

Correcting

Misconceptions on



the Rod of Correction

SDA Version

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The Rod of Correction - Study from Proverbs

Introduction

Many Christian parents have prayed and agonised over how to raise godly children, but they have seen their children grow up and discard the family's faith. Parents have claimed the promise "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6), but the children *have* departed from the faith. What went wrong? God's promises don't fail – so what did fail? This article attempts to answer this puzzling question.

The 5 "Beat-Children-With-the-Rod" Proverbs

Proverbs 13:24

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

Proverbs 22:15

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."

Proverbs 23:13

"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die."

Proverbs 23:14

"Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell."

Proverbs 29:15

"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."

<http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/Articles/rod-of-guidance.htm>

What Does the Bible Define as "the Rod?"

"There are 4 Hebrew words that are translated "rod." Only one word is used in Proverbs and Psalms and that is the word "shebet." A shebet is specifically the rod used by a shepherd in caring for sheep. The shebet has five common practical uses: 1) it is the symbol of the shepherd's guardianship of the sheep; 2) it can be thrown with great accuracy just beyond the wandering sheep to send the animal scurrying back to the flock; 3) the shebet can be used to ward off an intruder and protect the sheep from any animals which may attack; 4) the sheep are counted as they "pass under the rod;" 5) it is used to part the wool in order to examine the sheep for disease, wounds or defects which may be treated. There is no evidence that the rod is ever used to physically strike the sheep.

http://joanneaz_2.tripod.com/positivedisciplinresourcecenter/id4.html

Matteh is another Hebrew word for rod. This word can mean branch as a vine and is not used here. Maqqel has no meaning that can be applied here and is not used in this Scripture anyway. Choter, another Hebrew word, is branch, twig, rod and is not used here." <http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/Articles/rod-of-guidance.htm>

Therefore the focus is on “shebet.” The following information appears on <http://joanneaz.2.tripod.com/positivedisciplinresourcecenter/id4.html>

“Shebet” is used in the Bible to refer to:

● **The Rod of a Shepherd; Tool**

Leviticus 27:32: And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD.

Psalm 23:4: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Psalm 2:9: Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Isaiah 28:27: For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Exodus 21:20: And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished.

● **Symbolising Direct Heritage form God (offshoot)**

Psalm 74:2: Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt
Jeremiah 10:16: The portion of Jacob is not like them: for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: The LORD of hosts is his name.
Jeremiah 51:19: The portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the former of all things: and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: the LORD of hosts is his name.

● **Symbolizing the Authority of the Wicked**

Psalm 125:3: For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity. Proverbs 22:8: He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.

● **A Rod to Be Used on a Fool**

(Fool meaning stupid or silly, literally meaning fat...has a connotation of cocky)

Proverbs 10:13: In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding. Proverbs 26:3: A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.

● **Symbolizing Man's Authority**

II Samuel 7:14: I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: Ezekiel 19:11: And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches. Ezekiel 19:14: And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

- **Symbolizing God's Authority**

Job 9:34: Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me: Job 21:9: Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. Psalm 89:32: Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Isaiah 10:5: O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation Isaiah 10:15: Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood. Isaiah 11:4: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. Lamentations 3:1: I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. Micah 7:14: Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. Ezekiel 20:37: And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: Ezekiel 21:10: It is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth? it contemneth the rod of my son, as every tree. Ezekiel 21:13: Because it is a trial, and what if the sword contemn even the rod? it shall be no more, saith the Lord GOD.

- **Symbolizing the Authority of a Nation**

Isaiah 9:4: For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. Isaiah 14:29: Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent. Isaiah 30:31: For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod. Micah 5:1: Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

Thus all 36 places where this word is used "rod" in the KJV has been recorded in conjunction with the full counsel of God.

End of quote from:

http://joanneaz_2.tripod.com/positivedisciplineresourcecenter/id4.html

Who Does the Bible Say Should be Beaten with the Rod?

A Fool Should be Beaten

Proverbs 10:13

“In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.”

Proverbs 26:3

“A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.”

A Son Should be Beaten

Proverbs 13:24

“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.”

A Child Should be Beaten

Proverbs 23:13, 14

“Withhold not correction from the child: for [if] thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. 14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.”

Insert Some God–Given Logic

Isaiah 1:18

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

So, let us reason logically together in consideration of this verse.

Solomon is understood by many people to mean that “If you beat your young child with the rod, he shall not die.” Really? If we take this command literally and not assume that the proverb refers to the rod as parental authority, we must insist that this verse is insisting that it is impossible to kill a child by hitting him/her with a wooden rod or club “shebet”. This is simply not true. Despite death (or even serious injury) not being the intention of the parent, many children are killed by being “belted” or clubbed. Some are maimed for life.

Does the Bible Command the Beating/Spanking of Children?

Many Christian parents simply cannot accept that God does not command or authorise us to beat/spank our children. They have become de-sensitised to the beating/spanking of children and from misunderstood Bible texts, believe that God demands we spank our children, when in reality beating children is based on culture and tradition.

However, this study illustrates that the Bible teaches in many places that the rod is the rod of parental authority. Parents are to take up their rod of authority and parent their young children in love, so that the children will not require the physical and corporal punishment reserved for an adult fool.

Proverbs 10:13

“In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.”

Proverbs 26:3

“A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's (#33684) back.”

Strong's Hebrew Concordance #03684: - fool

kciyl kes-eel' from 3688; properly, fat, i.e. (figuratively) stupid or silly:--fool(-ish). see HEBREW for 03688

The Bible states that if we do a proper job of respectfully, lovingly training and instructing our children, the result will be that the children will willingly submit to parental authority so that when the child has matured into an adult, he will not be a fool. He will not need to be taught, by the use of violent means, to submit to authority.

Parents are not instructed to beat any child. According to the Bible, particularly Proverbs, beatings with a rod are reserved for adult fools. In the Bible, adults who reject the existence of God are termed “fools.”

Psalm 14:1

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.”

Fools are adults who have failed in childhood, to develop self-control. They are a shame to their parents as predicted in:

Proverbs 29:15

“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”

A child left to himself is a child who grows into an adult without proper training in being able to administer self-control. Adult criminals are beaten to encourage them to respect the authority of the country. These proverbs are not speaking of a young child. There are examples of criminals being beaten in Scripture. There are NO examples in Scripture of Jewish children being beaten with a rod - none that I can find anyway.

To further demonstrate that the verses show **adult** fools receive the physical “rod” as a penalty for their lack of submission to authority, consider the meaning of the Hebrew word translated "child" (which is used in these same "rod" verses of Proverbs).

How does the Bible Define “Child?”

Child is translated from the Hebrew word "na'ar."

Strong's Hebrew Concordance #05288:

5288 na`ar nah'-ar from 5287; (concretely) a boy (as active), from the age of infancy to adolescence; by implication, a servant; also (by interch. of sex), a girl (of similar latitude in age):--babe, boy, child, damsel (from the margin), lad, servant, young (man). see HEBREW for 05287

The KJV translates it as follows: young man 76, servant 54, child 44, lad 33, young 15, children 7, youth 6, babe 1, boys 1

This word "na'ar" is referring to boys most of the time (since a lad would be a male) and usually young men.

Some uses of the word na'ar which has been translated “child” in the “beat with a rod” texts in Proverbs.

Biblical examples of the use of the Hebrew word “na’ar.”

“na’ar” – is used to refer to a young, sexually mature man of marriageable age:

Genesis 34:19

“And the young man (“na’ar”) deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: and he was more honourable than all the house of his father.”

Genesis 22:12

“And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad (na’ar), neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”

“na’ar” is used to refer to Benjamin as “the lad,” just prior to his journey to meet his disguised brother Joseph, who was the prime minister of Egypt. However, Benjamin was already married and had ten sons!

Genesis 46:6, 7, 8, 21

And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him: 7 His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt. 8 And these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn (all sons and grandsons listed off of his 12 sons including Benjamin's in verse 21 “And the sons of Benjamin were Belah, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi, and Rosh, Muppim, and Huppim, and Ard.”

It is clearly seen that these Proverbs that advise parents to “beat children with a rod” must be harmonised with the Biblical interpretation of “child” as including mature men.

Most Christians fail to understand that in Scripture, the word translated “child” in the KJV, very often means some person we would recognise as being a “mature man.” Yet, if one is to interpret these Proverbs verses literally, this would have to be the explanation. There are no examples of children, prior to “coming of responsible age” from being physically beaten.

Even those supposed Christian child-training experts (e.g. James Dobson) suggest that a parent should be able to STOP spanking/beating their child by age 12 or 13, yet according to the Bible and Jewish culture, parents would not even begin using physical punishment until then – given the Jewish culture that a boy only reaches an age of accountability at 13 years of age at his Mizpah. Even then, the “beat children with a rod” proverbs, if taken literally, would be referring to this beating form of punishment as an absolute last resort to save the child (which was possibly only a boy – minimum age 13 but almost certainly much older) from hell.

