

McCabe United Methodist Church
The Marks of Christ
United Scripture with Life (Part 2)
Galatians 6:11-18
June 24, 2012
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In the early days of the automotive industry there was a problem in the Ford Motor Company. It's been said some of the employees had the habit of "borrowing" tools, equipment, and parts from the factory. It was, of course, against the company policy; but it was a prevalent problem.

There was one specific gentleman who participated in this behavior, but rationalized it way saying: "Everyone is doing it." After a few years this man had a conversion experience that led him to rethink his actions. He decided that as a "Faithful Christian" he should return everything he had taken from the plant. So, he loaded up all the tools and equipment he had taken. When he arrived at the plant he told his supervisor what he had done, explained he was now a Christian. He apologized and asked for the man's forgiveness.

It's said the supervisor was so surprised by this man's honesty that he tried to contact Henry Ford personally to tell him this story. Mr. Ford was overseas, so they contacted him through Western Union. Mr. Ford was excited by this turn of events and he sent back a telegram saying:

"I recommending you dam up the Detroit River and baptize the entire plant."

The man in this story exhibited the "Marks of Christ" the Apostle Paul was referring to in Galatians 6. You could see his faith through his actions.

In biblical times slavery was common. It wasn't like the slavery found in the Colonial period of our country, but it was slavery. There were slave who chose to serve a master in exchange for food and shelter. They were slaves for life. A second category of slaves were people who were working off a debt. They were slaves for six years and released in the seventh year. But if they married while they were a slave their wife and children remained the property of the master. A third category of slaves were people who were captured in battle.

A person who was a slave bore the mark of their master. For example a man who didn't want to leave his wife behind could volunteer to be a slave for life. Leviticus teaches us that he would have his ear pierced against his master's door frame as a sign of his station.

Yes, at that time someone who had pierced ears was showing the sign of being a slave.

The Apostle Paul wore the marks of Christ as well. First, they were evident in the scars on his body. Paul was beaten and thrown in prison on more than one occasion for professing his faith.

He also bore the marks of Christ by the way that he lived. He lived, if you will, with his faith on his sleeve. Everyone who knew him was aware of his faith in Christ.

In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul shares the “Fruits of the Spirit” They are:

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

The “Fruits of the Spirit” are also “Marks of Christ.” When we exhibit these qualities we are wearing our Faith on our sleeve.

Unfortunately, we live in a world which makes this difficult. Our world’s values are often in conflict with our Christian values.

One of the most memorable quotes from the 1987 movie “Wall Street” is: “Greed is good.”

Do you remember the name “Leona Helmsley.” She was a successful business woman and entrepreneur in New York City. She was known as “the Queen of the Palace Hotel” and as “the Queen of Mean.” She became infamous in 1989 when she was arrested for tax evasion. During her trial we learned she had stated: “We don’t pay taxes. Only the little people pay taxes....”

In about 1997 there was a Los Angeles Times article that interviews a young mother who was married to a successful junk bond trader. She lived a lavish lifestyle and spent large amounts of money on...everything. When the reporter asked her why:

“she spent \$20,000 last year on designer clothes for her 2-year-old daughter, she replied, I can afford it, so why not?” - Tom Ehrlich, Checkbook morality fuels our decisions, *Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 1997. http://articles.latimes.com/1997-06-14/local/me-32501_ethical-decisions. Retrieved February 9, 2011.

Gandhi spoke to the issues of our age when he shared his version of the seven deadly sins with his students:

1. Politics without principle
2. Wealth without work
3. Commerce without morality
4. Pleasure without conscience
5. Education without character
6. Science without humanity
7. Worship without sacrifice

In an interview the author Philip Yancy, who wrote the book: “What’s So Amazing About Grace;” said:

The only essential difference that I can tell between Christians and non-Christians is not necessarily morality, it's that Christians have acknowledged that we're sinners and we can't make it on our own. We're failures and will continue to fail. And the church in the year 3000 will be just as full of problems as the church in the year 2000, as it was in the year 1000. No other institutions that I know of recognize that. Governments don't, a lot of other religions don't. But that's the baseline of Christianity. If we deny that, and try to put on a good face, then we fall into the trap of the original Pharisees of just trying to make ourselves look good and even make God look good. -Philip Yancey, quoted by Doug Duncan, Thoughtful Evangelical: Philip Yancey Interview, The Door, May-June 2000, 11

The frailties of humanity are not a surprise to God or a surprise to us. They have been problems since the beginning of time. In the Old and New Testament we read about:

- Abram who is afraid and pretends his wife Sari is his sister, so that he can save his own life. Later their names are changed to Abraham and Sarah and he became the father of the chosen people.
- We read about Jacob stealing Esau’s birth right.
- Jacob’s father-in-law tricks him into marrying Leah...forcing him to work for another seven years before he can marry Rachel. But Jacob wrestled with an angel and be known as Israel.
- Boaz refuses to marry Ruth until after he gets drunk and she “lies at his feet.” In the morning he accepts his responsibility to take her as his wife.
- King David sees Bathsheba taking her bath of ritual purification after her menstruation and he calls her to his bed. Then he sends her husband, Uriah, to the front lines of battle where he will surly die. But he repents of his sin.
- Peter denies Jesus three times after vowing to remain faithful. But he goes on to become the cornerstone of the Christian Church.

We are as weak as our spiritual ancestors. But God isn’t done with us yet.

The miracle is that God loves us and Christ forgives us. Through the life death and resurrection of Christ we have been marked with the sign of the cross. In addition, it’s through the gift of the

Holy Spirit that we are able to occasionally get it right by sharing the marks of the Spirit...the Fruits of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23

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