"You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor
tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD."
Leviticus 19:28

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy
Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not
your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in
your body and in your spirit, which are God’s."
1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Should A Christian Get a Tattoo? Is It Wrong To Put Ink On My Body?

The main scripture verse used by Christians who say that it is wrong to get a tattoo is Leviticus 19:28:

"You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor
tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD."

The main argument by Christians against Leviticus 19:28 say this verse is in the context of pagan religious practices. After looking at both sides of the debate I would have to agree with them and say Leviticus 19:28 cannot be used to forbid tattoos by Christians.

I believe there are other verses of scripture that can be used to clearly show that Christians should not get tattoos. Would it be wrong to spray paint graffiti on a church? I’m sure most would agree that it is wrong because that person does not own the church building.
Well, Christians do not own our bodies, they belong to Christ since He died for us. I would liken a Christian getting a tattoo to a person putting graffiti on another person's property:

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's,"
1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Do you think our Holy and Righteous God wants people putting graffiti on his property? Do you think our Holy and Righteous God wants his children acting and looking like the *Devil's* children?

"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.' Therefore Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty,"
2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

In the twelfth chapter of Romans we are commanded to make our bodies a living sacrifice to God. We are also admonished to not conform to this wicked world. A Christian getting a tattoo anywhere on their bodies clearly violates both of these clear and concise directives.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,
that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God," Romans 12:1-2.

Jesus cleansed the Temple of God with physical force on two separate occasions (John 2:13-16, Matthew 21:12-13). He was angry with the Jewish leaders for defiling such a holy place. Now, imagine if Jesus had witnessed a bunch of people defacing the Temple? Of course Jesus would have upbraided them and told them to stop. Well, a Christian's body is the Temple of God and getting a tattoo would be the same thing as defacing the Temple that Jesus defended so vigorously.

"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are," 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

If a person got tattoos before they were saved then I don't see a problem with them. In fact, they could be a great witnessing tool. Anytime a person asks about them they could respond, "Yeah, I got these before I was saved and knew any better." That could lead to them sharing the Gospel with the person asking about them. However, for a Christian to get new tattoos is an entire different scenario altogether.

Another thing I would like to comment on is the general climate of tattoo shops and the beliefs of tattoo artists and sympathizers in general. Would you agree that these tattoo shops, artists, and sympathizers generally promote; anarchy, devil worship, profanity, or paganism? Why is it people who are into; anarchy, devil worship, gangs, and paganism are attracted to tattoos?

I am in no way saying everybody who likes tattoos is into these things, but why is the belief in anarchy so closely associated with tattoos? Nearly all of men in prison have tattoos. Nearly every gang member in America has tattoos. Why is that? Is that something a Christian should be associated with?
I have compiled a brief history of the majority of people who have gotten tattoos throughout the decades in America:

1970: Sailors, bikers, gangsters, inmates, and prostitutes have tattoos.

1980: Sailors, bikers, gangsters, inmates, and prostitutes have tattoos.

1990: Sailors, bikers, gangsters, inmates, and prostitutes have tattoos.

2000: Fraternity members, college coeds, Sailors, bikers, gangsters, inmates, prostitutes, and urban hipsters have tattoos.

2012: Middle aged men and women, teenagers, grandmas and grandpas, "Christians," Fraternity members, college coeds, Sailors, bikers, gangsters, inmates, prostitutes, and urban hipsters have tattoos.

Is it the world's worst and phoniest youth fad going mainstream because of our self-centered, evil, and youth worshipping consumer culture?

A recent article titled, "Sporting a tattoo? There's a good chance you like a drink, study finds" quotes scientists who conducted various studies that correlates people with tattoos with illicit activities:

"Alcohol tests performed on nearly 2,000 young men and women frequenting bars in the west of France showed a strong correlation between body art and boozing, they said.

'Pierced and/or tattooed individuals had consumed more alcohol in bars on a Saturday night than patrons in the same bars who were non-pierced and non-tattooed,' said a study for the journal Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research.
Previous research had shown that people with tattoos and piercings were more likely to engage in unsafe sex, fighting and heavy drinking, but this was the first such project to measure more alcohol per litre of exhaled breath."

I find it humorous that most people get tattoos to be different yet everybody is getting them. Have you watched an N.B.A. game recently? The only "Different" players are the ones without tattoos. The "Individuals" are the players who have not gone with the flow and gotten a tattoo like nearly every other man in the league.