Did God Intend that a Child Receive the Death Penalty?

Deuteronomy 21:18-21:

“If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: 19 Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; 20 And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. 21 And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear. “

What is the Biblical advice to parents in these verses? Recall that this advice cannot be directed to the parents of a male child under the age of at the very least, 13 years of age. The parents are to speak with, and reason with their child. Then, if the “child” (recall it is a youth or a married man with children) is rebellious still – a drunkard and a glutton, they are told to chasten him. To “chasten” means to correct with words or by striking with blows. Parents were to instruct, then correct the youth or young man with physical force if he did not respond to their verbal correction. If the youth or young man chose to rebel against parental correction, then he was to be presented to the priests who were to judge in the matter, weighing up the situation to see if there was any chance of repentance.

Deuteronomy 17:8, 9

“If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose; 9 And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgment.”

If there was not evidence of a change of attitude, probation on the young person’s life was pronounced as over, the death sentence was proclaimed and the unrepentant sinner was stoned.

I don't know of any record of this event happening in the Bible, but it is pretty shocking that parents would give up on their adult child just because he is a drunkard and a glutton. What about alcoholics who have become sober and converted today? Some have become ministers and win many to Christ. The Water's Family father - can't remember his name. And Stephen Lewis comes to mind. What if Stephen Lewis' parents decided he was too rebellious and arranged for him to be killed as a no-hoper drug addict? Or what if Jesus applied this strategy to Mary Magdalene? What if she was a no-hoper? She was a no-hoper – a prostitute, till she met Jesus. What if her relatives took her to the temple to have her stoned to death before she met Jesus?

Should adult children have the right to kill their drunken and gluttonous parents? If not, why not? The children would have no doubt suffered from the abusive treatment received from the alcoholic parents. But making a human decision to stone a person, is not the way of Jesus Christ. Jesus didn't join in stoning anyone, nor did He condone human decisions to stone anyone - in either the Old Testament nor in the New Testament. Death sentences in the Old Testament were to be meted out by God’s direction, not by fallible human beings.

Biblical Examples of the Divine Death Penalty on “Children”

For a person to be worthy of receiving the death sentence, the person must have reached an age of responsibility and maturity. A child of 13 years of age, would not have been pronounced “incurable.” It is not likely that a child of 13 years or less, could have been a “drunkard and a glutton” either, which the parents were said to have complained about in reference to their rebellious son. God did not strike down Eli’s wicked children Hophni and Phinehas, though they were priests (at least 25 years of age) until they were accountable adults, though they had been wicked for many years (1 Samuel 3:13,14; 4:11). God did not strike down Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu though they were priests (at least 25 years of age) until they had refused to repent many times. Leviticus 10: 1, 2.

Today we no longer live in a theocracy. God does not speak to the priests as He did in the Jewish Mosaic days. The Urim and Thummim on the breastplate of the priest, is no longer able to flash forth the divine light which used to inform the priest of God’s decision regarding matters of judgment. The probation of a rebellious child today, is not able to be determined as it was in the days of the Hebrew theocracy. Parents are not given special, divine insight into the child’s spiritual probationary status. For this reason, parents are no longer authorised to stone youth or young adults. Why then, do parents believe they still have authority to employ physical beatings to persuade the youth to conform their behaviour? Beating is certainly effective as a strategy to instil fear and to bring about a superficial repentance and a pretended conversion, but beatings are powerless to convert a sinner, for the Bible tells us that it is self-sacrificing love that converts sinners.

Romans 5:8

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Consider the following questions.

- If there was any converting power in beatings, wouldn’t it make sense to beat adults too? Adults need converting too! I wonder what “excuses” adults would make to this suggestion. I wonder what Biblical verses they would use to find Scriptural proof that adults should not be beaten as a religious converting strategy!
- Why not make conversion desirable to the youth by having parents make examples of a few rebellious children and stone them to death? An example of this method was recorded in the Bible. In John 11:50 “Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. “ Better that a few children should die to save a whole nation of them! Such reasoning was obscene in Christ’s trial and it is again obscene in reference to children who have not even reached the age of maturity or responsibility.

It seems that many Christians have taken FIVE “beat your child” verses from Proverbs and created a cruel and incorrect child rearing philosophy from them. Parents believe they are given divine authority to use torture/beatings and fear to produce “acceptable” Christian behaviour in their children. This is nothing but a “works” programme. To hold to this belief, that it is pleasing to God to force children to act in “righteous ways” **out of fear** is a substitution of the spirit of Christ which works on humanity to produce the loving fruit of the spirit.

Galatians 5: 22, 23

“For the fruit of the spirit is love joy peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance – against such there is no law.”

Beating our children is not Biblical theology. The question comes to my mind - Could this doctrine be a disguised as Christian, when in reality it is a doctrine of the antichrist? The antichrist brings satanic practices in place of God’s loving doctrines.

Matthew 15:8, 9

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

The Bible commands children to honour and obey their parents. When a child is mature enough to understand this Biblical command, he/she will be held responsible to God for their decision either to obey or disobey the parent. **The Biblical command is, "Children obey your parents," not "Parents force your children obey you even if you have to employ the devil’s strategies."**

Examples of ‘Shebet’ - a Rod - Being Employed to Hit

There are only a few references in the Bible that use "shebet" as possibly referring to a literal rod in connection with hitting someone.

Exodus 21:20: And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished.

If the rod were used on a maid or servant and killed them then it was punishable. This verse indicates without any doubt that the rod “shebet” was definitely not a switch. It had to be a solid piece of wood since it was capable of killing someone. This outcome is in keeping with the BDB Hebrew Lexicon which defines “shebet” as a staff or club. If it is ok to spank a child using this instrument, then it is not mentioned here and if it were, then the child could die by its use or at least, the child would be in danger of receiving internal damage or broken bones. If this text in Proverbs 23:14 is being correctly interpreted when we read “If you beat him, he will not die,” then we make the Bible writer out to be a liar. Children do die from being beaten with a lump of wood – a club or a walking stick. We also force Solomon to disagree with Moses, who says in Exodus 21:20 that the rod (same Hebrew word) certainly could cause the death of an adult. Let’s not twist Solomon’s words and make him out to be a liar. Let’s study the intended meaning and abandon preconceived ideas and the traditions of sinful men.

Exodus 21:27

“And if he smite out his manservant's tooth, or his maidservant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake.”

If a man struck a servant/slave in the mouth and the blow caused the slave’s tooth to be broken off, then the resulting penalty to the landowner was the immediate loss of his slave. This loss was a hefty penalty to pay, but considered proportionately equivalent to the level of violence brought against the slave.

Consider the Real Meaning of the Proverbs within the Gospel

If parents beat (instruct) the child (by using the gentle rod of correction as a guide -not as an instrument of torture) he will not die, but his life will be saved eternally. Eg the child will be converted and make his/her own commitment to serve God. This will be because it is parental love and authority that converts the sinner child – it is not force that converts the sinner child. Christ draws all sinners – whether child or adult - lovingly to His side.

Satan uses force to coerce sinners to do as he (Satan) wills them to do. Christ does not use physical force against His own children – His sheep - the church of God. He loves and protects the church – it is the apple of His eye - but Christ warns that those who resolutely, consistently determine to disobey His laws of love and who proclaim themselves to be the enemies of Christ, that they will reap destruction of their own selves. It is Satan, not Christ, who uses physical force against His own subjects. Eg Saul sought the witch at Endor – aligning himself with Satan. Saul then asked Satan for assistance and yet Satan ensured Saul's death in the battle the next day. Satan destroys his own. Christ protects and says, "Come let us reason together." Christ works to convert the sinner through logical reasoning from cause to effect.

Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

The context given for the correction to be given immediately precedes in verse 12.

Proverbs 23:12

"Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge."

Matthew 7:12

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

Would adults like to receive a physical beating when they make a mistake? Even a rebellious mistake? Or would they, like David cry out asking for mercy?

2 Samuel 24:14

"And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man."

Psalms 25:6

"Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old."

Psalms 51:1

"To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions."

The Fruit of the Spirit of Christ

It is the spirit of Christ's work to produce fruit in a Christian's life. The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness (gentleness) and temperance (self-control). Do parents expect their children to produce the fruit of the spirit of Christ, as converted children, when the parents responsible for training their children to be Christlike, are producing fruit of another spirit? This expectation is unrealistic. Any good fruit that mature Christians produce are only produced because of the surrender of the parent to the spirit of Christ. This is a real battle for adults. Should the struggle be any less strong for their children?

