

The Marked Man

By Paris Reidhead*

Romans, Chapter 16, verse 17 through 20 are the text of our meditation this morning. Romans 16:17 - 20. The theme, that you might bear it in mind as you hear the text read, is THE MARKED MAN. The Marked Man:

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.”

I would like to identify this message as one in this series on the Communion of Saints, and we are approaching it today from the standpoint of the marks that ought to characterize the Christian and the marks that ought to be avoided. Philips translation of these verses, 17 and 18, is so effective that I am reading it for you: “And now I implore you, my brethren, to keep a watchful eye on them who cause trouble and make difficulties among you, in plain opposition to the teaching you have been given, and steer clear of them. Such men do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ at all, but are utterly self-centered. Yet, with their plausible and attractive arguments they deceive those who are too simple-hearted to see through them.”

There are certain marks which characterize us as members of the human family, and it is these with which we do well to be acquainted. We ought not to be morbidly concerned about these marks that were branded into us by virtue of our birth. But we ought to understand them. You will recognize, of course, that when Eve revolted against God and decided that she knew how to take care of herself, to please herself and rule her life better than God, that one of the first evidences of this was that she with Adam hid from responsibility. This, I believe, is a characteristic mark of sin, unwillingness to face actions, attitudes, and unwillingness to accept responsibility for what we have done. We see the pair cowardly hiding in the shrubbery, pulling the vines and the leaves down around them, and in their own deceived minds suggesting that if they crouched low enough they would probably not have to face the consequences for what they had done and what they had become.

Then we find when they were finally drawn out from this insecure place of hiding, (for who can hide from the eye of God?) that they evidenced another characteristic mark of sin, blaming others. And God spoke to Adam and said, What is this that thou hast done? And instead of saying, I chose to have her rather than Thee. I made a choice, my choice to please myself, he said, The woman which Thou gavest me, the fault is all Yours. If it had not been that you gave me this woman I never would have gotten into this trouble. It is your fault. Don't blame me. It is utterly irresponsible of you to judge me when it was not my fault at all. You did it. You made the trouble. You gave me the woman. And then He turned to her and said, What is this you have done? And there again she evidenced one of the characteristic marks of the sinner, and she said, The serpent made me eat. He made me do it. Of course, he didn't make her at all. He simply suggested to her that she would be happier being God than serving the true God, and she yielded to the suggestion. She was led by her appetites. But she was unwilling to face the blame. She was unwilling to accept the consequences. She was not prepared to judge herself. And, this hiding from herself is a characteristic mark of sin and sinners.

Then the next evidence of sin that we find is that when Abel's offering was accepted, and Cain was rejected, this stirred within him a deep resentment. Covetousness for the acceptance of God and envy. And the consequence of that was that every time he looked at Abel having something that he did not have, an acceptance that he did not have, he became increasingly resentful. Filled with envy, it became anger. Have you ever wondered why in Romans 1:29 it says, “envy, murder?” Well it says that Cain moved out of envy, slew his brother Abel. And so this, envying another's position, envying another's status, and the brutality with which he dealt with it is a mark of sinners everywhere. Cowardice, blaming others, and resenting the acceptance, the success and ministry of others.

Now these three marks have been indelibly impressed upon the human race. One of the interesting things about our part of Africa was that fact (and it is true in many others as well) that all of the tribes had distinctive marks, cicatrisation it is called

technically. There was a cutting into the flesh, a piercing of the flesh, and a rubbing in of soot or salt or dirt, dust, so as to cause scars to heal in a characteristic manner that identified the individual with the tribe. Now sinners carry these marks. We have them. They are in you. They are in me. This is part of our heritage. This is the evidence that we were born of a certain lineage, into a certain family. By nature, all are cowards. By nature, all try to escape blame. By nature, all of us are envious, and that envy leads to many of the actions that we commit. I would say more crimes are committed because of an unfulfilled appetite for status than for food or sex or any other single appetite that is the grounds for crime. We see it happening today.

