

The Mark

The first operation [of the blood covenant] consisted of making an incision in each of their right wrists, just sufficient to draw blood; a little of which was scraped off and smeared on the other's cut; after which gunpowder was rubbed in (thereby securing a permanent token on the arm) (Trumbull, op. cit. pg 16, concerning a covenant made between one of the first explorers of Africa and an African chieftain).

[Jesus] said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side (John 20:27)."

Can a woman forget her nursing child, and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands (Isaiah 49:15-16).

The marks in Christ's hands, feet, and side, He keeps, as permanent signs of the covenant. At our resurrection, we will be healed of any physical diseases, ailments, or injuries. At Christ's resurrection, He kept those scars, but only as mementos of the covenant.

We, in turn, have scars we bear as tokens of our covenant with God. For Abraham and the Old Testament believers, the mark was circumcision (Genesis 17:9-10). Outward circumcision is no longer required in the New Covenant. But before breathing a huge sigh of relief, inward circumcision still is. Romans 2:29 says that our "circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter."

Outward circumcision was always intended to be a physical representation of the inward surrender to God. Abraham's circumcision was symbolic of his willingness to surrender that which is usually the most important thing to mankind, the ability to reproduce. Later, he was asked to demonstrate the veracity of this spiritual commitment by giving up his offspring to God. Abraham proved that he bore the marks of the covenant in his heart when he willingly gave the most precious thing in his life.

The requirement to surrender everything to God is summarized in the New Testament when Christ said and repeated many times that "whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it (Matthew 16:25)," and "whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple (Luke 14:27)." We bear the marks of

our own version of the cross by living a constant lifestyle of dying to ourselves and living to God and others.

Similar to Christ's journey from the cross to the throne, our journey begins with dying to ourselves and ends in victorious love for God and others. Love begins with dying to self. Love is the giving of yourself, not just giving of what you *have*, but the pouring out of *yourself* into another even unto the point of self-negation. This summarizes God's covenants as well as His nature since "God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him (1 John 4:16)."

As we abide in God's love, all the rest of God's requirements flow naturally through us. The other requirements, however, remain to remind us that each time we break them, we are no longer bearing our cross, dying to ourselves, or loving God above all. When this happens, we should not wrestle individually with each little problem and command, but return to the center, rededicate, recommit ourselves, and then continue to watch all the other little guidelines for clues as to how we are doing.

Christ permanently bears the marks of the covenant. We must permanently be committed to bear His mark. We must continually die to our old identities and natures until we are completely united with Him in a loving embrace which transforms our identities and natures forever.