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# The Correction and Salvation of Children

**By Ronald E. Williams**

Believers Baptist Church, 508 School St., Winona Lake, IN 46590 (219) 269-2376

TWO DIRECTIVES OF SOLOMON FOR THE CORRECTION AND SALVATION OF CHILDREN

"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." Proverbs 23:13,14

THE FIRST DIRECTIVE: The perception of my duty and the promise involved if I carry out my duty

A. The perception of my duty

"Withhold not correction from the child."

Through a negative admonition, "withhold not," Solomon is encouraging us to perceive what our duty is with regard to our child. One might ask, Why is it necessary to be told what our duty is? Because we would naturally "withhold" instead of obeying. The Scripture indicates in Proverbs 13:24, "He that spareth his rod, hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." Many parents today are in a position where they Biblically hate their children because they are not acting against their natural feelings and disciplining themselves towards the Godly habit-pattern of consistent correction. In other words, it takes work, wisdom, self discipline, and

Godliness to correct children the way the Lord wants.

Fight your feelings

The concept of having to be told what to do in order that we can combat our natural feelings is illustrated in other areas of our lives. The Lord Jesus, for example, taught in Matthew 5:28 that it is wrong for a man to look lustfully upon a woman, implicitly telling us to not do that. One could ask, Why does He teach such a thing? Because men naturally look upon women in a lustful way. In fact, any man who claims that he has never had a problem in this area is either a liar or he is dead! Just as the Scripture indicates "the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Proverbs 27:20). Therefore, the Lord, recognizing our weakness, has admonished men not to look lustfully at women. Men must not operate on the basis of their natural inclinations, but on the basis of what is right, controlling their feelings and the flesh in the process.

Another example would be in the area of a man loving his wife. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." Why did the Spirit of God believe it necessary to instruct a man through the Apostle Paul to love his wife as Christ loved the church? Because a man would not naturally do this. A man is naturally in love with himself even as that same chapter indicates in 5:29: "For no man ever yet hateth his own flesh but nourisheth and cherisheth it even as the Lord the church." A man left to his own inclinations and desires will love himself supremely above all others. A Christian, however, who is obedient to the Spirit of God and to the Word of God, will love his wife and not submit to the natural inclination to love himself first; even as the Lord Jesus demonstrated through His supreme example in His love for the church. Therefore, when the Lord gives a negative admonition to parents to "withhold not," it is in keeping with this Biblical principle of instructing parents to obey where they will have to overcome their natural inclinations, control their emotions and do what is right even when they do not feel like.

Whose job?

Who is to perceive this duty that Solomon outlines? The Hebrew language indicates in this passage through a second person masculine singular suffix that Solomon is probably addressing a man. The context of course, would indicate that the father of the household is the subject of Solomon's admonition. Solomon, in doing this, is underscoring and agreeing with the rest of Scripture when it teaches that child-training and education is the primary responsibility of the father of that child. The primary responsibility for this vital task is not delegated by God to the mother, Sunday School teacher, pastor, day school teacher, grandparents, or any other person, but is the primary responsibility of the father. Obviously, these other individuals are an invaluable help to the father, especially his wife, but they are helpers only. A father will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account for the spiritual, emotional, and physical welfare and training of his wife and children. It therefore behooves a father to be extremely judicious and cautious in whom he selects to be his helpers in the vital task of training and educating his child. Why?

So as not to compromise the Biblical standard he must inculcate in his children.

This same principle is especially underscored in Deuteronomy 6:7--"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Moses in that Old Testament passage uses a similar ending or suffix on the words in that verse, again indicating that he is addressing the heads of Hebrew households, or more simply, the fathers of each family. Moses, as a spokesman, for the Lord, indicated that God expects the father in the home to diligently train the children in Godliness and in God's standards.

This concept is not exclusively an Old Testament concept, but is highlighted again in the New Testament. Ephesians 6:4 states: "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The Apostle Paul directly addresses fathers in this verse and lays the responsibility for nurture and admonition squarely on their shoulders. So to answer the question, "Who is to perceive this duty of correction," one must simply answer, it is the responsibility of the father to perceive this duty.

