

“THE OFFENSE OF THE CROSS” NO. 2594

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 30, 1898.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD’S-DAY EVENING IN THE YEAR 1856.

*“And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer
persecution? Then is the offense of the cross ceased.”
Galatians 5:11.*

THE religion of Jesus is the most peaceful, mild, and benevolent religion which was ever promulgated. When we compare it with any set of dogmas invented by men, there is not one of them that can stand the least comparison with it for gentleness, mildness, and love. As for the religion of Mohamed, it is the religion of the vulture; but the religion of Jesus is that of the dove—all is mercy, all is mild; it is, like its Founder, an embodiment of pure benevolence, grace, and truth.

And yet, strange to say, gentle as the gospel is, and inoffensive as its professors have always proved themselves to be, when they have acted rightly—not resisting evil, but submitting to it, whatever it might be—yet there has never been anything which has caused more disturbance in the world than the Christian religion. It is not a sword, and yet it has brought war into the world; it is not a fire, and yet it has consumed many old institutions, and has burned much that men thought would last forever; it is the gospel of peace, and yet it has parted the dearest friends, and caused direst feuds and confusions everywhere. Though in itself it is all gentleness, yet it seems as if the standard of the dove were the standard of battle, and as if raising up the peaceful cross had been the signal for war, like the blood-red fiery cross, which of old they passed through Scotland, to summon the clans to battle. Strange, yet strangely true it is, that the cross of Christ has always been an offense, and that it has provoked the fiercest battles and the sternest strifes which men have ever had with their fellow men.

In considering our text, I shall, first, discourse to you a little concerning *what “the offense of the cross” is*; secondly, as to *how men show their offense against the cross*; thirdly, I shall have a little to say to *those who are offended at the cross*, to show them their folly; and, lastly, I shall conclude by *an inference or two, for the special benefit of Christian ministers, and the Church at large*.

I. Let us inquire, first, WHEREIN DOES “THE OFFENSE OF THE CROSS” CONSIST?

Our limits forbid any attempt to be elaborate, and we commence by saying that “the offense of the cross” lies, first, *in the way in which it deals with all human wisdom*. The philosopher puts his glasses to his eyes, looks at the cross and then says, “I cannot see anything so very wonderful in it—even with these splendid glasses of mine—more than can be seen by that poor, humble peasant; I do not care about such a system of religion as that; any simpleton can understand the cross.” So he passes by, and merely sneers at it. The man who loves controversy comes to the gospel, and finds that there is in it pure dogmatism. Such things are said to be true, and sinners must believe them, or else be damned. “I shall not do so,” he says; “I shall not yield implicit faith to the gospel; I like disputing upon points of doctrine; I like controverting them; I shall not listen to your preacher who says, ‘This is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing else but the truth.’ I will not hear the man who speaks thus authoritatively; I like men who will give me margin enough to doubt, who let me believe what I like, and no more; I prefer to use my reason and common sense.” When you come to talk with him about the religion which says, “Believe that, or else be lost; believe that, or else be shut out of the pale of salvation;” he turns on his heel, and says, “I will not believe any such thing.” And when he asks what it is he is to believe, he professes himself to be wiser even than the Word of God! “What!” he says, “believe in the atonement? I can’t; it is contrary to my common sense. Believe the doctrine of election? Why, it shocks my humanity! Believe in the total depravity of human nature, and the impossibility of being saved without being born again?”

Why, I cannot receive such teaching for a single moment. It is contrary to all that the scholars ever taught and different from what any philosopher ever would have invented; so I shall not receive it.” And he turns away with an anathema against the cross. He cannot bear it because of its great simplicity. If he could describe it as being so wonderful that he could by no means make the common people comprehend it, and that it was only because of his gigantic intellect that he was able to understand it himself, he would not mind accepting it; but as it is so plain and simple, he turns away from it in disgust. He cannot bear the gospel of the cross; it has not worldly wisdom enough in it for him; and he either does not know or he forgets that the knowledge of Christ crucified is the most excellent of all the sciences, and that never is reason so glorified as when it humbly sits down under the shadow of the cross.

