

Prov. 22: 15; 23:13-16; Eph. 6:1-4; Wisdom within the Family I. The Need for Discipline II. The Benefit of Discipline III. The Tempering of Discipline

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what are the ways in which we get wisdom? What are the God-given means of instructing us at our earliest age? Well, today we are going to see that God uses the rod of discipline in order to instill wisdom within the family. This past week I read of a school in Georgia that is re-introducing corporal punishment- flagrant disobedience will earn you a literal paddle to the backside. This used to be the norm, as the school was once seen as an extension of the home. But today we live in a world that is almost a vacuum without discipline- so are we surprised by the lack of wisdom! We saw last week that Jesus is God's power and wisdom. That He is the truth and He has revealed wisdom in His word. But how does the ministry of Jesus change family dynamics? In other words, how does a Christian home differ from a secular home? In the process of sanctification we should see development in the core unit of the home. The Fear of the LORD is central to all home life. Each member of the home seeking to obey and honor the Lord. Today the book of Proverbs takes the position of the father in 3:1- my son, do not forget my teaching. Listen my son- obey my words! My children, come close to me and learn what is right and true. And who is a child? Well, we are all children in more than once sense. We know that because of Jesus Christ, we are the adopted children of God! God speaks to us as His children because that is what we are by grace! But today this child of God status is applied to the relationships found within the home. Children- chose which path you will take- wisdom or folly- blessings or curse. The Life of blessing normally follows the life of obedience in this life- but certainly follows in the life that is to come. So today we see that Jesus Christ instructs the family in the way of wisdom.

I. The Need for Discipline

We start by considering the need for discipline. The word for discipline in our text is "Muscar." This rich word means correction, instruction and training. It includes both direction and rebuke- discipline is the rod that teaches wisdom. There is a training and educational aspect to this word. Discipline is not a dirty word

as our world views it- the mean faced unreasonable rod wielder. No, first you teach a proper action or belief- and you rebuke or correct when that way of wisdom is rejected or ignored. But why is there this need for discipline, instruction and correction? Well, as you know, in Adam we all fell. We lost true knowledge, righteousness and holiness. And since our children share in this fall, our children are born totally depraved and unable to do or know anything righteous. Foolishness is now man's default- as 22:15 said- folly is bound up in the heart of the child. This is our birthright- to think little of God and to despise His word. If left to our own ways- that is what we would each do! This the exact opposite that the Pelagius taught! Rather we each do what is right in our own eyes. We are unwise in the things of nature and foolish in the things of the soul. We are all gullible and ignorant. As you know- children do not know how to act. Don't walk in the middle the street, don't touch that- don't put that in your mouth! Parents are a God given instruction manual on life for their children! Unfortunately, we are all slow learners- and we need to prick of pain to enforce the point. But more specifically, we are spiritually foolish! No child knows God and welcomes His Word by nature! That is why parents need to instruct their children- to teach them the way of righteousness! So parents teach their children the AC and the Lord's Prayer- teaching them the catechism and the Bible narratives. We each need- our children included- to be taught the way of truth- the content of the gospel! We need the good news of Jesus Christ- the hope of forgiveness and life everlasting. But this knowledge it too wonderful for us- it come from the outside of us! It is not ascertained or discovered by human logic or reasoning- so we need to be instructed in this way! We need to be shown the way of righteousness. But what happens when a child refuses to accept your words and instruction? This is where the rod of discipline is applied. To drive a child away from the path of destruction. Like a wild mustang- unbridled and dangerous- so is a child left to their own ways. But a tamed horse that is gentle and useful- that is a disciplined child. They want to go their own way- but discipline taps them on the nose- don't go that way- it will be your destruction! What does godly discipline look like? Well, it is a world and life view. The rod of discipline is not found in a vacuum. We start by

teaching, training, instructing and warning. We are seeking to bring God's Word to bear on the hearts of our children. Discipline done right is motivated by love with an eye to their future. The standard is God's Word. When the rod of correction is needed, it is used reasonably and with charity. If a spank is needed, it should be preceded with instruction and followed with an affirmation of love! Even a prayer of confession and assurance of pardon after the spank is a helpful way to take the word and apply it to their heart! Your goal is not only a changed action, but to bring the gospel to bear upon your child! This is who you are- a child of God! As a child of God, this action is not acceptable, little one. We should strive to be more like Proverbs here- My son, listen to me! Let me teach you the way of life and blessing!