What job needs to be done?

Next we need to ask, what is the duty perceived by the father? Solomon indicates that the duty to be perceived by the father is something he calls "correction." Correction in the Bible has two basic ideas. The first idea is training through oral instruction. This is a vital part of child- training and cannot be neglected lest the child not receive a balanced instruction from his father. The Scripture indicates that it is the rod and reproof that gives wisdom, not the rod alone (Proverbs 29:15). The other aspect of this word "correction" is training through physical scourging or chastening. Both concepts are involved.

Who is the object of our attention?

With whom is the duty of correction concerned? This passage indicates that "the child" is the object of concern with regard to Godly correction. Many young people, in learning about the Biblical standard of correction, might well ask, who is a child and who is not? The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures) uses the word meaning a minor child to translate this word. One could well ask, how old a child should receive physical correction? Or, to put it another way, when is a child not a child?

It is my opinion that the parents of that youngster should decide when a child is no longer a child and when he should no longer receive the correction of which Solomon speaks in this passage. Admittedly, this is not always an easy decision inasmuch as an older child may do unlawful things that the parent believes should be corrected by the rod. I would suggest three simple thoughts as possible helps in determining when a child is no longer a child in need of physical correction. First, when that child starts paying his own bills from his own resources he has probably reached the level of responsibility wherein he will respond better to the reproofs of life given him by the Lord than he will by the rod of correction given him by his earthly father.

Second, when that child starts his own household, whether it be as a single adult or as a married adult, he is quite obviously out of the realm of being physically corrected. Third, it is my suggestion that a child in your home be corrected according to his emotional age rather than his physical age.

In my limited experience, I have often encountered a child who physically has attained an age many parents would view as being too old to receive physical correction. However, that same child may be committing extremely immature and irresponsible acts in his life that could well benefit from the rod of correction. With these things in mind, you as a parent can be helped in determining when physical correction with the rod should be used and when it should not. These are not guidelines that should be chiseled in stone but might prove helpful.

One thing is certain, correction with the rod should and must start very early. In fact, correction with the rod should start much earlier than our contemporary godless and irresponsible society believes is normative. The Scripture says, "Chasten thy son while there is hope and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Proverbs 19:18). In other words, there is a time when there is real hope that a child can be corrected and have his will broken by the parent who uses the rod of correction, and there is a time when that hope diminishes by virtue of the child's advancing age.

In my position as the director of a rehabilitation ministry for troubled teenage girls, I receive phone calls daily from desperate parents all across the United States. They have children for whom all hope seems to be gone because they did not start the use of the rod of correction while there was hope as the Scriptures mandated. I do not mean to discourage parents with older teenagers, who have suddenly been exposed to God's inspired instructions in this matter. As long as you have a child under your authority and your home where you can directly supervise and correct him, there still is hope that you may turn that child from his wicked ways and break his will. You may still teach him to submit to authority in his life.

A good illustration of this hope is found in the case of a mother who called me from a distant state about her troubled teenage daughter. This teenager had gotten into such continual mischief and wickedness that the desperate mother went to the local hardware store and purchased a lock and chain with which to lock the girl to her body. This unorthodox measure kept the girl in her home at night but fell far short of Scriptural methodology in changing the heart! I explained to the mother that we did not have room to receive the girl at the time because our beds were filled. However, I mentioned that I could give her a possible answer for her predicament. I also said, "But I doubt that you will follow through." The mother, hearing that there might be a solution to her crisis, desperately implored, "Yes, I will take your counsel. What is your solution?" I then proceeded to explain that the mother should get a stick that would not break and get after that daughter until the daughter asked for peace in their relationship. The mother hesitated in silence for a time on that long distance telephone call, and then seemingly made a firm commitment before me and the Lord that she would do so. She answered, "Alright, I will!" I then forgot about the mother and her call inasmuch as we receive several calls like this daily.