I remember some years ago a lad up in the Bronx murdered someone quite brutally in the Park, and when the workers went to the prison cell where he was held this is what he said, He said, You know, my old man told me this morning that I would not amount to anything. I certainly proved he is wrong. He never got his name in the paper. Look at mine, all over the paper, front headlines. What had he done? He was willing to expose himself to the full ravaging attack of the Law, the vindication and justification of social standards. He was willing to put himself into the grinders of law that could possibly end up in his execution because he had not been furnished the status, the acceptance that he ought to have expected to receive at his home. And out of this, in unsatisfied appetite, had been committed this crime. And all the crimes of the human family come from these appetites. But the characteristic of the human family is not the appetite. The appetite is not bad; the characteristic of the human family is that because of sin people do strange, weird, often terrible things in order to satisfy these appetites, because they are away from God, and estranged from the only one that can possibly truly satisfy the human heart. Now this is a characteristic mark of the family. This is a mark that sin has left, and it is there. We call it, the fallen nature. We call it the old man. We call it many things, but it is that disposition that you have inherited and acquired. It is the deep markings and groovings of your mind. It is the pressure of your previous responses. It is many different things that we could explain by various technical terms, if we knew the terms. But the fact of matter is, it still comes under the Biblical statement of sin. The policy of pleasing and gratifying one's self at the expense of others without regard for the interests of God. Now this is in you. If you understand yourself, you will know what you are.

Now you may have come from a very fine family. Some here admittedly have come from a strata of society with which there was very little opportunity, very little possibility of ever having naturally had the privileges that some take for granted. But I do not care whether you entered the door by - from a position up-and-out, or down-and-out, you came the same door. God only has one way of entrance into His family, and that is as a self-confessed sinner, and we all therefore have the same marks, the same family marks. There is nothing that another sinner had that you have not had. There is nothing that another sinner has done that you could not have done. To rightly understand yourself, is to understand that there is no evil ever been committed by the human family of which you were not capable. Now this is a sad inditement, but it is true, and it is the inditement that the Word of God uniformly bears. And so, if I have left you at this point of despair, saying, Well if this is the kind of a person I am and this is the kind of a person he is and the rest of us are, what hope is there for us?

Well we will leave that for a moment because I want you to see other marks. Not only the marks that sin left, but the marks the Savior earned. For if you will come with me, you will discover that out of infinite love for you and me, marked, scarred, bruised by our rebellion and our sin, with the deep cicatrisation of personality and attitude and motive that sin engraved, God loved us nonetheless, I will never know why. I cannot understand why God should have ever loved anyone like me or like you. This is the miracle of miracles. Traitors, rebels, anarchists, enemies, and God loved us. And the amazing part is that He loved us when He knew He knew the worst about us. The only way He could deal with any that were so deeply scarred was for Himself to become Man. And so He laid aside His glory, took upon Himself likeness to you, a body like yours, a mind that operated like yours, everything that you have, except a nature bent and twisted by sin, and He submitted to the kind of pressures that you have, the kind of temptations that you have experienced, and He walked through life under the pressure of home and school and community, with children and parents, and at the age of 30 the Father spoke from Heaven and said, "This is My beloved Son," (He has not been scarred, He has not been marked,) "in whom I am well pleased" (Mat. 17:5). He could not have said that about you at six much less at 30. But He said it about His Son. And so all of this pilgrimage had left our Lord unmarked. He had none of the marks, and none of the scars, and none of the bruises of sin. But there was a time when out of love for you and love for me He was willing to identify Himself with us. And so the only possible way that He could redeem me was to stand before the Father as me, and to let the Father do to Him what He had to do to me. In other words, He had to become sin for

us, "He who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor. 5:21). We see the Lord Jesus, therefore, reaching out to you.

Let us make this extremely personal. With all the marks that sin had left, with all the tribal marks of your race, as being one of a race of rebels, and He drew you to Himself, and somehow He stood before the Father as you; all of your marks were on Him, disobedience, crime, arrogance, lustfulness, vanity, you name it. He became it. He was made to be what you were. He stood before the Father as you, as me, did our wonderful Lord Jesus. And then first thing they did was to push a crown of thorns upon His head. He was King that had been mocked. Do you understand what Eve did in the Garden? She mocked the King by taking the rule into her own hands. What happened? Our Lord Jesus to redeem us had to be mocked to evidence what it meant to be King, despised. This is what sin does. Every sinner despises the King, mocks the Sovereign. And so it was fitting that He should have done to Him what man had done to God, for He was God in the place of man and they pushed a crown of thorns upon His head. And then, blinding Him, they buffeted Him, and beat Him with their fists, and plucked His beard from His face, and He had marks left by cruel thorns as He submitted to the mockery of depriving of a Sovereign of His right to rule.

