

Why You're Not a Sinner in the Hands of an Angry God

We believers are not punished by God. But what about God's discipline?

In Hebrews 12, we see a description of God's loving discipline. However, the word "scourges" appears in some translations and can really throw people off.

Now, if you don't know what scourging is, check out Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ*. You'll see scourging in vivid detail.

Scourging was not fatherly discipline of a child. It was what Roman soldiers inflicted as punishment upon prisoners, including Jesus. They used an instrument composed of long leather straps and pieces of sharp metal at the end to beat the prisoner. The metal would gouge deeply into the prisoner's back, ripping away skin and muscle, severely injuring or even killing him.

So, does God "scourge" His children as discipline?

Here's the truth about this challenging passage: First, the verse includes a quote from the Old Testament, and the bit about scourging doesn't even appear in the original verse (Prov. 3:12). Also, the Hebrew term *biqqoret* has a double meaning; it can be translated as "scourge" or as "inquire into."

Interestingly, the "inquire" meaning is actually older than the "scourge" meaning, as the scourging instrument was invented much later.

Clement (AD 150 to 215) and other scholars thought the epistle to the Hebrews was originally written in Hebrew (which would

make sense). The letter mirrors Hebrew poetry in some ways, and there are about 150 words in the epistle that aren't found anywhere else in the New Testament.

This would mean a scribe translating the text to Greek chose to translate *biqqoret* as "scourge" instead of "inquire into." However, given the finished work of the cross and the fact that Jesus took all the punishment for us, the "inquire into" interpretation makes a lot more sense. After all, scourging was punishment, not discipline. Jesus took our punishment in full.

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5, NKJV).

Jesus was even scourged so we would never be. By His stripes (not ours!), we are healed.

God does deeply inquire into our lives because we are His children. He cares for us and wants us to experience His best—Jesus. God disciplines us in loving ways to mold us and shape us, and help us think and act in new ways. But He doesn't scourge us!

Ephesians 6:4 says not to exasperate our children but instead to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. This tells us God's training and instruction do not exasperate you. He invests in you for your good, so you may share in His holiness (Heb. 12:10).

You're not a sinner in the hands of an angry God. You are a saint in the arms of a loving Father! Jesus bore all your sins so you would not have to bear them (1 Pet. 2:24). You're saved from the wrath of God and you have peace with Him (Rom. 5:9).

When tough circumstances come your way, you need to know they are never God's punishment. The world comes at you, but Christ

is working in you. God is for you, never against you. God's discipline is training for your future, not punishment for your past. {eoa}

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