

Introduction:

- It is absurd. It is preposterous. It is ridiculous.
 - Not long ago in Sarasota there was this old law that you cannot leave an elephant at a parking meter without paying the parking meter fee. That seemed really absurd implying that people must have been riding elephants around town instead of horses at the very least. It appears to have existed on the west coast of Florida, in Sarasota. John Ringling, of Ringling Brothers Circus fame, moved his company's winter operations to Sarasota in 1927. Before that date, after Ringling purchased St. Armand's Key in 1917, he enlisted the help of elephants to build the first causeway to St. Armand's Circle, now a popular tourist destination. There were definitely elephants in use in Florida at that time. Parking meters began sprouting up in the country shortly thereafter, around the mid-1930s as local governments needed cash.
 - Question: Is it true that the government wanted to run a brothel in Nevada? Answer: That story is indeed really humorous. It is absolutely true that the federal government wanted to operate Mustang Ranch brothel in Nevada after it was seized in a bankruptcy proceeding in September 1990. It certainly would have been interesting to see how many government employees it suddenly took to interview the girls that wanted to work there. Indeed, the feds told the court that they wanted to keep the business going until the brothel could be sold at auction. However, the federal judge refused to allow the bankruptcy trustee to assume the ranch's business license. Instead, the IRS foreclosed on the property and auctioned it off a few months later. Nevertheless, they did want to run the brothel, which was legal in Nevada. That certainly would have made things interesting to see how they would have operated the business.
- It makes no sense, the cross is not the scandal, Christ crucified is the scandal of the ages.
- Romans 9:33; Jn 18:33-37

I. It Make No Sense

- A. "As it is written: *"Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."*" (Romans 9:33, NKJV) Why would God lay in Zion a Stone that would cause many to trip over or to be offended? That makes no sense. God is laying in this life ravaged by death and dying a glorious pathway to Life. And it makes absolutely no sense to the spiritually dull.
1. This is true if you are looking at it from a sinful mans perspective.
 2. Man is fallen. More than fallen...He is dead. There is no life for him spiritually. Because he has no life spiritually he cannot discern accurately.
 3. Therefore it is hard for him to perceive the activity of God in the earth and to accept His plan.
- B. The Kingdom is wonderfully good and the King of the Kingdom so beautiful in stature, grace, and love and being that it make no sense to a man that God would offer it to him so simply, so freely.
1. Pilate asked Him, *"Are you King of the Jews?"* Jn 18:33.
 2. Jesus asks Pilate, *"Is this your question or did someone tell you of me?"* vs. 34 You know Pilate is asking the question because Jesus is challenging him where he is at. That is

sweetness of God that He always challenges us where we are at! He is just, kind and loving in all of His ways. His heart is to cause us to see truth.

3. With out answering his question Jesus gives him the answer he is after. *"My kingdom is not an earthly kingdom...My kingdom is not of this world."* To which Pilate replies, "So you are a king?" *"You tell me. Because I am a King, I came into this world to testify of the truth!"* Message
 4. "I came into a world full of death, deception and dying. I came into this world under Satan's domain. I come to conquer and get it back. Not by guns and swords but by the Light of the Glory of the Gospel!" The KING and THE KINGDOM are HERE!
- C. Therefore: the stumbling stone and rock of offense.
1. Stumbling stone is just what it says.
 - a) Something that you trip over. Literally, this word (proskopto) means "to strike," "to dash against." Intransitively it means "to stumble against," "bump," "slip," "fall," "suffer harm," "perish." Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (p. 946). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans. IE. We are talking sever 'toe stub'
 - b) In Jesus time this is a perfect illustration because there are stones everywhere. And in Romans Paul is saying that God put this ROCK right into our path so that no one can miss it. IE. If you have a path that is traveled often you do not have to think about where you are going you just walk. BUT... you put a stone in that path and suddenly people are tripping over it all the time. Why? They can't see it even though it is in the path. Because they trip over it, it becomes the Rock of offense.
 2. Rock of offense
 - a) the word used there is scandalous - "closing on something," or "trapping," but later the meaning "offense," or "reason for punishment," Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (p. 1036). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans. It become grounds for divine punishment. It is a faith issue.
 - b) The Rock is a stumbling block. Here is the point: Something is in the way of progress and you trip and stumble and fall. The Rock is something people stumble over intellectually, emotionally and aesthetically (culturally).
 - c) Paul said that the preaching of the cross of Christ is a stumbling block (scandalon) *"but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,"* (1 Corinthians 1:23, NKJV) But...#2

II. The Cross Is Not The Scandal

- A. The cross did not make people stumble
 1. To the Roman world the cross made sense. It was a symbol of justice. It was the symbol of punishment for breaking the law. It was the result of wrong doing. Men were not scandalized by the cross, in the Roman's eyes this was justice. The cross had been around before the Romans.
 2. To the Jew the cross made sense, though they hated it. It was a symbol of terror. It was the force of a governmental power breaking the human will/terrorizing it to obey. They

were not scandalized by the cross. They were terrified of the cross. The cross had been around for a long time brutalizing men into submission.

