

Offensive Teaching

From time to time some preachers are told that their lesson or article offended someone. The lesson may have been on the errors of the Baptist church, modest dress, filthy language, false teachers or marriage, divorce and remarriage. When the complaint is lodged, it is either explicitly stated or implied that the preacher needs to change. He may be told his job is in danger or blamed for "running people off." Little attention is given to the question of whether or not the preacher taught the truth (cf. Gal. 4:16). In some cases the answer is yes, but he did it in an offensive manner. All of this is not new.

Jesus offended many people when He taught, especially the very religious. When He told men their worship was worthless, His disciples informed Him of His offense (Matt. 15:7-9, 12). Instead of changing, apologizing, or even trying to smooth things over, Jesus said the offended men were blind (Matt. 15:13-14). On another occasion Jesus offended religiously-minded men by criticizing their man-made doctrines and practices (Lk. 11:37-44). When a complaint was made, He did not back off or seek to placate them, but bore down on their sins (Lk. 11:45-52). A heated attack ensued (Lk. 11:53-54). Many other occasions could be given to show that the teaching of Jesus offended people.

As with Jesus, so it was with the apostles and prophets--their teaching was offensive to most folks (Acts 4:1-4; 7:51-60; 9:20-25). This is the nature of truth in a sin-sick world; it will offend far more than it will please (cf. Matt. 7:13-14; Jn. 3:19-21). If we stick to the truth, in love, we too will offend people and be despised (Eph. 4:15; 2 Cor. 12:15). To do less would make us traitors to the cause.

Steven F. Deaton