

Soldier Up!

Saints & Spiritual Warfare

"Scar Faith"

Second Corinthians 11:23-28

It's my favorite scene from the movie, *Jaws*. Chief Brody, Hooper and Quint, in the galley of their boat, the *Orca*, get to comparing scars.

It starts with Brody touching a recently acquired abrasion on his forehead. Quint pulls his hair aside to show a permanent lump from being hit with a spittoon in a bar on "Saint Paddy's Day."

Hooper shows a scar, on his forearm, where a classmate bit him during recess. Quint responds by showing a scar on his forearm, attributed to a wire burn.

Next, Hooper rolls up his sleeve to show the bite of a Moray eel.

Quint counters with a knife wound he received in a fight.

Hooper shows a bull shark bite on his leg; Quint, the scar from a thresher shark.

About that time, Chief Brody sheepishly checks the scar from his appendectomy!

Wounded and scarred isn't how we normally think of Christians - but we should. After His resurrection, Jesus invited Thomas to examine the scars on His glorified body. Charles Spurgeon said,

For did he not say to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." I wish to draw your attention to the ample fact, that our Lord Jesus Christ, when he rose again from the dead had in his body the marks of his passion. If he had pleased he could readily have removed them. He rose again from the dead, and he might have erased from his body everything which could be an indication of what he had suffered and endured before he descended into the tomb. But, no! Instead thereof, there were the pierced hands and feet, and there was the open side.

When He steps forward, in Heaven, to take the scroll and open the seals of the Great Tribulation, Jesus does so as the Lamb Who was slain.

Dave Hunt once commented on this, saying,

It's quite clear that He did have a hole in His side. He said to Thomas, "Put your hand into my side." He did have holes in His hands where the nails went. Now whether there were still scourge marks on his back - that I don't know, but perhaps. I wouldn't see why not.

Now in Revelation 5, He appears as a lamb, newly slain. Now I don't understand that, because I'm sure Jesus doesn't look like a lamb, but it would indicate that He will bear the marks of the crucifixion throughout eternity as a reminder. I mean, why would they be healed? You see, this was the payment for our sins, His death upon the cross.

Amy Carmichael applies this to us in her classic poem, *No Scar?*

*Hast thou no scar?
No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?
I hear thee sung as mighty in the land;
I hear them hail thy bright, ascendant star.
Hast thou no scar?*

*Hast thou no wound?
Yet I was wounded by the archers; spent,
Leaned Me against a tree to die; and rent
By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I swooned.
Hast thou no wound?*

*No wound? No scar?
Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,
And piercèd are the feet that follow Me.
But thine are whole; can he have followed far
Who hast no wound or scar?*

The apostle Paul was informed, at his conversion, "how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16).

In a passage filled with passion and pathos, Paul described a few of those sufferings.

2Co 11:23 Are they ministers of Christ? - I speak as a fool - I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.

2Co 11:24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.

2Co 11:25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;

2Co 11:26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

2Co 11:27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness -

2Co 11:28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

The context within which this boasting is set is important. Opponents of Paul's were challenging his authority. They were promoting themselves as great men of God.

Paul countered their claims by pointing out they had not suffered for the cause of Christ. They had no wound, no scar. They were Chief Brody's at best.

“In labors more abundant.” This is a general comment indicating he simply worked harder and more strenuously than those who were challenging him.

“In stripes above measure” refer to frequent physical beatings.

“In prisons more frequently.” By the time of this writing, the only recorded imprisonment was at Philippi. Apparently there were others not recorded in Scripture. And there would be others still to come.

“In deaths often” refers to the very real risk of death Paul faced, often from angry mobs.

2 Corinthians 11:24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.

The Mosaic law prescribed a maximum of forty lashes. This was traditionally limited to thirty-nine so as not to exceed the legal limit.

2 Corinthians 11:25 Three times I was beaten with rods...

This was the Gentile version of being whipped. It's commonly called caning. Even though he was a Roman citizen, and therefore exempt from caning, three times the punishment was inflicted before he claimed his citizenship.

“Once I was stoned.” This is recorded in Acts fourteen.

“Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I have been in the deep.” These were all *before* the really heavy-duty shipwreck in Acts twenty-seven.

2 Corinthians 11:26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

Paul's frequent journeys were not pleasant excursions but dangerous travels. Swollen rivers caused real peril. Robbers were a threat to any traveler. Danger hounded Paul's steps, both from persecuting Jews and from Gentiles. Whether he was in city or desert, or at sea, he faced continual danger in pursuing his service for Christ.

One of the threats he faced was posed by false brethren. Perhaps he had in mind Judaizing opponents who were bitter against him and did not hesitate to stir up Christians against him, and would even report him to the authorities if it would remove him from the scene.

“Weariness and toil” was an expression Paul used of his manual labor to support himself.

“Sleeplessness” refers to the sleepless nights he endured, working late to support himself so he would not burden the church.

“Hunger and thirst” were sometimes his experience when his own labors did not fully supply his needs.

“In fastings often” does not seem to refer here to voluntary fasts, but to those times when food ran out altogether, or when other circumstances made eating impossible. He also knew what it was to have insufficient clothing, especially when traveling on long journeys when nights were cold and accommodations primitive.

2 Corinthians 11:28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

2 Corinthians 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?

Paul cared deeply for the churches, and for each struggling, suffering believer in every church.

Physically, he was a wreck. But these were his wounds, his scars - battle scars he was proud to be able to display.

We are in a spiritual war. They are not war games; it's not a simulation. Our enemy is using real bullets. That's live ammo whistling by your head. And you're going to take some hits.

When Christian artists and illustrators want to portray spiritual warfare, they generally draw a Roman soldier in full armor.

At least show the soldier as if he had been in a fierce battle. We usually think of him as if he is presenting himself for inspection, when the truth is that there is a war going on.

There need to be dents in the helmet and breastplate; stains and scratches on the shield. The sword should be notched.

And there should be bruising, and blood. Lots of blood.

Better yet, portray the Christian soldier with a drawing of Paul that somehow represents all of the battle scars he listed.

*Can he have followed far
Who hast no wound or scar?*