Then they took Him out and tied His hands with leather thongs, bound the thongs to the ring in the pavement so that His back was arched, and then they began to beat Him with the cataninetails, and tore from His back the flesh. And in this the marks of man's ceaseless blasphemy, pride and rebellion and lust and disobedience, flashed and tore. For every sin that is ever committed is a sin against God. And as the cataninetails, with its pieces of steel flint and glass, tore into the flesh it was a picture of what the sin of the race and your sin has been doing to God, tearing at the One who alone is worthy to be worshipped and served and obeyed. Then to redeem us He had to submit to other marks. They laid Him upon a Cross and put a spike into the palm of His hand, and with fierce blow drove it through the quivering flesh, bound Him to that beam, and then through His feet, and raised Him up suspended thus by these three nails that bound His hands and His feet to the Cross. And there He hung, the epitome of evil, the off scouring of all things, on the refuse pit invented by Rome. For to reserve the Cross for the vilest of the vile, it could be disposed of in no other way. And here was the Lord Jesus submitting to the fact that, because of my sin, I ought to have been thus disposed of. And if you would see evil aright you will see it as the refuse pit in which the irretrievable rubbish of humanity, that which will not submit to reconciliation and redemption must be placed. And our Lord Jesus was willing to go to the Cross, to that place to which we ought to have been eternally consigned, but He went there for us. He died for us, and bore in His body our sins upon the tree.

Then the soldier came, when He had given up the ghost, and plunged the spear through His side, that it might be demonstrated that His heart had broken in anguish and grief over my sin, and there might blush out discernible blood and water, proving that death had been by a broken heart, and not by a lance piercing His side. And He died, and He was buried, and He was raised again the 3rd day, and today on the right hand of the Father is a Man, and in that Man you would find were you to see Him now five scars, nail pierced hands, nail pierced feet, and sword riven side, and the only answer to the depravity and the iniquity and the uncleanness of the human race are the marks in the Man at the right hand of the Throne of God. And the only possible way that there is any antidote for what you have done and what you are is to come and as it were bury yourself in that wounded side and see that the Life that was poured out was for you, for me, to redeem us from sin's penalty, from sin's consequences, from sin's power, and ultimately from its very presence when He takes us to Himself. And so the only hope for a man marked by sin is to see the Man who was marked for sinners, and receive Him as Sovereign as well as Savior, to embrace Him as He is.

What is the consequence of this? You will discover that when one repents and savingly receives Christ that there is Life released by this living Lord, and there is a complete transformation wrought in His grace and power in the life of the one that savingly embraces Him. The first thing that happens is that this one that has come to life has repented. There has come a moment when he has seen the enormity of this crime of playing God and reigning and ruling in his own life, and flaunting a righteous Sovereign, and so he has repented. And the one characteristic traceable, everyone born into the Father's family, is that at a point in the past they have renounced self and sin. They have truly repented. And he only is Christ's who has repented.

Has this happened to you? Did there come a point in your life when you purposed to please God and committed all of the intents of your personality to the end of working out His will in your life. I trust this is true, because this is the characteristic. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the fear of the Lord is to hate evil, and thus to come to the place where one renounces Satan and renounces his own right to rule, and sees the enormity of the crime of playing God, and savingly embraces Christ. This I say are the marks that indicate that one has been born into the Father's family.

But we see something else. There are marks that begin immediately. For we find in Romans 15, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15:13). And so that one that has been born of God has the beginning mark of joy, joy that he is in Christ, joy that sins are remitted, joy that his past is under the Blood, and will never be uncovered to flaunt him and haunt him again.

And then there is peace - peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and the peace of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. These are marks.

We turn to Galatians 5 and we discover that there He gives us the whole picture of the tribal marks. When Paul was writing to the church at Galatia in the 6th Chapter and the 17 verse, he said, "Trouble me no more, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," the cicatrisation, the tribal marks that have been carved in Him (Gal. 6:17). What are these tribal marks, spiritually discerned? Why they are here in the 22nd and 23rd verses. "The fruit of the Spirit is love,..." this is one of the characteristic marks of the Father's family, love and joy and peace (Gal. 5:22). We have already dealt on those. *Love for God, a purpose to please Him, and a renunciation of the purpose of just living to please ourselves.* Joy that sins are remitted. "Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

And then we find that it does not stop there. It goes on to long suffering. Oh, how absolutely contrary to those tribal marks of the wicked man, so utterly opposite what you are, resentful by nature that is. This is the work of grace. These are the tribal marks that evidence His working. "Longsuffering, and gentleness, and goodness, and meekness, and faith, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). These are the marks that the Spirit of God carves into our hearts and minds and attitudes. Is this what you find Paul writing to the church at Philippi? He said, When you find someone who has these marks, follow them, follow after them. Do these marks characterize you and mark you off as His child that the Spirit of God has wrought in your life, and that there you have love, very patient, very kind, you have joy and peace. Do you have longsuffering and gentleness and goodness? Are these the marks that we have? Oh, that God can cause us to see they are the ones we ought to have.

