

## STIGMATA ARE VERY REAL!

I am no catholic, for it is they that have caused the corruption of the word “*stigmata*,” but I have seen and witnessed *stigmata*—inflicted upon many a true man of God. While the marks are, for the most part, not a scarring of the epidermis but are most often a *stigmata* of the heart, mind and even the spirit.

Indeed, the real stigmatics are not the deceived and blinded who claim to bear the piercings of the flesh that are in similitude of the wounds of Jesus which He suffered upon Calvary’s tree. Those poor deceived people, who make such claims, are those that have no real concept of Paul’s declaration to the Galatians.

Paul makes his famous declaration of his apostolic calling when he told the church, by epistle, that “*From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks <stigmata> of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. To the Galatians written from Rome*” Gal. 6:17-18. [Mark - Stigma (plural: stigmata - marks)]

Please note that this epistle was written to the church of Galatia from a Roman prison—Paul, no doubt, glances around his rat infested cell and shivers as the cold unabated wind whirls the straw on the floor that makes his bed (a cloak would be nice—but parchment is more warming and needed for his readers than a cloak for his “marked” {*stigmata*} body).

Paul’s proof of his apostleship was no gold-bordered certificate hanging on a wall—no, his accreditation was “*stigmata*,” the marks he bore in his body of the Lord Jesus. Not some similitude of the wounds that Jesus Christ had inflicted upon Him—no, rather Paul’s *stigmata* were results of his service to the Lord Jesus Christ.

True “*stigmata*” has nothing to do with the way most people interpret or think of it today. But it is still a valid expression in the true faith of the Church of Jesus Christ, and it is even more so a true experience, especially among the ministry, which still “marks” God’s messengers even to this day.

While the marks are not necessarily the ones induced by a cat-of-nine-tails or by stones flung by an angry mob—they are still marks acquired in the work of the gospel—marks left by those whom the man of God strives to save—marks left by the cruel whip of

disloyalty; marks inflicted by loveless goodbyes; marks produced by the stones of callous words; marks left by the rods of selfishness; marks resulting from needless strife—*stigmata* of service in the Lord's business!

A post-Civil War court room was once given a jolting that convinced them of the charges brought against a former slave owner—that powerful convincing was not produced by the glib tongue of an educated and skillful lawyer—rather it was invoked by the simple removal of the victim's shirt and the display of his marked back.

Yet, in the work of the gospel, here in this world, God's men will never have that kind of impact with their marks—first, because this world is not the place where a divine court is in session, neither is there here a jury who decides such matters.

The real reason that such a worldly episode of a deciding court will not convene in this life is because a man of God “bears” his marks in great grace—therefore let no man trouble me. Why? Because the true preacher realizes that the *stigmata* goes with the territory and that in his service to His God *stigmata* is part of the high and holy calling with which he was called.

Time fails me to fully exploit this theme, but may I ask us as brethren—to strengthen one another and remember that serving Jesus is truly beautiful—*stigmata* and all!

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