

Series: Galatians

Title: What is the Offense [of the Gospel?]

Text: Gal 5: 11

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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.

To preach circumcision is to say the sinner contributes something to his salvation. The apostle Paul did not preach that there is any work the sinner contributes to salvation. Paul says, “I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution.” Paul was persecuted because he preached salvation is of Christ alone. Paul says, “If I put one work in the hand of the sinner, then is the offence of the cross ceased.”

Proposition: The offense of the cross is that Christ alone is Salvation, through faith in Christ, apart from any works of the one he saves.

Paul is saying that there is no offense in works. Natural man is not offended with religion so long as it is the god of his imagination that depends upon his works. Unregenerate sinners are not offended at good works. Morality is not offensive to natural man. The ways legalists enforce morality are offensive. But many in religion are moral outwardly. Good works do not offend

It is the cross of Christ that is offensive. It is the gospel being the only means God uses that is offensive

1 Corinthians 1:18: For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

It is the Gospel of free and sovereign grace given to whom God is pleased that offends. Grace cannot be earned—we demerit grace—that is offensive to natural men. Mercy is to those who do not deserve it. That is offensive to men who think they deserve something. The Gospel of substitution is offensive to natural men.

It is the preaching of Christ and Christ alone. He is all Salvation through God-given faith, apart from works on the sinner’s part. That is the offense. Natural man does not object to Christ being some part of salvation but not all. But to preach salvation is of the Lord and to use the gospel as the only means in the pulpit and out this offends

ALL GLORY TO GOD

The preaching of salvation by Christ alone offends because it declares that all the glory in salvation belongs to God alone. God alone saves. Most every religious person says they want God to have the glory. But no unregenerate sinner wants God to have ALL the glory. But God says,

1 Corinthians 1:29: That no flesh should glory in his presence...31: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Natural man wants something to glory in. He wants to glory in his righteousness. But scripture says,

Romans 3: 10: As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one.

Sinners want to glory in their wisdom, their understanding, their searching. But scripture says

Romans 3: 11: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable.

Man especially loves to glory in his will. Christ said that *you will* search the scriptures, *you will* try to find something you can do in the scriptures to obtain acceptance with God. But Christ said of the scriptures,

John 5: 39: they are they which testify of me and you will not come to me that you might have life.

The Judaizers were glorying in their ability to constrain others. God will not let us have that glory. It belongs to God alone.

Behold Christ on the cross declares all those he saves are sinners start to finish: ruined, helpless, in our flesh dwells no good thing. If we would see our sin-nature look to the cross. The prince of Life came—God in human flesh—and we nailed him to the cross. From the least to the greatest that is the heart in every sinner born of Adam! So God says:

Isaiah 42:8 I *am* the LORD: that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another...

CHRIST IS THE WISDOM OF GOD

The preaching of the cross is offensive because it declares that no sinner can believe on Christ until God makes Christ our Wisdom.

It offends a sinner's pride to be told he does not understand spiritual things and cannot expect God give him the holy Spirit. We are at the mercy of God! Scripture declares "*of God are ye in Christ, who of God is made unto us Wisdom.*" No sinner can understand spiritual things unless God give him the Spirit of God. We must be given the mind of Christ. The gospel offends because it declares all sinners from the doctorate degree to the poor uneducated sinner are all alike ignorant of spiritual things.

1 Corinthians 2:14 But 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.

Christ said, "*No man can come to me except my Father which is in heaven draw him.*"

CHRIST IS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

The preaching of the cross offends because it declares that Christ alone is the righteousness of those he saves. The word "offense" means "trap, snare, stumblingblock." God declared long before Christ came in human flesh,

Isaiah 8:14: And he shall be for a sanctuary [to those he gives faith]; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15: And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

1 Corinthians 1:23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

1 Corinthians 1: 22: For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

The natural, unregenerate sinner requires a sign—outward works of the law done by the sinner which they can see. Natural man seeks something impressive intellectually. He tires of the gospel. Natural sinners do not like hearing the same scriptures because the Spirit only makes them new in his people.

The gospel is not wisdom to a natural man, only a stumbling block, because he trusts his own works. But Christ is the Righteousness of God. He gave his body to be broken and shed his blood only for God's elect. He made each one of God's elect the righteousness of God in him. His righteousness is given by simply believing on him. The unregenerate sinners who followed Christ wanted to know what works they could do and they wanted to see a sign from him.

John 6: 28: Then said they unto him, What shall WE do, that WE might work the works of God? 29: Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye BELIEVE on him whom he hath sent. 30 They said therefore unto him, What SIGN shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? 31: Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. 32: Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life [freely] unto the world [to his elect Jew and Gentile]...53: Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. 54: Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 55: For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

Christ is speaking of believing on him. If we can believe on him the reason is because he has entered into us in Spirit and made us believe on him. That is what he declares in the next verse.

