

In the RSV, Hebrews 12:6 reads, "For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves and chastises every son whom he receives." Last week, Lois Axelson called our attention to the fact that the King James Version reads, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Lois also mentioned that she had heard another teacher state that this scourging was a once only event that corresponded to the Holy Spirit's convicting of sin that led to salvation. At that time, I indicated that I wasn't sufficiently familiar with the greek tense at this location to respond. It therefore has taken me this past week to look into the question.

Strong lists the word translated as "scourgeth" in the KJV as 3146 : μαστιγῶ mastigōō, mas-tig-ō-ō; from 3148; to flog (lit. or fig.): - scourge. This is the vocabulary form of the verb. The verb appears only twice in the New Testament: it is translated as "scourged" in John 19:1 and as "scourgeth" in Hebrews 12:6 (KJV).

In its location in Hebrews 12:6, the word actually appears as μαστιγῶ in both the UBS Text of 1966 and the Revised UBS Text of 1975 (both based on the 25th edition of the Nestle-Aland Text). The word also appears exactly the same in the 1894 Scrivener Text (which follows closely the 1550 Stephens Textus Receptus). Because the vocabulary form ends in omicron-omega, this is a contract verb and the actual appearance in Hebrews 12:6 (ending in the contracted omicron-iota) indicates that the verb is present tense, active voice, indicative mood, third person, singular number.

"The present tense indicates progressive action at the present time." (Ray Summers, Essentials of New Testament Greek, Broadman, 1950, p. 11) The usage in Hebrews 12:6 thus indicates action which is occurring now, has been continuously occurring in the past, and is continuing in the future. An example would be the English sentence, "He is running". This sentence implies that he is running at this instant, was running the instant before this, and will still be running the instant after this. Thus the "scourgeth" of Hebrews 12:6 is not a once only event but is rather a presently continuing event. The Lord continues to scourge every son whom He receives.

On the other hand, the usage in John 19:1 is the aorist tense, active voice, indicative mood, third person, singular number ἐμαστίγωσεν. This is the appearance in both of the UBS texts. The Scrivener text leaves off the final nu but that is common in the aorist active indicative third singular. "The function of the aorist tense is a matter of tremendous importance. The time of action is past. The kind of action is punctiliar. Thus is observed the difference between the imperfect and the aorist. The imperfect indicates continuous action in past time... 'I was loosing'; the aorist indicates finished action in past time... 'I loosed.'" (ibid., p.66). Thus the "scourged" of John 19:1 is a once only event.

Although only appearing twice in the New Testament, this verb also appears in the Septuagint at Exodus 5:14(beaten),16(beaten);Deut. 25:2(2nd beaten),3 (beat); II Chron 25:16(smitten); Job 15:11(not in the KJV);30:21(cruel?); Psalm 72:5(not in the KJV),14(not in KJV);Proverbs 3:12(correcteth);17:10(stripes); 19:25(smite);27:22(bray); and Jer. 5:3(stricken). The words in parentheses are the closest equivalents in the KJV of the Old Testament.

OVERALL, the conclusion is that the "scourgeth" of Hebrews 12:6 represents a present, continuing action. The Lord continues to scourge, whip, chastise, etc. His children when they need it. Once only action is not indicated in this passage.

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