



Spirit of Grace

Herald

THE MINISTRY OF DENNIS
& BENEDICTA POLLOCK

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Spirit of Grace Ministries

P.O. Box 2068

McKinney, TX 75070

(530) 712-4253

Email: grace@spiritofgrace.org

Website: www.spiritofgrace.org

Spankings & Worldviews

Recently one of the morning news programs played a video, secretly recorded in a school principal's office. It featured a little five-year-old boy about to be spanked and pleading desperately to escape his punishment. The principal and teacher patiently told the boy that he must receive his punishment, and finally the discipline was administered, a single blow to the backside with a paddle.

The scene was neither shocking nor novel to me. Having raised five children of my own and having taught in an elementary school where paddlings were allowed, I have given out my share of such punishments, although admittedly it was quite a few years ago. Nor was I particularly moved to hear the boy begging for a cancellation of the spanking. No child likes such a punishment, and most have their own strategies to try to get out of it.

You are probably wondering just what this boy's offense was. Of course, being five years old, it was not selling drugs or sexual harassment or bringing a gun to class. The little boy had fought with and had spat on one of his fellow students. When the teacher tried to apprehend him, he had run from her. Admittedly, this wouldn't qualify as the worst of all school behavior, but to my mind, for a five-year-old that is pretty serious stuff. I would have to agree with the teacher and principal that this little darling deserved to be spanked.

The thing that made this particular video upsetting to me was not the business of a little boy being spanked in school – that is something that has been going on for thousands of years. No, the problem for me was how the newscasters reacted in discussing the incident. One lady spoke of how terrible this was and how painful it was for her to watch. She was nearly in tears. Her male colleague declared over and over that this was hard for him to watch. The way these newscasters unanimously and somberly bemoaned the punishment of this child, one might have thought he had been tied to a rack and tortured. In fact, the boy received one whack with the paddle, far less than I would have applied, given the circumstances.

The business of a five-year-old who gets spanked in school is really a small matter, in and of itself. **But it represents an enormous chasm between the views of Christians and non-Christians.** When it comes to spanking and disciplining children, evangelical, Bible-reading, Scripture-memorizing Christians are nearly unanimous in their view that such is in fact necessary. How could it be

otherwise? The Bible tells us: "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly." (Proverbs 13:24)

That the Bible highly recommends discipline and physical punishment for children's willful, rebellious behavior, cannot be questioned. But sadly our nation is filled with people who a) don't read the Bible, b) don't accept the Bible as inspired, and c) don't have a clue what the Bible says. Evangelical Christians are a different sort. Believ-

ing it to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, they take it seriously and bend their own prejudices, opinions, perspectives, and attitudes to line up with that which they find in the holy Scriptures. But apart from the inspiration of the Scriptures there is another dimension to be considered, which is the Biblical view of the heart of humanity. Going beyond the question of "should children be spanked" is the question of why they need spanking in the first place. And the Bible reveals this very plainly, declaring: "**Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him**" (Proverbs 22:15). This is a powerful statement that almost no secular man or woman would accept these days. From this and other verses throughout the Scriptures the Bible declares that **we are born into this world hard-wired with foolishness.**



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Theologians refer to this condition as original sin, and Biblically speaking there are but two remedies for this terrible baggage we carry into this world. One is a temporary fix, and that is what the Bible calls “the rod of discipline.” **To ignore this aspect of child-raising out of a naïve and misplaced sense of compassion is to set your child up for failure and lawlessness.** The rod of discipline can work wonders in keeping wayward children in line, but it can never completely subdue the heart. That is the work of Jesus Christ. A self-controlled, easy-going sinner is far easier to live with than a rebellious, obnoxious, hateful sinner, but both are still sinners. Ultimately the heart must be changed.

It is in our youth, when our biases and prejudices have not yet hardened, when the walls of our delusions and false assumptions have not yet been fully erected, and when our hearts and spirits are still open to new views and insights, that we need to hear the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us then take the raising of our children seriously. Let us show by our interest and attention that they are important and valuable in our sight. Let us be sure that their rebellious behaviors and attitudes have consequences attached to them. Let us be quick to praise them for those first faltering steps of integrity and responsibility. And above all, let us be faithful to tell them the story of Jesus Christ: His life, His death, His resurrection, and His offer of salvation and eternal life to all who believe.

NEXT MONTH — MISSION KENYA



We have scheduled a mission in Bokoli, Kenya in June. We will be preaching the gospel of Christ in an outdoors venue in the evenings, and teaching believers the fundamentals of the Christian faith in the mornings.

Our budget is approximately ten thousand dollars for this mission, and we are needing around eight thousand dollars at this point to cover all our bills. Your designated contributions toward this mission are vital. Please pray about joining your hands and hearts with ours, and sending us a generous check

(or contributing through our website) to help us with this outreach.

Where does evangelism come from? — It comes from the command and loving heart of our Heavenly Father. Jesus declared:

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15)

None of us can fulfill this command on his or her own, but together we can do it! Although you may never be able to go on a mission to Africa or outside of the United States, you can share in this ministry, and do your part in fulfilling our Lord’s command.

Please pray about investing in people of the great continent of Africa.

And don’t forget to pray for us, and for this mission!

Thanks for caring!