- B. So what is Paul talking about? He is not talking about the scandal of the cross but rather the scandal of the 'cross of Christ' as presented to the world!
 - 1. The early apostles preached Christ and Him crucified!
 - a) They were declaring that the cross of Christ was the very center of faith. The only center of faith!
 - b) They were declaring that the government of God had come into the earth with the invasion of the One Man Jesus!
 - c) They were declaring that real beauty...life giving beauty had come into the world and it would make all things beautiful in Its time! IE. Metamorpho - complete and total change. Worm to butterfly.
 - 2. Those three things, in the preaching of cross, are what made the cross of Christ a scandal! Men laughed at it! They stumbled over it! They railed against it emotionally, intellectually and aesthetically.
- C. The cross was not the scandal it was the King that was on the cross, Jesus the Christ, that made men stumble.

III. Christ Crucified, The Scandal of The Ages!

- A. The scandal begins: *"Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin."* (John 19:19-20, NKJV)
 - 1. Pilate had a sign made that was hung on the cross of Christ: "Jesus of Nazareth, The King Of The Jews" He had no idea that he was prophesying of this man on the cross. What is revealingly powerful is that he had it written in three languages: Hebrew, Latin, Greek so that all could read it.
 - 2. If you were a Jew what would you think in reading this? Disgrace! Deut. 21:23 *"cursed is everyone who hung on tree, in the sight of God."* also Gal 3:13. Criminal are cursed.
 - a) So for a Jew to be told that the cross is the center of faith and the only way to righteousness he has just stumbled over the very thing placed in his path by God to save him.
 - b) For a Jew to consider this Jesus, crucified on the cross as the center of all faith and righteousness is absolutely RIDICULOUS!! It makes no sense.
 - 3. If you are a Roman and you are looking at the cross from the perspective of Rome you see Pilate making an example out of this man, Jesus. You see Pilate exercising absolute force when he crucifies this Nazarene, the King of the Jews. This man on the cross is a perfect picture of defeat! It has nothing to do with morality like the Jews see it. It had everything to do with POWER! Whether Jesus had done anything wrong or not He was dying on the cross. This man was powerless therefore he stumbled over the very thing God place in path to save him.

- a) So for the Roman to be told that the cross of Christ is the very heart of true government and the only way to lasting peace; is stumbling block put in his path that causes him to fall.
 - b) The thought of Jesus as King is absolutely CRAZY! How could such a defeated man be king? He carries no government! You can make a man obey but not have his heart.
4. If you are a Greek, you see a disgusting mutilated man. There is not beauty at all in what is seen. There was no room for this in their thought/idealism. The Greek was into his esthetic culture. The cross and its bloody cruelty would only make you look away.
- a) So for the Greek to be told that the man on the cross is the true way to all beauty and life, is a stumbling block to that man that causes him to fall.
 - b) This man on this cross serves for no inspiration. Why, the very picture is ABSURD!
5. The cross of Christ is stumbling block that causes men to fall (fall into eternal destruction). Ridiculous, Crazy, Absurd, Preposterous are all synonyms of things contrary to nature or of no common sense. That is why ..."*...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.*" (1 Corinthians 1:18, NKJV)
- B. The scandal unfolds:
1. Why was the Jew scandalized by the cross? Because he did not have an adequate sense of sin. He was ignorant of God. The very thought of God on a cross was offensive.
 - a) 2 Cor 5:21 He, Jesus, became sin. The cross was meant for sinners. But Jesus became sin and the cross became the place for all sin.
 - b) When Jesus said, "It is finished." It was over and a way was made to God. And unless sin is cursed on the cross by our faith we have no way to God.
 2. Why was Roman scandalized? Because he could not understand how a dying man could be king. The very thought is offensive. A dying man on a cross has no power. He is dying. To see Jesus as king, you have to look beyond the cross to the resurrection!
 - a) Jesus will not force a man to believe. His secret is love.
 - b) You can force a man to obey but you will not have his heart. You will have victory with rebellion still in the heart. Let a man meet Jesus, for real, and he will love God.
 3. Why was the Greek scandalized? The greek was after the perfect man with the perfect personality and the body of the gods! This was their highest ideal. Therefore, how could a mutilated man on the cross be that. The very thought is offensive.
 - a) The Greek had to look beyond the cross to the resurrection to see.
 - b) There they would see..."*and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;*" (Revelation 1:13-15, NKJV)
 - c) Mt 17:2 the transfiguration was a taste of the "greek' ideal.

- C. *“but **we preach Christ crucified**, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, **but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.**” (1 Corinthians 1:23-24, NKJV)*

Conclusion:

- The greatest scandal of the ages is Christ crucified. It makes no sense that God would die. The very thought offends the intellect, offends the emotions, offends everything we think is beautiful.
- *“Isaiah (again!) gives us the metaphor for pulling this together: Careful! I’ve put a huge stone on the road to Mount Zion, a stone you can’t get around. But the stone is me! If you’re looking for me, you’ll find me on the way, not in the way.” (Romans 9:33, The Message)*
- Don’t stumble over the ROCK that God has put in your path. Receive Him. He is the only way to the Father.
- Invitation -