

The Marks of the Lord Jesus

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[0:00] Let's stand for the Word of God, shall we?

Galatians 6 verse 17 Paul a marked man. Paul had his critics but he had his credentials too. He said, I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Paul bore some marks in his body that show who he belonged to. Paul bore the marks, firstly we could say the marks of a servant. The marks of a servant. His scarves show us that we must serve God no matter what. No matter what the scars. And the scars on Paul's body were as the branding marks of Christ. Now in some places around the world cattle are branded on their flesh to mark their ownership, who they belong to. And people once were done such too. That slaves bore marks on their bodies.

In the Bible it says that slaves were marked. As God's servants we too bear the scars that identify who our master is. And Paul had subjected his body so much and suffered so much persecution that in Christ's name his body was scarred. Because of that opposition and that suffering that he went through. Yet he still stood firm and proclaimed the grace and mercy of God.

Paul laboured on. And when you see a labourer's hands they're worn aren't they? I know, you know, I had some holiday time and I probably got my hands all marred more than before, than before because I got involved in my garden and I pulled all these tree branches and this great creeper and I was scarred all over. And likewise too manual work leaves its mark. And I'd imagine that the Lord Jesus was such a man as he would have laboured as a young man in the carpenter's shop. His hands would have been rough and shown evidence of the work that he did. And God the Father too is called the husband man in John 15 or the gardener of the vine. And when you think of a gardener their hands show the signs of their labour. And Paul knew what it meant to be serving God. Here is Paul's CV you might like to turn there in 2 Corinthians 11. His CV, his credentials if you like. They show his qualifications if you like as a servant of God. The scars, the credentials that he bore. In 2 Corinthians 11 verse 23 and we've got the verses here to help you too.

Thanks to the good suggestions someone made that we display the verses so we can see and follow and read along. Paul writes, are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool. I am law. In labours more abundant. In stripes above measure. In prisons more frequent. In deaths oft. He got right to the point. The door of death as it were.

[3:37] Verse 24 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. And a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journey's often. In perils of waters. In perils of robbers. In perils by my known 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. Verse 27. In weariness and painfulness. In watchings often. In hunger and thirst. In fastings often. In cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without. That which cometh upon me daily.

The care of all the churches. Paul was a marked man. There was something that marked this man. He says for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Paul was a marked man.

And like one preacher put it. He had this motto. My main ambition in life is to be on the devil's most wants of list. Paul was such a man. Such a man. He had once served the devil as the persecutor of the Christians. He hated them. In Acts 9 we read that he was one described as breathing out threatenings and slaughtered. That's serious stuff isn't it?

That's a man. Threatenings and slaughtered against God's people. He was bloodthirsty as the former man saw. But while he was on that Damascus road as he was setting out to cause havoc to the church of God The Lord stopped him in his tracks and he was converted, turned around.

[5:26] He did a U-turn on that Damascus road, as it were, as much as he still went to Damascus, but then he preached the gospel there. He himself became one of the persecuted. And we know, as I know, our brother Ian has

a heart especially for the persecuted church around the world.

And it's happening still. The scars on Paul's body told their story. In Lystra, a mob had tried to stone him to death. In Acts 14, verse 19, it says, They dragged him out of the city and left him for death. Surely this abuse would have left it scarce. In Philippi, Paul and Silas were beaten with many stripes. In Acts 16, verse 22, the Jews set a limit on the beating of 39 stripes, but the Romans had no such restriction.

Paul writes how he received stripes above measure. So likely he had many and great in intensity. Think of that.

Paul had the credentials, didn't he? A marked man. He remarks that he also received five beatings from the Jews, none of which were recorded in Acts. So each of these beatings, if you reckon it up, at least 39 wounds, that's no less than 195 stripes from these five beatings alone.

[6:48] On top of that, three times Paul was whipped with rods, you know, great heavy sticks. And two of these occasions are not recorded elsewhere in the New Testament.

This is a Roman punishment. And it violated Paul's rights as a Roman citizen, but he still suffered this. So think of it, brothers and sisters, today. Paul's body was marked and disfigured.

That's ministry. That's serving God. That's normal when you serve God. It will be normal for you, as one who serves God, to face some discomfort and trouble.

It's normal. You will be attacked, criticised, and you'll suffer fatigue and get worn down. You will be a target. A target. I know in the prayer time, we're talking how the preachers can be in the crosshairs.

