

## CHAPTER VIII

### *The Stigmata of the Cross*

*"From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the brand-marks of the Lord Jesus."  
(Galatians. 6. 17. Free Translation.)*

Such are the words of a heart filled to the overflow with the spirit of compassionated consecration. These words are the magnificent outburst of a fearless and faithful man, the language of a man wholly dedicated and utterly abandoned to his Master and his ministry. This impassioned outburst is the message of a soul who not only has hoisted his colors, but has nailed them to the mast-head. He has driven the nails right through. The words of my text are the battle-cry of a harassed, yet proud fighting soldier of the Cross. "Leave me alone! for I bear in my body the brand-marks of Jesus."

Paul had been used of God to found the Galatian church, and upon visiting them after three years of absence, he found them in danger of departing from the simple faith of the Gospel. False teachers had come and unsettled them in their faith and in their confidence in their spiritual father.

The letter is rough and rugged. In this fighting epistle the apostle gets down to the root of the trouble right away. "I am ashamed," he writes, "that you so quickly deserted the Gospel of God's grace. I know these false prophets have also asserted that I preached a message of my own compilation. This is not true. I never received it from man nor was I taught it of man. These false teachers, moreover, fail to preach the gospel of the Crucified Redeemer. Let it be clearly known that I, myself, glory in the stigma, shame and reproach of

Calvary. God förbid 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. I am a crucified man."

### *Brands Of The Cross*

The apostle brings his message of correction and castigation to a final conclusion: "Oh Galatians, here is my final word: to all those who would trouble and harass me, — leave me alone; I bear branded on my body the 'stigmata' of the Cross.' "

The word "marks" comes from the Greek word "stigmata". We are all familiar with the words "stigma" and "stigmatize", which are derived from this word. The word 'stigmata' denotes marks on the flesh, either by the puncture of a hot sharp instrument, sometimes hot needles, or more often by branding without puncture. Paul eloquently uses a word which strikingly conveys to the mind's-eye of his hearers his attachment to his blessed Lord.

Slaves were branded as the property of their master. Worshippers of heathen gods branded their bodies with the name of their favorite deity. Roman generals, when returning with the spoils of victory, caused their insignia to be put upon their enslaved captives. Proud warriors, marching fearlessly behind their favorite general, evinced their confidence and displayed their pride, by branding themselves with the illustrious name of their leader.

What precious thoughts rush into our minds when once we catch the significance of this glorious word, "stigmata"! Here is the language of —

### *Dedication*

Paul informs us he has enlisted in a mighty army — the army of the redeemed; and is marching under a banner to

which his life is dedicated. Only the truly surrendered soul could take such an uncompromising stand as Paul. As the oak sends its roots down into the ground, and is thus firmly rooted and able to weather the storm, so the apostle was firmly rooted in the love of Christ. Being a complete vassal of Christ, Paul could be indifferent to what man did or said. "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the brand-marks of the Lord Jesus."

*We have also in this word "stigmata" the suggestion of*

#### *Determination*

Paul was no weather-vane to be turned by every wind of man's opposition. Paul was no weak convert, who turned back in the heat of the battle. Opposition only drove this blessed man to a greater determination. His spiritual life thrived in the midst of conflict. He is saying, "You cannot deter me by your scorn, opposition, and treachery. I am going right on. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. None of these things move me!"

*The Word "stigmata" also implies —*

#### *Honor*

If you had asked him, "Paul, what is the meaning of that scar?" he would have told you, perhaps of the day when they beat him so cruelly at Philippi. If you had questioned him further, asking the meaning of another brand upon that worn body of his, he would have told you that he had borne it since the day they had stoned him and left him for dead at Lystra.

Some scars are ornaments. I do not know a more splendid statement in all the epistles of Paul than — "I bear (about) in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

"Do you see this?" he asked. "I was stoned there." And then he would pull up his sleeve, and pointing to another deep scar, say. "This is the mark of the scourge. And if you

could see my back and body they, too, bear the marks of the Lord Jesus."

Paul exhibited his scars as some men exhibit their degrees. Scars inflicted while he proclaimed the Gospel were Paul's crown. They were to him the beautiful initials of his Lord and Master etched into his flesh.

Paul counted it an honor to have fellowship with his Lord in His suffering. He gloried in the tribulations that overtook him as he preached the Gospel. "I carry, like a standard-bearer of an army, who proudly wears displays his wounds, the scars of my Redeemer," he cries.

Paul rejoiced in bodily weakness, — the thorn in the flesh, — because it was to him what the fire was to the sweet spice — it gave Christ an opportunity for His power to rest upon him. (2 Cor. 12: 9-10).

When John Clark of France was for Christ's sake whipped for several days, and afterwards received a mark on his forehead, as the sign of infamy, his mother, instead of being influenced by angry feelings, exclaimed exultantly, "Blessed be Christ, and welcome be these prints and marks of Christ." — words which encouraged her son, and showed how much that mother gloried in suffering for Christ.

The early Christians rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ. Latimer said, "Suffering for Christ is the greatest promotion that Christ gives in this world." Glover, the martyr, wept for joy at his imprisonment. Bradford said, "God forgive me for my unthankfulness, for His exceeding great mercy, that amongst so many thousands He chooses me to be one in whom He will suffer."

Eusebious, speaking in the days of Severus, of the martyrs' release from prison, says, "They seemed to have come out of a perfuming-house, rather than a prison. Joyful they were, and much cheered that they were so much honored as to suffer for Christ."

After the battle of Marengo, Napoleon struck a medal for his soldiers. On one side he put the name of the battle: on the other he inscribed the three proud words, "I Was There." In this way, Paul gloried too that he was in the thick of the battle for the Lord and had gained his scars.