I have more respect for those players because it shows they have the intestinal fortitude to not do something even though most people are. We as Christians should be doing the same when it concerns tattoos.

There is an N.B.A. player with a very large "Free Bird" tattoo on his neck? Is he really free? Getting a large tattoo on your neck would seem to restrict and confine you to a certain niche. Tattoos are permanent, how can you be a "Free Bird" with these colorful permanent markings all over your body? It just seems a little contradictory to me.

Several years ago there were these popular bracelets that read: W.W.J.D. That acronym stands for, "What Would Jesus Do?" They had Tattoos in Jesus time, did He get one? Would Jesus get a tattoo now? Would Jesus approve of His children acting and looking like the Devil's children? I don't believe so.

As Christians we should be concerned with our witness to unbelievers (Colossians 4:5). We have liberty in Christ (1 Corinthians 8:9–13) but we should not cause our fellow believers to stumble (Romans 14:21). We are commanded by Jesus to be Salt and Light of this earth (Matthew 5:13–14). Is doing what everybody else is doing being Salt? Is going along with our wicked and debased culture being Light?
As Christians we all sin every single day (1 John 1:8-10). We all have our besetting sins (Hebrews 12:1). I don't want you to think I am better than a person with tattoos. I am not. I just think its not very smart to have a sin permanently tattooed on your body for everybody to see.

Some Christians claim that tattoos are between them and God. Well, that is true but they are also between them and other people when we can clearly see them. If something is between me and God I don't advertise it for everybody to see.

So in a way, Christians who get tattoos that are clearly visible have brought this debatable issue into the public domain. Similar to alcohol, if it is done in private a Christian has the liberty to do it. When a debatable issue like this is brought into the public domain certain scriptures come into play that forbid these types of activities by Christians:

"So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak."
Romans 14:12-21
"But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble."

1 Corinthians 8:9-13

If a Christian has a tattoo that nobody can see then it is between them and God. But how many people get tattoos so nobody can see them. It seems people get tattoos on the most visible areas on their bodies to advertise their "uniqueness" (arms, shoulders, legs, angles, neck, wrists, etc). Tattoos scream, "Look at me, 'I'm different, I'm a gang member, I'm an individual, I'm a rebel, I'm special, etc.,'"

Having a tattoo in a clearly visible area is not being humble because it is drawing attention to yourself:

"Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.' Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you,"

1 Peter 5:5-7

I was in the military where tattoos are somewhat common, especially among sailors. I was tempted once when I was eighteen and in the military to get a tattoo. I wanted to be cool and "Different" but I didn't see anything that I liked in the tattoo shop. I thank God that I didn't get it because it would have been one of the biggest mistakes of my life.

Our wicked culture today screams, "I am free to do what I
please, don't judge me!" We as Christians should not fall into this trap and claim that every action is between us and God. We have a responsibility to our fellow believers to not make them stumble by our liberty in Christ.

We need to think and act biblically, we need to be Salt and Light and have the courage to take a stand for righteousness. We need to stop thinking about ourselves like our sinful culture demands that we should.

"All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being."  
1 Corinthians 10:23-24

Have you ever seen a bumper sticker on a Bentley, Ferrari, or Lamborghini? Of course you haven't! Why not? Because it would be absurd and absolutely foolish to deface such a valuable car with such juvenile nonsense. Now, put your Thinking Cap on for a minute, isn't your body much more precious than a luxury car? So why would you ever deface your body with a "bumper sticker?" Think about it my Christian friend, think!

We are commanded by Jesus to be salt and light in this dark and decaying world. We are to be examples by the lives that we live. Is going along with every worldly and fetid fad being salt? When you partake in works of darkness are you being light?

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven,"  
I have to admit that there is biblical evidence that an Apostle was "Branded" for Jesus and he made specific mention of it in the Bible. These are the marks or brands Christians should be proud of and desire, not some proud and self gratifying tattoo like so many boast of today.

The great Apostle Paul was proud of his brands on his body for the Lord Jesus Christ and we as Christians should be ashamed of ourselves to boast or take pride in a tattoo.

"From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus,"
Galatians 6:17

"From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 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,"
2 Corinthians 11:24-25

Below is a great commentary on Galatians chapter six that describes brands, marks, or tattoos in the time the New Testament was written. This provides a great insight and I don't believe any slave of Jesus could come away after reading this and not find tattoos for a Christian nothing less than rebellion against the God they claim to love and serve.