And for all of us, as God's people, in the workplace, when we go about our lives, people will mock your Christian testimony and laugh and scorn. And it can be, as it happens with us, that someone's got a beef against God, something's gone wrong in their life, that they take it out on those that are Christians.

[8:01] They take it out on you for no reason. It could be other than that they hate God or they've become a sceptic, they've become anti-God for whatever reason it is.

And so when you dare to say something, to testify, to witness, they'll take it out on you. Expect that. If you will serve God, expect that as Paul did.

I've experienced that. And I'm sure many here have too. But you will be attacked as a Christian. Expect to have to wear some of that.

What other marks that we bear? What scars do we carry for the Lord? I'm sure we all can think of things that have happened in our lives. If we look back, wow, I had some painful experiences just because I love God and want to follow Him.

Scars. Paul gloried in these scars as banquets of honour for his master. These ugly, shocking scars were yet beautiful signs of God's grace, of God's victory in his life.

[9:02] And for the believer, it should not surprise us that as we serve God, we will suffer. We're told to expect that. In 2 Timothy 3, Paul was exhorting young Timothy.

He said, But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured, but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

Yea, he says yea, listen to this, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

It's normal, expected scars.

And they serve as a reminder of those battles we've been through, of those struggles we've endured. Thank God for your scars today.

Thank God for them. As you serve him faithfully, they're a reminder of something. Now when we think of scars on our body, or experiences, there may not be physical scars, but even things that we've endured, that we still have memories of some painful thing, that they're a reminder of something unpleasant, mostly for us today, aren't they?

[10:20] Those things that have occurred all over our body, for example, sports wounds. There could be some footy players here, they've suffered some sports wounds, there's something there, there's a bit of a pain left after that injury they've had, could be some months ago, years ago,

decades ago, football scars.

Could be war wounds, combat. You might have seen times of wartime, I know people here have. They've been in countries torn apart by war and conflict, and there's memories there, traumatic things they've seen and heard about.

It leaves a scar, doesn't it? What about surgical wounds, surgical cuts? We've had some operations here and there, I had something cut off of my skin, and there's still a mark there from where it was taken.

It's a reminder. Maybe accidents you've suffered, falling off motorbikes, for example. Scars, they're a reminder. As they are for a farmer, that the cattle belongs to him, he knows those that are his, because they're marked.

And so too, for us that are saved, God marks us. And sometimes it could be through the times of trial, those painful times, when we've had to dig deep and trust him more.

[11:37] You'll get some scars as you serve God. So let's serve the Lord, no matter what, no matter what the persecution, no matter what the opposition. Let's not be deterred by the scars.

Do not be deterred by the suffering. You will get some scars. Just as Paul had those scars marking him like a badge that he wore, marking him as a servant of God.

He bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Is there anything about us, about you and me, that marks us, that marks us, as to who we belong to, that identifies us, that we belong to our Lord? You know that we talk sometimes and God willing, as a church, this is our prayer and our vision that we will have and truly see New Testament Christianity here where we fellowship and live and go about our lives.

And that this church will be a New Testament church in the sense of that we believe the book can we practice what it says. And yet, have we stood with God's people that were in the book in Acts 5, the New Testament church.

[12:52] What happened there? Acts 5 verse 14 And it was a time where they were let go after a time of being held captive. And to him they agreed and when they had called the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus and let them go.

And they departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Will we stand in their number? It says they were beaten because they spoke the name of Jesus. You know, I know someone just days ago that was telling me that they've been challenged because they've been witnessing too much of work.

You know, and they face potentially losing their job. Now it happens today still, doesn't it? If you're going to be an out and out Christian then expect to suffer something for that name.

And that you could be as those in Acts 5 accounts of worthy to suffer shame for his name. Will we have men and women, marked men and women who will stand, who will be marked out, who will stand out, who will serve God and bear the scars of service?

[14:26] I pray so. Secondly, we see that Paul not only bore the marks, the scars of a servant as it were, but he bore the marks of a soldier. Battle scars.

Battle scars. This is not to glorify war. We know war is ugly and awful. But there is a war that we're in that's a good warfare. A fight that's a good fight.

And his scars show us that we must soldier on. Paul's scars show we must soldier on no matter what, the scars. The scars come from actual combat with the enemy.

There are soldiers here today, soldiers of the Lord, bearing battle scars. the marks of a soldier show the battles they've been through. And friends, today there's a war going on around us and we're in it.

We ought to be. Yet many Christians are not aware of this warfare. When we make a stand for Christ, we will suffer scars. Every year around the world, even now, 150,000 people die as a martyr for Christ.

