

LET THE BIBLE SPEAK SERIES

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Branded For Christ

Our lesson, this morning, concerns a statement made by the apostle Paul about his dedication to the Cause of Christ, which involved some of the suffering he endured as one of Christ's representatives. All of us are marked in some way, it may be some habit in speech, walk or gesture etc 1.The criminal in prison, for example, is marked by his stripes 2.The sailor or soldier in uniform is marked by his insignia 3.Cattle are branded. Paul said "I bear branded on my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" Galatians 6:17. This statement is a probable reference to the physical sufferings he had endured during his service to the Lord. Such were in contrast to the body mark demanded by the Judaizers, which cost them nothing. Over, and against, the circumcision they required as proof of obedience to the law he set the indelible tokens, sustained in his own body, of his loyalty to Jesus. "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." Gal.6:14 Paul had suffered much for the cause of Christ: hunger, thirst, cold, poorly clothed, beaten, and homeless. 1Cor. 4:11 He was, by his own declaration, abundant in labors, in stripes and in prison, five times beaten with 39 stripes, Beaten with rods three times---stoned once, shipwrecked a night and day in the deep, in Perils of waters--robbers--in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea and among false brethren. Weary--toil, sleeplessness, hunger and thirst, fasting, cold and naked. He suffered greatly for his Faith and dedication the cause of truth and right. But what about you, what about me? Do we bear any marks of our service to God? To begin with, I would like to point out that We Bear The Marks of Whatever Enslaves Us. The slave is always branded by his master: 1. Man with bloated face and red eyes---slave to strong drink. 2. Man whose restless spirit and hard face tell us he is a slave to sensuality. 3. Man whose unprincipled business tactics tell us 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; while they hate themselves for the sins that brand them. The true servant of Christ bears the marks of the master. These are marks of ownership. When we sing "Now I belong to Jesus, Jesus belongs to me..." we are telling the truth? We all bear the imprint of our owner. If you want to know who or what is a man's master, listen to his conversation, and unconsciously he will give you a clue. The Christian is not his own. We have been bought with a price. Christ has established his claims upon us. His chains are chains of love, and they are infinitely stronger than links of steel. Just try to get away from Him. You'll find it is not easy. You don't need to advertise or announce you are a Christian. The world will know whether or not you have been with Jesus. They knew all about Peter--Mt.26:69, if the world cannot pick you out,--something is wrong.

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 the service of Christ, these were not the only "Marks of Jesus that he bore." The true marks of Jesus are not outward, but inward, not physical but spiritual. We may think that the true marks of a Christian are such things as "observing the Lord's supper, or giving, or attending church. These things are important, but not the real marks of a Christian. The "marks" of Jesus are not evident by a crucifix on a chain, or a cross around the neck or having one's name on a church roll. The "Marks of Jesus" are certain features of character such as: Obedience--Jno.8:31 "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." Christian discipleship **depends** on heeding and obeying completely and continuing to allow the word of God to guide your life. It is to have absolute sway: regarding the decisions you make regarding the lifestyle you live regarding the companion you choose regarding the attitude you maintain regarding the relationships you have regarding the standards you abide by. Love---Jno.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 for another.: It makes no difference: how long you may have been a member of the church, how faithful you may have been to attend on a regular basis, how much you give every Sunday, how great a voice you may have for singing, or how dedicated you may be in teaching the lost... If you don't have love, real, genuine, Christ-like love in your heart for others, then you are not one of His disciples. A person, who has the love of Christ within their heart, will not be difficult to get along with will not be critical of everything that happens will not be judgmental of everybody will not be rude in their disposition will not be instigators of trouble will not be deceitful in their methods And will not be easily offended by others If Love is there: no false accusations will be made no corrupt communication will be spoken no ungodly hypocrisy will be present no malicious gossip will be repeated no bitter attitude will be expressed no selfish position will be taken And no immoral behavior will be participated in...

3. Bear Fruit John 15:8 "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." There must be fruit if the tree is to be productive and beneficial. A tree does not bear fruit for its own purpose, but for others. So in order to be one of Christ's disciples, you must be a godly influence in the lives of others. Gal.5:22-23 "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law." These characteristics will be revealed in the manner in which you... comfort those who are lonely inspire those who are discouraged help those who are helpless cheer those who are sad lift those who have fallen calm those who are frustrated

IV. Do We Bear The Marks of The Lord Jesus?

A. Many today want to make Christianity popular, agreeable and convenient.

1. The Lord said the world hated Him and that it would hate us also. John 15:18 2. Jesus invited us, not to a picnic, but to a pilgrimage--not to a frolic, but to a fight. He offered us, not an excursion, but an execution, a death to self, sin, and the world. Jesus wanted men to count the cost and expect persecution. 2Tim.3:12 "yea and all..."

I hope we will remember this the next time we sing:

"Am I a soldier of the cross, A follower of the Lamb? And shall I fear to own His cause
Or blush to speak His name? No, I must fight if I would win; Increase my courage, Lord.
I'll bear the cross, endure the shame, Supported by thy Word."

C. Today we have geared our program too much to entertain and gain the favor of the world. 1. We seem to try to see how much like this world we can become instead of how little. 2. We try to argue that times are different, that the church is in better standing, so that we need not suffer as much reproach as our fathers did. 3. But the times were never darker, and never has the devil been in fuller control. 4. Christians are a foreign influence and a minority group in a heathen world. 5. If the church is not stirring up trouble with the world, and suffering reproach, then it needs to make a close examination of its very life and teaching. 6. We are good Christians only in proportion as we are bringing upon our heads the hatred, scorn and hostility of our present age. a. We are "the salt of the earth" Salt not only preserves, it also irritates. b. We are light of the world, and light exposes, it shows things up. 7. We can never expect to be acceptable to a generation of darkness; 8. If we are at peace with the world, it is likely because we have sold out to it or compromised with it. 9. Do we, by our life, ever make anyone think of Jesus

Story: A bitter cold night in NYC Little man in a faded rain coat and tattered hat was walking around in G.C. Station. He was really wealthy, but came there two or three times a week, to see if he could find anyone who needed help. He dressed this way so he could get close to them. That night a soldier sat on a bench dejected and unhappy. "What is your trouble?" He replied "What is that to you?" "I just thought I might be able to help you" "Nobody can help me" "Well tell me your trouble anyway." So the soldier said "I have a 10 day pass, and am on my way home. My family is expecting me.

Somebody stole my wallet and ticket, I don't even have enough money to get back to camp." "And to tell you the truth, I'm homesick" The man took him over to the window, bought a round trip ticket, pressed some money into his hand and gave him his business card. Two weeks later the little man received a letter, the soldier returned the money. In the letter he said "I had the best time I ever had. From now on I will always think of Jesus as a little man with a faded raincoat and a tattered hat." I wonder if we ever make anyone think of Jesus?