But there is something in the cross of Christ which hurts men’s pride even more than this, and that is, *it is opposed to all their notions of human ability*. The man, who is relying for salvation on his own strength, does not like the doctrine of the cross. If anyone preaches a gospel which tells the sinner that he has power to save himself, if he preaches a gospel which says that, Christ having died to put all men in a salvable condition, they have only to exercise the power they have, and they will be able to deliver themselves—if a man thus preaches something which exalts the skill and strength of the creature, he will never offend his unregenerate hearers. But if he once begins to cast the sinner down in the dust, and to teach what Christ Himself taught, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him;” and that, in the Scriptures, all men are declared to be “dead in trespasses and sins;” then the proud sinner will turn away, and say, “I am not going to be so insulted, to have all my powers leveled to the ground! Am I to be made into a mere machine, or into a piece of clay, and to lie passive in the Potter’s hands? I will not submit to such an indignity.” If the minister will give him a little to do himself, and let him sacrifice a little to his own idol, he will drink down the false doctrine as the ox drinks down water; but since we tell him he is powerless, like the poor bleeding man when the Samaritan met him, he says, “I will have nothing to do with you.”

And the cross offends men yet again, because *it goes clean contrary to their ideas of human merit*. There is not a soul in all the world that, by nature, loves to be stripped of all merit. No! The last thing a man likes to part with is his righteousness. I have known poor sinners stand on Sinai’s top until their knees knocked together, yet they have clung to their self-righteousness even there. I have known men stand where God’s earthquakes were shaking the ground under their feet, and the thunder and lightning were playing above their heads; yet they still held fast their self-righteousness. It is a hard thing to get that away from men. You know how Bunyan says that, when Great-heart slew Giant Despair, the giant “had, as they say, as many lives as a cat;” and I am sure that self-righteousness has many more lives than that; it is the hardest thing in the world to kill. You may cut the evil weed self-righteousness up; but when you think you have got to the last root of it, it will be shooting up again before you can sharpen your knife to cut it up once more. This evil thing is bred in man’s nature. When you preach against it, see how men will roar at you; they cannot bear that doctrine.

I sometimes receive letters from persons who say, “We would not wonder if all your congregation were to live in sin, because you are always preaching against man’s righteousness, and inviting poor sinners to come to Christ by simple faith, and to be saved by grace alone.” I daresay they would not wonder if such a thing were to happen; but I would wonder if my people, as a whole, lived in sin, and I bless God that I have no cause to wonder about that matter, for a holier people you will not find this side of heaven than those who receive into their hearts the doctrine of Christ’s imputed righteousness. This I will say of them, that grace has worked in them good fruits; that they do walk in the fear of the Lord, in love to one another, and in the practice of uprightness and godliness. But men of the world cannot stand this teaching, because it makes nothing of the merits of which they think so much. Tell men that they are a very good sort of folk; they will like to hear that. Give people a good conceit of themselves, and they will like to listen to you; but that self-conceit is the ruin of tens of thousands. I am sure it is only when we begin to say—

***“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-all,”—***

that we are saved. But as long as we are content with ourselves in our natural sinful condition, there is not the slightest hope for us. So, you see, this is “the offense of the cross,” that we do not let men trust in their own merits.

But there is another offense, which is a very sore one, and the world has never forgiven the cross that “offense” yet, *it will not recognize any distinctions between mankind*. The cross makes moral and immoral persons go to heaven by the same road; the cross makes rich and poor enter heaven by the same door; the cross makes the philosopher and peasant walk on the same highway of holiness; the cross procures the same crown for the poor creature with one talent that the man with ten talents shall receive. Therefore, the wise man says, “What! Am I to be saved by the same cross which saves a man who does not know his letters?” Your fine lady asks, “Am I to be saved in the same fashion as my servant girl?” The gentleman says, “Am I to be saved the same way as that chimney-sweep?” And he who boasts of his self-righteousness cries, “What! Am I to jostle against a harlot, to elbow a drunk on the road to heaven? Then, I will not go to heaven at all.” Then, sir, you will be lost. There are no two roads to heaven; it is the same road for everyone who goes there; and therefore, the cross has always been offensive to men of mark and might.—few kings and queens have ever bent humbly before it. Men have covered up the cross with some fine decoration, and they have said that they loved it; but it was not the cross they cared for, it was the gaudy ornament. If it had been the simple cross, they would have dragged it through the streets, as Mohamed’s people did with the cross at Jerusalem.

