

“Battle Scars”
Galatians 6:17-18
(Preached at Trinity, September 29, 2013)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria in the fourth century was a valiant defender of the Trinity against Arianism. Arius taught that Jesus was a created being and therefore not eternal and was inferior to the Father. At the Council of Nicea, which Athanasius attended while still a deacon, Arius was declared a heretic and the deity of Christ was affirmed. But this was in no way the end of this heresy. Arius soon regained his influence and was supported by the Roman Emperor. At the Synod of Tyre in 335 Athanasius was banished. He was exiled at least five times by four emperors. He became known as Athanasius Contra Mundum – “Athanasius against the World.”
2. This is often the badge of the Christian. It would seem that the whole world is against us.
 - A. We are hated by the unbelieving world because of Christ, whom we serve, and whom we reflect.
 - B. Sometimes opposition comes from members of Christian churches who resist strongly some of the doctrines to which we hold.
 - C. Sometimes opposition comes from members of our own family who can’t understand why we are so resistant to compromise.
 - D. It seems like everywhere we turn we face opposition.
3. Such was the life of the Apostle Paul. He had many opposing him in Galatia. The Judaizers had labored hard to undermine his apostolic authority.
 - A. They accused him of inconsistency—didn’t he have Timothy circumcised.
His answer:
Galatians 1:10 NAU - "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ."
 - B. They accused him of being a Johnny-come-lately. They said he couldn’t be a true apostle because he had not accompanied Christ during his earthly ministry.
His answer:
Galatians 1:1 NAU - "Paul, an apostle (not *sent* from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),"
 - C. They accused him of receiving the Gospel second-handed – implying that he misinterpreted it. His answer:
Galatians 1:11-12 NAU - "For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ."

4. Paul writes this letter in defense of the Gospel of Christ. The Judaizers boasted in circumcision. Paul's boast was in Christ.
Galatians 6:14 NAU - "But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."
5. As he brings this letter to a close he boldly commands the opposition to end their banter. It is as if he cries out, "Enough!"
Galatians 6:17 NAU - "From now on let no one cause trouble for me"
 A. Then Paul give reason for their silence:
Galatians 6:17 NAS - "for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus."
 B. What is the meaning of this statement?
 C. It might refer to Paul's apostleship. He was called and set apart by Christ. In this sense he was marked by Christ just as pastors are called and set apart for the ministry today. Paul could be saying, "Cease in your efforts to hinder me. I am an apostle of Christ!"
 But Paul doesn't seem to be referring to an internal call upon his life but an external mark upon his body.
 "for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus."
 D. Some throughout history have held that this refers to literal marks of Christ's crucifixion that has appear upon some. For example, some believe St. Francis of Assisi dripped blood from marks that appeared in his hands and feet, the apparent scars of Christ. Some believe he actually had nails protruding from his flesh. Luther declared of this that it was, "pure fiction and a joke."
6. So how should we apply this to our own lives?
- I. It would seem consistent with the trials consistent with the life of every believer.
 A. Paul suffered greatly at the hands of his enemies
 1. He described it in his letter to the Corinthians:
2 Corinthians 11:24-25 NAS - "Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned"
 Paul would have had literal marks upon his body—stripes across his back from the scourging, marks left behind from being beaten, scars from being stoned.
 2. This had particular application to the churches of Galatian—Antioch, Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium. Surely there were few places he suffered as much as in this region.
Acts 14:19 NAS - "But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead."
 3. Paul described his persecution in **Chapter 5**
Galatians 5:11 NAS - "But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished."