But now let us come to something that was read for us a few moments ago in our Scripture reading. It is in Ephesians 4, verse 1-3. Here is a mark that our Lord has said we should seek: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called, (walk becoming to it, evidence that you are part of the tribe, that you are part of the family, that you have the tribal marks) with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; (and then the word-) endeavoring (this is such a strong word, striving, seeking by every possible means) to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace." This is the mark of the one that is in His family.

And now we go back to the text. You say, "Well you gave us the text. You have made it a pretext. You haven't referred to it again." There is ample time in this closing moment to see the marks that we are to avoid having. By contrast to what we have just seen, the word now of Paul to the church of Rome has deeper significance. Now I beg of you, now I beseech you...This is identically the same word that he uses in the 12th chapter, with all of the fervor, with all of the concern, with all of the burden that he said, "I beseech that you present your body a living sacrifice," he says, "Now I beseech you, Brethren," (why?) (Rom. 12:1). For the sake of the church, for the unity of the Spirit, for the body of Christ to be what He can bless, this is what he has in mind. You see the church is not really for us at all. It is for Christ. It is His body. It is not our organization. It is His body, through which He is to manifest Himself and by means of which He is to reveal the splendor that is His. And so He said, If you have any insight into the nature of the church and any understanding of it, then I beg of you, I implore you, to realize something. What is this that comes with such heated warm longing. "I beseech you, Brethren, mark them which cause divisions" (Rom. 16:17). Why? Why mark them? The word mark here means to see, the word Scopus, from which we get our word Scope. The root of skeptical. To peer until one sees the meaning. So he said, If someone comes among you and names the Name of Christ and

seems to know the doctrine, peer if you see divisions. Why? Well we find in James that there is a reason for his speaking about divisions in this fashion. Let me read it to you:

“But if you have bitter envying and strife in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish, for where envying and strife is there is confusion and every evil work” (Jam. 3:14-16). So he said, Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned. Mark them, said Philips, which keep the watchful eye on them which cause trouble and make difficulties in plain opposition to the teaching you have been given, and steer clear of them. What is he saying? He is saying that the body of Christ is not our organization. It is not to promote ourselves. For he said, If ye find those among you that are deliberately seeking to cause division and strife, such men do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ at all, but are utterly self-centered. Yet with their plausible and attractive arguments they deceive those who are too simple hearted to see through them.

And so he said, I beseech you, Brethren, mark them which cause division and offenses, see them and understand it. Now my dear, I am not suggesting that you go around and brand everyone. That is not the purpose. I am suggesting that you and I understand that we are personally responsible for our own hearts, and if you have found in you a tendency for that which was natural to you before God in grace saved you to blame, to escape consequences, to cowardly seek to set on others, or to seek to elevate oneself at the expense of others, any of these things which are characteristic of the old man, the old Adam, what you and I were before God in grace came to us, listen. If we find in us, remember the Holy Spirit told others to mark us, and to have nothing to do with us if such we find in us. For the sake of the body of Christ. The principle is this: There must be discipline. This is the reason for his writing. He is saying to this church at Rome, If you have those come among you that even though they know theology and doctrine, and you discover that their path is strewn with division and offenses contrary to the teaching which you have heard, avoid them. Now that word avoid can be carried on to other Scriptures where it means absolute discipline. The church has one of two churches, that either it must put out, or ultimately those who love Christ must get out. There is no alternative for it, for the church is His body. It is not an organization, the rules of which are established by men. It is His body, a mystical fellowship of those who have repented of their sins, savingly embraced Christ, been partakers of His life, transformed by His grace with the tribal marks of redeeming love. Now said He, If you sense, if you understand that the church exists not primarily for men, but men in the church exist for the glory of Christ that they might serve Him and obey Him, and be all to Him that He has purposed for them to be, then you will mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have been taught. Avoid them, for they are such that serve not our Lord Jesus but themselves, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

