

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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GOD'S WORD ON CHILD ABUSE

by Ted J. Clarke

Our present society is plagued with the philosophies of so-called experts whose teachings are contrary to the Bible. Those who fall for these phony ideas, including Christians, often find out too late that they have to suffer greatly because they were too gullible. One such harmful philosophy involves the area of child abuse.

Sadly, there are tens of thousands of cases of genuine child abuse each year where children suffer cruel and senseless physical pain and mental anguish. In such instances the parents are not the godly guardians that they should be and the children suffer for it. Such abuse is of the devil, not God, and the Scriptures should never be twisted to support such horrible actions (2 Peter 3:16). Every decent person should be outraged at seeing or hearing of such treatment of children. However, because such abuse happens, we should not lose our perspective about the proper use of physical punishment to discipline our children when necessary to do so.

Most so-called child experts believe that it is child abuse to spank or scold a child. Christians in large numbers have swallowed this philosophy and generally ignored what the Bible teaches on this subject. As a result, society in general and many Christian families have witnessed a harvest of youths and young adults who reject authority and rebel against any kind of discipline. Since God is the Father of us all, surely He knows how to best deal with children, and His word should contain the wisest and most authoritative teaching on this subject. As a Christian, do you believe that? What philosopher, psychologist or social worker could improve on the Bible? I do not know of any! Below are two sets of verses from the book of Proverbs. The first shows the instructions of God for children to listen to their parents and their wise instruction.

The second set shows that **God teaches** that, when properly administered, physical punishment can be an effective means of training a child in the way he (or she) should go. This means fair and consistent **use** of physical discipline, not the **abuse** of it.

Obligation of children to listen to their parents' godly instruction:

Proverbs 1:8-9, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck."

Proverbs 13:1, "A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke."

Proverbs 15:5, 20, "A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent... A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother."

Proverbs 17:25, "A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him."

Obligation of parents to use physical discipline in training their children:

Proverbs 13:24, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." (Betimes can mean either promptly or early.)

Proverbs 19:18, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." (The American Standard Version says, "...and set not thy heart on his destruction.")

Proverbs 22:6, 15, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it... Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."

Proverbs 23:13-14, "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell."

Proverbs 29: 15, 17, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to

himself bringeth his mother to shame... Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight to thy soul."

The proper administration of physical punishment is not to allow the parents to vent their frustrations! It is training for the benefit of the child, to insure his happiness, as well as comfort to the parents for having done their duty to train the child in the proper way to live.

New Testament teaching on rearing children.

Luke's gospel tells us that Jesus was "subject unto" His parents and that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:51-52). According to Proverbs, Jesus' wisdom would increase as He followed His parents' wise and godly counsel! Surely, the same would be true for children today!

In Ephesians 6:1-4 the apostle Paul gave the same sage commands for children and parents that we found in Proverbs. Children are to obey and honor their parents and fathers are to provide the proper kind of training and discipline for their children that will insure for them the best possible life. Harsh and unfair discipline will bring out the wrath of a child, but fair, loving, and consistent correction provides them with the kind of training God wants. Such includes "nurture," which is both positive instruction and discipline by acts and works which provide a kind of "on-the-job training." Nurture would include physical punishment when needed. The "admonition" required is training by word, both positive and negative. Parents should always be generous in their praise of their children and encourage them in every good thing. There is also a time when a scolding or words of correction are needed. Words of correction and/or physical punishment when necessary are both given by God as means to properly train a child in the way he (she) should go. The American Standard Version on Ephesians 6:4 says that parents are to "nurture them (children) in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." Love for our children demands

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that we train them with proper disciplinary measures, just as God's love for us sometimes brings His chastening on us (Hebrews 12:5-11). Such actions are not pleasant for the parent nor the child at the time, but the end result is of great value to all (Hebrews 12:11).

The ultimate in child abuse.

Physical, mental, and sexual abuse of children are crimes and sins against one of the greatest gifts God gives to us, our offspring. Jesus' tender affection for children in Matthew 18:1-4; 19:13-15 and elsewhere shows that God would not give any kind of instruction in His word which would permit harm to these innocent and helpless souls. While physical, mental, and sexual abuse toward children is sinful and horrible to think about, there is a type of child abuse which is even more terrible. To raise a child without teaching him/her respect for authority is to abandon them in ways that they will suffer for the rest of their lives. To raise a child without respect for authority is to raise him without knowledge of and love for God! The greatest responsibility that we have as parents is to prepare for heaven ourselves, and in doing so to prepare our children for eternity.

Your child might struggle through life even though you did not provide him with the type of training you should have in his younger years, **but he (she) will not enter heaven's gates without faith and obedience to God's will!** How sad will be the judgment for many parents when they see their chil-

dren condemned to everlasting punishment, and for them to know that, at least in part, that they are responsible for it. In addition to that, parents who refuse to follow God's commands to properly train their children to follow God's word will also be lost.