Biblical discipline is when parents model their Christ-like characters in view of their children. It is the characters that the children behold that they become changed into. If parents are kind, yet firm, teaching (discipline), correcting (verbally admonishing, using loving strategies to teach responsibilities) then the child will develop respect for the parent's morals and standards. This respect can develop only from a trusting, loving relationship between parent and child. Parents are commanded to develop the kind of loving relationship with their children and so set the pattern of the relationship that the children will accept with God, their heavenly Father.

Figurative or Literal Interpretation?

The Hebrew language can be interpreted legitimately either literally or figuratively or both ways.

For example, should the following passage, verses 1 and 2, from the same chapter as two of the "beat-the-children-with-a-rod" verses of Proverbs 23, be translated literally or figuratively?

Proverbs 23:1, 2

"When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: 2 And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite."

What about Jesus' commands in Matthew 5:29, 30? Should these commands be literally or figuratively obeyed?

Matthew 5:29, 30

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. 30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Should we insist that those who fall into sin have their limbs cut off, as the Islamic religion requires? Should we pluck out our own eyes if we fall into sin and in a weak moment, if we view and cherish an immoral scene? How would that principle operate when we sin in our minds and cherish evil thoughts? Should we suicide to prevent ourselves thinking evil thoughts? This is the same type of extreme behaviour we would see if the principles outlined in these texts were interpreted literally.

The Hebrew texts and the Greek text are seen here to simply make a point by stating a principle which is evidenced in an extreme or end result "sin."

Consider how Jesus expanded on this concept.

Just prior to making the “eye plucking” and “arm- cutting off” commands, Jesus commented in the same vein on the sin of adultery. He quoted the 7th commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

Matthew 5:27, 28

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:
28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

Jesus is certainly emphasising that adultery is sin, but He is also illustrating that the 10 commandments state the extreme result of cherishing disloyal thoughts. Jesus expands the principle of marital loyalty – In the sin of adultery, the principle of absolute marital fidelity is broken, and ALL the thoughts leading up to the committal of that sin, were also the breaking of that principle (and the 10 commandment law) and those cherished thoughts were sins also.

Consider the texts again:

The texts in Proverbs 29:13,14

13 Withhold <04513> (8799) not correction <04148> from the child <05288>: for if thou beatest <05221> (8686) him with the rod <07626>, he shall not die <04191> (8799). 14 Thou shalt beat <05221> (8686) him with the rod <07626>, and shalt deliver <05337> (8686) his soul <05315> from hell <07585>.

Proverbs 13:24 "He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly."

Proverbs 19:18 "Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction."

Proverbs 22:15 "Foolishness *is* bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him."

Proverbs 23:13 "Do not withhold correction from a child, For *if* you beat him with a rod, he will not die."

Proverbs 23:14 "You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell."

Proverbs 29:15 "The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left *to himself* brings shame to his mother."

How can these harmonise with the following texts?

Literal Contradictions in Proverbs, but Figurative Harmony

Proverbs 29: 17, 19, 21

“Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul. 19 **A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer.** 21 He that **delicately** bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become his son at the length.”

Brown-Driver-Brigg’s Hebrew Lexicon

#06445 pñq panaq *paw-nak’* - delicately

a primitive root; ; v

AV-delicately bring up 1; 1

1) (Piel) to indulge, pamper, bring up, treat delicately

10 **Correction** <04148> is grievous <07451> unto him that forsaketh <05800> (8802) the way <0734>: and he that hateth <08130> (8802) reproof <08433> shall die <04191> (8799). *n10.1

How is correction defined?

04148: - correction

4148 muwcar moo-sawr’ from 3256; properly, chastisement; figuratively, **reproof, warning or instruction; also restraint**:--bond, chastening ((-eth)), chastisement, check, correction, discipline, **doctrine, instruction, rebuke**. see HEBREW for 03256

Note – if the advice in Proverbs is to be taken literally then the following contradictions appear:

- Parents are instructed to “beat their son” (not daughter);
- Servants will not be corrected by words;
- Masters are to treat their servants (who will not be corrected by words) “delicately;”
- Servants treated “delicately” become loyal sons to their master;
- Masters then can beat the servants who have become loyal sons to teach them wisdom;
- Servants who have become loyal sons won’t die if they are beaten, but their souls will be delivered from hell (the grave).

These proverbs, if taken literally – (as using the rod to beat a child) - teach us that salvation comes from being beaten! This is tradition at its worst, dressed up as Biblical truth! The Bible says that Christ suffered and died to save sinners. By **His** stripes we are healed, not by our own stripes or by those of our children upon whom we inflict the rod!

Isaiah 53:5.

“But **he** was wounded for our transgressions, **he** was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon **him**; and **with his stripes we are healed.**”

The Love of God Saves Sinners

The Bible tells us that it is the love of God that saves us.

Isaiah 63:9

“In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.”

Isaiah 40:11

“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”

Accusations and sarcasm are not God’s corrective strategies.

Revelation 12:10

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”

Note the following Proverbs and verse from Micah:

Proverbs 22:15

“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.”

Proverbs 29: 15.

“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”

Proverbs 10:13

“In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.”

Proverbs 26:3

“A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.”

Micah 6:9

“The LORD'S voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: **hear ye the rod**, and who hath appointed it.”

These verses point out that “the rod” brings wisdom. Does this verse refer to the rod being used to guide a child’s direction with discussion, logical argument, teaching (as “HEAR ye the rod” implies) or does it refer to the rod as a beating implement?

What Wisdom is Gained from the Beating Rod?

A beating teaches the child to be afraid of those who are physically stronger than themselves. It does give wisdom that stronger people can and will hurt weaker people. It also teaches a child that beating behaviour is acceptable to use on weaker persons to force them to behave in certain ways dictated by the physically stronger person. Children then imitate the parent's example.

If the rod was used to lovingly guide and instruct the child into making correct decisions, then the rod would be a powerful influence "to save his soul from hell." When used lovingly, parental authority and instruction would be a comfort to a child making unwise decisions. The rod uses only authority and gentle insistence to persuade the child to head back on track. Christian parents educate their child to make his own "good" decisions through Biblical reasoning, and if that doesn't work, parents move to remove privileges, to give the child time out in a quiet place to consider the consequences of their actions and other non-violent strategies. A wise parent will offer various options, suited to the personality of their particular child.

Hosea 4:6

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

Alternatively, the Biblical use of the rod is given in the context of Christ and His "sheep" – the church of God.

What Wisdom Is Gained From the Guiding Rod?

The Hebrew shepherd would guide the direction of a wandering sheep by throwing his rod and with the crook of the rod by drawing it back onto the correct path. That is why David in Psalm 23:4 refers to the shepherd's rod as being a comfort to him and not a terror to him.

Wisdom comes from learning and understanding and applying the truth about God and His Son and their divine character. Understanding Their incredible love is the basis for all true education; for the victorious life; for true conversion.

Isaiah 40:11

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

John 1:4

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men."

John 17:3

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

Proverbs 2:5-17

Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. 7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. 8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. 9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path. 10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; 11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: 12 To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things; 13 Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; 14 Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked; 15 Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths: 16 To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; 17 Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God."

Proverbs 9:10

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

Colossians 1:9, 10

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;"

The Rod of Defence

Psalms 23:1-4

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

A "club or a rod" or even a "switch" used to beat a child, might comfort a sadist (someone who likes to inflict pain) or a masochist (someone who like to receive pain), but it would bring fear to a normal person and especially to a weaker youth. However, a club or rod used to protect an adult or youth from danger, would be a comfort to them. God's correction is a comfort to us, for He is merciful and He doesn't "beat" us to bring us to repentance. Genuine repentance is a personal sadness for sins committed - not a sadness for being "caught" - as was Judas' repentance, but a genuine sadness for hurting God and others - as was Peter's confession.

A shepherd's rod was used as a weapon against wolves and enemies of the flock. The shepherd would beat predators with his rod. This aspect of God's promised protection is revealed in many Psalms.

Psalms 27:12

"Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies:"

Psalm 59:1

“Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me.”

Psalm 143:8-12

“Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee. 9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me. 10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

11 Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble. 12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.

Psalms 82:3, 4

“Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. “

Ezekiel 7:11

“Violence is risen up into and none of them shall remain, nor of their multitude, nor of any of theirs: neither shall there be wailing for them.”

Ephesians 6:15

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the **gospel of peace;**”

Proverbs 29:22

An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.

1 Peter 2:21, 25

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: 24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. 25 For ye were as sheep going astray; **but are now returned unto the Shepherd** and Bishop of your souls.

2 Samuel 22:3

“The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.”

Psalm 11:5

“The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.”

Psalm 72:14

“He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight”.

Psalm 73:6

“Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment.”

Proverbs 4:17

“For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.”

Proverbs 10:6

“Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.”

Proverbs 13:2

“A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence.”

Proverbs 13:3

“He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.”