II. This brings me now to tell you, in the second place, HOW PERSONS SHOW THEIR OFFENSE AGAINST THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

In olden times, they did it by burning, torturing, and tormenting Christians, making them suffer all kinds of indescribable agonies. But that method did not answer, so the devil adopts other measures now. He found that the more he oppressed them, like Israel in Egypt, the more they multiplied; so now he acts in another fashion. How does he do it? Not exactly by open persecution; but “the offense of the cross” shows itself, sometimes, *by private persecution*. You do not all of you hear of the persecution that is going on with regard to the Lord’s people. Every now and then, things of this sort come to my notice, though you may not know of them. How many drunken husbands there are who persecute their wives almost incessantly because they cleave fast to God! How many a young man, how many a young woman is there, who is called to suffer persecution from father and mother and sister and brother, for Christ’s sake! Persecution is not over yet; it works slyly, and comes not out openly before the world. It comes not out into Smithfield, as it did of old, though there may be many a house in the neighborhood of Smithfield that reeks with it. It comes not out in an honest garb, but watches for its prey in a covert way. It is not the lion, but the prowling jackal, though it is as wild and as ravenous as ever. And when persecution does not display itself in positive acts, it operates by means of jeers and scoffs, and by the shrug of the shoulder; and, let me say, more men have been ruined by this practice than by the direst slanders. Men who shrug their shoulders generally do a deal of mischief, though they may not know it. When, sitting at table, I have mentioned a person’s name, and someone has shrugged his shoulders, and said, “Oh!” the man’s character was half gone. If the person had anything to say against the other, why could he not say it right out, and not leave us in the dark to surmise all manner of iniquities? Another man will say, “I don’t wish to persecute you; you can go to chapel as often as you like;” yet there is, on his face the cold sneer, and on his lips the cruel jest or slander; every idle rumor is circulated, and everything that can be invented against the minister of the gospel and against Christian people—all still showing that there is now, as there was in the days of the apostles, an “offense of the cross.”

But I will tell you what is the favorite plan nowadays; it is not to oppose the cross, but *to wind round the cross, and try to get the cross to alter its shape a little*. Men, who hate the doctrines of the cross, say, “We, too, preach the gospel.” They alter it; they misshape it; they make it “another gospel, which is not another.” Let others say if they will, that yes and no can meet together; that fire and water can kiss each other; that Christ and Belial can be twins: the true minister of Jesus Christ cannot do that. Truth is truth; and whatever is the opposite of it cannot be truth. Truth is one, and that which opposes it must certainly be error and falsehood. But it is the fashion to try to blend the two things together. Look at very many of the churches; they say that they hold the truth. Look at their articles; there are all the five points of Calvinism. And if you ask the ministers whether they believe the doctrine of election? “Certainly,” they reply. If you ask them whether they believe all the great cardinal truths of the gospel; they say, “Oh, yes, certainly we believe them; but we do not think they ought to be preached to the common people.” Ah, sirs! You have a fine notion of yourselves, if you do not think that “the common people” are as good as you are, and that they can receive the doctrines of grace as well as you can. “Oh! But those doctrines are

dangerous; they drive the people to Antinomianism” They say this; but when we write to them, they reply, “Oh, we are as sound as you are!” Yes; but it is one thing to be sound, and another thing to preach sound truth. I will never believe a man to be better than what he preaches; if a man does not proclaim “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,” we like him none the better, but ten times worse, because he says that he believes it. We would rather he did not believe it at all than that he should conceal his real sentiments. Such men, who hide the truth, prove that they are as much offended with the cross as if they openly tried to refute its doctrines. God send us the day when the pure, unadulterated doctrines of the grace of God, which is in Christ Jesus, shall be proclaimed in every chapel, and heard in every street, and received by every professed Christian!

