

The Offense of the Cross

Galatians 5:11; 6:12-15

- The word “*offence*” is translated from the Greek word “scandalon” (where we get our word “scandal”).
- The same Greek word is translated “*stumblingblock*” in 1 Corinthians 1:23—“*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, [a scandal] and unto the Greeks foolishness.*” Peter called Jesus “*a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word*” (1 Pet. 2:8).

The message of the cross of Christ was offensive and a stumbling block to the Jews. To the Greeks who prided themselves in their wisdom, the cross was foolishness. But, to the Christian, it is the power of God unto salvation.

Paul wrote the book of Galatians to refute the teachings of the Judaizers. Judaizers mixed the gospel of Christ with the works of the Old Testament law. They acknowledged Jesus, but did not believe Jesus alone could save a person. Judaizers taught a person needed to be circumcised after the law of Moses to be saved. To say that simply trusting in Christ’s work on the cross was sufficient to save a person offended them—That was a scandalous teaching to them—They stumbled at it.

To preach that a person is saved by grace through faith, apart from good works (Eph. 2:8-9) is still considered by many a scandalous teaching. People still stumble over Christ’s FINISHED work on the cross. When Jesus cried, “*It is finished,*” on the cross, He meant exactly that. There is nothing more a person can add to what He already has done. All a sinner needs to do is accept it by faith (Eph. 2:8-9)!

Yet, there are multitudes today who say, “That’s too easy!”

Four ways people are offended by the cross today.

I. It is DISTASTEFUL to man’s sight.

- It offends man’s aesthetic values. Men cringe from it’s unsightliness and ugliness. It was sickening to behold. The ordeal at Calvary was a horrifying spectacle. Christ’s “*visage was so marred*”

more than any man..." (Isa. 52:14). "There is no beauty that we should desire Him... He is despised and rejected of men... and we hid as it were our faces from him" (Isa. 53:2, 3).

Even Mel Gibson's "*The Passion of the Christ*" fails to show the true horrors of Christ's cross.

- A. The SYMBOL of the cross. Today, the cross is seen as an emblem of Christianity. It is looked upon as an ornament...a piece of art.
 - 1. It is embossed on covers of Bibles...

—That is offensive to the world today! If Jesus came today, the world would still cry out for Him to be crucified!

- C. The SPECTACLE of the cross. The cross of Calvary was not pretty to look upon, like the white crosses on church steeples!
1. Calvary is gruesome... distasteful... disgusting... repugnant because Christ was dying for our sins.
 - To get a true picture of what sin is like, don't look at Hollywood, Las Vegas, or pornographic images—LOOK AT CALVARY with all its gory and its sickening details—It should turn your stomach.
 - We are disgusted by the deprave acts of man seen on the TV news. Mothers who murder their children... A boyfriend stabs his girlfriend to death (60 times)... Steve Mullins who beat and strangled his wife, then stuffed her body in a refrigerator... Terrorists who behead innocent people... Rapists who torture and kill their victims.
 - But there is no greater exhibition of how horrific your sin and my sin is than Calvary.
 2. **The cross is offensive because it confronts people about their sin**— It forces people to consider why Jesus was on the cross—Because of sin! The cross shows us what sin really is. Sin is serious. Sin is deadly. Sin is ugly.
 - The sin we take so lightly is what shed the precious blood of Christ on the cross.
 - Our backwardness, inconsistency, and coldness of heart is what drove the nails into His hands and feet.
 - We all took part in spitting in His face... whipping His back... mocking Him... laughing Him to scorn... plating of the crown of thorns on His head... driving a spear in His side.
 - Without the cross, we would never realize how offensive our sin really is.

II. It **DISPUTES** man's scholarship. (1 Corinthians 1:18)

- It offends man's intellectual thinking. The preaching of the cross is **INCOMPATIBLE** with worldly wisdom. To the wisdom of the world, it was ridiculous.
 - The cross was the instrument of a humiliating death. It would be equivalent to preaching the electric chair or lethal injection.
- A. The **INTERPRETATIONS** of Calvary. Two ways to view the cross of Christ:
1. To the world it is a foolish waste. They see no value in a dead Jew hanging on a cross.
 2. To the Christian who has been redeemed by Christ's blood, it is a blessing and sweet!
 - Consider all the knowledge of man—the wisdom of man... the philosophy of man... But none of it can lead him to Jesus— *"the world by wisdom knew not God..."*
 - The cross of Christ is a monument to the wisdom of God!
- B. The **IRONY** of Calvary. It is ironic that the place Christ was crucified was Golgotha—*"the place of the skull"* (Mk. 15:22). That was God's "joke" on the wisdom of man! Christ's cross sat right on top of the cranium, the home of man's intellect! There is no higher wisdom than the cross of Christ!

