

The God Who is Scarred

John 20:24-28 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." ²⁶ ¶ And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" ²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." ²⁸ And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

Most of us have some kind of scar somewhere on our bodies. Either a cut which wasn't properly stitched up, or was simply too big to heal without scarring, an injury on a very tender or thin part of your skin. Some of you have had operations where the incision was big enough to scar. Some of you experienced bad burns that have scarred. A scar is an odd thing. Usually it isn't painful, as it was when it was still an open wound. A scar is skin that has healed. However, it has healed in a way which differentiates it from the surrounding skin. You can tell the scar from the rest of the skin. The scar serves more than anything, as a reminder of whatever happened to you.

When we read this account in John, we find out that the resurrected Jesus carries the scars of His death on the cross. Thomas very specifically wants to see the print of the nails in His hands. He wants to see the hole where the spear was thrust into His side. And when Jesus appears, that's exactly what He shows Thomas.

Jesus has a scarred body. Christ being scarred is remarkable for two reasons.

First, because the resurrection body is a body without defects.

1 Corinthians 15:42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

The glorified body will not have broken teeth, cataracts, arthritic joints, or any such defect. Even less so would a resurrection body carry injuries from the life on earth. A Christian soldier who lost his eye in battle, will certainly have it back in the resurrection. A Christian who lost both legs to a landmine will have it back in the resurrection. A Christian whose face is horribly scarred by burns will have it restored in the resurrection. So if the resurrection body is a removal of every weakness, defect or injury experienced in this life, how is it that Jesus' body still bears the scars of His cross? If we are all healed of all things experienced because of the curse, why does Jesus bear evidence of injury? Why does His eternal, resurrected body now forever carry five scars?

Christ being scarred is remarkable for a **second reason**. The God of the Bible is revealed as the God who does not change. What He is, He has always been. What He is, He always will be. He calls Himself, the I AM. The Beginning and the End. The Alpha and the Omega. The God who was and is and is to come.

Malachi 3:6 ⁶ "For I am the LORD, I do not change..."

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Psalms 102:26-27 They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. ²⁷ But You are the same, And Your years will have no end.

So here we are confronted with the most severe paradoxes. God cannot change. He cannot be

anything other than what He is, for He is already perfect. Jesus Christ is God the Son. He has always been God the Son. He takes on a fully human nature, is born, lives amongst us, and then dies. And when He rises again, He is now marked, changed, forever changed to be the God-man who is scarred with the wounds of the cross. That staggers the mind.

God was scarred, God willingly died for His creatures, and it has changed Him. Has God changed in His essence? No, the divine nature cannot change. But the person of God the Son has experienced change, because His human nature is forever scarred with the wounds of Calvary. And so in some way, the Person of Jesus, the Son experienced change.

What would have made the eternal God, who needed nothing, choose to eternally add a human nature to Himself, and then scar Himself with the suffering that we deserved? That question will leave us wondering and worshipping for an eternity.

The question we want to answer this morning is,

Why would Christ's resurrection body still bear scars? Why has Calvary marked Jesus forever? Why do we go and experience the new heavens and new earth in completely restored bodies, and He experiences it with the scars of five wounds?

Surely, it would have been simply enough for Christ's resurrection body to be perfect in every respect. That would have been, physically speaking, as easy as fixing the crooked finger, or taking away the large wart, or repairing the skin on the scalp that was burnt on any other body. So why has He chosen to exist forever in a scarred body?

Well, I suggest that those scars will always be there as reminders. And I think they will remind us of three things.

I. They will remind us in a perfect place that Christ covered our sins.

The Bible tells us of the bliss we'll enjoy in heaven one day. "Revelation 21:4 "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

And I suppose after 10 000 years of joys unspeakable, we may very well take everything for granted and forget the pain of this life. Everything is perfect. There is life and health and peace, and fulness. In all of heaven, there will be only one imperfection: Christ's body. The King Himself will be the only evidence that we ever lived in a world of suffering.

The King's scarred body will say to us all : you are today righteous, resurrected and rejoicing. You have no defects, and are filled with delight. But you enjoy this today because I took the brunt of it for you. I stood in the firing line so you would not be hit. I fell on the landmine of God's wrath so you could live. I faced the hurricane of my Father's wrath, so you could survive and see this today. Jesus faced the blackness of separation from God, something that had never happened before or since. But in some way, it changed Him,. It scarred Him.

Almost any parent would face injury and disfigurement to save his or her child from injury or death. A parent will run in front of a car to prevent his child from being knocked over. Perhaps that father will walk with a limp for the rest of his life. But that limp will remind the child why he is still alive.

And the amazing thing is, the one with 'the limp' in heaven, will be God.

