

Mark 9:18 "pineth away" or "becomes rigid"? More of James White's Follies

Let's now look at the second objection James White brings up in his chapter called Problems in the KJV.

On page 225 James continues after his complaint about "observed him" versus "Kept him safe" in this manner: "A similar less-than-perfect translation is found at Mark 9:18.

KJV "And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, AND PINETH AWAY: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not."

NASB "and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth, and STIFFENS OUT."

(Here the NKJV, NIV, NET, Holman, RSV, ESV and the modern Catholic versions like the St. Joseph NAB and the New Jerusalem bible all read "becomes rigid".)

Mr. White continues: "It is difficult to get "stiffens out" or "becomes rigid" (NIV) from "pineth away". The KJV rendering is obviously less than adequate in comparison with the modern translations."

Now, to address this criticism.

First of all, the word used here is *xeeraino* (ξηραίνεται) and has several meanings including "to wither away, to dry up, to be ripe, and to pine away". To pine away simply means to fail gradually in health or vitality or to waste away through grief, pain, hunger, etc. The word is frequently translated in all versions as "to wither", as in the fig tree or other plant withers. If a plant withers, it gradually loses its strength and vitality and shrinks in size. It first becomes limp, and only after it is dead does it become dry and rigid. The little boy in this case was not dead, but had for many years been afflicted by the unclean spirit and his strength was pining away, as the KJB correctly has it. As a matter of fact, I have two earlier copies of the NASB right here in my study, and the 1963 and 1973 editions of the NASB translate this phrase as "and stiffens out" but then in a marginal note both add "Or, whithers away".

Secondly, other scholars disagree with Mr. White as to the possible meanings of this word.

In Joseph Henry Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, 19th printing 1978 on page 432 Mr. Thayer says of the word *keepaino* that "of members of the body, to waste away, to PINE AWAY" and then he lists Mark 9:18.

Moulton, The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised, 1978, page 281, has "to pine".

Vine, The Expanded Vines, 1984, page 1236 has "pine away".

Thirdly, not only does the King James Bible say that the boy who had the dumb spirit "pineth away", but so also do Tyndale 1525, Coverdale 1535, the Great Bible 1540 - "and gnassheth with hys teth, and pineth awaye." the Bishop's Bible 1568, the Geneva Bible 1599, John Wesley's 1755 translation, Worsley Version 1770, N.T. by Thomas Howels 1795, Webster's 1833 translation, the Revised Version 1881, the American Standard Version 1901 - "AND PINETH AWAY", Young's literal translation, Weymouth's translation 1912- "HE IS PINING AWAY", the Douay-Rheims bible 1582- "and gnasheth with the teeth, and pineth away", Noyes Translation 1869 - "gnasheth his teeth; and he pineth away.", Henry Alford's N.T. for English Readers 1868, William Godbey's Translation of the N.T. 1902 "pineth away", The Twentieth Century N.T. 1904 "is pining away", The N.T. Translation from the Sinaitic Manuscript by Henry Anderson 1918 - "AND PINES AWAY", American Bible Union New Testament and Worrell N.T. - "and pines away", the Douay version 1950, the KJV 21st Century Version 1994, the Third Millennium Bible 1998, English Jubilee Version 2000 - "and pines away"

Again, notice the pattern found in the Catholic versions. Both the 1582 Douay-Rheims and the 1950 Douay read "PINETH AWAY", but now the more modern Catholic versions like the St. Joseph New American Bible 1970 and the 1985 New Jerusalem read like the NKJV, RSV, ESV, NIV, NASB, Holman's "BECOMES RIGID". The latest Catholic version of 2009 (Catholic Public Domain Version) has an unusual way of translating this word. It now says "he becomes unconscious".

There are two fairly well known translations of the Syriac, one done by Murdock and the other done by Etheridge and both have translated their text as "pineth away".

Other versions that read in a similar way to the King James Bibles "pineth away" are Daniel Mace N.T. 1729 - "and grows meager.", The Living Oracles 1835 - "his strength is exhausted", Sawyer's N.T. 1858 "becomes emaciated", Edgar Goodspeed 1923 - "he is wasting away", World English Bible - "AND WASTETH AWAY", Montgomery N.T., New Heart English Bible, Riverside N. T., Williams N.T., Hebrew Names Version, and Green's interlinear with "wastes away", Darby's Transation and the Amplified Bible 1987 "is withering away", the Rheims bible of 1582 said "he withereth", Rotherham's Emphasized Bible 1902 "weareth himself out", James Moffatt N.T. - "He is wasting away with it.", J.B. Phillips Translation 1962 - "IT'S SIMPLY WEARING HIM OUT.", New Life Version 1969 "he is getting weaker", the Bible in Basic English 1970 "his strength goes from him.", the Worldwide English N.T. 1998 says: "HE IS GETTING WEAK AND THIN.", Apostolic Bible Polyglot English - "he withers", Jonathan Mitchell N.T. "he progressively withers", A Conservative Version Interlinear - "HE BECOMES LIMP", God's Word Translation 1995 and The Names of God Bible 2011 - "he becomes exhausted.", J.P. Green's literal and the Aramaic Bible in Plain English 2010 - "and he wastes away", Knox Bible 2012 - "HIS STRENGTH IS DRAINED FROM HIM."

Among foreign language bibles there are several that agree with the sense found in the King James Bible. Both the Spanish Nueva Biblia Latinoamericana of 2005 and the 1997 La Biblia de las Américas, both put out by the Lockman Foundation, which brings

us the NASB, say: "cruje los dientes y se va consumiéndose" = "he gnashes his teeth and is consumed (or pines away)", the Portuguese de Almeida of 1681 has: "e range os dentes, e vai definhando" = "he gnashes his teeth and is becoming weak" and the Spanish Reina Valera Bibles 1909, 1960, 1995 say "y cruje los dientes, y se va secando" = "he gnashes his teeth and is withering away (or drying up)". The Spanish La Biblia de las Américas 1997 says: "cruje los dientes y se va consumiéndose."= "he gnashes his teeth AND IS CONSUMING AWAY."

John Gill comments: "and pineth away; his flesh is withered, dried up, and consumed away."

Matthew Henry also says: "and though the fits go off presently, yet they leave him so weak, that he pines away, is worn to a skeleton; his flesh is dried away."

John Calvin translated the passage as: "And wheresoever it seizeth him, it teareth him, and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, AND LANGUISHED: and I spoke to thy disciples to cast him out, and they could not. " Then he comments: "The consequence was, that he was exposed to danger on every hand, and was thrown into violent convulsions, which left him lying on the ground, IN A FAINTING STATE, and like a dead man."

Actually the first major English translation to translate this word as "becomes rigid" was the liberal RSV, and since then the NRSV, NIV, NASB, ESV, Holman, NET and NKJV have followed this meaning. Again, Mr. White is dogmatically expressing his own opinion as to the correct meaning of the word used in Mark 9:18, but many others throughout history and to this day disagree with his conclusions.

James White and men like him have NO infallible Bible in ANY language to believe in themselves nor to recommend to anyone else either. He has become his own authority as he selects the particular texts, readings and meanings he personally would like to put into his own bible version if he were to write one. I think both he and a whole lot of other people as well would be much the better off if he were to take a very loooooong Sabbatical, go off into the woods all by himself and finally write his own bible version. That is the only way he will be happy. Take all the time you want, James. We Bible believers are in no hurry to hear back from you any time soon.

All of grace, believing the Book - the Authorized King James Holy Bible