Here we are. We have got marks. We go back again. You have the marks of the sinner. They are on you, each scar that sin carved, deep scars that sin engraved. They are there. And if you should take your eye off the Lord Jesus just as certainly as Peter began to sink you began to manifest those characteristics so natural to you. What do you have to do in order to resort to it? Return to it? There is only one thing. Just cease looking off unto Jesus. Oh, the testimony that you will this, my dear, is this, That in and of yourself there is nothing but division. In and of yourself there is nothing but vanity, nothing but pride, nothing but uncleanness. How many Christians there are, early in their life become so depressed when they discover that after they have been pardoned and forgiven they still are capable of doing the things which brought them under such a terrible sense of guilt and sin. But he understands himself aright who realizes that never will he be any other than he was in and of himself. In his flesh, no good thing. Whenever you or I take our eyes off the Lord Jesus and cease looking to Him and act as we are, this is what comes out. For this is what we are. Can you not see it? God has so marvelously understood us that He did not say; I'll forgive you if you go ahead and live the Christian life. He knew me too well. He knew you too well. He did not put it to us on that basis at all. He put it this way. He said, Look. I know that you are incapable of living this life that is so exalted, and holy, and pure. But what you cannot do, I can do. Now if you will rightly see yourself and see and realize that I have said that you are Cross-worthy, that all you will ever be is Cross-worthy, and if you are prepared to come and take your place crucified with Me, and then if you will present your body to Me, God says, I by the Holy Spirit will live My Life in you, and what is utterly unnatural to you is perfectly natural to Me. And what you cannot do, I can do. I think this summarizes it. I cannot cause anything but division. I cannot cause anything but sin. But He can. He can. And so, if this is what you have been, the Spirit of God says that you are one of those that ought to be marked and excluded and avoided, you say, But I know I have been forgiven, even

though I know that the inditement is fairly levelled at me, the answer is not hard to seek. You have just been acting in yourself. And if you will come to realize that this is all you can do, it is the best you can do, then you are not going to hopelessly whip yourself and beat yourself into the ground, but you are going to come and say, Lord, that I that I am by nature, cowardly, seeking to put blame on others, seeking to exalt myself at the expense of others, vain, ambitious, lustful, angry, that I. Lord, I know it is hopeless. I am just going to take my place crucified with Him. Stay here. Now Lord, here is my body. I am asking You to live Your life in me. The only way there will be love and joy and peace, and longsuffering and gentleness and goodness and meekness and faith and self-control, is for the Lord Jesus to live His life in me. And then, people will say, Look at what has happened to her. Well, if she has an opportunity she will say, Well you know really, nothing has happened to me. Something happened to Christ. I just allowed the Lord Jesus Christ to live His life in me. I am just the same me I always have been. But you see I have gotten now that I cannot, but He can, and I have taken my place crucified with Him so that He can live His life through me. Then the marks won't be the marks of what you are, but the marks of what Christ is in you, the marks of a sinner, the marks earned by the Savior, the marks of the saint, and then the marks of those to be separated. Since God has made provision to you do not have to live in division and strife, if you do the Scripture says you are to be avoided and excluded, because He has provided grace. It is inexcusable. He has provided grace. Let us take that grace this morning, asking Him to forgive us and cleanse us, and pardon us, and then live in us His Own Life.

Shall we bow in prayer? Our Father, Thou dost see us, and Thou dost know the eternal truths with which we have been dealing and we pray, Lord, that we may understand that the church is made up of a company of people, utterly bankrupt, totally hopeless, that came bringing all their need and nothing that made them worthy to receive pardon and forgiveness, and then to bring themselves in union with Christ to the Cross, and invite the risen Christ to live the life that is so natural and normal to Him in our frame, in our bodies, through our personalities. We ask Thee, Heavenly Father, that the Holy Spirit will drive this truth deep into hearts. And should there be those among us that have been causing division and offenses, may they realize that there is grace. And if they persist in this, Thou has indited the Church and commanded it that they be avoided, yea, excluded. And we ask that the Holy Ghost may come upon us, that we may view increasingly the church not as ours but His, as the vehicle by which He is to reveal Himself, and that the Communion of Saints is to furnish to Christ a body, a vehicle, for the revelation of His resurrection glory. To that end, bring us, one mind, one heart, of one accord, to this one place, that our Lord Jesus may see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

Let us stand for the Benediction. If God has spoken to you your need and to your heart, we invite you to remain quietly, seated where you are, and then after others have left we will join you in prayer ministry in Wilson Chapel, the room to my right. "Now may the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is wellpleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be the glory now and forever. Amen" (Heb. 13:20-21).

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Morning, March 18, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.