

# **“Mark Them” – The Bible Teaching Regarding Examples (Romans 16:17; Philippians 3:17)**

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## **Introduction**

In Genesis 4:1-15 we read of Cain committing the first murder. He was punished by God, who cursed him from the earth, making him a fugitive and a vagabond or drifter. Cain complained that his punishment was too severe and said that anyone who found him would kill him to avenge his brother. The Lord, therefore, showed mercy upon Cain by placing a mark on him and declaring that anyone who would kill him would receive the Lord's vengeance sevenfold. The mark God placed on Cain had a twofold purpose. First, it protected Cain from revenge from others. Second, it protected those who observed the mark, warning them not to harm Cain, lest God return His wrath sevenfold. Today, God still marks people. Some marks are intended to benefit those who bear them. Others are designed for the benefit of those who observe the marks. Today, we shall consider these marks.

## **Good Marks**

In Ezekiel's prophecy in Ezekiel 9:1-6, the mark had the purpose of protecting those who bore it. In this case, they were preserved from death who bore the mark; whereas their fellow Israelites were slaughtered.

David, in Psalm 37:37 instructs that we should mark the blameless, to observe who is upright, for such a one has a blessed future. The purpose is for the benefit of the observer, that we might imitate such a one.

In Philippians 3:17 we read of Paul's orders that we mark, or take note of, those who do well: "Brethren, be followers of me, and **mark** them which walk as ye have us for an ensample." The New King James translation of this verse reads, "Brethren, join in following my example, and **note** those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern" (Emp. mine - js). The context bears out the reason for Paul's orders to mark or take note of. In Philippians 3:16 are told this marking is necessary if we are to attain unity. In verse 18 Paul warns that since there are many who stray from this pattern, becoming the enemies of Christ, we need to cling even closer to the best examples we have.

Many passages contain examples of those whom we are to hold in esteem.

- Philippians 2:23-30 holds the worthy example of Epaphroditus
- 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 speaks of the fact that elders in the church deserve to be esteemed highly in love on account of the work they perform.
- The apostle John wrote, commending our brother Demetrius, saying that we should imitate that which is good (3 John 11-12)

- In Romans 16:1-2 , Paul presented an excellent testimony of Phoebe, who served the church at Cenchrea. The apostle was confident that she would benefit the work of the gospel in Rome, as well.
- In Acts 18:24-28 we learn that we should be obligated today to remember the practice of our early brethren in writing to disciples in different locations to receive the brethren who move their way. Doing so certainly increases the confidence of a church in accepting a newcomer.
- A good report by the brethren of Lystra and Iconium concerning Timothy in Acts 16:1-3a, gave Paul confidence in taking him along as he continued to preach.

In 1 Corinthians 16:17-18 we read that the apostle Paul himself was refreshed by the actions of others and declared their good example to those in Corinth. We need to cling to this apostolic command, acknowledging those among us who do well.

### Bad Marks

All have heard of “the mark of the beast.” While Ezekiel’s prophecy concerned those who were marked on their foreheads to spare them from death, in Christ’s revelation to John, the mark on the forehead, or even the right hand, was an indication of something altogether different (cf. Revelation 13:11-17; 14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). These were marked for death!

Looking back to Job 10:14, we find that even Job knew that God marks those who are in sin. It is just as clear that God’s children are to follow His example, and mark those in sin today.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark** them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” (Romans 16:17).

Paul commands that we mark, or take note of, those who divide the church by teaching contradictory to the revealed word because:

- They don’t serve Christ, but themselves (18)
- Their goal is to deceive (18)

Since we must greet one another in a holy manner (Romans 16:16), we are required to know whom we are permitted to extend such a greeting. To greet those who are in error and welcome them among us is to partake of their wickedness (2 John 9-11). Such an admonition applies not only those who teach false doctrine, but also to others:

- Those who live in immorality, whose very lives contradict the gospel. They too are to be **noted** by the church and withdrawn from (2 Thessalonians 3:14). The reason is obvious: *“that he may be ashamed.”*

- Those wearing the name of Christ who refuse to depart from iniquity (2 Timothy 2:19) must be marked (1 Corinthians 5:11)! Again, the reason is plain, such actions will encourage godly sorrow, leading to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:9-10), at which time the erring one may be returned to the fold (2 Corinthians 2:6-8).

God has given us many examples of those who have been marked in accord with His Word, as well as guidance as to how such is to be done.

- In 1 Corinthians 5:1 we learn that hearsay is not to be immediately discounted. Paul reacted to a report – probably from Chloe’s household (1 Corinthians 1:11), not firsthand observation.
- Paul also tells us that a couple of warnings should precede any eventual rejection (Titus 3:10).
- In 2 Timothy 4:14-15 we find the example of Paul marking Alexander, the coppersmith. He did so not spitefully, as though he sought revenge, but as a caution, telling Timothy to *“beware of him.” ...or be careful or cautious of him.*
- Another instance of Paul marking some is found in 2 Timothy 2:16-18. Here Paul warned of Hymenaeus and Philetus as a physician warns his patients of cancer, for the well-being of those who receive the warning. Since *“they overthrow the faith of some,”* Timothy needed to be cautious of such. A warning that had to be repeated as far as Hymanaeus’ actions were concerned (1 Timothy 1:18-20).

In 3 John 9-10 we find recorded for us something which some think odd. In the same letter in which he singled out Demetrius for his good conduct, John also marked Diotrephes for his heretical behavior. There is nothing contradictory in marking both good and bad for their various ways. In fact, it is the only way to be consistent. If I may publicly praise some for their hospitality and others for their sincerity, why am I called unloving when I name the false teacher and erring brother in the same fashion?

### Conclusion

God marks both the just and the wicked. We also must give good and bad marks.