

THE OFFENCE OF THE CROSS (1)

By Keith Greer

“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” {1 Corinthians 2:2} Paul told his audience his purpose for living was to preach Christ and His cross. He knew that sinful men needed to hear the gospel message {1 Corinthians 9:16}. Paul had learned the cross’s great lessons, and he loved sharing them with others. This unselfish gift from the Father and the Son saved mankind from eternal ruin. How could anyone be offended by the preaching of the cross? “And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.” {Galatians 5:11} Through His cross, Christ clearly expressed His supreme love, mercy, and grace. Yet, some continue to be offended by it. Let’s consider some of those who have little or no appreciation for Christ’s cross...

Lovers of the Law—Offended by Its Removal. “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” {Colossians 2:13,14} The Law of Moses acted as a wall between the Jews and Gentiles. Jesus nailed it to His cross. He took it out of the way to provide the means of salvation for ALL men—not just the Jews. “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” {Ephesians 2:13-16}

The Jews had lived under Moses’ Law for 1500 years. The Gentiles had no part in that law. Now, the Jews were seeking ways to bind it on the Gentile converts. Concerning such erroneous thinking, Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia, “And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” {Galatians 5:3,4} Moses’ Law had served its purpose—leading men to Christ {Galatians 3:23-25}.

Lovers of Wisdom—Offended by Its Simplicity. “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” {1 Corinthians 1:17,18} The Greeks thought the cross was foolishness. How could a man dying on a cross make a difference in a person’s life with God? Such simplicity was deceiving to their minds. “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” {2 Corinthians 11:3}

Sadly, the same thing remains true today. Many are put off by God's eternal plan for man's redemption – one Man taking the penalty of sin upon Himself for all men; one sacrifice for all time {2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:28}. Yet, without giving it any thought, these same folks, by following men's wisdom to obtain salvation, are willing to do things we perceive to be absolutely crazy or absurd. Listen, why are men so willing to do things not found in the scriptures but unwilling to follow the simple instructions in God's book? Unfortunately, so many have sought to equate God's eternal wisdom with man's human wisdom being better! Nonsense! Yes, it is a simple plan, but one thing makes it work – God is the one who designed the plan of eternal redemption. We have only to accept His terms!" ***