

The marks of the Lord Jesus

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[0 : 00] We will now turn with me to the rest in the, it's still to be read in the Galatians, Galatians chapter 6 and verse 17 particularly.

From him first let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the master of the Lord Jesus. The master of the Lord was having trouble, and those who were causing him trouble, were those from whom he least expected it. So he would feel very high in the estimation of these Galatians Christians from the very beginning.

So much further to you, it reminds them that in those days, he would put the fact out of the very eye and give them to him. In that case, the fact of looking out of the eye, underlies the view that so many people take, that one of Paul's great handicaps and difficulties, throughout his ministry was a defective high sight. And some go further and say that probably, he had in his flesh a master of the Lord Jesus from the cross that he carried with him from that confrontation on the road to the master. A reminder of the light brighter than the sun, as he said, that's trying to find him there.

That may very well be the physical defect that is one of the marks of the Lord Jesus. Just as Jacob's lips falls after he had received the angel. He won a great victory that day, but he was given a reminder.

[2 : 04] For example, until the rest of his life, he lived from the size which the angel had touched. Where'd he go with me? He even had a very high singing for a prayer.

And now, the recording of the reception reminds him of what he had been doing at the beginning. And how contrasted that was with what they were doing now. He says, you did run well.

Or better put, you were running well. What happened to you? What's gone wrong? Because obviously there has been a change. And the changes is that Judaizing creatures have come in among them. That is to say, men who professed the gospel and yet wanted to hold on to certain rights of the old faith, Judaism, particularly the right of circumcision.

And they did this. It would be not so much from conviction that this was necessary, a necessary part of the religion. But, as Paul hints in this very chapter, to say themselves, as many as make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised.

Only as they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. They weren't ready to suffer persecution from the cross of Christ. And of course, if they did continue the right of circumcision, then a Jewish perpetrator, at least, would be reasonably satisfied.

[3 : 48] It had its root in cowardice. And so they wanted these people to become of the same faith with themselves, with regard to circumcision. And Paul once had it.

It wasn't a small point. It wasn't something that they could leave as an open question. It was a vital part of their faith. Circumcision belonged to the Old Testament, Abrahamic covenant.

But now the purpose of that covenant and of that mark of the covenant were gone. A new Israel had arisen. The mark of the old covenant were no longer brought into the flesh of those who professed the new faith, for there was no need for them.

That sign was, among other things, an indication that the perfect redemption, the perfect satisfaction for sin had not yet been offered.

And that was what lay behind all the sacrificing and all the rights which have become very strange to all outside the Jewish community.

[5 : 01] That their purpose was no longer existing. All things have passed away, says Paul.

All things have become new. And if they insisted on continuing this right of circumcision, well then, it implied that the work of Christ was somehow or other defective and incomplete.

So he won't have it. And he declares, for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

That's how you knew the member of the new Israel. Not by any mark in his flesh. But the mark in his life. A new creature.

All things have passed away, behold all things have become new. So this epistle is in polemical strain.

[6 : 06] After a brief salutation, he plunges right into his rebuke. And he rebuked them with such authority, when he did turn to the language of reproof.

As we learn from the epistles to the Corinthians, that some of those to whom these epistles of rebuke were addressed, resented it, and questioned his authority.

Who was he to rebuke them? He didn't come to them with the authority of an apostle. He didn't follow Jesus when Jesus was in this world.

He didn't know Jesus during his earthly ministry. Christ had finished his work and was back in heaven. Before Paul came into the faith. Who was he to reprove them? And he had come to them without any letters of commendation.

He had just come and presented himself. He had no credential. He was an unaccredited ambassador at the base. And again Paul picks them up on that.

[7 : 21] He says, were not the marks of an apostle done among you? Letters of commendation, do I need them?

Ye are my epistles. Ye are my letters of commendation. Ye are the mark of the Holy Spirit upon my ministry.

That I have a commission from the Christ to commission me on the Damascus Road. To become henceforth his servant. So having dealt with the grounds of dispute.

He ends on the note of grace. grace he had said he has stated his case and he says from henceforth let no man trouble me about these marks in the flesh that you are setting such emphasis upon for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus and then as Christ ambassador he pronounces his benediction upon them as many as walk according to this rule peace be on them and mercy and upon the Israel of God rather than the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit amen so that's what it's all about but now look in let us look in particular at this phrase for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus and there I want to suggest you have first of all a strange boast and a great claim and an impressive vindication a strange boast I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus now I say strange because the work the word translated mark marks in this verse is in the original the word from which our word stigma come

