

# Offensive! (The Sharing of the Gospel Is)

## *Part 1: The Reality of the Whole Gospel*

(Preached 6/13/21)

Please turn to *1 Corinthians 1:17*

AMERICAN DIVIDE. **The great divide in America today is about what we say more than what we do.**

- I know that people like to say “actions speak louder than words” but all the “hate” you keep seeing is centered mostly around communication...which is words.
- Whether its words spoken by political pundits on TV, what we post on social media, send in a text/PM, or the opinions shared at the family get together, our words are causing far more rifts between people than anything else.

CRT. **It would be more appropriate to say that what lies behind our words is what’s causing the division which is what we believe, how we’re feeling, and what we’re thinking when we speak/post.** Right now CRT and whether it should be taught in public schools is the hot topic and even family members and friends are falling out with each other after opinions are being expressed whether for or against.

18<sup>TH</sup> YEAR AS PASTOR. This happens in church too and doesn’t have to surround a “political” issue. This is my 18<sup>th</sup> year as a Pastor and I confess that there have been times—mostly when I was younger—***that the preaching of Gospel, the Cross, and Jesus would not just offend others but perhaps even drive them away from God and the Church.***

CONCERNED: HOLD BACK? In the past this concern/fear has even caused me to hold back on the tougher parts of the Gospel and focus more on the positive aspects. We preachers are happy to talk about affirming love, blessing, answered prayers, prosperity, and sharing messages that are like falling onto a Tempur-Pedic mattress. Those are easy and well received by people including unbelievers who finally worked up the courage to come or be dragged to church.

CHARISMATIC DOCTRINE. My personal opinion is that some modern charismatic churches have ***done this to the point where church has become a light-hearted party atmosphere meant to make everyone feel secure, safe, and comfortable.***

SEATS FILLED. I get it: most pastors, if they're being honest, want the seats filled on Sunday morning. When we see that we rejoice and give thanks! ***Thus our temptation is to build the Sunday morning experience around people who might be bothered by the complete truth.***

FIRST DATE. It's like a first date: we put our best foot forward. We're funny, considerate, positive, well mannered, and whatever else we think is going to make our date think well of us. While we may be all those things, isn't there more to the story? Behind all those wonderful traits is a short temper, great insecurity, a jealous and controlling nature, a lustful intent, and more.

DATING IN OLD AGE. I would be transparent!

**There's more to the good news than being blessed, given authority, empowered, promoted, and gifted...there's a terribly offensive side that's just as much part of the message as the other stuff.**

### **1 Corinthians 1:17-25 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

<sup>18</sup> For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

<sup>19</sup> For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

<sup>20</sup> Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

<sup>21</sup> For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

<sup>22</sup> For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,

<sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,

<sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

<sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

**Verse 17:** It doesn't require "words of eloquence" and that phrase implies someone trying to use their own wisdom in the sharing of the Gospel. In other words it's like I told you in the beginning of today's sermon: instead of just sharing the message, we decide to leave the more offensive parts out and/or highlight the nicer parts. Look at the end of verse 17: when we choose to do this, the Cross of Christ is drained of its power to Save.

LOSES POWER. Perhaps, therefore, **when we attempt to water down, change, or highlight one part of the message then the message loses its power to truly Save.** If we're just telling people they'll be Saved, forgiven of everything, and eventually go to Heaven or be raptured, they aren't getting the power of the good news.

**Verse 18:** perishing doesn't just mean physical death, but includes the fate of our eternal spirit. In other words, "people who are perishing" are on their way to Hell where they'll be forever. To folk who have no desire to believe in Christ and repent of their former ways, the Gospel message is stupidity.

ATHEISM, SELF-RIGHTEOUS, OTHER RELIGIONS. Not just to the atheist who doesn't believe in God, but also to the person who already thinks they're good and relies upon their own moral code.

- It applies to the person who is mistaken about God and what He wants, or who doesn't know what sin and righteousness truly are.
- It's folly to the person of another religious belief system where Salvation is obtained some other way by a different god(s).

POWER. Yet for those who are being Saved its power—the entire message continues to have power in and through us.

**Verses 19-21** show us that the truth of the Gospel message destroys the wisdom of the self-proclaimed "wise" of the world for which I just gave you several examples.

- An intellectual person, for example, may never come to be Saved whereas someone with an IQ of 80 believes and has an amazing relationship with Christ.
- Perhaps a scholar or pious person of another religion cannot come to accept Jesus as the Lord, but a person whose never opened any religious text is able to have the revelation of Christ and enters into His Kingdom.

**Verses 22-24:** Jews demand signs from the OT and the Greeks, not having a Bible base, seek rationale.

**Verse 25** clinches it: we have both "foolishness" and "weakness" within the Gospel message.

**Foolishness and weakness is part of the Good News and did you noticed that Paul included GOD in those and not just humankind?**

GOD WEAK?! Wait: is it possible for God to be either foolish or weak? **It's not**, but allow me to explain what Paul met.

JESUS WAS GOD. Jesus was God, yet He was born into a normal human body 2000 years ago.