III. Now I come, in the third place, TO SAY SOMETHING TO THOSE WHO ARE OFFENDED AT THE CROSS.

First, let me say that *it is very foolish of a man who does not believe the gospel to oppose those who do*. If a man does not himself love the gospel, he might let alone other people who do. You have often heard the old fable of the dog in the manger, but here is something worse, here is the dog out of the manger; he does not even lie on the hay himself, and yet he barks at those that come to feed upon it. He does not love the gospel; and because others do, he hates them. Why, surely, what you do not want yourselves, you might let other people have in quietness! You need not oppose them for carrying away what you count worthless rubbish. Why should you be so offended, and endeavor to make a stand against the truth, since you cannot, in your present condition, get anything out of it, and you may burn your fingers for your pains?

Then, next, *how foolish it is to be offended at the cross, seeing that you cannot stop its progress!* He who should place himself before Juggernaut’s car to be crushed, would be as wise as you who are opposing the gospel. If it is true, recollect that “truth is mighty, and must prevail.” Who are you to attempt to stand against it? You will be crushed; but let me tell you that, when the car goes over you, the wheel will not be raised even an inch by your size. For what are you? A tiny gnat, a creeping worm, which that wheel will crush to less than nothing, and not leave you even a name as having been an opponent of the gospel. There have been men who have stood up, and said, “We will stop the chariot of Christ.” Thousands have looked at them, and have been afraid. Their trumpets have blown loud and long, and some poor Christians have said, “Stand aside! Here comes a man who will stop the chariot of the Lord Jesus.” At one time, it was Tom Paine; then it was Robert Owen; but what became of them? Did the chariot stop for them? No; it went on just as if there had never been a Tom Paine or a Robert Owen on the earth. Let all the infidels in the world know assuredly that the gospel will win its way, whatever they may do. Poor creatures! Their efforts to oppose it are not worthy of our notice; and we need not fear that they can stop the truth. As well might a gnat think to quench the sun. Go, tiny insect, and do it, if you can. You will only burn your wings, and die. As well might a fly think it could drink the ocean dry. Drink the ocean, if you can; more likely, you will sink in it, and so it will drink you. You who despise and oppose the gospel; what can you do? It comes on “conquering and to conquer.” I always think that, the more enemies the gospel has, the more it will advance. As the old warrior said, “The more enemies there are, the more there are to be killed, the more there are to be taken prisoners, and the more there are to run away.” Double your hosts, you opposers! Come on against us with a still mightier power! Rage yet more loudly! Slander us yet more foully! Do what you can; victory is ours, for it is predestinated. The massive column of Divine Predestination stands firm, and on its top there are the eagle wings betokening victory for every believer, and for the whole Church of Christ. God’s truth must and shall conquer; therefore, then do you, foolish creature, hope to oppose the gospel because it offends you? The stone, cut out without hands, cannot be broken by you; but if it falls upon you, it will grind you to powder.

But another thought, and I have done with this part of my subject. O man! If you hate the gospel, let me say to you solemnly *how doubly foolish you are to be offended with Christ, who is the only One who can save you!* As well might the drowning man be offended with the rope which is cast to him, and which is the only means of his escape; as well might the dying patient be offended with the cup of medicine which is put to his lips, and which alone can save his body from death; as well might the man whose house is burning be offended with the fireman who roughly puts the fire escape ladder against his window—as that you should be offended with Christ. Offended with Him who would snatch you as “a brand from the burning”? Offended with Him who alone can quench for you the fire of hell? Offended

with Him whose blood alone can wash you white, and give you a place with Him in glory everlasting? Offended with Him? Then you are mad indeed. Not Bedlam itself can produce a maniac more foolish than you are.