John 6: 56: He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I IN HIM. 57: As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

When they heard that sinners are made righteous by Christ alone and that his righteousness is imputed to us through faith, apart from our works, listen to what they said.

John 6: 60: Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard *this*, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? 61: When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this OFFEND you?

They were offended. Christ was a stumblingblock to them. He was a trap and a snare to them because they wanted to work out a righteousness for themselves. But he said righteousness is given freely through faith in him.

Romans 9: 30: What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. 31: But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. 32: Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; 33: As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Those attempting to come to God by their works—stumble, offended—at the preaching of the cross because it declares righteousness is Christ alone! Given freely of God through faith, apart from our works.

CHRIST IS SANCTIFIER AND SANCTIFICATION

The gospel of Christ is offensive because it declares Christ alone is the sanctifier and the sanctification of those he saves.

The reason the Pharisees/Judaizers at Galatia insisted the law must be added in addition to faith in Christ is because they did not have Christ as their Sanctification. They only saw sinful Gentiles who did not measure up to them. They wanted the glory for constraining the believers into an outward conformity that suited them.

But holiness is Christ formed in the sinner in Spirit giving a new, pure, holy heart in which we worship God. Christ prayed to God the Father and said,

John 17:23: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that [those in whom I dwell in all parts of the world] may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Child of God if you believe Christ to be able to save you, apart from anything done by you, it is only because Christ has sanctified you. It is only because Christ made you holy in Spirit by abiding in you so that now you abide in Christ. He said, “*Abide in me for without me ye can do nothing!*”

Pharisee’s judged those unholy who Christ made holy in heart because they committed what the Pharisee’s considered grievous sins—*they did not wash their hands before they ate*. That sounds absurd but it teaches us important truth. They thought a sinner is holy or unholy by “*touch not, taste not, and handle not*.” Listen to what Christ said of the Pharisee’s

Matthew 15: 7: *Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,* 8: This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. 9: But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. 10: And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: 11: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. 12: Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were OFFENDED, after they heard this saying?..

That is what Paul means by the offense of the cross. The Pharisee is offended at Christ being the Sanctifier and the Sanctification of his people. Christ exposed their sinful hearts. He said,

Luke 11: 41: But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

That is what Christ told the rich young ruler. He is declaring he looks on the heart and they were covetous in heart, unsanctified, unholy within.

Luke 11: 42: But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

They missed Christ who satisfied judgment for his people by his blood so that Christ shows mercy to sinners. They had not the love of God in their heart which constrains Christ's people to love our brethren as we want our brethren to love us.

Luke 11: 45: Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou REPROACHEST us also. 46: And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

Paul said that to the Judaziers at Galatia. He told them that they desired to make a fair show in the flesh. They constrained others that they might glory in what they made them do. But they have not kept the law themselves. Not that they could. But it was hypocrisy to act as if they did by judging those they constrained. What was their problem? They had not been sanctified in heart to know the power of Christ our Sanctifier.

Brethren, when Christ abides in us he makes us know he is our Redemption. By his grace, he is able to make his child stand fast in the liberty wherewith he made set us free. We will become entangled with the yoke of bondage in sin and self-righteousness.

But Christ is our Sanctifier who will teach and correct his child in the heart when what we touch or handle becomes dishonoring to him. He will use brethren who *are spiritual*. Brethren, who Christ has recently made to consider what great sinners they are. So that they reprove in meekness and lowliness of heart. So that they speak of what Christ has done for us.

It is not how we speak that makes the word *sharp rebuke*. It is the WORD of Christ crucified that is *sharper* than any two-edged sword. Christ gets the glory of being our Sanctifier. It is pride in the preacher or in the brethren to make us think we can make the word effectual in the heart by how loud we speak. Christ alone is able to break our hearts so that we repent in contrition. Christ only had to look at Peter. He went out and wept bitterly. And Christ makes those he uses to reprove to know that Christ's chastening hand is sufficient.

Not only this but Christ is our only High Priest and Advocate with the Father. He makes his child come to him confessing our sins. The Pharisee's wanted that glory. They wanted to be priests that the people had to come to. Christ commands his child to come to him. And he says to his child who he sanctified, "*I will in NO WISE cast you out!*" So by his sanctifying power we come and from a broken heart,

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

This gospel offended the Pharisee's at Galatia because they wanted the glory that belongs to Christ alone. But Christ was Paul's confidence. Christ was his confidence that his brethren

would be kept. Paul's confidence was that Christ would deal with the Judaizers. And, brethren, Christ is our confidence. Look to Christ and help one another look to Christ.

Amen!