

The Marks Of The Master

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Gal. 6:17

Gal. 6:17, *“From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”*

Everyone is a marked person in some way; there is a habit in speech, walk, or gesture gives us away. The criminal in prison is marked by his stripes; the sailor or soldier in uniform is marked by his insignia; cattle on the range are branded.

The New Testament speaks of brandings, or “marks”. In the text above the word “marks” is from the Greek word “stigmata”, which means “mark or scar of service”.

The setting of the text

Paul had just stated previously: Gal. 6:14, *“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.”*

Since this was the central theme of all his preaching, Paul was willing to undergo all forms of persecution for the glory of the cross. He had suffered much in the cause of Christ. Notice the following verses that describe what the Apostle Paul went through:

- 1 Cor. 4:9-13, *“For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.”*
- 2 Cor. 4:8-10, *“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”*
- 2 Cor. 11:23-27, *“Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above*

measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”

Considering the kind of life Paul lived, it is no wonder why Demas had forsaken him. 2 Tim. 4:10, “*For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.*” It is not that he loved the sins of the world, but that he was tired of the constant dangers and wanted to go back to living a peaceful life.

We bear the marks of whatever enslaves us

The slave was always branded by his master. The same is true with whatever enslaves us today. A man whose bloated face and red eyes tell us that he is a slave to strong drink; a man whose unprincipled business tactics tell us that he is dominated by covetousness.

Not all the slaves of sin are staggering down back alleys; some of them wear elegant clothes and live in mansions, but they too are branded.

The true servant of Christ bears the “*marks*” of the Master. Only thereby can he be “*the salt of the earth*”, “*the light of the world*”, and “*epistles, known and read of all men*”.

The Christian must ever have the name of Jesus written upon him in the Christ-likeness of his life. It is useless to have it on the tongue if it is not in the life. 1 John 3:18, “*My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*”

The real “*marks*” of Christ come through suffering. This is how Paul received his marks; they were brands of fiery trials. Suffering for Christ proves our fidelity to Him and brings out our Christ-likeness of character.

The marks of Christ are spiritual

While it is true that the primary reference of the text is likely to the scars of old and recent wounds which Paul had endured in his

service of Christ, yet these were not the only “marks” of the Lord Jesus which Paul bore.

The true “marks” of Jesus were not outward, but inward; not physical, but spiritual. There is a tendency to think that Christ’s “marks” are external and mechanical. We may think that the “marks” of a true Christian are that he observes the Lord’s Supper every Lord’s Day and gives freely of his means to the church. Certainly, these are important things, but they are not the “marks” of which we speak.

Matt. 7:21-23, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*

The “marks” of Jesus are not evident by a crucifix on a chain around the neck. They are certain features of character, such as:

- **Obedience.** Matt. 12:50, *“For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”*
- **Love.** John 13:34-35, *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”*
- **Sacrifice.** Luke 9:23, *“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”*

Do we have these “marks” that single us out as His true disciples?

Do we bear “*the marks of the Lord Jesus*”?

Too many today want to make Christianity popular, agreeable, and convenient. They want to hear “easy things” — things that don’t prick their conscience. Is this what our Lord taught?

Our Lord declared that the world hated Him and that it would also hate us. John 15:18-19, *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”* John 17:14-16, *“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because*

they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

Jesus invited us, not to a picnic, but to a fight. Our Lord wanted men to count the cost and to expect persecution. 2 Tim. 3:12, "*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*"

The "*marks*" of the cross are not to be confused with self-inflicted wounds that got its start in the Middle Ages.

Many churches today have geared their programs to entertain and to gain favor of the world. They seem to try to see how much like this world they can become instead of how little. Christians should be a foreign influence in a heathen world, not one of them.

We are "the salt of the earth". Salt irritates and causes to smart.

We are "*the light of the world*". Light exposes, shows things up. Eph. 5:11, "*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*"

We can never expect to be acceptable to those of darkness. If we are at peace with the world, it is likely because we have sold out to it, or compromised with it.

Conclusion

What do you suffer for Christ's sake?

What "*marks*" and scars do you carry to show that you have fought battles for Him who will be our eternal Rewarder?