"Let no man trouble me - This implies that he had had trouble of some kind, and he earnestly desires that he may have no more. What particular trouble he here refers to, is not certainly known, and commentators have not been agreed. It seems to me that the connection requires us to understand it of the molestation which he had in regard to his call to the apostolic office, and his authority to explain and defend the religion of the Redeemer.

This had been one principal subject of this Epistle. His authority had been called in question. He had felt it necessary to go into a vindication of it. His instructions had been departed from on the
ground that he was not one of the original apostles, and that he differed from others; see Galatians 1:11.

Hence, all the anxiety and trouble which he had in regard to their departure from the doctrines which he had taught them. He closes the whole subject of the Epistle by this tender and affecting language, the sense of which has been well expressed by Crellius:

"I have shown my apostolic authority, and proved that I am commissioned by the Lord Jesus. I have stated and vindicated the great doctrine of justification by faith, and shown that the Mosaic law is not necessarily binding. On these points may I have no more trouble. I have enough for my nature to bear of other kinds. I bear in my body the impressive proofs that I am an apostle, and the sufferings that require all my fortitude to sustain them."

These marks, received in the service of the Lord Jesus, and so strongly resembling those which he himself received, prove that I am truly engaged in his cause, and am commissioned by him. These wounds and sorrows are so many, that I have need of the kindness and prayers of Christians rather than to be compelled to vindicate myself, and to rebuke them for their own wanderings."

For I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus - The word here rendered "marks" (στίγματα stigmata), means properly the marks or brands which are pricked or burnt in upon the body. So slaves were sometimes branded by their masters to prevent their escape; and so devotees to an idol god sometimes caused to be impressed on themselves the name or image of the divinity which they adored.

Herodotus mentions a temple of Hercules in Egypt, in which if any slave took refuge, and had the sacred brands or marks impressed on him (στίγματα stigmata), he thereby devoted himself to the god, and it was not lawful for anyone to injure him.
Many have supposed that Paul here says, in allusion to such a custom, that he had the name of the Redeemer impressed on his body, and that he regarded himself as devoted to him and his cause. It seems to me that by these marks or brands he refers to the weals which he had received in his body; the marks of stripes and sufferings which he endured in the service of the Redeemer. Compare 2 Corinthians 11:24-25.

He had repeatedly been scourged. He bore the marks of that on his person now. They were the evidences that he was devoted to the Saviour. He had received them in his cause; and they were the proofs that he belonged to the Lord Jesus. He had suffered for him, and had suffered much. Having thus suffered, and having thus the evidence that he belonged to the Saviour, and having by his sufferings given ample proof of that to others, he asks to be freed from further molestation.

Some had in their body the marks of circumcision, the evidence that they were disciples of the Law of Moses; others had perhaps in their persons the image and name of an idol to which they were devoted; but the marks which he bore were the weals which he had received by being again and again whipped publicly in the cause of the Redeemer. To that Redeemer, therefore, he felt himself united, and from that attachment he would not allow himself to be diverted.

How often has an old soldier shown his scars with pride and exultation as a proof of his attachment to his country! Numerous scars; the loss of an arm, an eye, or a leg, are thus the much valued and vaunted pledges of attachment to liberty, and a passport to the confidence of every man who loves his country.

"I prize this wound," said Lafayette, when struck in the foot by a musket ball at Germantown, "as among the most valued of my honors." So Paul felt in regard to the scourges which he had received in the cause of the Lord Jesus. They were his boast and his glory; the pledge that he had been engaged in the cause of the Saviour, and a passport to all who loved the Son of God.
Christians now are not subjected to such stripes and scourings. But let us have some marks of our attachment to the Lord Jesus. By a holy life; by self-denial; by subdued animal affections; by zeal in the cause of truth; by an imitation of the Lord Jesus; and by the marks of suffering in our body, if we should be called to it, let us have some evidence that we are his, and be able to say, when we look on death and eternity, "we bear with us the evidence that we belong to the Son of God."

To us that will be of more value than any ribbon or star indicating elevated rank; more valuable than a ducal coronet; more valuable than the brightest jewel that ever sparkled on the brow of royalty."

_Barnes's Commentary on Galatians 6:17_

*I am not saying people who get tattoos are the Devil's children, all unbelievers are the spiritual sons and daughters of Satan (1 John 3:8-10, Matthew 13:24-43, Colossians 1:21, Ephesians 2:2, John 1:: 12-13, 8:34-47, John 12:35-36, 17:9, 1 John 5:19, 1 Peter 2:10, Luke 16:8, Romans 8:14, Galatians 4:22-30).*