Three weeks later, I received a phone call from this same mother. I had forgotten who she was and was reminded of her identity only when she reminded me of the lock and chain she had purchased to secure her daughter. I remembered who she was at that point since that was a unique method of restraining the girl. I asked, "Well, what has happened since our last conversation?" The mother replied that she had taken my advice to secure a large stick that would not break, and to quote the mother, "I wore off her behind!" I chuckled at the mother's response and thoroughly enjoyed the rest of the story. She went on to explain that she was simply amazed and dumbfounded at her daughter's change of heart following the severe thrashing that the mother gave her. It seems that the daughter, for the first time in sixteen years, chose to obey her mother when she realized that the mother was unflinchingly determined to break the girl's will and to settle for nothing less than complete obedience. The mother then said, "And it has lasted for three weeks! But I think she needs it again this week." This dramatic illustration of how one mother solved the problem of breaking the will of her daughter points up how God's methods really can and do work. But a parent must be fully purposed and determined in his heart that he will obey God no matter what the consequences.

B. The promise involved if I carry out my duty

The second part of the first directive is the promise involved if I carry out my duty. "For if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die." The condition of the promise is found in the phrase, "if thou beatest him with the rod." Who meets this condition? Again, the original Hebrew gives us the clue. Another masculine suffix is used here indicating that the father is probably the one who shoulders the responsibility of meeting this condition. The specific action involved in meeting the condition is summed up by Solomon in the word "beat." To use this word in connection with child correction conjures up in the listening mind all manner of horrible child abuse through stories vividly displayed by our mass media and by liberal thinking do-gooders. They decry almost any form of child correction beyond praise and persuasive speech or possibly withdrawal of privilege. God however, who knows better than men, and has wisdom that men can never approach, uses a word that is very strong.

The emotional freight connected with this word causes even many fundamental preachers to withdraw from its use. But since God uses the word and the translators of the Authorized Version have used a perfectly good English word, we shall attempt to explain it in its context free of the emotional freight so often connected with its use.

The grammatical form of the word indicates that it takes effort to carry out the conditions of this promise. The Hebrew word "to beat" in this verse is a causal verb that emphasizes that a dad must bring himself to do it. This hearkens back to what was said earlier about having to force ourselves to do what does not come naturally in this area of child correction. Not only must we cause ourselves to "beat our child" but the usage of this particular word indicates that God has designed corporal punishment so that it would cause pain. The word "beat" that is used here is the very same word used in Deuteronomy 25:2,3. In this Deuteronomy passage, it is very clear that the word is used in connection with a physical beating where pain is being inflicted by the beating as a means of punishment ordered by a judge in Israel. By this Scriptural illustration we are absolutely compelled to realize that this word is used in the sense of physical pain being caused by corporal punishment, and, further, that this is God's very objective!

If we return to our passage in Proverbs 23:13, 14, we see by the context that God is also talking about the theme of physical beating, not a beating with words, withdrawal of privilege, or anything else short of physical chastisement. Some folks have a real problem in thinking of the Lord planning to have a child experience pain during an incident of correction. Those who would have a problem in this area should quickly review Hebrews 12:6-11. There the writer to the Hebrews develops the point that painful chastisement at the hand of God is a very clear mark of being a child of God. Moreover, verse eight indicates that anyone without this chastisement, "whereof all are partakers," is in reality not a son of God at all and therefore not an object of His filial love.

The world and humanistically-trained minds are repelled in horror at the thought of a God who would deliberately order painful correction of a child and use words as strong as "beat" in ordering parents to carry out that correction. The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that such painful correction is the most loving, wise, and responsible procedure that a Godly parent can follow in developing obedience and character in his child. Therefore, when you hear someone object, "But that will hurt my child," you can answer, "Precisely, that is God's goal, that the child be hurt with the pain of the spanking during a session of correction."

What is the reason for the pain? It delivers, in some mysterious way, the heart of that child from its rebellion, stubbornness, and willfulness. Any regenerate person can see abundant testimony to how this mysterious process works by looking at his or her own life's experience in walking with his Saviour. God reproves His children many times in very painful ways to deliver their hearts of the same ungodly characteristics.