What are you doing to insure that you are not guilty of the ultimate in child abuse, that of neglecting your children's spiritual welfare? Are you living godly, Christian lives, setting the proper example for your children? Do you study God's word with them? pray with them? **Do you go with your children to Bible study classes and worship services? Do you allow them to believe that other things are more important than learning to love and serve God!?** It may be that a part of the torments of hell will be parents who will have to listen to the agonizing cries of their children, who were old enough to be responsible to God, but did not obey the gospel because their parents did not train them in the right way to go. God does not condemn those who are not old enough to understand and be accountable for their conduct, but all of us become responsible if we have normal development into our teens. Will you stand accused by God of the worst kind of child abuse? Follow Ephesians 6:4!

Are You Sowing and Bearing?

Part One

by Jeff Wealand

Editor's Note: Jeff Wealand is one of the missionaries which the Mammoth Spring Church of Christ helps to support in Skelmersdale, England. We are happy to print his fine article on the parable of the sower. Brethren, we need to practice the evangelism of which he writes!

In Matthew 13:1-8, we learn about the importance Jesus laid on spiritual sowing and reaping to his disciples and those contemplating becoming his disciples. Holy Scripture reads, "On that day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside. And there were gathered unto Him great multitudes, so that He entered into a boat, and sat; and all the multitude stood on the beach. And He spake to them many things in parables, saying, 'Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the birds came and de-

voured them; and others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth: and straightway the sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked them: and others fell upon the good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.'" The importance Jesus laid on this parable is seen in that He taught them "many things in parables," which is plural, yet this parable is first in the list recorded. It is explained, almost verse by verse, by divine comment in Matthew 13:18-23. I'm sure the Holy Spirit is grieved when we miss His message on the subject of sowing and bearing! It is essential! He recorded it firstly and explained it, being surely painful for Him, when we do not learn and live this message (Ephesians 4:30).

Many seeds are sown by the wayside and the birds or the evil one snatches them away. They were seeds that were not sown well, being on hard soil or hearts, they weren't buried. Many people only hear and never listen to understand, but that is no excuse for staying silent. God expects us to speak, else he would not have told us that He describes the sower sowing there. One way of perhaps helping the hard heart to soften up a bit is to make sure we are speaking the good news CLEARLY. When we get the opportunity to speak the truth, we should never be vague or hedging the issue. God says through Paul, "Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving; withal praying for us also, that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds; that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak" (Colossians 4:2-4). Making the mystery of Christ manifest, means to make sure God's work in Jesus is clearly explained to whomever we speak! Are we sowing clearly, getting straight to the point of the conversation? Or are we just hinting the gospel? Could we be leaving people guessing about what we mean, when we speak about the Bible or Jesus? If so, we could be leaving it for the birds or the evil one to snatch, whether or not the lost person has a hard heart or not, because we never got the seed INTO his or her heart. By sowing the seed clearly, you may help to truly break open and

soften a hard heart and see him or her bear fruit.

Some seeds are sown on rocky and shallow ground. Many people have become Christians with great excitement and joy, only to fade away in their new found faith in the near future months. Jesus says, "Yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth." (Matthew 13:21). Perhaps we would do well to try some rock picking, to make the soil more conceivable and give the roots more room to grow. Rock picking is one of the most laborious tasks of preparing a garden, and speaking the word of God confidently and boldly is one of the hardest things for most Christians to do. Timidity can allow the rocks to stay. God says through Paul, "With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." (Ephesians 6:18-20). Biblical "boldness" is defined in Vine's Expository Dictionary of Bible Words (P. 138, PARRHESIA) as: "freedom of speech, unreservedness of utterance, or to speak without ambiguity, plainly, or without figures of speech, the absence of fear in speaking boldly; hence, confidence, cheerful courage...". It is true to say that with seriousness and confidence, we often produce endurance. Perhaps many people do not endure because the word of God has not been spoken with boldness, or delivered confidently with serious sincerity. If we show people the importance of the truth, it may help deepen their shallowness and therefore remove some rocks. Are we sowing boldly, with confidence?

(To be continued)

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

by Chris Clouse

Editor's Note: Chris Clouse is another student which the Mammoth Spring, Ar. congregation is helping to support while he attends the Memphis School of Preaching. We appreciate his fine observations on salvation.

The age-old question, "What must I do to be saved?" is still asked by many lost souls in the world today. The difference between now and in times past is the answer that they are receiving. No longer do we hear the words of inspired men like Peter, saying, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins," or Paul's conversion account where he was told to "...arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins." Today, we are hearing the voices of liberalism throughout the land. Just as Satan deceived Eve in the long ago, many people are now being deceived and are getting the proverbial "wool pulled over their eyes" by sincere (?) but misinformed preachers and teachers. My friend, it is time to take a stand!

Wherein does the problem lie? Is it semantics, or is it doctrine? You be the judge.

In an article that appeared in a popular magazine the following statement was made:

"While we must repent and have faith (trust) that Christ can save us apart from our own imperfect works, it is unbiblical to suggest that our repentance, baptism or anything else contribute to salvation... Sin is not removed through a joint contribution of God and man with each putting in their portion. The only work that counts to remove sin is the work of Christ at the cross."