**This truth alone is one that many consider to be both foolish and weak.**

- How can someone be God and man at the same time?
- How can God be contained within a human body?
- Why would God subject Himself to this level of weakness?
- What of his omnipotence and omniscience?

CONUNDRUM WORSE! This conundrum gets worse as you read through the Gospels to see Jesus needing to eat food, drink water, and getting tired and needing to rest...why would God need to do such things?

- The struggle waxes greater when you see Jesus getting arrested, beat up, whipped, and then put on the cross where He feels pain just like a man, bleeds like one, and dies like one.
- Why would God allow this rejection and abuse?
- Why would He die?
- Why not ascend to an earthly throne and take power, putting all people and nations into subjection?

CHRIST SUBJECTED HIMSELF. Part of the preaching of the Cross is that God subjected Himself to His own creations and many people—even some self-proclaimed Christians—cannot understand or accept this.

- In their own wisdom they cannot reconcile these questions which fulfill God's prophecy that the revealing of this foolish weakness destroys the wisdom of the self-proclaimed wise.
- It brings all their thoughts, ponderings, speculations, and rationalization to nothing.

ACCEPT THIS, BUT.... In my opinion, most people in the church have come to accept this but where the gap suddenly appears is this: ***SOME believe that we are greater than our Master.***

- We will accurately look at the persecution, rejection, and betrayal Jesus endured and **WRONGLY** assume He died to spare us from that as well as He did for the eternal consequences for our sins.
- Were there Christians persecuted to the point of martyrdom in the 1<sup>st</sup> century? How about now?
- The Apostle James, who was Jesus' half-brother, was the first to be martyred among the 12. If anyone should have thought he might be spared from persecution shouldn't it be family?
- I strongly urge everyone to read the book "*Tortured For Christ*" by Richard Wurmbrand which is an autobiography of the horrors both he and his wife faced under Communism just for sharing the Gospel.

- In 2016 Pastor Andrew Brunson, an American presiding over a church with 25 people was taken prisoner in the country of Turkey for sharing Christ. He was released 2 years later but only after being beaten & tortured in jail.
- He said that during this ordeal, he began to feel abandoned by God but then we he realized Jesus and the Apostles endured the same, he said he drew closer to the Lord than he ever had.
- In a recent interview, he pointed out that most charismatic American Christians were unprepared for the coming persecution because we've learned a version of the Gospel which is primarily blessing based and doesn't prepare us for hardship.

*One man who knows suffering from experience is Pastor Andrew Brunson, who was in prison for his faith in Turkey for two years on trumped-up terrorism and spying charges before being released in October 2018. Brunson believes persecution and harassment toward Christ-followers in America is about to intensify in many ways and that Christians—charismatics in particular—are not ready.*

*"Jesus said that it would happen," Brunson says. "Just as the world hated him, that it will hate His followers."*

*A missionary to Turkey for 25 years, Brunson told me [when I interviewed him recently on my Strang Report podcast](#) that American Christians must to be prepared for persecution in the coming days. He said the charismatic theology that God is a good God who cares for His children like a benevolent parent is part of the reason they won't be ready when the persecution comes.*

*"I'm especially concerned about my charismatic brothers and sisters," Brunson says. "We have an emphasis on presence and on glory and encounters and miracles. When those don't happen, how are we going to handle it?"*

*"I think many charismatics could be in danger," he says. "Jesus specifically warns that the love of many will grow cold, and this is talking about offense in the heart. That distances people from God, and it specifically happens in times of persecution, which I believe is coming. People become disillusioned with God because of the rise of the amount of wickedness that God allows, the judgments that He will bring and the persecution He allows, but also many people go through that silence of God. Jesus warns that many people will be knocked out. I think this is especially a risk for charismatics because of the heightened expectations that we have."*

*Preparing for persecution means more than just stockpiling food or arming for violence. We must be prepared not to become offended at God for allowing such things to happen. This view of suffering goes against a lot of Pentecostal/charismatic doctrine, which teaches that God is a good God who lovingly protects His children from anything bad.*

*I agree completely! And thus part of the purpose of today's message.*

**JESUS POOR, NOT ME.** Many people believe Jesus was poor or, at the very least, not rich and rightly talk about His willingness to give up those things for the Kingdom. Yet we'll exalt ourselves above our Master and say that He was crucified so that we shouldn't be poor.

DIED FOR SINS. Dying on the Cross to pay for the sins of the entire world is something only Jesus could have done! All of our sins were transferred from us to Him, the perfect Lamb of God, then He was slain and His blood sprinkled upon us. In that glorious moment, we went from being slaves of sin to sons & daughters of God and citizens of His Kingdom. We will have everlasting life!

WE'RE EXEMPT FROM.... Only Jesus could accomplish these things and the part we're exempt from *is having to die for our own sins and end up in eternal debtor's prison called Hell.*

**ALL THE OTHER STUFF JESUS HAD TO ENDURE AND PUT UP WITH, HOWEVER, WE ARE SUBJECT TO. ALL OF IT.**

“YOUR BEST LIFE NOW.” Years ago Joel Osteen published a best selling book called “Your Best Life Now” and I bought it and read it. The unfortunate result is that it redirected by internal desires away from the Kingdom which is to come to my life right now, just as the title suggests. The book was a bestseller because it offers Christians the best of both worlds—this one and the next. The book starts with a story of man looking at an expensive mansion built on the side of hill overlooking the valley and the man thinking to himself “I’ll never live in a house like that.”