Ideally, a child should know the reason that he is being dealt with in this way. In other words, he should know the sin or the rule he has broken. He should especially know how he has offended God and broken His moral law and then be called to repentance before God and others who are affected by his sin. When this is done the session of correction has its maximum benefit in the life of the child. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a

child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Proverbs 22:15). Mysterious? Yes, but mysterious as it is, the promise is bound in this Scripture that Godly and consistent application of the rod of correction will deliver the foolish rebellion and stubborn willfulness from the heart of a child when his parents have disciplined themselves enough to carry it out.

Correction not a one-time affair

Another condition of the promise Solomon develops in this passage is that correction must be consistent and repetitive. The verb for "beat" that he uses in this verse is not a one-time action. The verb calls for ongoing activity of beating. Therefore a parent may not reasonably expect that one or two times of Biblically beating the child is going to deliver that child once and for all of the rebellious heart with which he was born. However in the same breath, we must emphasize that Godly parents who insist on complete obedience and back up their demands with immediate application of the rod discover to their joy that the need for the rod diminishes as the child recognizes the parents' determination to apply it when necessary.

Many parents have said to me when being challenged about their lack of consistency in application of the rod of correction, "I have tried that; it doesn't work." Let us think about that response for a moment. Can it really be true that a child correction procedure that is ordered directly in the Scriptures for Godly parents will work in some cases and not in others? The earnest believer would be repelled in horror and say, "Of course not!" Then if the fault does not lie in the Lord or His Word, where does the fault lie if a child is manifesting the rebellion bound in his naturally depraved heart? I believe the answer lies with the father primarily and with parents collectively.

Whenever I have encountered such an excuse on the part of a parent, I immediately begin to ask specific questions about their child correction procedures. In each case I have examined, I have discovered that the parent who claims that they have tried the rod of correction God's way, in reality hasn't done so at all. Some have given their child the rod of correction with such a lack of determination and vigor that their blows could not be expected to seriously dampen the enthusiastic rebellion of the child. Other parents have tried the application of the rod at widely divergent intervals of time and have been seriously negligent in the area of consistency. Further questioning always has revealed that the correction was not done with God's methods in mind at all. In fact, when a child is disciplined in this inconsistent way, he seems to become a worse child of the devil than he was before. In effect, as he is given half-hearted strokes of the rod by a parent who is not fully determined in his heart to break the child's will for the glory of God, that child in his heart reasons, "I can take this. My parent has not succeeded in breaking my will and I have won."

To carry out the spirit of this passage, a parent must immediately carry out correction with the rod as soon as practical after the offense has occurred. This is fully in keeping with Ecclesiastes 8:11--"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." God clearly states that the further correction is removed from the actual offense in terms of relative time, the less effective that correction will be. What an instructive lesson for our judicial system! How corrective can any method of punishment be when it is weeks, months, and even years after the actual offense? Therefore, a parent should apply the rod as quickly as is possible following the breaking of a rule.

For this reason, a mother who is alone with her children during the day is wise to use her delegated authority from her husband to speedily execute the correction against the erring child rather than wait the minutes or even the hours that it may take for dad to arrive home. When one keeps in mind that the greater the time difference between the offense and the correction the less effect will be gained from the correction, it is obviously wise to follow God's method and apply the correction immediately after the offense.

Many parents in using the rod of correction on their child do so with an obvious lack of vigor and often stop short of the child's will being completely broken. Manifestation of this error is illustrated in countless homes as a child gets up from his session of correction still spouting rebellious words and giving willful looks at his discouraged parent. The parent has no one to blame but himself for this problem since he did not completely

break the will of the child during the session of correction. A child who is still willing to resist the authority of his parent after having received the rod of correction is still in need of more of that same rod.

Both my wife and I have often remarked that it is good that one of our children was not our firstborn. This particular child who came along later in our family was extremely willful and rebellious toward our authority and would often require sessions of correction lasting from one to two hours in length before the will would finally be broken! Had this child been our first, we may well have been tempted to despair of the grace of God.