I bear in my body the stigmata the marks of the Lord Jesus and in the early use of that word even from the beginning and had associations of shame for instance the slave was branded by his masters so that if he didn't make a brick for liberty and got away with it his recovery would maybe be made easier by the very fact that he had that brand that mark in his flesh telling who his master was the master who had bought him and placed his yoke upon him so that it had that note of reproach this word stigma as it has in the use that we make of it in its anglicised form talk about a man as having a stigma if there's if some reproacher or a claim to well that's what Paul is at he indicates as I was saying in that recent sermon here that he became the captive of the Lord Jesus when he was converted a captive and he signed himself from that time as the slave of the Lord Jesus who had then taken him captive he bore the stigmata of the Lord Jesus Christ and he was proud of it he didn't want to run away from that service it is natural that the slave and slaves under the normal condition conditions of slavery he should want to make a break for it that should never be characteristic of a Christian under the mastery to which he has subjected himself in the gospel make me a captive Lord and then I shall be free

[12 : 35] I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus now there are others who take this in a very literal sense and that literal sense doesn't look at all in the case of Paul in particular to do injustice to the original this is that the marks of the Lord Jesus to which Paul was referring were literally those marks in his very body marks of suffering marks of what he had endured since he became a preacher of the gospel and known as and since he became known as an ambassador of Christ when they scourged him so viciously in Philippi such a scourging must have left a mark in his very flesh from then on when they stoned him in Lystra it would be strange indeed if those stones which had knocked him unconscious in so much that they thought he was dead didn't leave permanent marks in his body and he lists several other experiences of suffering that he had from which he may indeed have received quite literally the marks of the Lord Jesus in the respect that he sustained those marks of suffering for the sake of Christ

I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus now that can very well go with the more spiritual interpretation which I have been given to these words hitherto and yet we must give a wider meaning still to this phrase I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus because you see Paul is as I've been stressing talking about a new Israel in which that mark in the flesh that stigma to have circumcision was no longer required that wasn't the brand by which the member of the new Israel was to be known it is something far more wonderful look at chapter five that part of it that we read marks of the flesh well he says the works of the flesh are manifest and he enumerates these adultery fornication uncleanness lasciviousness idolatry witchcraft hatred variance emulations wrath pride seditious heresies you see it wasn't literal marks in the flesh that he was referring to there it was a manner of life in other words a man's conduct he was known by his conduct he revealed and they were marked of an entirely different character in the new Israel of God the true and sincere

Christians and he enumerates these but the fruit of the spirit is love joy peace long-suffering gentleness goodness faith meekness temperance against such there is no law only that of Christ have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts two sets of marks the works of the flesh the fruit of the spirit so he's given this wide interpretation to what he's saying about the marks of the flesh I bear in my body he says the marks of the Lord Jesus all he bore in his body the mark of circumcision because he was circumcised as an unconverted Jew and he bore in his body the marks of suffering as I've been saying he suffered for the gospel and for Christ and those marks were in his flesh too but much more important than these were these marks of conduct marks of the new creation if any man be in Christ he's a new creature all things have passed away circumcision among us all things have become new they that are Christ have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts it's a new life that he is unfolding to them there and he reminds the Corinthians when he rebukes them for their offenses and their unseemly conduct that they're contrary to the marks by which they were professing

Christ he reminds them of this tremendously important fact he are not your own if your profession is true he are not your own you have obeyed the gospel in the terms in which Christ himself stated it when he said to those who are weary and heavy laden and burdened come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart and in me we shall find rest unto your souls the new life through Christ you are not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ don't sin against it you bear in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus if you are true to the professions you make you make so that brings us to the application of these words to our own life if we are not servants of Christ we are the bondmen of sin verily verily said Jesus he that committed sin is the servant or the slave of sin not that he is conscious of his bondage because he has never known anything else he has been a sinner all his life he has endured to the conditions of spiritual servitude and then God made him conscious of his plight the spirit convicted him of sin showed him what his bondage was that it was that it was the cause of his own neglect of the gospel and refused of the gospel offer but once we accept the gospel then the mark of the Lord Jesus is upon us in the new life into which he has led us the Lord Jesus now Paul is talking about glorying in things he has been talking about stigma and stigmata reproaches things that he gloried you'll find it in the Philippians the things that he gloried when he was ignorant of salvation through grace and he calls it here in the thirteenth verse glorying in your flesh because circumcision bound the person who was circumcised to works and they came to pin their to build their hope of salvation upon those works just a compliance with the law as if they ever could fulfill all the duties of the law and they couldn't but they were glorying in the flesh in the past as Paul himself had done you see this man is talking about things in his own experience and he tells them what he glories in now this man who bears in his body the marks of the Lord 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 that's the life of the Christians

is it yours is it mine you in that sense bear in our body in our Christian behavior the marks of the Lord Jesus well now we pass on to regard this phrase as containing a great claim I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus as I say there's some controversy as to the or at least difference of opinion as to what the marks signify in in daily life and we come back to the mark that was branded upon the slave to tell who he wants there's that in the Christian life too but what are the marks of this Christian service this Christian behavior which Paul is in Calcutta well the brand upon the slave especially if that brand was willingly accepted as it was by the apostle Paul that binds a man to

obedience ye are my friends said Jesus if you do all things whatsoever I have commanded you so the obedience is one of the marks of the Lord Jesus it came to light very quickly in his own life no sooner was that meeting with Jesus on the Damascus road no sooner was the change brought in this man than he said

