

The Offense of the Cross

Galatians 5:7-15

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. The Text in Context—

1. Paul was writing in response to those who opposed his apostleship and ministry to the Gentiles.
2. Our text is Paul's answer to the false charge that he was no longer opposing circumcision for believing Gentiles (Acts 16:1-3)
3. It was imperative that Paul address this matter, since it was affecting the peace and unity of the churches.

B. What Was the Offense of the Cross?

1. The "circumcision question"
 - a. The Lord addressed the matter of whether or not believing Gentiles must be circumcised for salvation (Acts 10:9-16, 24-33; 11:1-18)
 - b. The controversy was renewed after Paul's first preaching tour (Acts 15: 5-21)
 - c. Even after a direct revelation on the matter some refused to be persuaded (Galatians 2:1-3; see: 6:12-13).
 - d. Thus, it became necessary to address the matter in the churches where false teachers called Judaizers continued to preach the doctrine (Romans 3:25-29; Galatians 5:1-6; Ephesians 2:14-18; Philippians 3:1-11; Colossians 2:11-17; Titus 1:13).
2. What did these Jewish Christians find "offensive?"
 - a. By "offensive" we do not mean "unpleasant to the eye" or "hurtful to the emotions." Rather, "offence" is used to describe something which causes one to fall.
 - (1) *Skandalon* is "the name of the part of the trap to which the bait is attached, hence, the trap or snare itself," ("stumbling-block" in Romans 11:9 and Revelation 2:14).
 - (2) In the NT always used metaphorically, and ordinarily of anything that arouses prejudice, or becomes a hindrance to others, or causes them to fall by the way. Sometimes the hindrance is in itself good, and those stumbled by it are the wicked (see: "Offence," *VEDNTW*, p. 801).
 - (3) Obviously, Paul uses "offence" in this latter sense. The cross which was something good of itself had caused these believers to fall by the way.
 - b. How had the cross become an occasion of falling away for these Jewish believers?
 - (1) The cross of Christ had effectively removed all distinctions between Jews and Gentiles (Galatians 3:28; I Corinthians 7:18-19; Galatians 5:6; Acts 15:7-9).

- (2) It had abolished the Law as a system of justification, in particular the need of circumcision, admitting all men to renewed fellowship on the basis of grace through faith (Ephesians 2:14-19; Colossians 2:14; II Corinthians 3:7-13; Romans 6:12-18).
- (3) In the mind of some Jewish believers the abrogation of the Law removed all advantage from being a Jew (Romans 3:1; 9:1-6).

C. How Could the Offense End?

1. Paul could preach circumcision (Galatians 5:11).
 - a. Paul could preach: "Keep the Law of Moses and be circumcised to be saved" (Acts 15:1-6).
 - b. By doing so would cease to be the servant of Christ (Galatians 1:10)
 - c. Paul would be lost (Galatians 5:4).
2. This was the course the Judaizers had chosen to follow (Galatians 6:12).
 - a. Faithfulness to Christ and His Gospel results in persecution (Galatians 5:11; 6:12).
 - b. Sometimes it is severe (Acts 8:1; 13:50; 22:4).
3. Christ knew this and warned His disciples about it (Matthew 10:16-18, 21-25).
 - a. He told us all to count the cost (Luke 14:26-33).
 - b. He promised us that we would be persecuted in the world (Matthew 5:10-12; John 15:20).
 - c. Denial of Christ is the only way to avoid persecution (Revelation 2:13).

D. Does the Offense of the Cross Still Exist?

1. The offense continues even today.
 - a. Men are offended at the cross whenever its message demands of them that which they are unwilling to do.
 - b. Even though circumcision is no longer a matter of controversy, there are a multitude of other things that men find objectionable.
2. This offense is found within and without the church.
 - a. Remember, those that were opposing Paul and persecuting him were supposed to be his brethren (Galatians 1:6; 5:13; II Corinthians 11:26).
 - b. He was persecuted by those that believed in the same God as did he, and which were looking for the Messiah, but held to different convictions concerning the practice of their faith (Acts 24:14; 22:3, cf. Romans 10:2-3).
 - c. Sometimes he was persecuted by the unbelievers of the world (Acts 16:19-23; 17:5; etc.).
3. We will use the remainder of our lesson considering some of those things which men find offensive about the cross of Christ.

II. DISCUSSION:

A. The Cross of Christ Is Offensive to Unbelievers (I Peter 2:7-8).

1. Sin (Galatians 5:19-21; I Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:1-5; Hebrews 11:24).

2. Repentance (Romans 2:4-8; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30, 31; II Peter 3:9; II Corinthians 7:8-11; Matthew 21:28-31; Revelation 3:21).
3. Hell (Mark 9:43-48; Matthew 25:30, 40-41, 46).
4. If I would eliminate these and other things from my preaching, then would the offense of the cross cease?

B. The Cross of Christ Is Offensive to the Religious Traditionalist (Matthew 15:12).

1. Salvation is in the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:14-16; 5:23-27; Acts 20:28; 2:47).
2. Baptism is for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:1-6; I Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-27; Colossians 2:11-12; I Peter 3:21).
3. The New Covenant (Matthew 26:28; Colossians 2:14; Ephesians 2:15; Galatians 3:24-25; 5:4; Hebrews 8:8-13).
4. Instrumental music and choirs (2 Chronicles 29:25; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; James 5:13; Hebrews 2:12; I Corinthians 14:15; Romans 15:19; Acts 16:25; Mark 13:26; Matthew 26:30).
5. Sabbath day observance (Exodus 20:8; Colossians 2:16; Galatians 4:9-10).
6. Vestments, foods, days (Colossians 2:16; Galatians 4:9-11; I Timothy 4:1-3).
7. The Kingdom has been established (Mark 9:1; Revelation 20:6; Hebrews 8:4; Zechariah 6:12; Colossians 1:13-14; Matthew 16:18-19).
8. If I would eliminate these and other things from my preaching, then would the offense of the cross cease?

C. The Cross of Christ Is Offensive to Some Christians (Matthew 13:21).

1. Bold doctrinal preaching (Acts 4:29-31; II Timothy 4:1-4; II Peter 2:1-3, 18-22)
2. Rebuke (I Timothy 5:19-20; II Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15).
3. Denunciation of materialism and worldliness (I Peter 4:3; Galatians 5:19-21; I Timothy 6:10).
 - a. Mixed swimming
 - b. Modest apparel
 - c. Social drinking
 - d. Lewd entertainment
 - e. Dancing
4. Sin, hell, repentance, etc. (Galatians 4:16; II Corinthians 5:10, 11; 12:20; 13:10).
 - a. Adultery (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2-3; I Corinthians 7:1-15; Hebrews 13:4).
 - b. Exposing false doctrines and false teachers (Matthew 7:15-20; Acts 20:28-32; Romans 16:17; II Corinthians 11:13-15; I Timothy 1:3-7, 18-20).
 - c. Opposing unauthorized practices in the work, organization and worship of the church.
 - d. Giving warning in view of unsound trends among brethren.
 - e. "Negative preaching"

5. If I would eliminate these and other things from my preaching, the offense of the cross would cease.

III. CONCLUSION:

A. *The Cross of Christ Is Offensive...*

1. to the unbeliever
2. to the religious traditionalist
3. to the believer

B. *How Should We React When Others Are Offended?*

1. If we stop preaching the offensive things we will gain the offenders.
2. However, by doing so we give up Christ (Galatians 1:8; 2 John 9; II Timothy 4:1-5).