Do not be discouraged, dear parent, when it appears that your Godly efforts to chastise your child with the rod of correction meet with total resistance towards your authority. This simply means that you have started on the right course and you must now pursue your objective of a broken will with great vigor until your mission is finally accomplished. This may require a great deal of self-discipline on your part but you can do it, since God requires you to do so.

God's tool for correction

What is the tool of the condition in this passage? Solomon explains that it is "the rod." I have spent a great deal of time researching just exactly what a "rod" is and the Scriptural usage thereof and have determined that a "rod" is simply a rod! It is variously defined as a rod, a staff, a scepter, or a wand. In short, a rod is an instrument strong enough to be used in a session of correction so that it will not be broken. It also lends itself to inflicting pain on the posterior of the child, but it is not so constructed as to break bones or tear flesh! In other words, the rod is not a pencil, or a ruler, or a pillow. It is far more severe than any of these objects. Nor is the rod a rubber hose or a length of barbed wire! A rod in most cases is probably a wooden paddle used for spanking the buttock. In my own family, we use a large hardwood paddle for this purpose. If you were to ask any of my children, "Where is the rod of correction in your house?" They would immediately know of what you are speaking and each child who is old enough to do so would be able to take you down to the master bedroom where the "family rod" is kept in a corner.

Since the Lord emphasizes the use of this inanimate object called "the rod" it is not wise for a parent to ordinarily use any other tool for correction.

Although a hand may have to be used in an emergency session of correction, this is not what the Lord had in mind. Your hand cannot do an effective job of correcting since you will inflict about as much pain on your hand as you will on the child's buttock. Your hand should represent love and affection, not correction. The Lord prefers this inanimate object called the rod.

If a parent obeys ... then what?

The promise specified to an obedient parent is "he shall not die." A casual reader of this passage may be tempted to think Solomon is speaking about the rod of correction in a session of discipline and this session of discipline will cause sufficient crying on the part of the child that it may sound as if he is going to die but he really will not. Although many believe this to be true, this is a false and erroneous interpretation of this passage. If this were true and Solomon is making a reference to physical death in this phrase, "He shall not die," then a parent could keep his child alive forever by giving him a daily beating! That is ludicrous you may say, and I agree. This passage is not a reference to physical death but is a very clear reference to spiritual life and death.

II. THE SECOND DIRECTIVE: THE PROCEDURE AND PRODUCT OF CORRECTION

A. The procedure of correction

The second directive found in this passage is also in two parts. They are: the procedure and the product of correction. The first part or the procedure of correction is highlighted by "Thou shalt beat him with the rod."

The one who does the beating, in other words, is the one who saves this child in a spiritual sense! Here is a very mysterious promise to a parent in the Scriptures, that consistent, Godly, disciplined correction of the child with the rod of correction will in some mysterious sense be instrumental in that child's spiritual salvation from sin and death.

To ignore this very clear reference to the child's salvation being related to his being disciplined is to ignore the very clear teaching of this passage of the Word of God. A parent must recognize and see clearly that Biblically beating his child sensitizes that child not only to the fact of sin but also to its ugliness. In addition, the child will see that the penalty must always be paid when we sin. The beating spoken of in this passage is done often and consistently so that the child recognizes he will always pay a price that he does not want to pay for rebellion against his authority. Such a child who is Biblically trained and corrected will be far more likely to respond to the spiritual concepts of sin and salvation when he reaches the age of understanding. A vital principle for a parent to grasp in this business of child correction is that our children will leave our house to obey their heavenly Father in exactly the same way as they have obeyed their earthly father.

If a child has been accustomed to disobeying his earthly father and was rarely corrected or corrected inconsistently at best, that child will not likely be trained to expect the hand of God to be active in his life in chastening and drawing him to repentance for his personal sin. Therefore, he will not be a very likely candidate for responding to the spiritual concepts of sin and salvation. Obviously, by the grace of God, there are exceptions to this general rule. By the mercy of God, the Lord has often reached down and saved a rebellious youngster who has left the home of parents who never corrected him in a Godly fashion. It must be remembered that he was saved by an all-wise, merciful, and loving heavenly Father who regenerated his heart even though his earthly parents were unfaithful in the area of correction.