Isaiah 53:9

“And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.”

Isaiah 59:6

“Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.”

Isaiah 60:18

“Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.”

Jeremiah 6:7

“As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds.”

Jeremiah 51:35

“The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say.”

Psalms 37:37

“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.”

Psalms 37:8, 9

“Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. 9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.”

Psalms 37:11

“But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”

James 3:16 - 18

“For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. 18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”

Is God in Favour of Violence?

Is God in favour of violence against helpless, weak children? Is God in favour of violence against His adult people? Or is violence simply the natural consequence of leaving the path of God's guidance – His loving ways – which through His commandments reflect His own unselfish and gentle character?

Once Jesus was refused entry into a small town in Samaria. The disciples asked if Jesus would like it if they "called down fire" onto the town to destroy them all. How horrendous! It is obvious to me that just as Jesus told the disciples, "you don't know what spirit ye are of" so also is the belief that we have licence or a divine right, to beat our children as a legitimate, acceptable, everyday type of punishment. The disciples were products of a violent culture. We also have a violent culture today. The disciples were of the opinion that their hearts were sanctified, but this was not so. Christ said there was another spirit, unknown to them that influenced them to think in that violent way. In the past, the Jews were known to have hearts so hard that Moses had to give them extra rules of conduct in an attempt to stem the tide of violence which pervaded the surrounding nations.

Matthew 19:7, 8

"They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so."

In Duet 24 the original command was given by Moses to put away a woman and give her a certificate of divorce. The commandment to divorce was authorised in:

Deuteronomy 4:14

"And the LORD commanded me (Moses) at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it."

Moses says that the Lord gave him the statutes and judgments to teach to the Jews, but in Matthew 19: 7,8 Jesus says that Moses gave the statute on divorce. Clearly there is a difference here.

The corporal punishment laws - the death penalty for sin - could only be in effect in the Jewish culture under a theocracy, just as it will be when probation closes and all sin will be punished again under the ultimate theocracy - the direct judgment of God.

Psalms 11:5,6

"The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."

The wicked for whom no probation is any longer available, will receive wages of their sinful choices - permanent destruction.

Isaiah 11:9

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

God's methods of bringing his children to genuine repentance are outlined in the Bible. None of His ways involved forcing the Jews to "obey" Him. They involved God permitting the occurrence of the natural consequences from the Jews' own choices and actions. The Jews imitated the apostate nations and then the apostates warred against them. God's punishment was that He didn't intervene to prevent **all** the natural consequences - which could possibly have been genocide of the entire Jewish race. God, out of respect for their freedom of choice, couldn't offer His **full** protection to the apostate Jews who had chosen to identify and imitate the other nations. But God permitted some of the natural consequences to occur on His rebellious people. The Father was ever ready to forgive them though, when because of the unpleasant natural consequences of their choices, they wished to separate from the apostates and return to God. God was then able to offer His children His **full** protection from their enemies. It was when the Jews "came to their senses" that they would repent and ask God's forgiveness.

This is the Biblical example for parents to follow. If a child decides to rebel and make self-destructive choices, the parent is to let the natural consequences take place, but to pray to continue to guide, encourage and advise the youth to make godly choices. But when the natural consequences of ungodly choices take effect, and the child makes a decision to repent, then the parent needs to show that they are ready to forgive with open arms - without any sarcasm or Pharisaic righteousness. The Bible promises parents that **wayward child will be drawn back by love and prayer, not by force**. Of course the age of the child determines what consequences will be permitted to occur to the child. Of course no natural consequences will be permitted to afflict the child, that endanger the child's life or well-being – it is only his/her desires/wants that need be "touched." All actions taken by the parent will reflect nothing but the reflected love of Jesus for the child.

Another example of how parents should treat their children even when a dreadful sin has been committed is seen in the story of the woman caught in the act of adultery and Jesus' response to that sad situation.

The Woman Taken in Adultery

John 8:3-11

“And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, (4) They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. (5) Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? (6) This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. (7) So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. (8) And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. (9) And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. (10) When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? (11) She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”

The lady taken in adultery had clearly broken the 7th commandment. She had been “caught” in remarkable circumstances – “set up” or “framed” as it might be termed today. The Pharisees arranged the adulterous liason with the purpose of trapping Jesus into disallowing/breaking the law of Moses which was held in high esteem by the Jewish people, or into breaking the Roman law – for which He would be condemned also for taking matters into His own hands i.e. ordering a death penalty without the permission of the Roman governmental authority. In the case of adultery, the law of Moses required that death penalty (by stoning) be applied.

Deuteronomy 22:21

“Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you.”

Leviticus 20:10

“And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.”

The law of Moses also required that there be at least two witnesses to testify against the accused before the person/s could be convicted and condemned to death. “At the mouth of two witnesses,” the death sentence could be legally executed.

Deuteronomy 17:6

“At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.”

The Mosaic law also stated that the witnesses had to be the first to “throw the stones” which would inflict death on the guilty person.

Deuteronomy 17:7

“The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.”

Statements from Ellen White

In three separate articles, Ellen White comments on the experience of the woman taken in adultery and Jesus' reaction. She reveals the "scenes behind the scenes."

1. Review and Herald, 6 September, 1906

"On one occasion those who were guilty of many secret sins, brought to Christ a woman who had been taken in sin. They thought that he would pronounce judgment against her, and then they could accuse him of taking judgment into his own hands. While they were presenting the case, Christ was busy writing on the sand. He said nothing, and when they pressed him for a decision, he was in no hurry to pronounce judgment. One after another came near to him to see what he was writing, and there in the sand they saw the record of their own sins. Then Christ said to them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone." But not a stone was cast, and they went away, leaving the woman with him. He said to her, "Where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord." Christ answered, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." The Lord Jesus beheld the whole plot and the arrogance of the ones who had arranged it, who were worthy of condemnation and punishment, and when they saw that he knew their lives, they left and went out, having failed in their desire to bring about the condemnation of Christ."

2. Signs of the Times, 21 April, 1898

*"While among men, Christ pronounced sentence upon rabbis, rulers, Pharisees, and Sadducees, because of their hypocrisy, their rejection of light. Looking at them searchingly, He said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone." **But He addressed the woman who was guilty of sin** in words of tenderest compassion. **He knew all about the character of the sin committed**; but He traced upon the ground the sins of her accusers, who had laid their net for the woman, that thus they might find occasion for condemning Christ. Their curiosity led them near to Christ, to see what He had written in the sand; but they did not care to look more than once, and one by one they hastily left His presence. **Those who had acted a part in bringing this poor woman before Him were far more guilty than she, and Christ knew it. The guilty persons expected that before they could take themselves away, Christ would single them out, and expose them and their deep-laid plot before the gathered throng.** These professors were spiritually blind. Maxims and traditions were cherished by them, and obedience to God's requirements was regarded as a thing of naught. Christ was grieved with them. He looked upon them with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their heart. He could detect every phase of their hypocrisy, and their great sin brought from His divine lips a scathing rebuke."*

3. Ministry of Healing p 088

"Their pretended reverence veiled a deep-laid plot for His ruin. Should Jesus acquit the woman, He might be charged with despising the law of Moses. Should He declare her worthy of death, He could be accused to the Romans as one who assumed authority belonging only to them. Jesus looked upon the scene--the trembling victim in her shame, the hard-faced dignitaries, devoid of even human pity. His spirit of stainless purity shrank from the spectacle. Giving no sign that He had heard the question, He stooped and, fixing His eyes upon the ground, began to write in the dust. Impatient at His delay and apparent indifference the accusers drew nearer, urging the matter upon His attention. But as their eyes, following those of Jesus, fell upon the pavement at His feet, their voices were silenced. There, traced before them, were the guilty secrets of their own lives. Rising, and fixing His eyes upon the plotting elders, Jesus said, 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.' Verse