[15:28] That's amazing statistics, isn't it? 150,000 every year die for Christ. Perhaps it's news to you today that you're in a war.

You might think, well, the devil isn't bothering me too much. It's been said that some Christians, that the devil is not bothering about them. The devil is not bothering some Christians because they're not bothering the devil either.

You're no threat to the devil, so maybe in that case you don't have too much of those battle scars. But Paul urged his own son in the faith, Timothy, he said, Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Endure hardness. See Timothy 2, verse 3. He says to Timothy that Timothy stepped over the line to that place of hardness.

And we're called on to to wear the uniform, to be clothed with Christ. There's a clear identification. You go down the shops and they stand out, don't they? The men and women in military uniform, they stand out from the crowd.

[16:40] It's clear what they are. And it should be clear of us too who we are. As you identify with your commanding officer and his army, the church of God, it will be clear who you are.

Paul knew that hardships and difficulties Timothy would face and he says, as he says to professing Christians through the scriptures today, endure hardness. Endure hardness.

Fight not. Fear not. Fight the good fight. Those spiritual strongholds calling, that we're called on to tear down false beliefs, mindsets, behaviours.

You know, when you tear down strongholds, you're going to get some wounds. You're going to get some scars in the process. Don't be surprised about that. When you battle on in the Christian life, it's normal for you to get some battle scars.

And Paul says here, endure hardness with me. There's a sense where it's suffering hardship in company with. That's the sense of it here. He's saying, be a partaker in the afflictions with me.

[17:42] You're not a one-man army. None of us are. We're not a one-man army. We've got brothers and sisters in arms, comrades around us who've enlisted with us in this common cause, in this military service for the great King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The commanding officer of the universe has called us into his company and we are here as an army unit, as it were. And the picture here is not of a picnic, but of combat.

And so we're called to afflictions and trouble. I think in some ways these days we're seeing the rise of a kind of soft, effeminate kind of Christianity. And a Christianity that knows only softness and ease.

And it's no wonder as a result we've got airy, fairy, fairy floss kind of Christians. And the message seems to be come to Christ and walk a path of ease and blessing.

No talk of a cross. But we are soldiers, brothers and sisters. And patiently we must endure the hardships of the battlefield as our Master did in his faithfulness.

[18:55] And just as a soldier is drilled and disciplined for the fight, Paul would have seen that in Rome. He was surrounded by soldiers. He'd have seen the severe training, the discipline that they had to engage in.

Paul was a soldier of Christ. What about you? About me today? Are we in the battle zone or are we too easily settled into the comfort zone?

Are you a threat to the enemy, to his strongholds? Maybe we should do something to stir him up a bit. Tell your family about Christ. Step over the line with Grant's testimony.

How much time have we got to communicate the gospel to those we love? Step over the line. Let's stir up the fight. At boot camp, the raw recruits endure hardness.

They're taught that. It's been said that the war really is won at the boot camp rather than at the battlefield because it's about the hardening, the disciplining, the endurance that people learn in that time of recruit camp, of the boot camp.

[19:59] They learn discipline there. They learn obedience there. Through endless parades and hours of drills and long route marches and constant pressure, drab food and guard duty and sergeants that yell and berate them and lectures and being exposed to the weather.

It's all about toughening them up, strengthening them so that they'll be resilient. And Roman soldiers were such efficient soldiers. Paul would have seen that. So endure hardness, Paul says, as a good soldier.

Be prepared to lay down your life. There's a hardness. Of course, there's a tenderness too. There's a love. But there's a hardness towards the enemy that we must be resilient in facing the dangers ahead to suffer the trouble and to know that it's not a picnic.

It's a battle. And so we engage in this until death or until the Lord returns. So Paul urges Timothy to this faithfulness to endure hardness.

We see Paul has said he bore the marks of the Lord Jesus. The marks of a servant. Christ was the absolute servant, wasn't he?

[21:17] Of a soldier. The endurance of Christ. And then he bears the marks, if you like, of a living sacrifice. The message for us is to be steadfast no matter what the scars.

Don't let the scars stop you. If in that Christian life that you're living, you get some knockbacks, you get knocked down and flat on your face, you get punished and criticized and attacked and wounded deeply within.

Deep, deep hurts. Don't let it stop you. Don't let it stop you. Soldier on. Serve God as a living sacrifice. Be steadfast.