Ah, you despisers, you shall wonder and *perish!* You are offended with the gospel because it says that you have not any merit; but you have not any, then why are you offended? You are offended at the gospel because it does not ask anything of you in order that you may be saved; yet, if it did demand anything of you as a condition of your salvation, you would be lost. It is just the gospel for you; it is made on purpose; it fits your condition; it is adapted to your case—and yet you are offended with it! Oh, how can you be so foolish? Did you ever hear of a man who was offended with a coach that was carrying him, because it had wheels? Why should you be offended with the gospel chariot because it could not advance except on the wheels of free grace? What! You are offended with the gospel because it lays you low? Don't you know that it is the very best place for you? The devil would have you very high if he could; but that would be only that he might ruin you. My dear friends, I beseech you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, do think why you are offended with the gospel. I know it goes against your prejudices; when you first hear it, you do not love it; but, remember, it is your only hope of salvation. Are you offended with that which alone can save you? Offended with that which can put a crown on your head, a palm branch in your hand, and give you bliss forever? Then, I think, when you sink to hell, you will look up to heaven, and say, “Ah, Christ! I was offended with You, and now I see that You are the only Savior. I hated Your name, of which it is written, ‘At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow.’ I hated that Savior who was the only Savior to redeem sinners from sin.”

IV. Lastly, I am TO DRAW ONE OR TWO INFERENCES.

The first is this, *If the cross of Christ is an offense, and always was an offense, what is the reason why so many professed Christians go on so easily from January to December, and never have any trouble about it?* Old John Berridge said, “If you do not preach the gospel, you may sleep soundly enough; but if you preach it faithfully, you will hardly have a sound place in your skin, for you will soon have enemies enough assailing you.” How is it that we never hear of any slander against a great many ministers? Everything goes easily and comfortably with them; nobody is ever offended with their preaching, but people go out of their chapel doors, and say, “What a nice sermon! It was just the thing for everybody, and nobody could be offended.” They do not preach the gospel fully, or they would be sure to offend some people. Suppose that somebody says to me, “Do you know that Mrs. So-and-So was fearfully offended with your last sermon?” That is no trouble to me if I know that I have preached the truth. A celebrated preacher was once told that he had pleased all his hearers. “Ah!” he said, “there is another sermon lost.” The most effective sermons are those which make opposers of the gospel bite their lips, and gnash their teeth. “That preaching is worth little,” Rowland Hill used to say “that cannot make the devil roar. He preaches but very little truth that does not set the old lion roaring against him.” Depend upon it, Satan does not like the gospel any better than he did; and the world does not like the gospel any better than it did; and if there is not, nowadays, so much persecution and hatred as there used to be, it is because men do not proclaim the plain, simple truth as their forefathers did. People go to hear nice velvet-tongued preachers; they like the minister to prophesy smooth things to them. “I won't go to hear Mr. So-and-So” says one, “for he will be sure to offend me.” Now what is the reason for this? It is because he preaches the whole gospel, the pure truth of God. But do men imagine that we want to offend them? No, God knows, the hard things we often say cause us more pain than they cause to our hearers. But it is a good thing when we care little for the opinion of men, and when we have learned to live above the world. Once let ministers faithfully proclaim the plain, simple gospel, and we shall soon hear the laughter, and scorn, and jeers. It was an ill day when the sons of God made affinity with the daughters of men; and it will be an ill day for the Church of Christ when the world speaks well of it, and everybody commends it. The sect that is most spoken against is usually the sect where Christ most dwells; but the sect that is lapped in plenty, and dandled on the knees of honor, is usually the most corrupt. Preach the gospel boldly, steadfastly, steadily, strongly, out and out, and you will not be long without hearing something about “the offense of the cross.”

My last remark is this. O my brethren, *how much reason have we to bless and extol our gracious God, if the cross of Christ is not an offense to us!* I hope many here can unite with me in saying that there is nothing in the Bible that offends us, and there is nothing in the gospel that offends us now. If

