

Preached on 12/10/23 - GBC

"Our OFFENSIVE Gospel"

Gal.5:11

For those who know, understand, love, and believe God's Gospel, the reality of God's GOSPEL being OFFENSIVE to the natural mind is a foregone conclusion – "*Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*"(Rom.8:7); "*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.*"(I Cor.2:14) I find it interesting that the word translated "*foolishness*" is a Greek word from which we get our English word – MORON. The meaning of the word 'moron' is 'a foolish or stupid person'. So Paul is telling us in this verse that to the UNREGENERATE SINNER, the Gospel is MORONIC or 'stupid and foolish'. Since we who believe know and understand their view of the ONE TRUE GOSPEL, we also know and understand exactly what Christ meant when He stated to us the world's view and treatment of us as His children: "*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before [it hated] you.*"(Jn.15:18) This situation of which Paul wrote wasn't unique to him. It is the present reality of all God's elect in every generation as they stand steadfast for the Gospel. Maybe you're sitting there thinking: "*Well, everybody I know believes the Gospel!*"! DO THEY? I feel like a broken record, but those kinds of thoughts by sincere, dedicated religious people DEMAND that we make a distinction from God's Word concerning the Gospel. The Gospel, THE TRUE GOSPEL, the Gospel Paul called "*the Gospel of God*", concerns and sets forth ONE PARTICULAR TRUTH, namely, His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ – "*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called [to be] an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared [to be] the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called [to be] saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord.*"(Rom.1:1-7) This Gospel sets forth Christ's righteousness ALONE as the sinner's only hope and cause of salvation – "*So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*"(Rom.1:15-17) This message of God's free grace founded exclusively on the PERSON and WORK of the Lord Jesus Christ is the message that is so OFFENSIVE to the unregenerate. With that as a backdrop, I want us to consider the implications and magnitude of Paul's words in our text – "*And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.*"

First of all, Paul's words here have to be understood and interpreted in the context of his whole argument as set forth in Vss.1-10. These "*brethren*" were being told by the Judaizers who had crept in, that "*unless you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved.*" PAUL WOULD HAVE NONE OF IT! Paul had preached God's Gospel to these Galatians, declaring to them the absolute certainty of any sinner's salvation based exclusively on Christ's accomplished work of redemption, with absolutely NO CONDITIONS on the sinner in any way, shape, form, or fashion, AT ANY TIME – Vss.1,2,7. But now these Judaizers by their words and accusations against Paul were basically telling these who had received the Gospel from Paul that Paul was in

reality speaking out of both sides of his mouth. In other words, they made **ALLEGATIONS** that Paul taught that circumcision was important, **in fact essential to salvation**, just like they were teaching. There's no doubt that Paul circumcised Timothy – *“Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father [was] a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.”* (Acts 16:1-3) These Judaizers would point to this and say: “See there – Paul preaches and teaches the same things we do” - **BUT THIS WASN'T THE CASE AT ALL.** Paul **DID NOT** circumcise Timothy **as a duty of law**, i.e., as obedience required **IN ORDER** to make one righteous, because Paul knew and taught that the **LAW** in its entirety had been set aside by way of Christ's perfect fulfillment of the **WHOLE** law as His people's Surety and Substitute – *“For Christ is the **END** of the law **FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS** to everyone that believeth.”* (Rom.10:4); *“Be it known unto you therefore, men [and] brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, **FROM WHICH YE COULD NOT BE JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW OF MOSES.**”* (Acts 13:38,39) **So why did Paul circumcise Timothy?** Paul did it as a thing “**indifferent**”, in order to be able to effectively reach those believing Jews who had not been taught at length that all those Mosaic laws they had been under their whole lives had been done away by Christ's work as His people's Surety – **I Cor.9:19-27**. It's similar to Paul's instructions to the believers at Rome in **Romans 14-16**.

Paul's words in our text today make reference to this allegation by these false teachers that he preached circumcision as something essential to salvation. Now a lot of people, **maybe even you**, they think this isn't a big deal! But in reality their charge goes to the **VERY ESSENCE OF THE GOSPEL!** **The question is simply this:** Is salvation by God's grace alone through faith **WITHOUT** any of our personal obedience to the **LAW**, or is salvation partly by grace and partly by our obedience? **The Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul recorded this rhetorical question** – *“And I, brethren, **if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.**”* By nature man gravitates to the doctrine of human merit and obedience as being of absolute necessity in this matter of salvation, i.e., the alternative to what Paul wrote removes the offence of the cross. **Think about the alternative** - If Paul was truly preaching and teaching the necessity of circumcision like these Judaizers alleged, why did he suffer at the hands of the Jews? There's no doubt that Paul truly suffered over the Gospel he dogmatically and uncompromisingly preached concerning Christ and His righteousness alone as the only hope of salvation for God's elect – **II Cor.11:22-26**. So in a backhanded way, the Apostle Paul pointed out to these Galatians the difference between himself and the Gospel he loved and preached, and the false gospel the Judaizers were promoting. The Judaizers were preaching and weren't suffering persecution, yet the Apostle Paul was preaching and **SUFFERING** persecution – **WHAT WAS THE DIFFERENCE?** The Judaizers **HAD NOT RECEIVED**, nor were they willing to receive **PARDON THOUGH CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS ALONE**. They couldn't get beyond the truth that in salvation a sinner's conduct has absolutely no influence in obtaining pardon and salvation from God. It troubled their souls that in this all important matter of acceptance with God, **THEIR OBEDIENCE AND REBELLION ARE EQUALLY EXCLUDED** – *“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's*

righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ [is] the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”(Rom.10:1-4)

In the time remaining, I want us to think about this “*offense of the cross*” and **HOW** one can remove it. **FIRST**, what is the **OFFENSIVE NATURE** of the message we preach? It preaches pardon, peace, and eternal salvation through Christ’s person and His work to **SINNERS**, those who in **THEIR CHARACTER** are **REBELS**, without **ONE REDEEMING QUALITY** to recommend them to God – “*For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but BELIEVETH ON HIM THAT JUSTIFIETH THE UNGODLY, his faith is counted for righteousness.*”(Rom.4:3-5) Some examples – **Adam; Noah; Abraham; Jacob; Paul**. What does the unregenerate, religious mind **HEAR** when we declare this message? **ELABORATE!!!!** But to those who see and feel themselves as **SINNERS**, they find peace and rest for their weary souls in this same exact Gospel message– “*Come unto me, all [ye] that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke [is] easy, and my burden is light.*”(Matt.11:28-30) **Here’s some examples** – **The woman caught in the act of adultery; Zacchaeus; the thief on the cross; the Philippian jailor**. Let me show you something about the words Paul uses - “*And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.*” The words “*the offence*” in the original is the word - skan’-dal-on – from which we get our English word "scandal". This word means ‘any impediment placed in the way and causing one to stumble or fall, (a stumbling block, occasion of stumbling) i.e. a rock which is a cause of stumbling’. **Three times** in the New Testament this same word is used as a reference to Christ’s person and work – “*As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*”(Rom.9:33); “*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.*”(I Cor.1:23); “*Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe [he is] precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, [even to them] which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*”(I Pet.2:6-8) The **OFFENSIVE NATURE** of the message we preach is the declaration of Christ’s **PERSON** and His **WORK** as the **ONLY HOPE** and **CAUSE** of salvation for God’s people, **totally excluding the sinner’s character and conduct**. The doctrine of Christ is a stumbling-block and foolishness to unregenerate sinners. **Here’s the question their unregenerate mind raise:** How in the world could one believe that a man who is moral, religious, dedicated, and sincere; one who is kind and charitable; one who gives his whole life to serve others **HAS NO MORE CLAIM** on God that the most ungodly and immoral of sinners? Yet that is the **FACT** of the Gospel, and **it is exactly** what Christ declared – “*Whether of them twain did the will of [his] father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen [it], repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.*”(Matt.21:31,32) Listen to Elizabeth’s words concerning Christ – “*He*

hath put down the mighty from [their] seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.”(Lk.1:52,53)

Here's the last thing: How do men remove the offense of the cross? By making salvation conditional. Circumcision was a **SMALL THING!** Yet these Judaizers made it **EVERYTHING** when it came to salvation, and by doing so they avoided any persecution. Matter of fact, that was **WHY** they persecuted Paul. By persecuting Paul, they avoided persecution. **You might be thinking:** “I don’t think circumcision is a condition of salvation.” Well, it goes much deeper than the Old Testament teaching of circumcision. If you **PLACE ANY CONDITION** on the sinner for salvation, **I MEAN ANY CONDITION**, you remove the “*offence of the cross*” by removing **Christ and His righteousness alone as the sinner’s only hope and cause of salvation** – “*But 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.”(Gal.6:14-16)* All one has to do **to remove the offense of the cross** is to no longer preach the cross, **i.e., leave off the doctrines of Substitution and the sure, finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of His people** – “*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; BUT UNTO THEM WHICH ARE CALLED, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”(I Cor.1:23,24)*

Let me say this in closing – Christ promised us that if we consistently stand for and preach His righteousness alone as the sinner’s only hope of salvation, we won’t be loved for it – “*Blessed [are] they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when [men] shall revile you, and persecute [you], and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great [is] your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”(Matt.5:10-12)* Like the Apostle Paul, the Lord will not allow His people to remove the offense of the cross, and for this reason they will be persecuted and hated by this present, evil world.