7. And, stooping down, He continued writing. He had not set aside the Mosaic law nor infringed upon the authority of Rome. The accusers were defeated. Now, their robes of pretended holiness torn from them, **they stood, guilty and condemned, in the presence of infinite purity.** Trembling lest the hidden iniquity of their lives should be laid open to the multitude, with bowed heads and downcast eyes they stole away, leaving their victim with the pitying Saviour. Jesus arose and, looking upon the woman, said, "Where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, **Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.**" Verses 10, 11. (page 89) The woman had stood before Jesus, cowering with fear. His words, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone," had come to her as a death sentence. She dared not lift her eyes to the Saviour's face, but silently awaited her doom. In astonishment she saw her accusers depart speechless and confounded; then those words of hope fell upon her ear, 'Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.' **Her heart was melted, and, casting herself at the feet of Jesus, she sobbed out her grateful love and with bitter tears confessed her sins. This was to her the beginning of a new life, a life of purity and peace, devoted to God. In the uplifting of this fallen soul, Jesus performed a greater miracle than in healing the most grievous physical disease; He cured the spiritual malady which is unto death everlasting. This penitent woman became one of His most steadfast followers. With self-sacrificing love and devotion she showed her gratitude for His forgiving mercy.** For this erring woman **the world had only contempt and scorn,** but the Sinless One pitied her weakness and reached to her a helping hand. **While the hypocritical Pharisees denounced, Jesus bade her, 'Go, and sin no more.'** Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul. **The greater the sinner's guilt, the more he needs the Saviour. His heart of divine love and sympathy is drawn out most of all for the one who is the most hopelessly entangled in the snares of the enemy. With His own blood He has signed the emancipation papers of the race.** (page 90) Jesus does not desire those who have been purchased at such a cost to become the sport of the enemy's temptations. He does not desire us to be overcome and perish. He who curbed the lions in their den, and walked with His faithful witnesses amid the fiery flames, is just as ready to work in our behalf to subdue every evil in our nature. **Today He is standing at the altar of mercy, presenting before God the prayers of those who desire His help. He turns no weeping, contrite one away. Freely will He pardon all who come to Him for forgiveness and restoration. He does not tell to any all that He might reveal, but He bids every trembling soul take courage.** Whosoever will, may take hold of God's strength, and make peace with Him, and He will make peace. The souls that turn to Him for refuge, Jesus lifts above the accusing and the strife of tongues. No man or evil angel can impeach these souls. Christ unites them to His own divine-human nature. They stand besides the great Sin Bearer in the light proceeding from the throne of God. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses 'from all sin.' 1 John 1:7. 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.' Romans 8:33, 34."

Ellen White described some necessary details in the instance of the woman being caught in the very act of adultery:

- Christ knew the woman **was** guilty of committing adultery **as charged**;
- Christ knew the despair in the woman's heart and her guilty hopelessness;
- Christ knew the penalty under the Mosaic law for committing adultery was "stoning to death;"
- Christ knew the Mosaic law specified that at least two witnesses were required to condemn the woman to death;

- Christ knew that more than two witnesses **were** present to legally condemn the woman;
- Christ knew that, under Mosaic law, the witnesses who had brought the charge against the woman, had to be the first to throw the stones at her;
- Christ also knew the “hidden” testimonies of the lives of the witnesses – how they had schemed to engineer the adulterous crime and to murderously use the woman in their plan to trap Him;

Christ realised that the entire situation was a “set up;” planned by those who wanted to kill Him. More than wanting to have the woman stoned, her “witnesses” wanted Christ to utter something that they could use to condemn Him.

Christ informed the witnesses to “cast the first stone” at the woman – if they were sinless. If the witnesses had cast a stone, resulting in the death of the guilty woman, they would have been breaking Roman law and answerable to the government for that infringement – which was definitely not in their best interests. No doubt the witnesses had fully considered this outcome earlier and weighed the consequences. If the witnesses refused to cast stones at the woman, they could still assert to the Romans that Christ had set Himself up as a revolutionist and that He had authorised them to break the Roman law and stone the guilty woman. Such a statement alone, would have placed Christ's life in extreme danger and His immediate arrest would have been certain.

Despite the threat to His own life, Christ refused to condemn the woman **whom He knew to be guilty**. Why didn't Christ **condemn her** for her sinfulness? Why did He make a merciful judgment? Why didn't He cast the first stone at the adulteress in conformity to the Mosaic law and trust the consequences with the Roman government to His Father's protection?

Some suppose that Christ would have condemned the woman according to the law of Moses, except that He **could not** condemn her because the guilty man was not present to testify against her. This certainly was not the case. There were many witnesses who were ready to condemn the woman whom they announced was “caught in the very act” of adultery (John 8:4). One can only wonder how the male adulterer escaped being captured by the many witnesses who apprehended the guilty woman.

The Mosaic law specified that only two witnesses were necessary to condemn lawbreakers to death; the adulterer, the male involved in the immoral act, **did not need to be “caught” in order for the woman to be condemned**.

Deuteronomy 22:20, 21

“But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel: (21) Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you.”

When a woman committed adultery in secret and it was not witnessed, she might escape detection and death, **unless she became pregnant**. (e.g. David and Bathsheba, recorded in 2 Samuel 11). Because men do not become pregnant, there is often no evidence to convict the other party of his adulterous crime, however, pregnancy announced to everyone that the woman had committed adultery and unwed pregnancy was considered sufficient evidence to convict the woman.

Enforcing the death decree for adultery was already standard practice in Abrahamic times, prior to the introduction of the Mosaic law. (e.g. Tamar became pregnant after she committed adultery [prostitution] with her father-in-law Judah - Gen 38).

To secure a conviction against an adulteress, the adulterous male partner does not have to be apprehended or convicted in order for the woman to be condemned to die. The practice of stoning adulteresses still occurs in fundamentalist Islamic countries today e.g. Nigeria, Bauchi, Afghanistan, Sudan
www.web.amnesty.org/library/index/engaf440012004 ;
http://www.religioustolerance.org/isl_adul1.htm

Christ – the only pure and sinless witness, could have testified against the guilty woman. He could have joined the other witnesses whose testimony was intended to secure the woman's death sentence.

But Jesus did **not** refuse to pass judgment in the woman's case. He judged her, but He did not condemn her; He justified her. He gave her justice – He forgave her. He took her place and suffered for her sin. Jesus gave the woman mercy. His mercy – His grace - empowered her to “go and sin no more.” He gave her power to live a sanctified life. There was “no condemnation” in the woman because at that instant – as soon as she was forgiven, she was, by the mercy of God, “in Christ Jesus” and empowered to “sin no more.” She was empowered to live a sanctified life by Christ's grace - His mercy.

Romans 8:1

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Through His treatment of the woman taken in adultery, Jesus revealed that contrary to the law of Moses, adulterers and adulteresses are to be the recipients of the converted Christian's mercy - not their condemnation.

Did the apostles follow the example of Jesus?

Paul's advice to the Corinthians imitates the example of Jesus, rather than the Mosaic law. Consider Paul's response to the treatment of a male member of the church, who had sexual relations with his mother or step-mother. The Mosaic law insisted on the death penalty, while Paul instructed the Christians to disfellowship the offender and to separate from the guilty party.

Leviticus 20:11

“And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.”

1 Corinthians 5:1, 2, 9,11

“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. (2) And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, **that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.** (9) I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: (11) But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator....”

Where is the Merciful Justice?

Recent events demonstrate that similar principles and punishments for immoral behaviour are advocated by both the Islamic Law (Sharia) and Mosaic Law. Examples of punitive actions common to both religions are:

- cutting off hands
- stoning to death
- damaging an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth

Mosaic Law

Deuteronomy 25:11,12

“When men strive together one with another, and the wife of the one draweth near for to deliver her husband out of the hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secrets: (12) Then thou shalt **cut off her hand**, thine eye shall not pity her.”

Leviticus 24:19, 20

“And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; (20) Breach for breach, **eye for eye, tooth for tooth**: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again.

Deuteronomy 22:23, 24

“If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; (24) Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall **stone them with stones that they die**; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you.”

Taliban Regime

1996-NOV: Afghanistan: Under the previous Taliban regime, a woman, Nurbibi, 40, and a man Turylai, 38, were **stoned to death** in a public assembly using palm-sized stones. They were found **guilty of non-marital sex**. Turylai was dead within ten minutes, but Nurbibi had to be finished off by dropping a large rock on her head. Mr. Wali, head of the Office for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prohibition of Vice expressed satisfaction with the execution: "...I am very happy, because it means that the rule of Islam is being implemented." **These executions (as well as hand amputations for convicted thieves) are regarded as religious occasions** and are not normally viewed by non-Muslims. "Afghanistan Execution for Adultery," *New York Times News Service*, 1996-NOV-06;

- *2002-MAR: Nigeria: Safiya Hussaini, 33, was convicted of adultery. She was sentenced to be **buried up to her neck in sand and to be stoned to death**. However, her sentence was deferred until her 13-month-old daughter has finished nursing. She appealed her conviction. Her cousin, a Mr. Abubakar allegedly confessed to police that he had sex with her three times. However, the judge dismissed the testimony of the three policemen who witnessed Abubakar's confession, because a minimum of four witnesses are required under Sharia law. Hussaini's lawyers claimed that she also could not be convicted because of the four witness rule. The prosecution argued that witnesses were not required in her case; adultery had obviously taken place because she had become pregnant. Her defense team finally argued that, under Islamic law, the interval between conception and birth can be up to seven years! Only two years previous to the birth of her daughter, she was still married to her husband. The lawyers argued that her husband could possibly have been*

the father. Commenting on the conviction, Aliyu Abubakar Sanyinna, the attorney general of Sokoto State, said: "**Society is injured by her act. The danger is that it will teach other women to do the same thing.**" 9 Mansur Ibrahim Said, Dean of the Law Faculty at Dakar University in Sokoto said that **adultery is "an abomination abhorred by God and society because of the example it gives and because it creates bastards to be rejected by society."** Law Professor Backs Nigerian Stoning," AfricaWoman, <http://www.africawoman.net/politics/sharialaw.html>