In Romans 12, that lovely scripture, I know Adam loves it so well, it's known in Romans 12, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living, sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Sometimes we may face pain and hurt and we can, you know, the human nature would be I'm going to pack my bags and go home. I'm going to take my ball and bag, whatever it be, and we sulk off like a dog with its tail between its legs, we get hurt, we get too easily discouraged, we'd rather take an easier road.

[22:46] It's easy to ease back. It's the human nature. It's the flesh. The flesh would have us eased back to not push ourselves, to lose our drive, to give up.

We talk about servants bearing scars. Servants, soldiers bearing scars. And we see sports people too. They bear scars. What if a champion athlete had a devastating injury and just gave up?

It would be the end of their career. They'd be finished. But it could be that that devastating injury is just prior to the gold medal.

They've just got to get back on the track. It happens all the time. Athletes, sportsmen and women, champion cyclists, runners, they have a fall, a crash, they suffer all kinds of serious injuries, but the champions don't let stop them.

They just get back up on their feet, don't they? They get back on the track, don't they? Or don't we? Brother, sister, when you're feeling like you're back, you're flat on your back, get back on the track.

[24:07] Press on. We're called to the same mind. Dig deep. Have that stamina of a champion and bear the marks of a champion athlete that will show, yes, I had a fall.

I hurt myself, I wounded, I scratched, I scraped, I broke, but I'm restored. And Paul urges us as the champion athlete, urges us back on the racetrack for the gospel race in 1 Corinthians 9.

He says, know you not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize, so run that ye, ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.

There's a, there's a temperance, there's a, you know, there's a self-control in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, one that's going to perish away, but we, an incorruptible, one that never will perish.

It will never corrupt. I therefore so run not as uncertainly, so fight I not as one that beats at the air, but I keep under my body, I bring it into subjection, lest that by enemies when I preach to others, I myself should be a castaway.

[25:26] Paul says, push through the pain barrier, push through the pain barrier, keep on running, keep on striving to win, discipline yourself. that's sacrifice, isn't it?

There's sacrifice there. You know, read of these men and women who, you know, champion swimmers who get up in the morning and jump into a cold pool and, you know, just crazy, isn't it?

There's sacrifice there, determination, that's what we need. Are you going through some toughness in your life? Is the trap hard going for you today?

You're running out of strength, your faith is weakening, it's tested. Paul says, press on, press on. Philippians 3, he says, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

He says, I press toward the mark. That's his focus, his focus, his vision, his attention, his concentration is on that mark. It's on that glorious finishing line where the Saviour is waiting.

[26:34] And we only be in that number of the champions of the faith as the men and women of Hebrews 12, you know, prior to listing them, it tells of that racetrack again, that picture of the racetrack, that athletic picture.

And he says, we're foreseeing, we are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses. Let us lay aside every way drag it off, all those things that hold us down.

And the sin which does so easily beset us and let us run with patience, with endurance, with patience, with perseverance, that race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher.

He started it and he's going to finish it of our faith. who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be weary and faint in your minds. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

[27:38] Paul says, well, the writer of Hebrews says that you've not yet resisted unto blood. You see these champion athletes and you hear stories of how they're bleeding when they get to that finishing line.

They've had a few scrapes and falls but they get there. That's what we need to do, brothers and sisters. We're champion races and let's not let afflictions and suffering, let's not let people and trouble put us off.

You know, there's people that you're not going to have everyone cheering you on. You're going to have some people throwing bottles at you. You're going to have some people spitting at you and cursing you as you run that race, as you're in that arena, as it were.

Not everyone's on your side. Chances are, everyone's, the majority's against you as a Christian. But don't let afflictions and setbacks deter you.

It's more reason ever more to be steadfast. So expect not to throw some afflictions your way. None of us are immune to that. Some have more crosses than I carry, but let's not let anything deter us.

[28:55] It's par for the course. It's normal. The Christian race is an obstacle race. It's a marathon, a steeplechase, a long-distance event. But Psalm 34 says, many are there afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.

Amongst us are some wounded soldiers here today, wounded warriors, bearing battle scars. Let's consider one another. There might be others more wounded than you are and you don't even realise it.

Amen? Sometimes I think, oh, I've got this battle scar, I'll scratch my little finger. Whereas someone's had an amputation or a deep internal injury.

Let's look after one another in this race, in this battle. Let us consider one another when we hear that rallying cry. not turn back, but rather continue to march forward, march forward, together, together, as a fighting unit, as we pray for one another, as we encourage one another, as we forbear one another.