Revelation 5:6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

There in heaven, Jesus appears as one who has been slain. Even in heaven, His eternal appearance is unmistakably one of someone who was sacrificed for our sins.

So amidst all that perfection, only one Person will have holes in through His hands and feet, a deep gouge in His side. It will be the Creator Himself. And won't that speak the loudest of all: that the most beautiful One, the sum and source of all beauty, chose to disfigure His beauty for us. Which will make Him more beautiful to us.

I think there is a second reason that Jesus is forever scarred for us.

II. They will remind us in a perfect place of His eternal work on our behalf.

When Jesus died on the cross, one of the last things He said was "It is finished." By that He meant, the payment has been made. The one offering that is perfect has been offered up. No more sacrifice will be needed. He will not need to die again.

Hebrews 10:14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

Hebrews 9:12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

However, though the offering of His life has been done and needs never be repeated, there is something about His work which goes on.

Hebrews 7:23-25 ²³ ¶ Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. ²⁴ But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

It is as if His offering was done once for all, but the application of His offering to us continues forever.

It is His very presence as our mediator which keeps us accepted by God. We will stand in heaven not on our own righteousness, but on His. What would happen if He died or disappeared? We would have no merit of our own to stay in heaven! Jesus is our eternal High Priest.

Perhaps sometimes we think of our sin in an almost monetary fashion. We owed God so much, Jesus paid it, so now we are debt-free and can live in heaven. That's partially true, but Jesus didn't just pay our sins with something else, He paid with Himself. We are accepted in the Beloved. We get into heaven by grace, *we stay in heaven by grace.*

When we will look at those scars, it will remind us, we are in heaven because of grace. They will say, "Jesus still pleads for you – His presence here is Your advocacy." We remain in heaven because of grace. Christ paid my sin. His very presence in heaven as my Advocate guarantees that the Father accepts me.

Remember how Wesley put it?

"Arise, my soul, arise,

shake off your guilty fears;
The bleeding sacrifice,
in my behalf appears;
Before the throne my Surety stands,
My name is written on His hands.

2. He ever lives above,
for me to intercede;
His all redeeming love,
His precious blood, to plead;
His blood atoned for every race,
And sprinkles now the throne of grace.

3. Five bleeding wounds He bears;
received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers;
they strongly plead for me:
"Forgive him, O forgive," they cry,
"Nor let that ransomed sinner die!"

4. The Father hears Him pray,
His dear anointed One;
He cannot turn away
the presence of His Son;
The Spirit answers to the blood,
And tells me I am born of God."

The perfection of heaven may make us forget the misery of sin on earth, and take for granted His work for us in the past. His scars will remind us – Someone suffered, so that you could enjoy this. The perfection of heaven may make us forget that we are in heaven by grace, and take for granted His ongoing work in the present. His scars will remind us – Christ is forever a priest

III. They will remind us of His eternal covenant with us

Every now and then, someone will ask, it's all very well that Jesus saves us and we get to heaven, but who is to say we will not fall away when we are in heaven?

Well, I think the scars of Jesus answer that one too.

Isaiah 49:15-16 "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. ¹⁶ See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.

What is the Bible saying? God will not forget or forsake His people. He has inscribed us on the palms of His hands.

Do you know that when the Old Testament spoke of God making a covenant with people, the actual Hebrew means 'to cut a covenant'. Covenanting often involved cutting – the cutting of an animal in two, even the cutting of the skin in a blood oath. So God makes a covenant with His people, and what is the most permanent way He can seal this covenant? He gives up His own blood, and then leaves His resurrection body marked, so as to say, I will never go back on this covenant with you.

My body permanently bears the marks of Calvary because I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Think of the graciousness of this assurance. God could have left His body unscarred, but we might have been just slightly less certain that He ever pleads for us, and that the covenant is eternal. But if He has marked His own body, He has cut the covenant into His own flesh to forever say, I am yours and you are Mine.

Sometimes people today will tattoo their skin with the name of the person they are in love with. But sadly, they often leave that person, and in the end, even that tattooed body will die, and the tattoo with it. But Christ's eternal body is marked with the wounds that signify His death for us. Truly, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands.

Christ's scars will remind us of the past, the present and the future. In a place of eternal bliss, they'll remind us that in the past, Jesus faced our hell for us. Someone faced the despair of being forsaken by God so that we could be in a place with no more sorrow.

They remind us that in the present, we continue to live in heaven by grace. Christ's once for all death is forever pleaded for us by His presence as our Advocate

They'll remind us that in the future, Christ will remain faithful to us. We are graven into Him, and our union is permanent and eternal.

What manner of love is this, which would cause the unchanging, perfect God to scar Himself for us?