- 2002-MAR: Nigeria: A woman, Amina Lawal Kurami, from the small village of Kurami in Katsina in norther Nigeria was **sentenced to death for adultery.** The sentence was delayed for eight months (one source said 2 years) until she has finished breast feeding her infant. Nigerian Justice Minister, Kanu Agabi, declared this and other Sharia punishments discriminatory and therefore unconstitutional. This is the first time that the national government has made its position clear. (Dan Isaacs, "Nigeria in crisis over Sharia law," BBC News, 2002-MAR-26, at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/>). She appealed the conviction, on the basis that the offence occurred before Sharia law came into effect. Her lawyers also claimed that she had no legal representation in her original court trial before a village court. The appeal was rejected by the Islamic High Court in Funtua in Katsina state. **Dozens of spectators cheered and shouted "God is great". Her execution will be delayed until at least 2004-JAN until her daughter has finished breastfeeding.** The federal government is planning to help Kurami appeal her sentence to the Nigerian Supreme Court. This case may ignite a major legal battle between the state and federal governments. 12 (Her case was eventually dismissed. Jim Fisher-Thompson, "U.S. Women Protest Stoning Verdict by Nigerian Court. Activists decry 'barbaric' aspect of Sharia law." U.S. Department of State, International Information Programs at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/af/a2082903.htm>).

James Arlandson comments regarding a chapter from the Qur'an: The law of retaliation (lex talionis) is carried over to Islam.

"Sura 5:45 And We ordained therein for them: Life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth and wounds equal for equal. But if anyone remits the retaliation by way of charity, it shall be for him an expiation. And whosoever does not judge by that which Allah has revealed, such are the Zalimun (polytheists and wrongdoers).

http://www.americanthinker.com/articles_print.php?article_id=4671

A Qisas [law of retaliation] punishment means causing injury to the offender similar to the injury caused to the victim. For example, in August 2000, the Saudi Arabian media reported that Abdel Moti Abdel Rahman Mohammad, a 37-year-old-Egyptian national was subjected to forcible surgical removal of his left eye at King Fahd Hospital in Medina. The operation was carried out as a judicial punishment of Qisas after he was found guilty of disfiguring Shahata Ajami Mahmoud, a 53-year-old Egyptian, by throwing acid at his face and damaging his left eye.

- ***In 2003, in Saudi Arabia a man had two teeth extracted under the law of retaliation.***
- ***In 2005, an Iranian court orders a man's eye to be removed for throwing acid on another man and blinding him in both eyes. Etemaad says the accused, identified***

only as Vahid, was 16 when he threw a bottle of acid at another man during a fight in a vegetable market in 1993. The top opened – Vahid insists accidentally – and blinded his victim in both eyes. A court said the crime should be judged as qisas, a category for which the Koran stipulates specific punishments, in this case an eye for an eye. The paper said the sentence was to pour acid on Vahid’s eyes, but an appeals court ruled it should be done surgically so as not to harm other parts of his face.

• **Eye and teeth removal come directly from the Quran, [the eternal word of Allah, which must be imposed on humankind for its own good. Therefore, \[how can traditional and Quran-believing Muslims reform unless they leave behind their sacred book?\]\(#\)](#)**

(http://www.americanthinker.com/articles_print.php?article_id=4671)

(*The American Thinker*, James M. Arlandson, 24 July 2005

(James Arlandson continued)

Translations of Sura 5:38, AS Abdel Haleem (*The Qur’an, Oxford UP, 2004*)

translates Sura 5:38 as follows:

“Sura 5:38 **Cut off the hands of thieves**, whether they are male or female, as punishment for what they have done—a deterrent from God: God is almighty and wise. 39 But if anyone repents after his wrongdoing and makes amends, God will accept his repentance: God is most forgiving and merciful. (Haleem)”

“The standard verb “to cut” (q-T-c) is used, and the object of the cutting is “their hands.” For this crime, early Islam punishes both male and female thieves. Evidently, the purpose is to purify the Islamic community and to deter future thieves. Verse 39 is included because it seems that Muhammad is providing a way of repentance before the penalty is exacted. But traditional Islam says the opposite. **The bloody penalty is carried out, which helps the thief to purify his or her heart, and then he or she is in better state to repent** (James Arlandson) http://answeringislam.org/Authors/Arlandson/hands_off.htm

It is generally accept that the Jewish/Mosaic God is the same God that Christians worship. Generally it is rejected by Christians, that they worship the same god as worshipped by Islam. However, the divine laws (Mosaic and Quran) – both called the infallible, unchangeable Word of God - demonstrate the characters of both deities are very similar. Both gods are retributinal and demand extremely violent punishments for disobedience.

Is it possible that the law of Moses adequately and clearly represented the character of the One True God? If so, which god's character does the very similar Islamic law demonstrate?

Why was the demonstration of the Father's character which Jesus perfectly displayed, of such a very different nature to both the Mosaic and Quran laws?

Jesus upheld the principles of the 10 commandment laws as revealed in His life and in the words He tried to instil into the minds of His followers.

Matthew 7:12

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”

God Does Not Desire Nor Accepts Fake Conversions

If a person, especially a child, was beaten with a rod by a parent, especially a violent, angry, parent/person, they most certainly could die - in fact, children have died - and they have died at the hands of "Christian" parents. The point is not "how hard can you **Biblically** hit your child?" but the question should be "Would hitting your child achieve a conversion experience in the child?"

God doesn't want us or little children to **ACT** in certain ways as the first covenant was understood by the Jews (a works-based system), but God wants us **to be converted** - to have His love - His law- His spirit - written in our hearts - in our thinking. That takes an intelligent decision-making opportunity. These opportunities we are to permit our children to experience. This experience is not created by an unsanctified beating. During and after most beatings given by exasperated parents, a child is simply angry with the parent. Anger and feelings of resentment are experienced by the child - not willing, heartfelt submission. **It seems to me that beatings (as commonly given - not the prayerful, tearful, once-a-lifetime beatings) are the action of a parent who is shooting themselves in the foot. The focus is on the child's behaviour (works) and not on the thinking that caused the behaviour (the power of the gospel - the love of God - to draw sinners to repentance).**

The children of Israel were given freedom to rebel and freedom to repent. God wanted to teach them the truth in love - not in rigid rules, but He gave them freedom to choose. It was the rigid rules that Moses found necessary to introduce that hid the love of God from them. Jesus said these rules were given because of the hardness of their hearts. Jeremiah was told that God wanted His law - His loving character - to be part of their very thinking - true conversion. He didn't want obedience from fear - though that would have been incredibly easy for God to enforce. Remember Mt Sinai's thunderings and smokings? But it is not God's plan to enforce obedience on any of His subjects. The unrepentant sinner's own behaviour will destroy them eventually and if they are saved, it will be their own choice that saves repentant sinners through the power of Christ in their lives - in their thinking. This Power, in their thinking, will then be revealed in their actions and behaviour. Conversion - that is the object of child training.

God's love is the only true converting power available to humanity. The gospel is a response to the love of God, not a works trip, based on fear of ever-burning hell or other violence from God.

Parents who beat their children do not necessarily THINK they are being UNloving. I believe that they are mistakenly focusing on behaviour - works - instead of motivation and true conversion - Christ in their children.

1John 4:8

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:8

"But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (God's unselfish love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, **I am nothing.** And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (God's unselfish love), it profiteth me nothing. Charity (God) suffereth long, and (God) is kind; charity (God) envieth not; charity

(God) vaunteth not itself (Himself), (God) is not puffed up, (God) Doth not behave itself (Himself) unseemly, (God) seeketh not her (His) own, (God) is not easily provoked, (God) thinketh no evil; (God) Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but (God) rejoiceth in the truth; (God) Beareth all things, (God) believeth all things, (God) hopeth all things, (God) endureth all things. (God) Charity never faileth:

Isaiah 11:9

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Please consider: Will the 144 000 will be beating their children in the time of trouble? Will they be beating their children just prior to the close of probation? Will they be beating their children now? The 144000 will reflect the gentleness and the love of Jesus. This is the discipline by which the children will be converted. If children fail to repent, the parents will weep over their rebellion, as Christ did over Jerusalem. What did Christ say - "I wanted to cover you with my feathers and protect you, as a mother hen protects her chicks, but you wouldn't agree to it." Christ protected and provided for His church. He allowed the church to make her own choice though, despite the pain He knew they would inflict upon themselves. He never demonstrated that beating or violence causes sincere repentance and conversion. Outside forces used violence and that caused repentance – through a recognition that love, forgiveness, acceptance and full protection were waiting for them in the worship of the true God.