To put it another way, the one who does not Biblically beat his child, in a loving and consistent way, in a very real sense predisposes that child for hell and even has a direct part in sending him there! This truth is precisely why the Lord says you "hate your child" if you do not chasten him betimes (Proverbs 13:24). Interestingly, the world believes a parents hates his child if he does use the rod on him!

When your child does wrong and in rebellion breaks rules that you have very clearly laid out, you should not nag him and incessantly scold him or put on your mad voice and use any threatening words. Rather, you should use a rod that has already been designated for that purpose and in Biblical love consistently beat him that his will might be broken and that repentance toward you and toward God be achieved.

Again, these concepts cause horrible thoughts and evoke dramatic reaction in those not accustomed to principles of God. Such folks may say at the top of their lungs, "That is child abuse"! My response to their cries of horror is that their methods of correction in never using the rod and never trying to bring a child to repentance for his personal sin is a horrible, hateful, and unloving method of correction. They are the ones who really are the child abusers, the parents who neglect and leave their child to his own devices. These are the parents who allow their children to express their natural depravity and become increasingly wicked and more sophisticated in their rebellion toward their authority and toward God in their advancing age.

No, God's method is best, no matter what the wisdom of this world presents as an alternative. For a child to be confronted with his sinnand to be Biblically corrected and to be led to repentance and gaining of forgiveness for his sin is far better than all the talk, discussion, and any other substitute for Godly correction that men can theorize. In my view, any method of child correction that is presented as a substitute for God's method is child abuse.

But these opponents of God's methods may object, "What you are suggesting will hurt the child and may even bruise him!" My response would be, "That is correct." A child may in fact be bruised by a session of difficult correction. In fact, the Lord has already anticipated this objection and has discussed it briefly in the Scriptures. "The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly" (Proverbs 20:30). One may say, "That is talking about a child who has bruised himself in an accident at play."

No, the latter part of the verse explains that God is giving this passage in the context of physical chastening for correction. God makes the point that if a child is bruised during one of these sessions of correction that a parent should not despair but realize that the blueness of that wound cleanses away the evil heart of rebellion and willful stubbornness that reside in that depraved little body. I must hasten to add that no parent should deliberately seek to bruise his child nor should that be the goal of Biblical correction. I simply must agree with the Lord and declare that if a bruise does occur, God knows about it and will use it to cleanse the guilty heart of that erring child.

Bitter medicine

But the humanist or disobedient parent who does not want to use God's method may still object and say, "I just cannot bring myself to do such a horrible thing to my child." Let me ask this question. If your child was dying of a deadly disease and a very bitter, extremely distasteful medicine was discovered that could cure your child of the deadly disease, would you not give him that medicine? In fact, would you not get help to hold the child to even force the medicine down his throat in order that he might be saved? Most thinking menwould most readily admit that they would indeed do so even though the medicine was horribly bitter and distasteful to the child. So it is in this matter of God's method of child correction. It is very distasteful and painful for the child involved and since this is true it has become bitter and distasteful to disobedient parents as well, but it is absolutely vital for that child's character training and ultimate spiritual salvation.

When to begin?

When should a parent start using the rod of correction on a child that the Lord has brought into the family? There is no clear and specific answer to this very good question. However, it is my opinion that the correction of children should start as soon as the need for that correction is made manifest. Every discerning parent who has been blessed with a little child in his home realizes that his initial impression of the sweetness and the innocence of the child is in reality an illusion. A child very quickly demonstrates his fallen, depraved nature and reveals himself to be a selfish little beast in manifold ways. As soon as the child begins to express his own self-will (and this occurs early in life) that child needs to receive correction. My wife and I have a general goal of making sure that each of our children has his will broken by the time he reaches the age of one year. To do this, a child must receive correction when he is a small infant. Every parent recognizes that this self-will begins early as he has witnessed his child stiffen his back and boldly demonstrate his rebellion and self-will even though he has been fed, diapered, and cared for in every other physical way.