III. It **DISTURBS** man's self-esteem. (Gal. 5:11; 6:12-13).

- It offends man's prideful platitudes. God accepts nothing else but the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. This wounds the pride of man; it slays his vanity; it lays his glory in the dust. If man could only offer something to God, like Cain, to flatter his flesh and build up his ego. **This is the real offense of the cross.**
 - As long as a man preaches you must work your way to heaven, the world don't care. A salvation by works boosts man's self-esteem.
- A. The **APPEAL** of man's pride. There is a certain appeal of a salvation by works (Luke 18:9-14). It fuels man's pride to think he can contribute something to his own salvation. But, the gospel of

the grace of God says you can do nothing to save yourself. It is entirely a work of God. *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...”* (Titus 3:5).

B. The AVERSION to Christ’s cross.

1. Man’s OBJECTION—When you preach a person’s good works will not get them to heaven, it insults the self-righteous. If you say, “The best you can do will land you in the lake of fire,” look out—Someone will get their feathers ruffled!
 - **The offense of the cross is**, you are so hopelessly rotten, wicked, defiled, and sinful, and you cannot save yourself. The only way you are going to get to heaven is by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross (Eph. 2:8-9). Since the cross takes away the glory from man and gives it all to God, it becomes an offense to the self-righteous.
2. Man’s OPPOSITION. Galatians 5:11— *“And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? **Then is the offense of the cross ceased.**”*
 - a) Paul’s preaching of the cross caused him to be persecuted (5:11). Paul was saying, “If I am still preaching circumcision (like I did before I was saved), why am I being persecuted?” That is, “As long as I add the necessity of circumcision to believing on Jesus, nobody would object.”
 - Seeking to be a “good person” according to the law never caused anyone to be persecuted. It is when you preach a person’s religion cannot get them to heaven that gets people upset.
 - b) If Paul did preach circumcision, *“THEN,”* in that case, *“the offense of the cross ceased.”* To add the works of the Law to the gospel softens it’s offensiveness.

IV. It is DISCREDITS man’s ways of salvation.

- ➡ It offends man’s open-mindedness. The cross is an offense because it says there is only ONE WAY to salvation (John 14:6).

- **The early church was not persecuted because they worshiped Jesus but because they worshiped Jesus only.**
- The world likes to think there are many ways that lead to God. Each person can choose his own way. But the Bible says, “*there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death.*” Jesus is not an alternative way to heaven—He is the exclusive way to heaven (Acts 4:12). It is Christ or nothing! This is what offends Oprah and others like her!

SUMMATION: There are an abundance of soaps on the market. Those who promote them tell us they will make you smell good or make you feel good. So let’s make a new brand of soap, and we’ll call it *Clean*, since getting clean is the main purpose of soap. We’ll advertise it by claiming our soap is the **only** soap that will make you clean. Our motto will be “Buy *Clean* and get clean.”

To advertise our soap as the **only soap** that will get people clean will get us in trouble immediately. Manufacturers of other soaps will really begin to object.

This is what Paul was claiming about the cross. If he had said, “Judaism is good but Christianity is better,” he wouldn’t have been persecuted. That’s what advertisers say today—our product is better than other soaps on the market. That’s competition. But, no one would dare say their soap is the only soap that would do the job.

Paul was not claiming that his soap is better than the soap of Judaism—He is saying Judaism is nothing—circumcision is nothing, that whether you are circumcised or not circumcised is nothing (v. 15). He is saying that only by the way of the cross can you be made “*a new creature.*”

1. The cross **confronts** you with the ugliness of sin.
2. The cross **challenges** the wisdom of the world.
3. The cross **cuts** across the pride of man. No room for pride at the cross. The ground is level at the cross.
4. The cross **Cancels** the multiple ways of religion.