

William P. Wilson, MD  
Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry  
Duke University Medical Center,  
Distinguished Professor of Counseling  
Carolina Evangelical Divinity School

© Protected by Common Law Copyright  
This may be copied for personal use only.

## **TATTOOS**

*ICG E-Newsletter Commentary 1*  
*December 2009*

Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:28)

Sometimes I feel I have to speak out on various subjects. To my knowledge, no one has commented on the subject in the written literature. On the Internet there is a site that rationalizes the Levitical injunction against tattoos, and it says that it is OK if people get Christian tattoos. Jesus said he came to give the law real meaning, and on the basis of that statement, I do not accept the arguments on that site.

Everywhere I look today, I find that people are being tattooed. This is especially true of those in the military, athletes and people in the entertainment industry. Even Christians are being tattooed in spite of God's condemnation of the practice.

Looking back on my attitude about tattooing, I remembered that one of my friends was in the Coast Guard in World War II. One day, just after the war, we went to the beach, and I noticed that he kept his t-shirt on. I could not understand why until he went into the water. When he came out, I noticed through his wet t-shirt that he had a huge eagle tattooed on his right shoulder. When I queried him about it, he said he got drunk one evening, and with some other guys got tattooed. I asked him if he was ashamed of it, and he said he rued the day he got it. He later became a lawyer, and felt embarrassed if people saw it. In those days it was considered lowbrow to get a tattoo, for only riff-raff got tattooed. Before the war most of those who did were usually merchant marine sailors, US sailors, soldiers and marines who had been stationed in the Philippines or China. At that time, many of the enlisted men in the military were riff-raff. I know that to be true, for before the war I lived in a town near Fort Bragg, NC.

Tattooing is very popular today. Many in the Christian world are tattooed. Notable among those who have been on television is Todd Bentley, who only exposes his extensively tattooed arms. He came out of the drug culture, and got his tattoos before he was saved. Others that are often extensively tattooed are members of

the motorcycle culture and gangs.

Both Jews and Muslims have a taboo against tattooing. They base their objection to it on the grounds of it being primarily a pagan practice. This belief has truth since it is common in pagan cultures over the globe, both historically and currently. Among the practitioners were the Egyptians, Celts, Picts, Ainu, and Maoris. Wikipedia says that it came into the modern western world from Polynesia. Even though early Europeans practiced the art before they knew that Polynesia existed, it had declined in popularity because of the biblical injunction against it.

Early in my career, I had several encounters with tattooed patients. While working in a USPHS rapid treatment center, I encountered a lady wrestler and prostitute who was being treated for syphilis. I was a 4<sup>th</sup> year medical student at the time. When she had been prepared for examination, the nurse told me with a chuckle that she was ready, but would not tell me why she seemed so amused.

When I did my examination, I found the reason for her amusement. The lady was tattooed on her breasts and abdomen. The content of the tattoos was amusing to me, too. Another one of my patients who was an ex-marine, was tattooed from his neck down to his ankles. I did not ask him to show them all to me. More recently, one of our friends who is in the 82nd Airborne came home with some tattoos on his right arm. He is a Christian.

I recently read the scripture in Leviticus cited above, and it reminded me that I find tattoos objectionable. God does not like them! After I read it, I felt I had to bring this to your attention so you can remind your fellow believers, children and grandchildren that God does not approve of it. Jesus said he did not come to do away with the law, but to give it real meaning. So we Christians should avoid being tattooed.

At this point, I want to go back to a statement I made earlier. Spirits generate fixed ideas. The two spiritual sources are the Holy Spirit and Satan. These two sources generate righteous and unrighteous ideas. Both spirits use our minds to develop our moral beliefs and thus our moral behavior. Our lack of righteous beliefs has given rise to the immorality of our society today. As a result, God has cursed us (Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

If we look at what is going on in our society today, we can only come to the conclusion that we are under God's curse. Most in the Christian world today do not believe God's curse will be levied. We believe Jesus became a curse for us so we are immune (Galatians 3:13). It is true that we Christians are immune, but the pagans amongst us and the country in which they live are not. Therefore, if we examine what is going on in our world today, we find the fruits of God's curse are all around us.

The first is that the fruit of our wombs is cursed. Abortion kills millions in our society, and in many cases produces sterility.

Then there is wasting disease. AIDS is a wasting disease. If you have ever seen pictures of persons dying of HIV (AIDS), or antibiotic resistant tuberculosis, then you will know what a wasting disease is like. Both of these diseases are spreading rapidly in the world including in the US.

Then there is confusion in our society. The government does not know what to do about the recession we are in, and neither do experts in economics. Accompanying this confusion are the enormous losses of money, which occurred because of people like Bernie Madoff and others. Associated with those are the losses suffered by the banks in the collapse of the real estate market.

Then lastly, we are being invaded by peoples who are propagating other religions. They are contributing to our moral decay.

Unrighteous fixed ideas can only be changed by conversion to Christianity! Pray for revival, and get your friends and churches praying for revival! Nothing else is going to break the curse and change our culture.