

A Day of Prayer for Wales?

Are you ever naughty? Disobedient to your parents? I expect you are sometimes. In fact, I know you are sometimes. How do I know? The Bible tells us that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and “all” means you and me too. The Bible gives parents the special job of bringing up children. And it gives some guidance on the best way to do it. It tells us that if we “train up a child in the way he should go... when he is old he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6). It gives rules for how parents should do this. Proverbs 13:24 says “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.” “Chasteneth” means punishes. “Betimes” means “sometimes” in America but in old English it means “early” – in other words here it means “when he is tiny before the child becomes unruly” or perhaps “quickly” that is “as soon as he has done wrong.” But what about the rod? What does that mean? At the very least it means a physical punishment. Perhaps not a literal rod (after all it would be hard to have that about one “betimes” wouldn't it?) but certainly a smack that causes a little bit of pain.

God hates cruelty to children. When his people sinned against him and began to treat their children cruelly in order to worship wicked false gods He was furious with them. “Such a thing never came into my mind” he told them. (Jeremiah 19:5) Wicked parents who beat their children harshly are doing the very opposite of what God demands. But the Bible makes it clear that a proportionate physical punishment is a blessing. I'm sure you know that very small children, for instance, do not know the dangers of a hot cooker or of stepping off the pavement without looking. (I know a little girl who climbed up and sat on the hob of the cooker while her mummy was not looking and got burned. Imagine that!)

If you have parents that love you and smack you when you are naughty you have a great blessing for which to thank God. I had such parents and I bless God for it. A smack teaches you not to do something dangerous or wrong long before you are old enough to understand why. Other kinds of punishment are not only less effective but also much more damaging to the child. Physical pain is not the only kind of pain there is, after all.



In church on the first Sunday in March 2022 one brave minister in Wales (I hope there were many others too but I do not know about them) held up a horrible little leaflet that the Welsh government had put through the letterbox of every house in Wales. He told his congregation that the leaflet said that **21st March** 2022 was a historic day for Wales. He said that this was true. It was the first time the Welsh government had passed a law forbidding people to do something specifically commanded in God's Word. What are they forbidding? They are making it illegal for parents in Wales to smack their children from that day. The leaflet was to tell everyone about it. Then the minister asked, “What do we do?” He said, “We do what we've always done, we listen to God's Word.” Then he read the history of Daniel and the Lions' den. Do you remember what Daniel did when he was told not to do something God had commanded? Read the history in Daniel chapter six.

The Bible says clearly that rulers are given by God for a specific purpose. A ruler is the “...minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” (Romans 13:4) A ruler who makes laws that go against God's law as revealed in his Word, the Bible, is making *invalid laws* since in that case they are not punishing “evil doers” but those who do good.¹

¹ There is an investigation of this topic in the lesson for 8th August which might be worth looking at today with older children, especially if you will be on holiday in August.

What a wonderful thing it would be if children with Christian parents who love them and discipline them would make today a special day of prayer for parents and children in Wales. They are facing difficult times but, God will protect them in the end, as he did Daniel, if they carry on in faith.