Article of the Month
August, 2022

"Scourges?"
(Hebrews 12:6)

Hebrews 12:5 and 6 is the Apostle's <u>direct quote</u> from Proverbs 3:11 and 12. For SOME REASON, Paul, when quoting the Proverbs text, uses the word "SCOURGE" — a word which simply IS NOT in, nor even implied in, the Hebrew manuscript of the Proverbs verse. Why does Paul do this?

THE PROBLEM

"Scourge," the Greek word (Strong #3146) which we find in Hebrews 12:6, is a very unpleasant word. It literally means to flog or to whip — a terrible infliction of pain, virtually a torture used as punishment for the most despised of outcasts. <u>ONLY in Hebrews 12:</u>6 is it used with the suggestion that God, Himself, is inflicting it on His sons. There is SOMETHING WRONG with this picture!

The New Testament's uses of this same Greek word are ONLY in the Gospels (excepting this Hebrews' usage). The Gospels' uses are all about Jesus' or his followers' <u>receiving unjust treatment</u>. To find this same word in Hebrews 12:6 seems entirely out of place.

The New Testament uses (in the Gospels) are these::

Matthew	10:17
	20:19
	23:24
Mark	10:34
Luke	18:33
John	19:1

THE SOLUTION

We COULD just say that Paul is using the term <u>metaphorically</u> for "correcting." But the inherent violence in the term makes its use seem inappropriate. There IS, however, a <u>very legitimate reason</u> that Paul uses this word — a reason that gives us EVERY RIGHT to <u>CHANGE</u> the word!

We may infrequently or never think about it, but Paul quotes Old Testament passages from the ***Septuagint*** Bible — the Greek translation of the Old Testament made by B.C. Jews of Alexandria, Egypt who preferred Greek to Hebrew. The ***Septuagint*** Bible was

virtually the Jewish "King James Version" (O.T.) of the early Church. Paul used it for his quotations because most of his readers (being Gentiles) could read it, and most Jews were familiar with it. Being the "King James Version" of Paul's day made the Septuagint readily available (as far as hand-written books were concerned) and readily quoted.

Paul's option (which would have been VERY GOOD for us) would have been to make his own translation of everything he quoted. But he didn't. And just as we frequently quote the KJV in our witnessing opportunities WITHOUT MAKING CORRECTIONS, so did the Apostle quote the Septuagint as he wrote most of the New Testament — not making corrections when he quoted. He was using a poor translation — even though it was the popular translation. Sometimes we suffer for that — as we do here.

THUS, Hebrews 12:6 is WRONG because the Septuagint was wrong. The Alexandrian translators used the Greek word "scourgeth" to translate the Hebrew word (Strong's #3198) — which means "correcteth") in Proverbs. It was a poor and inaccurate choice by those translators. We are JUSTIFIED in changing the word for "scourgeth" because IT IS WRONG. The Hebrew manuscript does NOT use nor sanction it. Only the Septuagint does — a translation which leaves MUCH to be desired.

How, then, should our Hebrews 12:6 text read? We suggest the following corrected alteration of the NAS so that it conforms to the original Hebrew in Proverbs:

> "For those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines,
> And He corrects every son whom He receives."

THAT is a comfort rather than a threat!

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