4. One of the constant messages he taught in Galatia was the reality of persecution.
Acts 14:21-22 NAS - "And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

B. Christians are never excused from suffering for the cause of Christ.

1. We bear the marks of Christ—sometimes physical, sometimes the scars of rejection, of verbal abuse and ridicule. Paul spoke of sharing in the suffering of Christ.
Philippians 3:10-11 NAU - "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."
2. We have counted the cost of a life committed to Christ without compromise. See **Luke 14:26-33**
3. It isn't because we are evil doers. It is because we are godly.
2 Timothy 3:12 NAS - "And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."
Matthew 5:10 NAS - "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
4. Genuine Christianity should always expect opposition from this world
1 John 3:13 NAS - "Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you."
 - a. Humanity is in a constant state of enmity with God – when we become followers of Christ they become at enmity with us
 - b. They hate the image of God in us.
5. This is why Paul gloried in the cross of Christ. It is there that we come into union with Christ. We share all things with Him—not only His suffering but also His glorious resurrection. We bear the brand-marks of Christ.

II. But there is another mark upon the Christian

- A. Slaves in the ancient world were frequently branded as a form of being identified with their master
 1. It is from the Greek word *στίγμα* which refers to a brand or tattoo – an identifying mark.
Even in the Old Testament we find a slave being marked as a pledge of ownership and allegiance to the master
Deuteronomy 15:16-17 NAU - "It shall come about if he says to you, 'I will not go out from you,' because he loves you and your household, since he fares well with you; ¹⁷ then you shall take an awl and pierce it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also you shall do likewise to your maidservant."
 2. Paul is saying he bears the mark of ownership by Christ.
Galatians 6:17 NAU - "I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus."

3. He opened his epistle to the Church of Rome:
Romans 1:1 NAU - "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God"
 (bond-servant = δοῦλος = slave)
 4. Later in Romans Paul writes:
Romans 14:4 NAU - "Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand."
 5. He is saying here, "Stop troubling me. I'm a servant of Christ. In tampering with the Gospel you are opposing Him."
Galatians 1:6 NAU - "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel"
- B. As the people of God we are pledged in service to Him.
Galatians 6:17 NAU - "for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus."
1. We have been bought with a price
 2. We gladly service our gracious Lord. But we must understand that this is not an optional aspect of Christianity.
 3. The Lordship of Christ is an essential aspect of the Gospel
Romans 10:9 NAU - "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;"
Acts 2:36 NAU - "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ"
- C. The question before all who profess Christ is, do you bear the brand-mark of Christ? Are you marked as belonging to Him? Are you a servant of Christ?
1. Have you been removed from your throne? Are you dying to self?
 2. Are you striving to obey His commands?
John 14:15 NAU - "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."
John 15:13-14 NAU - "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ "You are My friends if you do what I command you."
 3. Our greatest desire should be to serve our Master with all of our strength and to do so with excellence
 4. The faithful servant of Christ strives to purge himself of all which is displeasing to his master.
2 Timothy 2:19-22 NAS - " Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness." ²⁰ Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. ²¹ Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these *things*, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. ²² Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

Conclusion:

1. Do you bear the brand-marks of Christ; the mark of suffering with Him, and the mark of His ownership upon your life? There is nothing more precious to the Christian than his life in Christ. There is no greater gift than being reconciled with God—no greater glory.
2. Paul now closes this letter to the Galatian churches. He uses a benediction he used in other letters.
Philippians 4:23 NAU - "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."
Philemon 1:25 NAU - "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."
2 Timothy 4:22 NAU - "The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you."
3. In a letter that has been characterized by directness and even a condemning tone Paul closes the letter with grace.
 - A. He calls upon God to bless them with His grace.
 - B. He addresses them as his brothers.
 - C. He addresses them as those alive in Christ – “with your spirit’
4. The grace of Christ has been the primary focus of this book in contrast with the works of human effort. God’s work of grace cannot be earned.
5. The Gospel of Christ is perfect. The cross is always sufficient.
 God has granted His infinite love to undeserving sinners, love that cannot be earned, love that can only be received. We have been redeemed through the redeeming work of Christ.
Galatians 3:13 KJV - "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us"
Galatians 6:14 KJV - "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"