On what occasions should a child be corrected? Whenever a child directly disobeys authority or shows disrespect and rebellion toward authority, that child should receive correction. Lesser infractions of course would receive lesser forms of correction with the rod being reserved for the more serious infractions.

B. The product of correction

Solomon last turns to the product of Godly correction: "shalt deliver his soul from hell." The disciplined consistent habit of Godly correction with the rod figuratively snatches that child's soul from a real hell. The word for hell in this passage is the word "sheol." Because of the context, we must recognize that Solomon is not only talking about sheol in terms of being the realm of the dead but rather is talking about the lower regions of sheol wherein reside the souls of the wicked dead who have died in their sins and in an unbelieving state. Solomon, in other words, makes a direct tie between Godly correction with the rod and spiritual salvation of the soul of the child.

This connection is made in a very startling illustration from the Old Testament Scriptures.

In 1 Samuel 1:12 we are introduced to an Old Testament believer who was in God's work. This man's name was Eli, who was a priest of the living God.

As if to reveal Samuel and Eli in startling contrast to one another, the Spirit of God introduces us to the family of Eli following the wonderful account of Hannah conceiving the child Samuel after being infertile. Hannah must have used the rod of correction on little Samuel since he is later demonstrated in the Scripture as being a totally different kind of child than were the children of Eli. We are told that "the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord" (1 Samuel 2:12). These two boys, Hophni and Phineas, were unsaved, unregenerate young men who despite the wickedness of their hearts and their unregenerate natures were made to be priests of the Lord. This unhappy and horrible testimony was an abomination to God. He goes on to say in 1 Samuel 3:13, "For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not." In short, Eli was judged forever by the Lord because he did not restrain the boys from their wickedness and evil-doing even though he knew they were doing wrong and violating God's law.

Eli would be in close company with many men today, for even though they know their boys or their girls are doing wrong, they refuse to obey God in their own lives. They will not institutes the Godly, disciplined, consistent use of the rod of correction to turn the children around.

Why did not Eli follow through with what he knew he should to restrain his boys? The answer is found in 1 Samuel 2:29, "Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice or at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honorest thy sons above me to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people." Eli did not want to lose the riches, honor, and prestige of the priesthood in order to vindicate God's honor. He was well satisfied with the tremendous wealth and benefits of the priest's office and he did not want to "rock the boat." He lived a very selfish and self-centered life rather than obey the Lord. Because he did not want to jeopardize his or his sons' positions in the priesthood, he refused to do what he knew he should in restraining their vile, sinful habit patterns. Again, Eli was like many men on the contemporary scene who; because they do not want to "upset the apple cart of their lives," refuse to restrain their children in order to please God.

The stakes are high

Every father and mother must recognize this all-important fact, that the very soul of their child is at stake in this matter of Godly correction with the rod. The immortal, undying portion of that child is in very real jeopardy if his will is not broken and he is not trained to respond to God's authority in his life.

A parent must not just correct for present results. If this were true we could understand more clearly why so many parents allow their children to get by uncorrected at present only to reap sad results later on. NO, a parent must correct his children not only for present results but for results twenty years from now and for an eternity!

I am often reminded of a conversation I had with a neighbor of mine who related a very personal incident from his life with regard to the correction of his children. He mentioned to me on one occasion that he thought that he was much too hard on his son and was even accused of being too harsh with the boy by other friends and associates. However, when the boy became an adult man he became active in the Lord's work and even chose a full-time position in Christian service. On one occasion the young man returned to his father and with tears streaming down his cheeks related to his father how thankful he was that his dad cared enough for him and his spiritual welfare that he absolutely insisted that the child do right. He was also thankful that he backed it up with the consistent and Godly use of the rod of correction even though it was extremely unpleasant and distasteful at the time to his flesh. Your children will also come back and thank you twenty years from now for making them do right if you in fact do so at this moment in their lives.