there is anything you do not understand, you do not hate it; if it seems dark and mysterious, you do not reject it, but you are willing to learn all you can about it. Ah, my God! If all I have ever preached is false, I stand prepared to disown it when You shall teach me better; if all I have ever learned is a mistake, and I have not learned it from You, I will not be ashamed to recant it in that hour when You shall Yourself teach me and show me my error. We are not ashamed to bring ourselves wholly into the mold of Scripture, to take it just as it stands, to believe it, and to receive it; and if you are in that state, mark you, you are saved, for no man can say that he accepts the gospel wholly, loves it all, and receives it in his heart, and can yet be a stranger to it. I have heard preachers ignorantly talk about “natural” love to the gospel; there cannot be such a thing. I heard someone say that there was a “natural” love to Christ; it is all rubbish. Nature cannot beget a love to Christ, nor love to any good thing; that must come of God, for all love is from Him. There is nothing good in us by nature. Every conviction must, in some way or other, come from the Holy Spirit. Even if it is a temporary one, it must be traced to Him, if it is good. Oh, let us adore, and exalt, and magnify the mighty grace that has made us love the gospel! For I am sure, with some of us, there was a time when we hated it as much as any people in all the world ever did. Old John Newton used to say, “You who are called Calvinists—though you are not merely Calvinists, but the old, legitimate successors of Christ—you ought above all men to be very gentle with your opponents, for, recollect, according to your own principles, they cannot learn truth unless they are taught of God; and if you have been taught of God, you ought to bless His name; and if they have not, you should not be angry with them, but pray to God to give them a better education.” Do not let us make any extra “offense of the cross” by our own ill humor, but let us show our love to the cross by loving and trying to bless those who have been offended with it.

Ah! Poor sinner, what do you say? Are you offended with the cross? No, you are not, for it is there that you wish to lose your sins. Do you desire this moment to come to Christ? You say, “I have no offense against Christ. Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! I would come even, to His seat.” Well, if you want Christ, Christ wants you; if you desire Christ, Christ desires you. Yes, more; if you have one spark of desire after Christ, Christ has a whole burning mountain of desire after you. He loves you more than you can ever love Him. Rest assured that you are not first with God. If you are seeking Jesus, He has first sought you. Come, then, you destitute, weary, lost, helpless, ruined, chief of sinners; come, put your trust in His blood and His perfect righteousness, and you will go on your way rejoicing in Christ, set free from sin, delivered from iniquity, rendered as safe, though not as happy, as the very angels that now sing high hosannas before the throne of the Most High!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: GALATIANS I.

Verse 1. *Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead);—*

Paul begins this Epistle by stating his commission as an apostle. In Galatia, he had been subjected to the great sorrow of having his apostleship called in question. Does he, therefore, give up his claim to the office, and retire from the work? No, not for a moment; but he begins his letter to the Galatians by declaring himself to be “an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ.” His enemies had said, “Paul was never one of the Savior’s twelve apostles; he is not like those who were trained and educated by Christ Himself. No doubt he has borrowed his doctrine from them, and he is only a retailer of other men’s goods.” “No, no,” says Paul, “I am an apostle as truly as any other of the twelve; ‘not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead;’”—

2. *And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:—*

Paul always loved to associate others with him in his Christian service. He was not one who wanted to ride the high horse, and to keep himself aloof from his brethren in Christ. He frequently mentions the true-hearted men who were with him, even though they were far inferior to him in talent and also in grace. He often joins with himself such men as Timothy and Silvanus, and here he puts in, “all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia”:—

3. *Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,—*

It is the genius of the gospel to wish well to others. Hence Paul begins the actual Epistle with a benediction: “Grace be to you and peace.” Dear friends, may you all have a fullness of these two good things! Grace rightly comes first, and peace afterwards. Peace before grace would be perilous: no more, it would be ruinous. But may you always have enough of grace to lead you on to a deep and joyful peace! The two things go together very delightfully—grace and peace—and it is the best of grace, and the best of peace, since they come “from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.”—

4. *Who gave Himself for our sins,—*

There is the doctrine of the atonement, which Paul always brings into his preaching and writing as soon as he can: “Who gave Himself for our sins.” Well does Luther say, “Christ never gave Himself for our righteousness; but he gave Himself for our sins, because there was no other way of saving us except by a sacrifice for sin.” The substitutionary character of Christ’s death is always to be noticed: “Who gave himself for our sins,”—

4, 5. *That He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself puts away our sin in order that we may rise out of it, and may become a pure and holy people, delivered from this present evil world, and brought into obedience to the will of God.

