

## The Offense of the Cross

10/20/2019 Sunday AM

**Scripture: Galatians 5:11, Titus 3:5, 1 Corinthians 1:18,**

### **Introduction to the Cross**

- The cross is the symbol of Christianity as nothing else represents the cause of Christ more in the present day
- The cross has actually become popular in the secular world with charity organizations and other groups adopting the symbol to enhance the value of their groups.
- It is worn by Christians and non-Christians alike as a piece of jewelry and has many variations.
- Sadly, the content of the gospel is no longer contained in the symbol of the cross.
- The meaning of the cross has been watered down to the extent that it is meaningless.
- There are many churches that have elaborate cross displays, but they don't teach its full meaning.
- A fact that may surprise many people, is that Jesus was most likely not crucified on the cross as we have it designed today. The Romans adopted their method of crucifixion from the Phoenicians and they used many different 'cross' configurations like some of these depicted here:
- Actually, crosses can be seen throughout the ancient world and only began to be associated with Christianity after the time of the early church.
- In fact, the early church never used the symbol of the cross as we understand it today; they only referred to it in a veiled and hesitating manner.
- The Greek word that is translated "cross" is *stauros*, which primarily means, "an upright pale or stake." The Romans often used the *crux simplex* or stipes to be the permanent fixture that remained in place. The person being crucified then carried the patibulum which was the crossbar to the place of crucifixion. These two pieces together formed the 'cross.'
- We get our English word 'cross' from the Latin *crux*. The *crux commissa* was the most likely configuration that was used during Jesus' crucifixion although the *crux immissa* could have very well been used as well.
- The Bible is extremely lacking in any details about the cross itself.
- Not only do we have disagreement with how the cross may have been configured, there is even a controversy as to whether or not Jesus should be depicted on the cross or not.
- Some elements of Christianity use the crucifix (i.e. Catholics), while others will only use the plain cross (whichever one they finally choose!)
- The argument is that the Catholics put a lot of emphasis on Christ's suffering on the cross, while many Protestants put the emphasis on his resurrection.
- Therefore, some people are offended when they see someone adorning a crucifix because they feel as if that person is trying to "keep Jesus on the cross." This is in my opinion, ridiculous. At least with a crucifix there is absolutely no question that the person recognizes the cross' association with Jesus Christ.
- Even though there is a lot of disagreement about the cross's configuration and depiction, and its meaning and message is being deteriorated, it still remains the symbol of Christianity.
- Because of this, the cross is under attack in our world today with different atheist groups attempting to remove any sign of the cross from the public.
- Why is that? Because the cross offends them.

### **Galatians 5:11**

<sup>11</sup>Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.

- Here Paul speaks of "the offense of the cross."
- **What does he mean when he says this? Is he meaning that the shape of the cross is offensive, or that Jesus being depicted on the cross is offensive?** Absolutely not!
- Actually, there is no merit whatsoever in the cross as a piece of wood.

- There is value in the cross, but it is in the one who died there, not the object itself.
- The **NLT** translates this verse this way, “<sup>11</sup> Dear brothers and sisters, if I were still preaching that you must be circumcised—as some say I do—why am I still being persecuted? If I were no longer preaching salvation through the cross of Christ, no one would be offended.”
- See Paul was preaching in the synagogues that because of the cross, the Jewish sacrifices and circumcision were powerless in bringing a person to God. He was preaching that only Christ can bring a soul to God, and nothing else is needed.
- This was causing an uproar with the Jews that he was preaching to, and he was persecuted because of it.
- If he was not preaching this type of message, then there would be no reason for the people to be offended.
- What is the offense of the cross? It offends the pride of mankind because the message of the cross says that we are to come to God just as we are and as the good ole song says, “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.”
- **Titus 3:5** says, “he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,”
- The message of the cross offends people because it confronts them head-on with their inadequacies and requires that they surrender to Almighty God.
- People do not want to surrender control and they love nothing more than to boast about things they do.
- This is why the cross is so offensive and confrontational in our world today.
- More and more the world is becoming arrogant and self-sufficient and this is in direct contrast to the message of the cross.
- When we engage with people in the world with the message of the cross, we have to remember what Paul said in **1 Corinthians 1:18**, “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.”
- I believe this story powerfully illustrates what Paul was meaning in this verse:

Many years ago, a mother brought her little baby girl to an orphans’ home in the state of Texas and asked them to take care of the child. The mother’s face and hands bore horrible scars from a burn, and she urged the officials of the home not to tell the baby about her when she grew up. The mother assured them that she would not come to see the child. Then she told them the story of how she was burned. Time elapsed and the mother-heart of this woman yearned to see the baby who was now a little girl of five or six. One day she could restrain herself no longer, and she applied at the orphans’ home for permission to see her little daughter. This was readily granted, and an interview was arranged. The mother was seated in the living room, and the little girl was sent in to her. The little girl entered with fear and trembling, and the mother held out her hands to her — hands that were horribly scarred. The mother’s face, which was misshapen, was filled with longing to see her child. When the little girl got a glimpse of her mother, she screamed, turned, and ran out of the room. The mother broke down and sobbed. Then the matron took the little girl into her room and told her the story — how that when she was a baby asleep in her crib, the house had caught on fire, and how her mother had rushed into her room that was in flames, wrapped her in a blanket so that she would not be burned, and in so doing had been horribly burned and had to spend long weeks and months in the hospital. When the little girl heard that her mother had been so terribly scarred for her sake, she went back into the living room where her mother was sobbing, pulled the misshapen hands down from her mother’s face, and covered them with kisses. She did the same with her mother’s face and thanked her from her little childish heart for what she had done for her.

- The cross may be offensive, but He bore all of the offense for you and me that we might stand before God blameless and without spot or blemish.
- **Let’s make sure we boldly proclaim the message of the cross!!**

**Wednesday Night Bible Study:**  
The Fall – Part Two - Genesis 3:7-24

**Bible Knowledge Question:**

What man did David have killed in order to take his wife, Bathsheba?

**A.)** Uriah    **B.)** Joab    **C.)** Ziba    **D.)** Benaiah

(Last week's answer was, **B.**) Jacob and Esau)