**The Prodigal Son Didn't Expect a Beating from His Father -
Though Some Parents Would Argue that "He Was Asking for It"!**

Luke 15: 11-24 (the prodigal son)

This is the recognition that dawned on the prodigal son when he "came to his senses" while sitting in a pigpen. The prodigal son recognised that all **good** things come from his Father. The prodigal son again trusted in His Father's demonstrated, unconditional love for him. **This son was not valued for what he did; he was valued purely for who he was.** He didn't expect a beating when he arrived home, stinking and covered in filth, destitute and ashamed. But even the son did not expect the "royal" and undeserved treatment (grace) that he received from His loving Father. **This is the heavenly example of how to woo our wayward children back to us. This is God's way of showing parents how to lead children, youth and young adults back to all the good things that we want to provide for them. It is also the path the children need to take to find their way back to their Heavenly Father and all the spiritual good things He is waiting to provide for them also. Our children need our unconditional love, our prayers and our guidance - not our violence.**

Statements on Child Discipline from Ellen White

CHILD GUIDANCE, PAGE 244

Exact obedience in your family; but while you do this, seek the Lord with your children, and ask Him to come in and rule. Your children may have done something that demands punishment; but if you deal with them in the spirit of Christ, their arms will be thrown about your neck; they will humble themselves before the Lord and will acknowledge their wrong. That is enough. They do not then need punishment. Let us thank the Lord that He has opened the way by which we may reach every soul. Manuscript 21, 1909.

If your children are disobedient, they should be corrected.... Before correcting them, go by yourself, and ask the Lord to soften and subdue the hearts of your children and to give you wisdom in dealing with them. Never in a single instance have I known this method to fail. You cannot make a child understand spiritual things when the heart is stirred with passion. Manuscript 27, 1911.

The Lord wants the hearts of these children from their very babyhood to be given to His service. While they are too young to reason with, divert their minds as best you can; and as they become older, teach them by precept and example that you cannot indulge their wrong desires. Instruct them patiently. Sometimes they will have to be punished, but never do it in such a way that they will feel that they have been punished in anger. By such a course you only work a greater evil. Many unhappy differences in the family circle might be avoided if parents would obey the counsel of the Lord in the training of their children. 3 Manuscript 93, 1909.

Do not, I beg of you, correct your children in anger. That is the time of all times when you should act with humility and patience and prayer. Then is the time to kneel down with the children and ask the Lord for pardon. Seek to win them to Christ by the manifestation of kindness and love, and you will see that a higher power than that of earth is co-operating with your efforts. 7 Manuscript 53, 1912.

I have felt such a deep interest in this line of work that I have adopted children in order that they might be trained in right lines. Instead of punishing them when they did wrong, I would hold out inducements to them to do right. One was in the habit of throwing herself on the floor if she could not have her own way. I said to her, "If you will not lose your temper once today, your uncle White and I will take you in the carriage, and we will have a happy day in the country. But if you throw yourself on the floor once, you will forfeit your right to the pleasure." I worked in this way for these children, and now I feel thankful that I had the privilege of doing this work. 19 Manuscript 95, 1909.

The mother may ask, "Shall I never punish my child?" Whipping may be necessary when other resorts fail, yet she should not use the rod if it is possible to avoid doing so. But if milder measures prove insufficient, punishment that will bring the child to its senses should in love be administered. Frequently one such correction will be enough for a lifetime, to show the child that he does not hold the lines of control. And when this step becomes necessary, the child should be seriously impressed with the thought that this is not done for the gratification of the parent, or to indulge arbitrary authority, but for the child's own good. He should be taught that every fault uncorrected will bring unhappiness to himself and will displease God. Under such discipline children will find their greatest happiness in submitting their wills to the will of the heavenly Father. Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students, 116, 117.

As the Last Resort—Many times you will find that if you will reason with them kindly, they will not need to be whipped. And such method of dealing will lead them to have confidence in you. They will make you their confidant. They will come to you and say, I did wrong today at such a time, and I want you to forgive me and to ask God to forgive me. I have gone through scenes like this, and therefore I know.... I am thankful that I had courage, when they did wrong, to deal with them firmly, to pray with them, and to keep the standards of God's Word before them. I am glad that I presented to them the promises made to the overcomer, and the rewards offered to those who are faithful. Manuscript 27, 1911.

Bro. L., have you considered what a child is, and whither it is going? Your children are the younger members of the Lord's family—brothers and sisters entrusted to your care by your heavenly Father for you to train and educate for heaven. When you are handling them so roughly as you have frequently done, do you consider that God will call you to account for this dealing? You should not use your children thus roughly. A child is not a horse or a dog to be ordered about according to your imperious will, or to be controlled under all circumstances by a stick or whip, or by blows with the hand. Some children are so vicious in their tempers that the infliction of pain is necessary, but very many cases are made much worse by this manner of discipline....Never raise your hand to give them a blow unless you can with a clear conscience bow before God and ask His blessing upon the correction you are about to give. Encourage love in the hearts of your children. Present before them high and correct motives for self-restraint. Do not give them the impression that they must submit to control because it is your arbitrary will, because they are weak, and you are strong, because you are the father, they the children. If you wish to ruin your family, continue to govern by brute force, and you will surely succeed. 2Testimonies for the Church p 259, 260.

...kneel down with the children and ask the Lord for pardon. Seek to win them to Christ by the manifestation of kindness and love, and you will see that a higher power than that of earth is co-operating with your efforts Manuscript 53, 1912.

I never allowed my children to think that they could plague me in their childhood. I also brought up in my family others from other families, but I never allowed those children to think that they could plague their mother. Never did I allow myself to say a harsh word or to become impatient or fretful over the children. They never got the better of me once—not once, to provoke me to anger. When my spirit was stirred, or when I felt anything like being provoked, I would say, "Children, we shall let this rest now; we shall not say anything more about it now. Before we retire, we shall talk it over." Having all this time to reflect, by evening they had cooled off, and I could handle them very nicely....

There is a right way, and there is a wrong way. I never lifted a hand to my children, before I talked with them; and if they broke down, and if they saw their mistake (and they always did when I brought it before them and prayed with them), and if they were subdued (and they always were when I did this), then I had them under my control. I never found them otherwise. When I prayed with them, they would break all to pieces, and they would throw their arms around my neck and cry....

I never allowed, in correcting my children, even my voice to be changed in any way. When I saw something wrong, I waited until the “heat” was over, and then I would take them after they had had a chance for reflection and were ashamed. They would get ashamed, if I gave them an hour or two to think of these things. I always went away and prayed. I would not speak to them then. After they had been left to themselves for a while, they would come to me about it. “Well,” I would say, “we will wait until evening.” At that time we would have a season of prayer, and then I would tell them that they hurt their own souls and grieved the Spirit of God by their wrong course of action. Manuscript 82, 1901.

Questions

- How hard is too hard to beat a child? What Biblical guidelines do we have to regulate the force with which the beating is given? A beating that is of acceptable force to you, might not be acceptable to another person? Who is the authority on how hard is too hard to beat a child? There is no Biblical guide on this subject.
- Does Proverbs 23:13,14 mean that parents can beat their children as hard as is humanly possible, and yet somehow the child will not be miraculously protected from death? Unless more is read into the text, this is the only literal conclusion.
- How many parents cry tears of agony (as Jesus wept) when beating their children? Parents are often angry, frustrated and exasperated, not tearful because of their great love for an erring, much treasure and valued child.
- Why do the children’s beatings suddenly stop when the child grows strong enough to defend him/herself? What example is it to the non-Christian world, and to our children, when we –parents (who represent God to our children) say that we worship a loving, non-violent God, (Isaiah 53:9 –because he had done no violence), but we, the followers of the meek and mild and non-violent Jesus, behave very unlovingly and beat our children?
- When we beat our children, we voluntarily give the governmental authorities opportunity to take our children away from us;
- How much pain or torture or fear is a good level to install into our children?
- Beating children is a culturally established, worldly tradition – pagans sacrifice their children violently – why should Christians imitate the pagans in being violent to their children?
- Should Christian parents choose the “lazy” way of giving their children wisdom? Shouldn’t parents view discipline as simply employing Christ-like strategies to assist instructing their children in principles of love? Those parents who choose to beat their children are choosing the quick-fix option. Proper resolution requires self-assessment and evaluation of the parent’s thoughts and motives; talking with the child to really understand what the child is thinking and feeling; creative thoughtful, prayerful strategies; strong leadership; study of the child’s good traits of personality, not just focusing on the weaknesses; creation of a programme designed specifically to motivate that child to work towards a cherished goal etc.

