

## Love Motivates Discipline; The Scourging Metaphor

Justice expresses the approval of righteousness by blessing and rewarding compliance to divine mandates from the motivation of personal love. Justice expresses the disapproval of righteousness by chastising and disciplining noncompliance with divine mandates from the motivation of unconditional love.

The intent of reward and blessing is to provide the believer with momentum in his advance as well as a foretaste of things to come in eternity. The intent of chastisement and discipline is to provide incentive to recover from sin through rebound and recovery from degeneracy through Bible study. If recovery is accomplished, the renewed believer can reassume his advance and be ultimately blessed and rewarded by God.

As a father chastises his son out of unconditional love so also the heavenly Father chastises His children out of unconditional love. This is brought out by the present active indicative of the verb *paideuo* - This is the vocabulary form of the noun, *paideia* and refers to the corrective discipline of chastisement.

Remember that the basic root of these two words is *pais* which means “child.” Both the noun and the verb are used in the sense of motivating a child to orient to rules and regulations by discipline. God chastises the errant believer through a progressive system of divine discipline which results in varying degrees of pain and suffering.

present - Aoristic; used for punctiliar action in present time. Punctiliar action views the action of the verb at a point in time. The indicative mood designates it as a present fact. Consequently, the believer-Jews in Jerusalem are currently under divine discipline.

active - God produces the action from divine justice which imposes the necessary level of discipline upon each individual.

indicative - Declarative; statement of historical reality.

In addition to chastisement, justice also applies a second disciplinary tactic expressed in the present active indicative of the verb *mastigoo* - Lit.: “to skin alive with a whip.” This is obviously the metaphorical use of this verb. God is not going to step out of heaven, grab a mastix, or a whip, and literally scourge the reversionist.

The Bible must be interpreted in the time in which it was written. This metaphor is designed to communicate to Jews who are familiar with the procedures of their former religion’s corrective discipline. We will note some isagogics on the Greek word for “whip” and then on the process of scourging.

**Kittel, Gerhard. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Vol. 4, L-N, 515-19. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967:**

*mastix*

*Hebrews 11:36 enumerates the sufferings of the martyrs, the reference is to stripes received in the synagogue.*

*The synagogue scourge consisted of a strap of calf leather which was divided into four thongs and through which smaller thongs were plaited to make it stronger. In the handle there was a device to make the strap longer or shorter. Basically, the form is Egyptian or Asiatic.*

*On the stele of Esarhaddon in the Berlin Museum there is a whip with two thongs. In the Codex Hammurabi it is made of ox leather. The Roman scourge, the flagellum [fla-GEL-lum], was a leather strap with interwoven bones and bits of metal. This was the most terrible instrument for beating; milder forms are scutica [scu-TEE-kah], a leather whip; virga [WIR-gah], a rod; and ferula [fe-RUE-lah], a stick.*

*mastigow*

*In Matthew 10:17 and Matthew 23:34 the disciples are told that with other persecutions they will have to face whippings in the synagogues.*

*There is a thorough treatment of punishment by scourging found in the Mishna's tractate Makkot of the fourth order, Nezikim.*

[Note: In order to appreciate this particular source of information, it is important that we take a couple of minutes to explain what these references are. The Jewish rabbis built over a period of centuries what was called an "oral tradition," which was passed down from generation to generation. These were interpretations of the Old Testament's Mosaic Law, specifically the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. Around the third century A.D., this oral tradition with its commentaries and interpretations was reduced to writing and called The Mishna. According to the rabbis who created the Mishna, the oral tradition originated at Mt. Sinai as part of the divine revelation given to Moses. The oral tradition interpreted the written Torah, adapted its precepts to ever-changing political and social circumstances, and supplemented it with new legislation. During the two-hundred years following publication of the Mishna, the rabbis developed a set of commentaries on it which they named the Gemara. These two works were subsequently united to form one volume which is known today as the Talmud.

The Mishna is divided into six orders, each order into tractates, and each tractate into chapters. The six orders are:

Zera'im with 11 tractates deals with agriculture.

Mo'ed with 12 tractates deals with festivals, feast days, and rituals. (Rosh-ha-Shanah, Yom Kippur, Passover, etc.)

Nashim with seven tractates deals with family life.

\* Nezikim with 10 tractates deals with civil and criminal law.

Kodashim with 11 tractates deals with sacrifices, offerings, and donations.

Tahorot with 12 tractates deals with ritual purity.

Please note the fourth order, Nezikim; the fifth of its 10 tractates is named Makkot. This tractate provides us with a thorough treatment of punishment by scourging's administered in the synagogues. From it we learn the following.]

Three judges were needed to secure condemnation to whipping in the local synagogues. These had specific tasks during execution of the sentence. One recited (Scripture), the second counted the blows, the third gave the command before each blow. Deuteronomy 25:3 limits the number of strokes to 40 as compared with 60 in the Code of Hammurabi and as many as 80 or even 100 in the Koran. But according to 2 Corinthians 11:24 ; Makkot, 3, 10; and Flavius Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews, the synagogue reduced this to thirty-nine. There were thirteen strokes on the breast and 26 on the back, 13 on each shoulder. Before the whipping, it had to be considered whether the person could stand the punishment. If not, it was reduced to a lesser number divisible by three. The punishment was administered by the servant of the synagogue, who usually stood on a stone behind the sentenced person.

The mode varied, for sometimes the victim would stand by a pillar with his hands tied, sometimes he would bend, sometimes he would be beaten lying down. The instrument was the lash, mastix. If it tore, a new one was not supplied; the victim was released. If there seemed to be danger of death, the whipping was to stop. Women were whipped as well as men. The punishment might sometimes be a substitute for a capital sentence when there was repentance.

Obviously, this was the maximum goad in Jewish penology just below capital punishment. The administration of 39 lashes with the mastix was therefore the maximum infliction of pain and suffering which Jewish jurisprudence could impose. Thus, Hebrews 12:6 recognizes the varying levels of punishment that believers in reversionism may receive.

The verb *paideuo* indicates the less intensified levels of divine discipline while *mastigoo*, implies metaphorically the more advanced levels.

The Jews were fully aware of the application of these terms in Jewish culture and were able to quickly orient to their metaphorical uses with regard to divine discipline. Such discipline is entirely a family matter and is administered by God in the same manner that a father disciplines his child.

**Hebrews 12:6 - For you see, whom the Lord loves, He disciplines [paideuo] and punishes to the maximum [mastigoo].**