



Child Abuse

The salvation of our children depends upon many factors not the least being the free because sovereign grace of God. Apart from God's electing love none can be saved (Ephesians 1:3, 4). But just as God ordains the end of a thing he also ordains the means towards that end. And the means of the salvation of our children are believing parents; especially believing fathers. Yes, we are responsible for the salvation of our children. By the looks of things, many parents simply don't believe that. I refer to the refusal of even some believing parents to use the means of grace of the rod of discipline. Yes, corporal punishment is a gift of God to parents for the salvation of our children.

The world tells us that spanking our children is a form of child abuse. Actually, according to the Bible, our *failure*, our *refusal* to spank our child is child abuse. We imperil their soul. Consider the following verses: He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes (early) Proverbs 13:24. Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him Prov 22:15; and Withhold not correction from the child: for *if* thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. Prov 23:13, 14.

These verses make it patently clear that to refuse to use the rod of discipline upon ones child is to imperil its soul. And there is no greater evil to be inflicted upon a child than to not prepare him for eternity, all the psycho-babble notwithstanding.

As I have argued elsewhere, the Rod of discipline (we might call it a 'wooden spoon' today) is a means of grace. When a parent biblically applies corporal punishment then he/she is pointing the child to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The child is being taught that sin has consequences and that those consequences are painful. They are also being taught something important about authority; not merely the parents but ultimately and most importantly about God's authority. There are lines that must not be crossed because God says so. To cross them brings judgment. A child must learn this. But further, biblical spanking (prompt, controlled and painful) also drives home to the child that grace is required, that forgiveness is to be sought. Spanking a child is a wonderful opportunity to preach the gospel to them. The child feels their guilt but when the tears are wiped away they see that forgiveness can be theirs. It is at such a time that the parent can lovingly and hopefully point them to the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oftentimes parents feel frustrated with their corporal punishment. We have probably all been there. You know, your child just doesn't seem to get it! You spank them often and yet the behaviour does not change; more importantly, you sense that there is no change of heart. At such times let me encourage that like all means of grace, the effects often take time to be realized. After all, were you converted the first time that you heard the gospel? Has every sermon that you have heard made an immediate impact? I doubt it. God's means of grace are effective but usually over the long haul. And so be encouraged. As you use the wooden spoon, see it as the 'Rod of God' which He will use as a means to bring your child to salvation. One day when you see your child embracing the other means of grace, baptism and the Lord's Supper you will be filled with joy that God delivered you from child abuse.

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