

The Offense of the Cross

And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offence of the cross ceased.

– Galatians 5:11 –

The modern decline of our nation, and for that matter, the Western world, is due in large part to Christendom's voluntary surrender of influence. Somewhere along the line, the professing church relinquished its grasp upon the foundation of the gospel. This is true of both pulpit and pew. "Fire and brimstone" preaching that condemns sin while pointing to the only means of salvation through the finished work of Christ at Calvary has become appallingly Neolithic to the sophisticated modern mind. Thus, many pulpits have polluted the gospel with pop-psychology and "seeker-friendly" syntax in a desperate hope to build and keep membership rolls, sell books, or both. This has helped spawn a generation of half-converts; professing Christians who embrace a neo-gospel that is "relevant" to the culture and not overly-intrusive to one's daily life. A facsimile of "grace" (the true biblical doctrine is grossly mis-understood) is the operative theological concept upon the lips of multitudes to justify a heart that craves a worldly compartment, while self-denial and holy living are seen as a puritanical relics of their unenlightened spiritual ancestors. Additionally, many true believers, aware of their own shortcomings as well as the increasing spotlight on genuine Christian profession, shrink in their commitment to witness to the unvarnished gospel that powerfully converted them, delivering them from the power of darkness and translating them into the kingdom of His dear Son.

We must not fall prey to these modern compromising phenomena. The gospel, properly understood, is attractive, yet quite abrasive. There is a fundamental and intrinsic offense to the cross of Jesus Christ. That offense is due to our proud, sinful soul and our haughty human intellect. In order to be born-again, one must humble himself and become as a little child. At the cross, man stands as criminal, not judge. Here, all of our best efforts are futile, all of our excuses are void, all of our justifications are puerile, and all of our intentions are exposed. We stand fully and unequivocally condemned. Here, we must become unobtrusively honest about our inward condition and embrace the pathetic state of our soul. We must abandon our pretense and acknowledge our vileness, now disclosed under the looming shadow of a bludgeoned and battered Christ, pierced and gasping in agony, bearing our shame. Here, pride finds no tolerating tenement. The honest soul has no recourse but to heave in deepest contrition at the foot of this sacred, bloody cross. When this condition of heart is met, salvation is at the door. It changes the man, now and forever, from the inside out. This experience will never be forgotten, and in fact, will grow curiously more precious with time.

Brothers and sisters, do you remember your conversion – your vileness confessed, your condemnation conceded, your deserved sentence to Hell acknowledged? And that was but the beginning. In His wrath, He remembered mercy, and plucked us as brands from the fire. Oh, the wonderful cross! Let us, with Paul, not be ashamed of the cross of Jesus Christ, nor of its offense. This, and only this gospel, is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. – D. Murcek