Any parent who allows the correction of his children to be regulated on the basis of that parent's feelings and emotions will find that he only disciplines his children on a infrequent basis. This type of correction will be administered only when a parent is extremely irritated or is upset by something rather obvious in the child's rebellion. Parents cannot afford to base their correction on feelings or on avoiding unpleasantness but must

purpose in their hearts to use Godly, consistent, loving correction with the rod even though they don't feel like it!

What do I do now?

If you are like many parents, you have not been correcting your children God's way. If after you have read this material and you have allowed the Spirit of God to speak to your heart about your sinful failure with regard to your child's welfare in this area, you must not simply throw yourself into a new program of child correction. You must first ask God to forgive you for your sin and your failure. Next, ask your child to forgive you for failing him as a parent in not requiring that he be made to do right in all situations. Only after these very important steps are taken may you start with Godly correction and expect your child to respond to you in a positive way.

You must be prepared however, for a very startling reaction to your Godly attempts to do right by your children in this area of correction. If you purpose in your heart to be consistent in this matter, you will soon discover as countless other Godly parents have discovered that you must endure persecution, misunderstanding, and negative reaction from others around you. Some of your friends, perhaps your parents, neighbors, and even other Christians will not agree that you should carry through with this Godly discipline. Be prepared for this reaction, for unless you are in very unusual circumstances, it is most likely to occur.

Parents must use wisdom

Christian parents must be very wise today in how they carry out Godly correction. I would encourage you to be vigorous and consistent in the application of these procedures in the privacy of your home. I cannot completely tell you the grief I have shared with so many parents who have telephoned me and asked me in tears to somehow help their daughter. They have asked to get their daughter back from the welfare authorities or other bureaucrats. You see, many parents who have educated their child with the rod of correction in order to make them do right have found out in shocked disbelief that even the authorities of our local and state governments are against the implementation of this Godly method of training a child. Countless parents could give you vivid testimony of how various authorities have come to their door and have taken away their children because the parents were observed correcting their child with the rod of correction as God ordered them to do. You must correct your child in the privacy of your home so that the fruit of your training will be so indelibly fixed on the child's heart that you will not have to use the rod of correction in a public setting and expose your family to this very real risk in today's permissive lawless society.

Another aspect of this is that if you carry through with Godly correction in the privacy of your home your child will not embarrass you in public. Many are the parents who are embarrassed in a church service or in a public setting by their child's unruly behavior simply because they have not enforced rules of obedience on that child in the home.

Grandparents should also recognize one possible complication in their lives with regard to this issue of child correction. The Scripture states that the crown of older men are children's children (Proverbs 17:6). That being the case, a grandparent is tempted not to follow through with the rod of correction being used for his grandchild. However a Godly grandparent will recognize the necessity of doing so as well as the Godly reason for doing so. The minority is right.

We must recognize that those people who disagree with what God commands parents to do in this passage are in a definite majority in our society. Perhaps as you read this material, you yourself disagree with what has been expressed. If you do disagree, you may be comforted to know that you are definitely in the majority of opinion. However, you are also very wrong.

Ten spies and all of Israel disagreed with the minority report given by Joshua and Caleb. But God vindicated Joshua and Caleb and punished the majority who chose to disobey (Numbers 13-14).

Even though you may think these methods of correction that God has ordered parents to carry out are bestial, abusive, and unloving, you are the one who is bestial, abusive, and unloving if you don't obey God in this matter. Moreover, if you do not obey God your child likely will not be saved unless the Lord supernaturally in His mercy does so despite your disobedience.

Today there is at least one European country that has already outlawed what God has clearly commanded in this area of child training. Sweden has made it illegal for a parent to use the rod of correction on his child. If Sweden does carry through and enforce this ungodly and morally unlawful legislation, I can guarantee that the next generation in that land will likely be a nation of perverts. This will be true because of the selfish, rebellious, self-centered, irresponsible young people such sinful and wicked legislation will promote.

No matter what men or governments do or do not do with regard to this issue of child correction, God's people by God's grace must follow through and do it simply because God commands it and they must obey to please Him.

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