Is it just imagination or does this comment contradict plain Bible teachings?

It is true that salvation originates with God. We cannot save ourselves apart from God's grace (Rom. 5:6, 8, 9). It is also true that without the shed blood of the Son of God there would be no remission of sins (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 9:22). However, it is the height of ignorance to say or suggest that "Sin is not removed through a joint contribution of God and man with each putting in their portion," or that "it is unbiblical to suggest that our repentance, baptism, or anything else, contribute to salvation." Have we become wiser in our own eyes than the men who were infallibly inspired of God?

Is it necessary for one to repent, confess and be baptized in order to be saved? Peter affirms that it is necessary (Acts 2:38; I Pet. 3:21; II Pet. 3:9). Paul also affirms that it is necessary (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3, 4). Can it be any clear-

er? My friend, if these men say, "Yes, these things are necessary for salvation," then they are necessary - regardless of any uninspired man's intellectual achievements.

What about the remission of sins? We understand that it is through the blood of Christ that our sins are forgiven. Yet, can sin be removed without obedience? My friend, it is easy to understand that God loved the world enough that He, through His grace, sent His only begotten Son into this world to suffer and die on Calvary's cross, shedding His blood that we by faith and obedience could have remission of our sins (John 3:16-18; Mark 16:16).

What does it take to remove my sin? It takes the blood of Christ and my obedience to God's divine will. Nothing else will remove my sin.

What must I do to be saved? I must do no more and no less than those whom we read about in the sacred scriptures. I must have an obedient faith, which means that I do contribute something to my salvation, and I must have God's grace. "For it is by grace that ye are saved, through faith..." (Eph. 2:8).

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One cannot lose reverence for things spiritual without losing reverence for the Author of spirituality.

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"RESTORATIONISM"

by Dennis Gullledge

The term "Restoration Movement" is a valid term. It identifies the religious fervor and activities which brought about a return to New Testament Christianity. There is certainly nothing wrong with the term, even though it may be used in wrong ways. There is plenty of evidence to show that some brethren have forgotten the Scriptural basis of the restoration movement and what it stands for, and are currently casting the term into a purely sectarian mold which is quite removed from the restoration principle itself.

The idea of the restoration movement is to go back to the Scriptures as authority in religion. When Hilkiah the high priest found the book of the Law, after it had been lost, the young king Josiah said, "For great is the wrath of Jehovah that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of Jehovah to do according unto all that is written in this book." (2 Chronicles 34:21) The plea of that great movement was for people who were steeped in idolatry to forsake it and go back to God's Word. The plea of the current restoration is for people to break the bonds of denominationalism and go back to the authority of God's word and find the church of the New Testament. Long ago it was said, "Let us speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent." (1 Peter 4:11) No other authority has any place in the ideals of the restoration movement.

In recent years we have noticed that the term "Restoration Movement" is used by many of the prestigious writers and popular speakers among us in a purely sectarian fashion. You will observe that they speak of "our movement," as though the restoration movement is the only thing that distinguishes churches of Christ from the denominational world. The idea they present seems to be that churches of Christ are just one "movement" among others of equal validity; that "our movement" is noble in its intent, but fraught with problems and shortcomings. You will notice in some of the books written by our brethren of late, such expressions as, "our movement," "our tradition," "restorationist Christians," "restorationists," "restorationism," "American Restoration Christians," "our identity," "our roots,"

"our heritage," etc. This is a radical misappropriation of both the term and the idea of the restoration movement. The term was never intended to be used as a label. These writers can speak for themselves, but I am not a "restorationist" following "restorationism" as my "tradition" and my "heritage," with my "roots" in the 19th century. I'm just a Christian. That is all the Bible speaks of. The idea of the restoration movement is not to lock us into a "movement" theology, as these brethren imply in their books. If so, we may as well admit to a human founder. Why not Alexander Campbell? That seems to be about all these brethren have not done in their misrepresentation of the restoration movement.

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WATERPROOF

Alexander Maclaren, an English preacher, once lamented, "You do not know the despair that comes over us preachers time after time, as we look down upon the faces of our congregations and feel, 'What shall I do to put a sharp enough point upon this truth to get it into the heart of some man who has been sitting there as long as I have been standing here, and is never a bit the better for it?' Some of you have been listening, listening, listening, until your systems have become so habituated to this Christian preaching that it does not produce the least effect. It all runs off you like rain off waterproof."

Today we would say "like water off a duck's back." Waterproofed worship! A man can live by the side of Niagara until he cannot hear the falls! It is a frightening thought that a church-goer can immunize himself against the truth by continually hearing it without receiving it. The Scriptures tell of those who, hearing, hear not (Matt. 13:13). In worship, some turn off the hearing aids God gave them and might as well have them in their pockets.

We should never accept such a condition as though it were a matter of course with nothing to be done about it. It is better that those who attend leave the worship angry than that they just leave! The issues of life and death, heaven and hell, are too urgent to be waterproofed out by indifference.

- Bill Watkins

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (1 Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

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