II. The Benefit of Discipline

So when discipline is done well, what is the desired affect? What is the benefit of this discipline? As 22:15 says, folly will be driven away. A child is attracted to folly- and foolishness to a child. Or as 23:13 says, by discipline your son will not die, but you will save His soul from death. There is a two-fold benefit that is desired- a change in the outward behavior and an inward cleansing. That the bad behavior would be curtailed is the first benefit. There are obvious and immediate benefits when a child learns to follow their parent's good instruction. As we read from Eph. 6- when you honor your father and mother, it will go well with you. A child who learns wisdom and submits to instruction is prepared and equipped for an ordered, well-maintained life. Normally a long life consists of avoiding punishment and pain. A well-disciplined life that is prepared for the days and trials to come. Parents teach their children how to respond to authority, how to work and use money- even simple things like good hygiene and eating habits. Parents get their kids ready for life. The second benefit is this internal cleansing- the saving of his soul and the blessing of life eternal. 20:30 speaks of an inward cleansing that discipline brings; and 23:13 speaks of delivering a soul from death or hades. There is a spiritual component to discipline- and it is the desire of Christian parents to teach the way of life and righteousness. When discipline is received from Godly parents, a child also learns the gospel. They learn the need for true repentance and faith. Or as 3:2 says- length of days and

years of life- even peace will be added to you. As we also read in Eph. 6- it will go well with you in the land- you will live long. These can be taken in a spiritual sense. You will live in the land of eternal life if you heed the instruction of your godly parents. Since parents point their children to Christ- if you follow your parent's instruction and accept their discipline, you will be led straight to the cross from which living waters flow! You will learn to hate sin, and love obedience. Not just for the benefits of this life- but in preparation for the life to come! To say this another way, parents are the first pastors that a child has! They are a means of grace to their little ones as Christ uses them to instruct and instill in them true wisdom- which springs forth from fearing and honoring God! This good instruction leads to joy- as 29:17 says- discipline your son and he will give you rest- he will give delight to your heart. Not only will it be for the joy and good of the child who has learned wisdom- when the child responds and embraces this wisdom the parents themselves are given great joy! The rebellion of Eli's son- Hophni and Phineas- was a source of constant pain and regret! But happy is the man who has a quiver full of obedient, Christian children! As III John 1:4 says, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

III. The Tempering of Discipline

As we come to our last point, we find that this discipline is moderated- there is a softening of this discipline. The rod is mitigated by mercy- discipline motivated by love. If you spare the rod, you do in fact hate your child as 13:24 says. It must be love that motivates us in the teaching and correction of our little ones. Love for God first of all- and love for your child! Love is the sugar coating that makes the bitter pill of rebuke easier to swallow. This is even applied to us as children of God. 3:12 says that the Lord disciplines the ones He loves- as a father the son in whom he delights. And the tool that God uses in correcting is His word- as II Tim. 3:16 says, the Word is for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness. God uses His work to discipline us- so that we might be mature and equipped for good works. Heb. 12 says that God disciplines the ones He loves. God treats us like his beloved children. So we in kind are called to discipline our children in like manner. On the other hand, the opposite of love must be guarded against. The

opposite of love is a twofold danger. On one hand, it is unloving to spare the rod- or to reject discipline! To ignore your duty to consistently discipline and lovingly correct is actually hatred as we 13:24 says. Only those who hate their children will neglect them and allow them to do whatever they want. But the other side of this danger is also to be guarded against- that danger is a harshness. We read from Eph. 6- do not provoke your children to anger. Discipline must not be done in wrath- or with an unchecked anger. When we discipline our children with the rod- when we ourselves are lashing out in anger- we are in danger of pushing them away from us and from Christ! If our expectations are unrealistic or our rebuke is uncaring, we are not showing them the mercy and grace which we ourselves are in need of. This is not to say you should ignore sin, but rather deal with sin as sin! It is a big deal- but it can be dealt with in the blood of Christ! We must be careful not to be too severe and thus crush the heart and spirit of our children. But before we conclude, we must acknowledge our own inability. We know that we cannot change our children's heart. We can only speak the truth and point to the correct way- it is Christ by His Spirit that must cause our children to be born again. A rebellious child does not mean that you have failed- it may be that you have done your duty as a parent to the best of your ability. When we see wayward children, we must acknowledge that they are responsible for their actions. And as parents, we cling to the covenant! We pray to and cry out for God's faithfulness and promises to be made evident in the hearts and lives of our little ones! So we pray and we work- seeking to discipline our children so that they too might grow in grace and knowledge of the truth- to raise them in the fear and knowledge of the Lord.

To conclude, the first subject of Proverbs is that of wisdom. We find that wisdom is found when we fear the Lord and submit to His word- as well as learning from godly teachers! Jesus Christ instructs families in the way of wisdom. Parents in the home are the closest and earliest teachers and preachers. As Matthew Henry said, severe rebuke does a great deal of good, as the cure to a wound is the removal of proud flesh. In other words, sometimes it hurts to be healed! May we each submit ourselves to our Father's loving discipline- knowing that He uses Godly parents and their discipline to teach us wisdom!