- The same principle of child-beating also apply to the wife-basher and the bully in the school playground ie. "Might is right! The strong are never wrong." Shouldn't the people of God stand in stark contrast to the worldly violent people and be seen to be the most tender, gentle, compassionate people on earth?
- Should adults who make mistakes be beaten with a walking stick?
- Who says that beatings should only be activated on young, weaker people - children?
- Why can't husbands, as priest, head and leader of the house, treat their wives to an "educational, religious conversion experience" of beating - to train them in the right ways?
- Do adults ever stop being the children of their parents? Not Biblically! The Bible commands that we must honour both father and mother till death. EGW says that the 5th commandment is applicable for life. Therefore, should we conclude that if a parent thinks their adult child is going the wrong way, then they are required not to spoil the rod and to beat their adult child? If not, why not? Where is the Biblical texts to say that this is not so?

Some Thoughts from the Bible

- Matthew 18:6 "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."
- The meek shall inherit the earth. Meek means "gentle-minded."
- Psalm 37:11 "But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."
- Matthew 5:5 "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."
- Colossians 3:20, 21 "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." It does not command parents to force their children to obey them using satanic means. The sword of the loving spirit of Christ and the power of prayer are the weapons of our warfare, not violence.
- Ephesians 6:12 "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Should we treat our children as if they are wrestling against anything less than the powers of darkness too?

- Colossians 3: 21 “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” Parents can cause their children to become discouraged – how? Not by lovingly encouraging and motivating them to do their best, but by continually telling them in words and in actions, that they are “pests, failures, hopeless, unacceptable, unwanted” etc. Dominating and controlling the child and disallowing any decision making; disallowing the child to express a different opinion to that expressed by the parent – these actions cause children to be discouraged and they also provoke them to wrath.
- Ephesians 6:4 “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Parents could choose to say encouraging words that nurture the child’s spirit – trust, encouragement, frequent and dependable praise for a job well done, freedom of choice in areas that can be safely handed over to the child, respect for individuality – the child should know that he/she is permitted to think differently to the parent and both parent and child should be able to discuss a subject with respect for each other’s views. The parent gives the child opportunity to express differing viewpoints. The parent then gives the Biblically predicted outcome of the child’s choices. But the emphasis is that God allows each to have their own opinions, but there is a price to pay (consequences) if the child, knowing right from wrong, decides to choose the wrong way. Not because the parent threatens, but because God said negative consequences will happen as a result of unloving and unwise choices.
- Luke 13:6-9 “He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. 7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? 8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: 9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” A rebellious child needs extra guidance and assistance in the form of extra love and attention, not more wrath from extra beatings. Extra beatings would only make the child even more frustrated and less able to cope with anger than he/she was before the beating. Proper loving guidance with lots of parental patience can “deliver his soul (his own and his child’s soul) from hell.” Proverbs 23:14

Witnessing with the Spirit of Love – The Spirit of Christ

Actions speak louder than words.

Proverbs 23:1,2

"When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite."

Should this Proverb be literally be performed? Would we suggest to newcomers at our church gatherings that they must perform this suicidal behaviour if they were tempted to overeat? Of course not. That would injure the spread of the gospel and it would misrepresent the message of God's love to the newcomers. It would be a bad witness for the gospel. However, this proverb opens Proverbs 23 - the chapter that also supposedly commands parents to beat their children. Is beating children repeatedly, a good witness for the gospel of the gentle Jesus? I strongly believe that child beating/spanking is not an accurate representation of the love of God and in fact is a positive witness against the gospel.

In Jesus was no violence. Isaiah 53:9. Jesus never hit Judas. He never hit Peter or Mary Magdalene though they made great mistakes. He could have called down fire from heaven to consume them in their sins. Peter and Judas had great light. But, there was no violence in Jesus. There is no use looking for an example from Jesus of beating or injuring anyone. He wouldn't even think a violent thought about anyone, and most especially not toward children and women. He warned others not to dare offend one of His little ones.

When the Bible says, "Thou shalt not kill," it means thou shalt not be violent too. Just as "thou shalt not commit adultery" means thou shalt not look upon a woman to lust after her in your heart also. The Bible texts are clear.

Just as Jesus pointed out to the Pharisees in regard to the question of divorce, it is our spirit also that needs to be changed. What are we teaching our children? Violence toward our children simply teaches them a "works without faith and love" gospel. "Act like this or else you'll get a beating." The supposed religious emphasis is on the child's actions, not his/her motive - which is the works gospel. This gospel of works is simply a response by children to avoid a violent parental reaction. The child's decision is not based on true conversion - on an intelligent heartfelt decision based on the drawing of love from the parent, to choose between good and evil. Christ tells us to teach our children to respond to our love, which reflects His love, so they will be drawn also to Him. What do most folk think of Christ? It seems they think the Son of God to be a violent being when in the Bible, St John tells us that this is not true.

1 John 4:8, 16 (St John speaking)

"God is love."

John 5:20 (Christ speaking)

"For the Father loveth the Son...."

John 16:27 (Christ speaking)

"For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."

How do we know that God is loving to us? We believe the seer who told us:

1 John 4:7

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

So God tells us to love each other because He loves us and proved it by sending His divine Son to suffer and die for us, so that we don't have to suffer and die as Christ did.

Was Christ violent to anyone? No.

Isaiah 53:9

“And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.”

If the Father is loving and Christ is loving and not violent to us, His children, then it is logical to assume that God wants us to be gentle to the children he has given us; firm, guiding, but gentle.

Summary

I consider beating/spanking violent and an abuse of children. And it shocks and traumatises me when I see it happening. And I believe the Bible condemns beating/spanking of children.

Beating/spanking is confirmed to me to be a case of using the devil's tool under a guise of Christ's gospel.

This is the case I have found in the Bible by studying - line upon line, precept upon precept - Hebrew culture taken into consideration and use of Hebrew lexicon also.

So do we conclude that Proverbs 23:13,14 is a lie? Of course not. We interpret the text in the context of a "shepherd society." **The Jews knew what a shepherd's rod was used for - guiding the sheep and protecting His sheep and precious little lambs from ravenous wolves.**

Our children should be able to bask in the knowledge that they are securely loved for whom they are – simply because they are God's gift to us. Our love for our children, like God's love for humanity, does not depend upon our behaviour. God's love transcends behaviour and reaches deep into the human heart with a love that is unquenchable. This is the example that parents are to imitate in relation to their children. Violence, whether in word or in action, has no part in this love.

Word Definitions

Strong's Hebrew Concordance;
Brown-Driver-Brigg's Hebrew Lexicon

04148: "correction"

4148 muwcar moo-sawr' from 3256; properly, chastisement; figuratively, reproof, warning or instruction; also restraint:--bond, chastening ((-eth)), chastisement, check, correction, discipline, doctrine, instruction, rebuke. see HEBREW for 03256

05288: "child"

5288 na`ar nah'-ar from 5287; (concretely) a boy (as active), from the age of infancy to adolescence; by implication, a servant; also (by interch. of sex), a girl (of similar latitude in age):--babe, boy, child, damsel (from the margin), lad, servant, young (man). see HEBREW for 05287

05221: "beatest"

5221 nakah naw-kaw' a primitive root; to strike (lightly or severely, literally or figuratively):--beat, cast forth, clap, give (wounds), X go forward, X indeed, kill, make (slaughter), murderer, punish, slaughter, slay(-er, -ing), smite(-r, -ing), strike, be stricken, (give) stripes, X surely, wound.

07626: "rod"

7626 shebet shay'-bet from an unused root probably meaning to branch off; a scion, i.e. (literally) a stick (for punishing, writing, fighting, ruling, walking, etc.) or (figuratively) a clan:--X correction, dart, rod, sceptre, staff, tribe.

04191: "die"

4191 muwth mooth a primitive root: to die (literally or figuratively); causatively, to kill:-
-X at all, X crying, (be) dead (body, man, one), (put to, worthy of) death, destroy(-er),
(cause to, be like to, must) die, kill, necro(-mancer), X must needs, slay, X surely, X
very suddenly, X in (no) wise.

07585: "hell"

07585 shaul sh@'owl *sheh-ole'* or shal sh@ol *sheh-ole'*

from <07592>; ; n f

AV-grave 31, hell 31, pit 3; 65

- 1) sheol, underworld, grave, hell, pit
- 1a) the underworld
- 1b) Sheol-the OT designation for the abode of the dead
- 1b1) place of no return
- 1b2) without praise of God
- 1b3) wicked sent there for punishment
- 1b4) righteous not abandoned to it
- 1b5) of the place of exile (fig)
- 1b6) of extreme degradation in sin

03684: - "fool"

3684 kciyl kes-eel' from 3688; properly, fat, i.e. (figuratively) stupid or silly:--fool(-ish). see HEBREW for 03688