You know, one day, all of my annoying characteristics that Julie knows only too well will be gone. I'll be gone. I won't be here in this body anymore. And not that I have too many annoying characteristics, of course.

[30:15] Just the odd one too we've got to work on. No, we've all got things we can do better. But let's encourage one another, even those annoying people. We're in this together, aren't we?

We're in this together. We're on the same side, aren't we? And we will stand and face the enemy together. That annoying fellow soldier who gets under your skin could be the one who shields you and carries you to safety when you're injured one day.

Isn't that safe? Even the ones we find it hard to get on with. We don't know how long we have with each other just as Brad was saying to be able to do that. One day that brother, that sister that annoys you could be dead.

And you'll miss that opportunity to encourage them. Life is a vapour. Love one another. Tomorrow could be too late to show that care.

One of you could pass away before you get another chance to exercise some compassion and some consideration. So, may this family gathering be a place, a haven for the hurting.

[31:24] May we be a cohesive fighting unit in God's army, standing shoulder to shoulder. We have a saviour who knows what it's like to bear the scars of suffering. He did not turn back.

He set His face as a flint. He set His face with determination towards Jerusalem. He knew what He was going to get there, the cross. Luke 9, and it came to pass when the time was come.

He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. His wounds bring us healing today.

And scars for us too can sometimes be God's plan. Wow. Maybe God's let me have that affliction. Wow. I can't fathom why, but maybe God's doing something in me.

Scars can be a sign of God's grace. Keeps us humble, like Jacob. Got that joint out of joint, didn't he? He strengthens us through our scars.

[32:27] Suffering helps us get a greater dependence upon Him. We get less self-reliant, don't we, when we know we've got something to endure. And suffering draws us to find comfort in the Scriptures.

The Word gives us life. Psalm 119 verse 50 it says, this is my comfort, this is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me.

Thy word hath quickened me. Thy word has made me alive. Thy word strengthens me. He sent His word, it says in Psalm 107 verse 20, He sent His word and He healed them and delivered them from their destructions.

Friends, your scars are not permanent. They're not permanent. They show for the meantime that you've been healed. They show the battles you've gone through and got through and you've been delivered, you've been set free.

There's different scars, there's different marks that we can bear. Friends, I want to tell you today, we're told in the Scriptures that one day it's going to be very trendy and popular to get yourself a tattoo.

[33:33] In Revelation 13 verse 16, And He caused us all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads.

A tattoo in your right hand and your forehead. The devil wants to mark you. And with some people you can see the imprint, the mark is on them. They're stamped as the devil's property.

Yet God's grace is always greater than our sin. He wipes the slate clean for just come to Him. And think of your life, just to wrap up.

Maybe you're suffering some scars today. And they're not scars of the kind we've been talking about. They're a wounding of your spirit. There's inner hurts. There's bitterness and pain.

There's internal wounds. God is your source of wholeness today. And no matter what your body feels like, He's your source of wholeness. And our scars can be to His praise.

[34:36] Even a testimony that God's helped you to get through. A testimony of the mission He's called you to. As Joseph could testify, as he looked back, of that awful time of his family, chucking him in the hole in the ground, selling him as a slave, treating him so badly, so badly, that Joseph could say, it was for the good.

God had planned it this way. And so we can do the same. When we look at our scars, the hurts we've overcome, we can rejoice in the glory of the cross, in the victory of the cross, in the power of the cross today, bearing the marks, the marks of a servant.

As you serve God, expect criticism. You are his enemy. You are a target as a Christian. And we've got people attacking us and we can't get our head around why on earth are they doing this.

It's because you're a servant of the Lord. People have got a problem with God, they'll have a problem with you. Don't worry about it. It's normal. The marks of a servant of the Lord. The marks of

a soldier of the Lord.

You're in a battle for goodness sake, expect it. And bearing the marks of a living sacrifice, as your life should be marked out, marked for his glory, with the fruit of the Spirit, with God's peace ruling, with the character of God, with integrity and humility.

[36:04] You'll be marked men and women. There'll be a mark about your life that you're not of the world. You're in it, but you're not of it. You've been marked by the word instead of the world.

So let us therefore be steadfast, brothers and sisters today. No matter what the personal pain, the failures of the past, the scars that you still carry, he is with you.

Into your hardness, serve him, soldier on, and be that living sacrifice. Dig deep and trust him to take you through. And it'll be a testimony of his grace after the event.

Those scars will not be such that that you grieve them, but that you think, well, yeah, the Lord's helped me through. I've got through that by his grace.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Thank you.