DON'T HAVE TO WAIT. Osteen goes on to say we CAN live in a home like that, right now. We don't have to wait for a heavenly mansion, God will give us an earthly one AND a heavenly one! This is the “theology” Pastor Brunson was talking about and it doesn't merely have to surround material things but emotions as well.

ROMANS 8 PROMISES, THEN.... At the end of Romans 8 amidst a bunch of wonderful promises, Paul inserts a quote from the OT that doesn't seem to fit...at least from a modern American “your best life now” interpretation:

**Romans 8:31-36 (NKJV)**

<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us?

<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

<sup>33</sup> Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies.

<sup>34</sup> Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

<sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

<sup>36</sup> **As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."**

**Verse 36** seems to clash with the rest of it. Verses 31-35 says God, Who didn't spare His own Son for US, will certainly not hold back...and then we fill in the blanks for our current desires. Maybe we want greater prosperity in our jobs and businesses, to be delivered from a "same old same old" lifestyle into "something greater." Perhaps we struggle with depression, relationships, or addiction and would like to be freed from the same.

**FREELY GIVE ALL THINGS.** So we read verse 32 where Paul says God will "freely give all things" and we insert a personal need or desire. We pray for it, declare it, bind & loose, proclaim in a loud voice, but....

**CONTEXT IS RAPTURE.** Then we read verse 36 which tears all that down and confronts us with the reality that what Paul is referring to—and has been talking about in all of chapter 8—is the future resurrection and Kingdom to come. God giving us all things is referring to our beautiful glorification that will take place at the Rapture, where we will be fearfully and wonderfully remade in the complete likeness of Christ! Where we will live in His Kingdom forever and ever, with our Lord and Savior! That the earth itself will be remade into a Paradise!

**God "freely giving us all things and not sparing His Son" is for the world to come and not this one.**

**PAULS LETTER TO TIM.** Which is why we have verse 36 that says, in this world, we are led like lambs to the slaughter all day long. Listen to Paul's last letter to Timothy...and ever:

**2 Timothy 3:10-13 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness,

<sup>11</sup> my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

<sup>13</sup> while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

**Verse 11:** Paul has suffered many persecutions including being whipped, jailed, and thrown into a gladiatorial arena to fight animals. Yes, the Lord delivered him from being killed in those events, but God didn't spare from being beaten, only dying from it. He didn't spare Paul from going to jail for years at a time, only from dying in jail. He didn't prevent Paul having to fight tigers like Russel Crowe in Gladiator, only from losing the battle.

**EXECUTED.** Just so you know: Paul writes this letter from prison and perhaps only hours from his execution. Soon after sending this epistle to Timothy, God doesn't deliver Paul from being beheaded.

**Verse 12:** ALL who desire to live a godly life in Jesus will be persecuted. Paul was likely inspired by the words of Jesus Himself:

### **John 15:18-20 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

<sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

<sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

DIDN'T DIE FOR PERPETUAL HAPPINESS. Jesus wasn't crucified so that we would live in perpetual happiness in the here and now. He wasn't crucified so we would be spared from every negative emotion and experience. Yes, joy is a fruit of the Spirit as is peace, praise God! Yet we're not guaranteed complete protection from negative emotions and thoughts just because we got Saved. Again, some charismatic theology suggests that Father God would never allow such a thing, yet it seems to happen anyway.

***The message of the Cross is that we give up our former life where we went after this world and what it offers—that we literally die to the self with Jesus:***

### **Romans 6:1-14 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

<sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

<sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

<sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

<sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

<sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free from sin.

<sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

<sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

<sup>10</sup> For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

<sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

<sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

<sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

<sup>14</sup> For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.



**DEAD TO SIN.** We haven't just been forgiven of sin, we died to it—our old selves. We give it all up to live for Jesus. That includes our former worldly goals, desires, and wants. All of it is supposed to die!

**OFFENSIVE.** The Cross, and its preaching, is horribly offensive. Have we been afraid of telling others this side of it? Are we concerned that they will think that, in order to be a Christian, they'll have to give up the pleasures of life?

**PRESENT AS IS.** How about this: we present the entire Gospel of Jesus Christ to people and let God do the rest. If we didn't believe in God and His power, we might say "let the chips fall where they may."

**STOP WORRYING.** How about we stop worrying how someone will receive the message. They might get hostile, argue, walk further away from God & the Church...and that's OK because we've done what were called to do.

**WAYNE GRETSKY.** Yet...famous Hockey Player Wayne Gretsky once said "I miss every shot I don't take." Perhaps when we share Christ, a person will be convicted by the Holy Spirit and their conscience, repent, and come to the Lord.

**EYES WIDE OPEN.** Perhaps they'll walk into the Kingdom understanding that hardship and persecution will happen in this world, and that our reward waits for us in the world to come: the Kingdom.