

Luke 12:47

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

Analysis

And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes (ἐκεῖνος δὲ ὁ δοῦλος ὁ γνούς τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ καὶ μὴ ἐτοιμάσας ἢ ποιήσας πρὸς τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ δαρήσεται πολλάς, *ekeinos de ho doulos ho gnous to thelēma tou kyriou autou kai mē hetoimasas ē poiēsas pros to thelēma autou darēsetai pollas*)—This verse establishes the principle of proportional judgment based on knowledge. The aorist participle *gnous* (γνούς, having known) indicates definite knowledge of the master's will (*to thelēma*, τὸ θέλημα). Yet despite knowing, the servant neither prepared (*hetoimasas*, ἐτοιμάσας) nor acted (*poiēsas*, ποιήσας) according to that will.

The passive verb *darēsetai* (δαρήσεται, will be beaten) with the cognate accusative *pollas* (πολλάς, many stripes) indicates severe punishment—literally "will be beaten with many." The severity corresponds to the knowledge possessed. Greater knowledge of God's will creates greater responsibility; disobedience despite knowledge brings greater judgment. This principle appears throughout Scripture: "to whom much is given, of him shall much be required" (verse 48). The servant who knows but doesn't obey faces stricter judgment than one who acts in ignorance. Knowledge without obedience compounds guilt rather than excusing it.

Historical Context

Roman and Jewish law practiced corporal punishment, with the number of stripes proportional to the offense's severity. Jewish law limited flogging to forty lashes (Deuteronomy 25:3), later reduced to thirty-nine to avoid accidental excess (2 Corinthians 11:24). This cultural context makes the "many stripes" comprehensible—severe but measured punishment. Jesus' teaching established a principle the New Testament develops: greater privilege brings greater accountability. James warns that teachers receive stricter judgment (James 3:1). Those who sin against greater light face greater condemnation (Hebrews 10:26-31).

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does knowing God's will but not obeying it increase rather than decrease guilt and judgment?
2. What does proportional punishment based on knowledge teach about divine justice and human accountability?
3. In what areas of life might you possess clear knowledge of God's will yet fail to prepare yourself or act accordingly?

Interlinear Text

ἐκεῖνος	δὲ	τὸ	δοῦλος	τὸ	γνούς	τὸ	θέλημα	τὸ
that	And	which	servant	which	knew	which	to his will	which
G1565	G1161	G3588	G1401	G3588	G1097	G3588	G2307	G3588
κυρίου	ἐαυτοῦ,	καὶ	μὴ	ἐτοιμάσας	μηδὲ	ποιήσας		
lord's	his	and	not	prepared	himself neither	did		
G2962	G1438	G2532	G3361	G2090	G3366	G4160		
πρὸς	τὸ	θέλημα	αὐτοῦ	δαρήσεται	πολλάς·			
according	which	to his will	G846	shall be beaten	with many			
G4314	G3588	G2307		G1194	G4183			

Additional Cross-References

James 4:17 (Parallel theme): Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

John 9:41 (Parallel theme): Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

John 12:48 (Parallel theme): He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

Acts 17:30 (Parallel theme): And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: