

## Scandal

Ponder: Neither offending nor being offended.

Scripture: "But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:23, NKJV).

We get words like "scandal" and "scandalous" from the New Testament word for "stumble" and "offend." When politicians take bribes or religious leaders commit adultery, it shocks and offends our sense of decency and propriety. It's scandalous!

The Jews considered apostolic preaching of Christ crucified to be scandalous. Messiah suffering and dying in such an agonizing and undignified way offended their misguided perception of how the great King David's descendant would be received. Our Muslim neighbors also recoil at the idea that God would permit a great prophet to suffer such shameful treatment.

By contrast the message of the cross is, "to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24). Far from being scandalized, we rejoice that Christ willingly suffered and died to atone for our sins! Our infinitely wise God planned this from all eternity. We praise His name!

As we relish our salvation in Christ, let us take heed lest our own teaching or behavior should cause anyone to stumble and fall. Jesus reprovved the church at Pergamum because "you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality" (Rev. 2:14). Our world seems to sink deeper into immorality and false worship every day. We must guard against being swept away with the tide!

Our attitude and the way we treat each other can make the difference between enduring and falling away. "He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him" (1 Jn. 1:9-10).

Let us strive neither to be offended nor to offend!

Hymn: "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord"

Prayer: Father, we thank You for Jesus and His willingness to endure shameful abuse for us. May we never be offended at Him, and may we always behave in ways that will not cause others to stumble. In Jesus' name, Amen.