saves sinners. So I say with Paul, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” (Ga 6:12-16)

I pray Christ might be pleased to give us a broken and contrite heart to bow and cast all our care on him! Salvation is of the LORD!

Amen!