

A Marked Man

'To children big and small'

"... ye shall not cut yourselves ... for ..." (Deut. 14:1-2).

"... not make any cuttings ... nor print ... I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:28).

"... set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh ... cry ..." (Ezek. 9:4).

"... Fear not ... one shall say I am the Lord's, and another ... another ..." (Isa. 44:1,2,5).

"Henceforth ... I bear branded on my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6:17, RV).

Some of the passages read from the Old Testament told the people very strictly that they were not to mark their bodies or stamp or cut marks on their bodies, but here in Galatians 6:17 Paul says that he *does* bear branded on his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Let us explain that because it has a very interesting and helpful lesson. Let us think what was in the mind of God and of Paul when speaking about these marks on the body.

We know something of what is meant by branding. Perhaps you have been sent to a shop and asked to get a certain brand and it is marked on the tin or packet, that is the brand that is wanted. Our branding is taking place in connection with quite a lot of things.

I remember seeing wild horses being branded. As they wander very far they get away for long distances and onto other peoples property, and get mixed with other horses, so the owner has them rounded up and branded with letters or a design. The brand is a piece of iron with the design cut in the end and the man doing this gets it nearly red hot in a fire and then stands as near as he can for safety and having the brand fixed to a long pole thrusts it against the horse's flank and so burns the design through the hair into the flesh of the horse. The horse flings up its heels and dashes away to freedom, though the soreness soon goes it is branded for ever with its owners mark. Now it can go as far as it likes and mix up with other horses as much as it likes but can still be known by its owner whose brand is on him.

Long years ago this was done with two kinds of people: soldiers and slaves. The soldiers belonged to certain regiments or generals, so wherever they went it was known to what general or regiment they belonged, they were his 'marked men'? A 'marked man' is not only one on whom an eye is to be kept but one who has a mark on him. Slaves bought in the market were branded, a mark was cut or burned in, and even if they ran away being branded they could never get away from that master's mark.

Now we come to the Bible. God says you must not brand or mark yourselves for any reason whatever. When the Lord says this He always puts something with it. For example, "I am the Lord", "I have chosen you", you are a special people, you belong to Me.

If I belong to someone else I cannot brand myself. If I belong to the Lord, He brands me. Paul says: "I bear branded on my body marks of the Lord Jesus", marks of His ownership. *I* did not put them there. *He* did it, I am His property; He is my Lord and Master. I have got not my marks but His marks and wherever I go anyone can see to whom I belong. I am His bonds slave, His property, a soldier of the Lord Jesus.

Paul had a lot to say about bondslaves and soldiers, and is always calling himself a bonds slave of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus had put His brand on him; he could never get away from that and did not want to. He was very glad to bear His marks, to be branded and to be a good soldier of the Lord Jesus.

The point is the marks, the brand of the Lord Jesus. What do these marks mean? I find in the words of Paul they mean two things:

(1) Marks of Ownership

The Lord Jesus owns Paul. Paul belongs to the Lord Jesus. His marks of ownership are upon Paul.

I always look around a statement of this kind to see what it means. It is not something by itself.

What does Paul mean in Gal 6:17? I find the whole letter to the Galatians tells us. It was written to try to get people to belong to Jesus altogether. They were being tempted by some people to draw back, to ease off a bit, not to let the Lord Jesus be everything in their lives, not to be out and out, not to let the Lord Jesus be the fulness of their lives. These people were going round saying that Paul went too far, that they need not go so far, that it was not necessary to do so. "Don't take Paul too seriously, there is no need at all to do so", and they were drawing people away from the Lord Jesus and His fulness. Paul in closing the letter says, "*I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus.*" It is really a matter of, Are you going to be absolutely for the Lord Jesus and follow Him fully, OR, are you listening to those who say "Don't be too serious, don't live on too high a level." "It is a difficult life. Be simple, don't be so out and out". And Paul says that is saying the Lord is not absolute Master, that He is not having all. If "I" must have a place in the matter then the Lord has not all. Paul says, "If you go that way — I have some place and He has some place — I don't. He is for me absolute Master, and whatever others say, I belong to the Lord Jesus and listen to His voice. If He wants me I am absolutely His, branded with His mark. I belong to Him altogether and can take no other instructions.

If we belong to Him we can take no other way. He is absolute Master and Owner, and we cannot divide with the world, sin, or self. We may all ask ourselves the question: Do we have the marks of the Lord Jesus on us? All can ask themselves that question. Are we bearing His marks branded on us? Does everyone know we belong to the Lord Jesus and there is no dispute about it.

If one of those branded horses is claimed by another man the fact of the brand is the end of all argument.

Have we got the mark of the Lord Jesus on us? See Isaiah 44. Can you say, "I am the Lord's"? Are His marks on you? Not just lip declaration but His marks. It is not, 'Are you calling yourself His, but are His marks on you?' It is not what you say, for marks do not speak. They are seen and it is what people see that declares, "I belong to Him." Is it true of us that as Paul said: "I bear His marks, I belong to Him and everybody can see it"?

(2) Marks of Protection

This is a very helpful part of the meaning of what Paul said. Gal 6:17: "From henceforth ... for the rest of the time let no one heap trouble on me FOR ...".

This little word FOR is an important one, it is a peg on which it all hangs "*For I bear ...*". What did Paul mean? This — Look here, you people have been saying very unkind and cruel things, and acting very cruelly, saying things that are not true to make me suffer. I warn you. If you fight against me I bear branded in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus and if you fight me, I have a Master I belong to, who is a very great and powerful Master, and in the long run you will be called to book and will have to meet Him and answer for what you did to me."

This means not only ownership but PROTECTION. God says: "You will have to reckon with Me sooner or later, you be careful, in touching that one you are touching Me" (1 Chron. 16:22; Zech 2:8). And Paul adds, "Why you are not to heap trouble on me is because you will have to reckon with God."

If you have suffered for Him woe betide those who put their hands on you, you are precious to the Lord. Those who are branded are very precious and dear to Him.

Paul would say to the Galatians, "I bear the brand and that means protection. The day of reckoning is coming. The Lord may be very patient and wait but sooner or later you will have to face Him and answer for it. The brand means belonging to Him and everyone can see."

Can they hear and see it in us? If we are wholly His and His mark is seen on us, and we are ready to suffer, He will look after us. We are very precious to Him and when other hands are on us they are touching Him, fighting against Him. Many have tried it, but the end is terrible if they fight against the Lord or against us because of Him. What is the good of it? It would be like hammering your head against a brick wall. The strongest man hitting against God has to give it up.

His marks mean protection, they mean that the Lord is on our side, that the Lord is our Master, and the Lord is going to look after His own. For the rest of our lives we are going to bear the marks of the Lord Jesus and if others fight against us they will discover they are fighting against the Lord and the Lord will look after and protect us.