

My artist friend was concerned about having paint on almost every garment in her possession. She was embarrassed to be seen in this condition, as most everyone she knew kept their clothes very neat and clean. She was concerned for the way she looked and whether or not she would be “approved” by others¹. She tried to keep at least a few things that were unstained that she could wear to a public event².

I emphasized to her that these “blemishes” were actually the mark of an artist. They should be shown and worn with pride (though without arrogance). To my mind the marks were a symbol of character, or purpose, or life’s work. They were not stains that represented faults in her character (not like defects in animals to be sacrificed³) - they showed who she was and what she was!

I also tried to make it clear that she should ignore those who might belittle her – those who did not understand about the nature of an artist.

Each of us has a mark of some kind that proclaims our identity⁴. We may do our best to hide it at times, but we are not always successful in that. We have the opportunity to take on the mark of Christ, and be accounted as though we are righteous.

God has spoken through the scriptures at different times about giving people a “mark”. Some of the marks were in response to evil⁵, but some were to indicate those who responded to Good⁶. All of the marks given were representative of the behavior and character of those who received them.

Christ certainly showed the marks of His trial and crucifixion – the penetrations through his hands, feet, and side⁷. He showed these significant and serious marks to the disciples (especially to Thomas⁸), and they finally understood the great sacrifice of love that He had undertaken for us all. Christ also bore our “stripes⁹”, which also surely left their marks¹⁰.

We who follow Christ must have His marks in our spiritual lives such that they demonstrate His love for all people¹¹. Our brother Paul speaks of bearing in his body the marks of Jesus¹², and indeed he had many actual stripes of his own¹³.

We have had our sins washed away¹⁴, but that did not wipe away the marks of our identities (which God embraces!). Our garments, which represent our souls, in a way, were washed and made white in the blood of the lamb¹⁵. But our most noticeable mark must be the mark of Christ¹⁶!

We must wear the love of Christ as a garment¹⁷, and this should be the mark those who follow Him.

1. see the story Response to the Creative Artist
2. Think of the story of the man who was condemned for not having the wedding garment at the marriage (Matthew 22:11-14).
3. See, for example, Leviticus 3:1
4. 2 Thessalonians 3:17; I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.
5. For example, see Zechariah 11:4; This is what the Lord my God says: “Shepherd the flock marked for slaughter.” See also Revelation 14:9, 11, and Revelation 16:2
6. see Ezekiel 9:4 & 6
7. John 20:25; So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”
8. John 20:25
9. Isaiah 53:5 (KJV)
10. It is interesting to note that these stripes were not also emphasized to Thomas.
11. 2 Corinthians 12:12; I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles - but not the miracles for non-apostles]
12. Galatians 6:17; I bear on my body the marks of Jesus
13. 2 Corinthians 11:24; Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.
14. Acts 22:16; And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.
Corinthians 6:11; and that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
- Titus 3:5; he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit...

15. Revelation 7:14; “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”
16. Ephesians 1:13; And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit...
17. Colossians 3:12-14; Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.