[24 : 20] Lord what will thou have me to do that's the mark of the Lord Jesus obedience in the Christian life and you find this right throughout the ministry of Paul remember when he and Silas purposed to go into Bithynia the Spirit suffered them not that was their plan it apparently wasn't the Spirit's plan for them at that particular time and the Spirit gave them instead a vision of a man of Macedonia saying come over and help us and Paul gathered that that meant that Bithynia was not to see them just now but there was work for them to do in Philippi Philippi's time of visitation had come and the vision of the man from Macedonia had an impelling force come over and help us and straight away he abandoned his own plans and obeyed God and that comes into the Christian life to respond to the master of the Lord Jesus think of the Gethsemane prayer not my will but thine be done let it be that in our lives if we indeed profess the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and then again self-sacrifice is a mark of the Lord Jesus in the Christian life that's one of the stigmata of the gospel and how marked that was in Christ himself

Paul speaks of that in writing to the Corinthians why he says you know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ how though he was rich for your sakes he became poor for self-sacrifice that he through his poverty might be rich have we that mark of the Lord Jesus he would do we obey when it costs us something and costs us something great as it did to him as it brought into us a self-sacrificing spirit again another mark of the Lord Jesus is an interest in his work a zeal for his cause and particularly for the salvation of souls and how marked that was in the master other sheep he said

I have that are not of this whole them also I must call and he went from place to place doing good issuing his father's call to sinful men and how characteristic that was of Paul also think of him with his physical infirmities his discomfort his sense of danger and impending martyrdom trudging through those through those difficult and dangerous mission fields which he visited gathering in the course of his journeys yes in a quite literal sense marks in his flesh marks of suffering that would be with him to his dying day he had thrown away everything for Christ's sake and these marks the marks of his servitude were revealed in his conduct and service how do we stand on that comparison now lastly

I look upon this this phrase I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus I look upon those words I say as an impressive vindication he had been charging he wasn't a true apostle he didn't come to them with letters of commendation the other apostles hadn't commissioned him to come he was a freelance he wasn't able to produce documents that would give him credit the credit that he needed to be recognized as an ambassador to Christ now he has answered them and he says from henceforth let no man trouble me

I stated my case I told you what marks a true believer in Christ and by the grace of God I am what I am a slave of Christ I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus and he didn't hide the marks he displayed his credentials this is the man who said this one thing I do forsaking the things that are behind pressing forth to the things that are before I press towards the mark for the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus there was that mark of zeal in his new life he wanted men to know that he was Christ he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ it is the power he says of God and to salvation to everyone that believer

[31 : 01] Peter had lapsed in that respect when he denied his master Christ to save his skin to save perhaps his very life probably not even and not that Peter once Christ proclaimed him from the condition into which he had backslidden and with that denial he too bore in his body from then on in a very remarkable stigmata of the Lord Jesus the Lord knows them that are his, he knows them by the marks too he's talking about the coin you remember as if he said and in verse and in a reverse side and on the one side the Lord knows them that are his, the Lord is reading the sign in the believer's life and on the other, the manward side the other side of the coin let every man that professes the name of the Lord Jesus depart from iniquity let him walk in this new life by these marks the shepherd knows his sheep and by these marks the very world is able to discern something in the lives of God's true people which convinces them that there's something there that didn't come just through nature they don't know the meaning or the operation of grace but there's something that they don't know about it's grace that makes it all and these marks will be the vindication of believers in the great judgment itself

Christ has given us a picture of the judgment in the 25th chapter of Matthew he warns us of the doom of the wicked they didn't have the marks they had said to Christ depart from us for he desire not the knowledge of thy ways and he now in justice and judgment was saying to them depart from me he cursed it but to these other people those on the right hand come ye blessed of my father in hell the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world but they weren't seeing the marks themselves but he did they said Lord when saw we thee hungry and fed thee and thirsty and gave thee to drink and make it and clothed thee and these other things when did we do these things to thee but the marks were there and the master saw them as much as you did it unto one of the least of these my brethren you did it unto me my church and myself to the humblest member of my body my spiritual body a one one with me and in a suchest event of these services even to one of the least of these my brethren even in giving him a cup of cold water in my name to one of these little ones ye did it unto me so Paul claims that he's got the full attestation of the claim that he makes

I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus so let it be with us let us pray we come to thee O Lord with thanksgiving for the gospel for the appeal which by the Holy Spirit it makes to the souls of men shifting their hope and confidence from unsafe foundations to the sure foundation of the finished work of Jesus Christ O Lord be thou so precious to us that we shall rejoice in this stigmata of the Lord Jesus and endeavor in daily life and conduct to commend him to the world around us we remember his own charge ye are the light of the world let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father who is in heaven these things we ask for my name's sake amen