Now we come to quite another topic.

6. *I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel:*

The Galatians were a very fickle people. Some have said that they were a colony from Gaul—Galatians—and that they partook somewhat of the fickleness which is attributed to the character of the Gaul. I know not how true that may be; but, certainly, they seem very soon to have left the gospel, to have adulterated it, and to have fallen into Ritualism, into Sacramentarianism, into salvation by works, and all the errors into which people usually fall when they go away from the gospel.

7. *Which is not another; but there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*

“Another gospel: which is not another;” for there are not two gospels, any more than there are two gods. There is one only message from God, of good news to men; and if you turn away from that, you turn away to a falsehood, to that which will bring you trouble, to that which will pervert you, and lead you astray.

8. *But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

Paul is no fanatic, no raving enthusiast; yet he cannot endure the notion of a false gospel. In his solemn anathema, he includes himself, and all the brethren with him, yes, and the very angels of God if they “preach any other gospel.” “Let him be accursed,” he says, and so he is.

9. *As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed.*

The modern style of speaking is, “Let us fraternize with him; he is a man of original thought. Surely, you would not bind all men down to one mode of speech. Perhaps, if he has made mistakes, you will bring him round to your way of thinking by receiving him kindly into your fellowship.” “No, no;” says Paul, “As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed.”

10. *For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*

He would not be the servant of Christ if he pleased men. Those, whom we try to please, are our masters. If a man tries to please the populace, or to please the refined few, these are his masters, and he will be their slave; but if he tries to please his God, then is he a free man indeed.

11, 12. *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Paul foresaw what would be said about him in the after ages; and truly, to this day, the fiercest attack upon Christianity is always made upon the teaching of the apostle Paul. The men who creep in unawares among us talk glibly about having great reverence for Christ, but none for Paul. Yet Paul is Christ’s

apostle; Paul speaks only what was personally revealed to Him by the Lord Himself; and he is in everything to be accepted as speaking by divine revelation.

13, 14. *For you have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.*

He was an out and out Jew. He never took up anything without going through with it thoroughly; so, while he believed in Judaism, he did believe it. He was no hypocrite, no pretender, so he fought for it tooth and nail. This was the man who afterwards preached the Christianity he had received from Christ. Evidently he did not borrow it from his parents, for they had taught him quite differently. His religion was not the product of his training; but it came to him from God—to him who seemed to be the most unlikely person in the whole land to ever receive it.

15, 16. *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:*

He felt divinely called to preach the gospel. Christ revealed Himself to him on the way to Damascus. As soon as he was converted, he did not wait for anybody to ordain him, or to teach him further, but he says, “I conferred not with flesh and blood.”

17. *Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia,—*

What he did there, we do not know; but probably he had a time of quiet meditation and prayer, all alone: “I went into Arabia.” The best thing we can do, sometimes, is to get away from the voices of men, and listen only to the voice of God: “I went into Arabia,”—

17. *And returned again unto Damascus.*

To bear witness for Christ in the very city where he had gone to persecute the saints.

18. *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.*

That is, “after three years,” which showed that he did not go there to receive any commission from Peter. He had been for three years working for his Lord and Master before he ever saw the face of an apostle.

19. *But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.*

He had an interview with the apostle James. He was probably the chief minister of the church at Jerusalem, so Paul went and had a conversation with him.

20. *Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.*

“I did not derive my knowledge of Christ from any one of these holy men, therefore I am not an imitator of any other apostle. I was sent out by Christ Himself, and instructed by Him by revelation, so I am an apostle of Christ as much as any of them.”

21, 22. *Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ:*

They did not know him; it is evident that he had not been there to be taught by them, or else they would have recognized their illustrious pupil.

23, 24. *But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preaches the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.*

Brothers and sisters; may you and I so live that Christian people may glorify God in us! May they often wonder at the mighty grace which has worked such a change in us; and as they see us zealous and fervent, may they marvel at the amazing grace of God which has brought us to be so consecrated to Christ!

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