

The Offensive Unity

Introduction. Have you ever heard people say, "Preach the gospel and leave other people alone," or "You ought to preach the truth without offending people." I agree that the truth must be preached with a feeling of love (Ephesians 4:15). A man who gets in the pulpit without this intention is not fit to preach. However, there are some people who get upset or become offended upon hearing the gospel.

In Matthew 15:12-14, the Pharisees became offended at some of the teachings of Jesus. Their offense was so deep, it caused them to reject what Jesus was saying. When His disciples pointed this out to Him (though I am sure He was quite aware of it already), He made no apology for the truth.

If brethren who say we ought to quit offending people mean we need to change our attitude (assuming it is wrong), I would be in favor of this. However, if they mean we ought to change the message, hide the truth or beat around the bush, I say it cannot be done without sinning against God! Our responsibility is to preach all the counsel of God and use plainness of speech so that men who love the truth can understand and obey it. In preaching the truth it will be inevitable that some will be offended (John 15:20). In fact, one cannot even preach Ephesians 4:4-6 without offending somebody.

I. ***There Is One Body***

- A. Paul taught that the body was the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:16; Colossians 3:15; 1 Corinthians 12:20). We believe that there cannot be any other churches which are true in the sight of God because that is the will of the Lord (Matthew 16:18).
- B. The one church spoken of in the New Testament has many characteristics which make it the Lord's church: work, worship, organization, etc. This makes it the "Lord's church" (Ephesians 4:12; Acts 2:42-46; 14:23).
- C. This will offend those who teach there are many churches or that one church is just as good as another. They feel that we can join the "church of our choice" because they have been convinced that "all roads lead to heaven."

II. ***There Is One Spirit***

- A. The Holy Spirit is part of the Godhead (Genesis 1:26-27; Matthew 28:19; 1 John 5:7). He is the one who would reprove of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11). He is the one who revealed all truth which set man free from sin and death (1 Corinthians 2:7-13; John 8:32; 16:13).

- B. This is going to offend those who believe in modern day inspiration, revelation and miracles. This will offend those who believe in the inspiration of other documents than the Bible because the Spirit of the Bible is not the Spirit of modern day Pentecostalism, Mormonism, Buddhism, Adventist, etc.

III. ***There Is One Hope***

- A. Hope combines desire and expectation (Romans 8:24-25). Of course, the Christian's hope is heaven (1 Peter 1:3-5; Matthew 24:46; Titus 3:5-7). This hope is an anchor of the soul to all those who believe and obey (Hebrews 6:18-19).
- B. Our belief in the hope of eternal life after death or judgment will offend those who are hoping for an earthly mansion, earthly kingdom, and an earthly paradise. It will also offend those who hope to be elevated by reincarnation.

IV. ***There Is One Lord***

- A. This is the Savior of the world who came to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). It is by belief and obedience to Him that men can have their sins washed away by His blood (John 8:24; Hebrews 5:8-9; 1 Peter 1:18-19). We are complete only in Christ (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 2:8-10).
- B. This will offend those who recognize authority other than the authority of Christ in the New Testament. This will offend Catholics who recognize the Pope as divine authority, Mormons who look to the writings of Joseph Smith, Jehovah's Witnesses who accept the authority of the Watchtower Society, the Jews who reject Christ as the Messiah, Muslims who accept the pronouncements of Mohammed and a host of others.

V. ***There Is One Faith***

- A. Jude 3-4 mentions earnestly striving or fighting for the "faith." This is not just a belief, but it means the entire Christian doctrine (Acts 6:7; 1 Timothy 4:1). Synonymous words for "faith" are "truth" (John 1:17; Galatians 5:7), "gospel" (Philippians 1:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:14) and "doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:16; Acts 13:12).
- B. This will offend those who have accepted any other creed, doctrine, dogma or covenant other than or in addition to that of the New Testament. This will include the Baptist faith, Methodist faith, Catholic catechism, Mormon prophetic announcements, etc. All "faiths" that differ from the New Testament are wrong.

VI. ***There Is One Baptism***

- A. Water baptism was commanded and was to last through the ages (Acts 10:47-48; Matthew 28:19-20). Holy Spirit baptism was promised and was only given by the Lord (Acts 1:5; John 1:33). Baptism in the New Testament was immersion of believers for the forgiveness of sins so that the Lord would add them to His church (1 Peter 3:21; Galatians 3:26-27; Acts 2:47).
- B. This will offend those who practice a baptism different from that of the Bible. Some perform baptism using a different mode (sprinkling, pouring), a different subject (infants) or for a different purpose (to show salvation, to become a member of a denomination).

VII. ***There Is One God***

- A. This is the Jehovah of heaven (1 Kings 18:17-40; Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 6:4). He is the one who created our world by virtue of speaking it into existence (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 33:6, 9). He also sent His Son into this world to save men (John 3:16; Matthew 20:28; Luke 19:10).
- B. This will offend individuals who believe in deity besides the one true God of the Bible as well as those who do not believe in God at all such as Atheists and pagans (1 Corinthians 8:4-6; Psalm 14:1).

Conclusion. I think you can see the impossibility of preaching the truth without offending somebody. If one will accept one God, Lord, Spirit and hope, why will they not accept one faith, body and baptism? If a man preaches the truth out of love for souls, do not apologize for him, do not get angry at him or do not rebuke or discourage him. He is only doing what the Lord told him to do. Instead support him, encourage him, "Amen" him and pray for him.

We hope that you will accept the truth. If you can see the truth presented before you, why continue to fight against it? Believe me, we do not intentionally set out to offend people. However, if you can see this as the truth, there should be no reason to be offended. We beg you to accept nothing but the truth.