

1 Corinthians 1:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

Analysis

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness (hēmeis de kēryssomen Christon estaurōmenon, Ioudaiois men skandalon, ethnesin de mōrian, ἡμεῖς δὲ κηρύσσομεν Χριστὸν ἐσταυρωμένον, Ἰουδαίοις μὲν σκάνδαλον, ἔθνεσιν δὲ μωρίαν)—Despite Jewish and Greek objections, Paul refuses to alter the message. **Christ crucified** (Christon estaurōmenon, Χριστὸν ἐσταυρωμένον, perfect passive participle: "Christ having been crucified") is the unchanging content of Christian preaching. A **stumblingblock** (skandalon, σκάνδαλον) is a trap or snare—something that causes one to trip and fall. For Jews, a crucified Messiah was blasphemous contradiction (Deut 21:23).

Unto the Greeks foolishness (ethnesin mōrian, ἔθνεσιν μωρίαν)—The Greek mind found the cross intellectually absurd: a deity who dies? Salvation through execution? No philosophical system, no ethical program, just substitutionary death? Preposterous. Yet Paul does not repackage the message for cultural palatability. The offense of the cross must remain; removing it removes the power.

Historical Context

Crucifixion was Rome's most shameful penalty—public, torturous, degrading, designed to humiliate. Claiming a crucified man as Lord and Savior invited mockery from both Jews (who saw it as proof of divine curse) and Greeks (who saw it as barbaric superstition). Early Christian apologists struggled to explain the

crucifixion to pagan audiences. Paul refuses to apologize or soften the message: the cross is central, non-negotiable, scandalous—and that's precisely where God's power lies.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. Why must the offense of the cross be preserved rather than softened or explained away?
2. How do modern presentations of the gospel sometimes try to make it less scandalous or intellectually offensive?
3. In what ways is the cross still a "stumblingblock" and "foolishness" to contemporary culture?

Interlinear Text

ἡμεῖς	δὲ	κηρύσσομεν	Χριστὸν	ἐσταυρωμένον	Ἰουδαίοις
we	But	preach	Christ	crucified	unto the Jews
G2249	G1161	G2784	G5547	G4717	G2453
μὲν	σκάνδαλον	Ἑλλήσιν	δὲ	μωρίαν	
a stumblingblock		unto the Greeks	But	foolishness	
G3303	G4625	G1672	G1161	G3472	

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 2:14 (Parallel theme): But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

1 Peter 2:8 (Parallel theme): And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

1 Corinthians 2:2 (Cross): For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Galatians 5:11 (Cross): And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

1 Corinthians 1:18 (Cross): For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

Luke 2:34 (Parallel theme): And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

Matthew 11:6 (Parallel theme): And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

Matthew 13:57 (Parallel theme): And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.

Galatians 6:14 (Cross): But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Ephesians 3:8 (References Christ): Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;