*The word "Stigmata" speaks also of ownership*

As a slave bore upon his body the branded marks of slavery, proving him to be a slave, so Paul gloried in his marks as evidence that he was the bond-slave of Christ. Read his letters, and you will see that he thrilled at the thought of being a "doulos", the bond-slave of Christ. "God has honored me", he says, "by putting His stamp of ownership upon me. I bear in my body the brand-marks of the Lord Jesus."

Paul had surrendered all to the domination of the Redeemer; he wholly belonged to Christ. "If you have anything against me," he says in effect, "go to my Master. I am responsible to Him. Do you not see in my body the marks of His ownership?"

The believers at Galatia immediately knew the illuminous meaning of the word "slave". All around them were slaves, including some of the believers. A slave was a person who had no power over his own body, no rights of his own. He could not resign; he could not give up his master's work just when he felt like it. Paul was sold out completely to his glorious Lord. "Go where I may", he says, "I cannot turn traitor, or I shall be a traitor with my Master's 'stigmata' upon me".

There also is included in the words of Paul the thought of

*Sacrifice*

With the slaves under the Roman domination, the marks were those of burning, for their bodies were seared with a hot iron. The procedure was painful, but the results were permanent.

Listen to the heart-breaking account of Paul's sacrifice and sufferings, as found in his second letter to the Corinthians: "...exceeding them in labors, exceeding them in imprisonments, quite surpassing them in floggings, with risk of life many a time. From the Jews I have five times received forty lashes, all but one. Thrice I have been beaten with rods, once I have been stoned, thrice I have been shipwrecked, a whole night and day I have passed in the deep.

"I have travelled much, amid dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from Gentiles; dangers in the city, dangers in the desert, dangers by the sea, dangers among false brethren; in labor and toil, with many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, in frequent fastings, in cold and lack of clothing. And apart from all else, there is that which presses on me daily — my anxiety for all the churches." — (Weymouth).

Paul might have lived the self-centered life, but he would have had no scars. He never would have been able to say, "At all points we are hard-pressed, yet not hemmed in; perplexed, yet not at our wits end; pursued, yet not forsaken; struck down, yet not destroyed; always carrying about in our bodies the putting-to-death of Jesus, so that in our bodies the life of Jesus also may be manifest. For we, alive though we are, are continually surrendering ourselves to death for the sake of Jesus, so that in our mortal nature the life of Jesus also may be manifest. Thus death is at work in us, but life in you." (Weymouth).

Unless we know the deep meaning of those words, "death worketh in us," we shall never know the meaning of those other words, "life worketh in you." The word "bless" is derived from the old Anglo-Saxon word, "blood", and the idea conveyed is that before we can really bless our fellowmen, we must give away a part of our life; we must shed blood.

He who has no "marks" — no "print of the nails," has no evidence of true discipleship. Paul bore these marks of sacrifice in his body — the proof positive of his daily dying, but he lived again in the lives of thousands of others. In Galatia, in Corinth, in Thessalonica, in Ephesus, in Philippi, there were those in whom he had buried himself; but, like the buried seed, he had brought forth much fruit, and these were among the living because he had learned the secret of daily dying.

These outward brand-marks of the Lord Jesus inflicted on Paul's body were as nothing in comparison to the inward scars. His missionary journeys, his satanic assaults, his persecution from the enemies of the cross, his attacks from the false brethren, his concern for the young converts, the care of the churches: these were the real scars.

Have you the brand-marks of the Lord Jesus on Your body? How few believers have His brand-marks upon their bodies! How few are giving themselves away for the sake of those who can only be saved by the sacrifice of their lives.

In these days of ease and heartless self-indulgence it is easy to pass through life without the "stigmata" in which the apostle gloried. This feeble age is the mother of feeble saints.

The militant words of the first Century found in the Gospels and Epistles need a militant age to interpret them. How few real New Testament churches there are today! How few New Testament Christians there are! Witness the idle, easy-going, compromising Christians who exhibit scholastic degrees instead of scars!

Think of the awful condition of earth's millions without the Gospel who will never hear its message at the present rate of advance. Think of all the various phases of the work of God that urgently need reinforcements.

Then cry to God, my brother, my sister, that He will make you a real soldier of the Cross, to bear the outward and inward scars of conquest!

The first Century believers, so honored by us, will rise up in judgment against us, because of our easy lives! Oh, that there were in this century more like George Hunter, that blessed pioneer missionary to the Gobi Desert and the other outlying parts of Asia. Possibly no man in modern times has ever followed so gloriously in the footsteps of the apostle, glorying in all the implications of the Cross.

For years he labored alone in these Asian wilds without any furlough, penetrating the dark places of heathenism. What sufferings and sacrifices were his, I have not time to relate, but, blessed be God, he too filled up in his own person what was lacking in Christ's sufferings. (Colossians 1:24).

The Son of God desperately needs warriors today! May God help us to stand with Paul, come what may, and cry out, "Henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the ownership-marks of the Lord Jesus."

*Hast thou no scar?*

*No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?*

*I hear thee sung as mighty in the land,*

*I hear them hail thy bright, ascendant star,*

*Hast thou no scar?*

*Hast thou no wound?*

*Yet was I wounded by the archers, spent,*

*Leaned me against a tree to die, and rent*

*By ravening beasts that compassed me, I swooned;*

*Hast thou no wound?*

*No wound? No scar?*

*Yet, as the Master, shall the servant be,*

*And pierced are the feet that follow me;*

*But thine are whole; can he have followed far*

*Who has no wound or scar?*

*Amy Carmichael.*