

**PREFACE**

*“Thank God for this beautiful Sabbath. Thank you pastor. My sabbath rest began when, just as the sermon was about to begin, Othniel fell asleep in my arms. If he could have known the content of the message, perhaps he would not have wanted to allow me to listen, but I thank God because it is for the good of his soul. Today was a liberating message for me. Thank God for pastor. Liberating because I have been avoiding and limiting the application of the rod in recent months. This message drove home that to apply the rod is to obey the Word of God. I feel liberated from the need to apologise for doing so! I come from a very liberal background. If I looked at these verses from Proverbs before coming under pastor’s ministry, I would have been very angry. My reaction would have been that it is so cruel to cane a child, and surely psychologically damaging! – I felt perhaps the Bible translation must be wrong. The more I learn the doctrines of the Scriptures, the more I discover that these instructions pastor expounded from the book of Proverbs are the right way to raise up a child. However, this makes me more and more culpable for not carrying them out properly. I felt the way we discipline our children really reflects our understanding of the doctrine of man, and of the difficulty of the standard of salvation. I see a lot of children in my line of work and every parent thinks their child is the most wonderful and precious. In my heart I knew they couldn’t all be right. Through Hananiah I came to know the doctrine of man at an intellectual level but in the west we idolize childhood, so it is hard for a westerner to look at a cute child and say, ‘Utterly depraved!’ Thank God for the prompting of the Holy Spirit; I felt some breakthrough in this area during my first year under pastor’s ministry. It enabled me to start to apply the rod on Esther. There is no hope of applying the law deeply and intensely unless you can appreciate the state of the child’s heart. There is a lot of support for corporal discipline in American groups - Dan used to listen to sermons on the subject by an Arminian Fundamentalist called Denny Kenaston. However, the degree to which discipline is applied is vastly different. Following his methods, you think you have success when you see improvement in the child’s behaviour. The approach pastor described is on quite a different level. Although we would not cane a child at the moment when they are actually being good, yet the sin in their heart needs to be drawn out, exposed and dealt with. I really thank God that later on I could observe with my own eyes the verity of some of these Scriptural principles, particularly that the blueness of the wound drives away evil. Particularly in a small child, I saw that the sharp application of the law caused a change in the child’s spirit. It was more obvious when Dan smacked them, but I could achieve the same thing if I applied the law hard enough. Thank God that the truth of Scripture is plain to see if you follow it faithfully. I was also convinced when pastor spoke about foolishness being bound in the heart of a child. I’m very stupid and Satan is laughing at me as he manipulates my children – the foolishness starts being in their heart, but when I was not vigilant, I have seen their behaviour deteriorate until it became frankly demonic. My own heart is depraved and so my eyes are clouded to these things. My mind is untutored – I need to commit myself to follow the Scriptures rather than my own inclination. Pray for grace to change and to be more consistent. This issue of the physical disciplining of our children is part of the battle of Gog and Magog. Thank God that I have heard the voice that is crying in the wilderness, exhorting me to apply the law in obedience to the Scriptures – but every other source is pressing me to use the liberal rationale in raising the children. Even the books in Esther’s home school curriculum (which is supposedly Protestant Christian) commend the use of star charts, rewards etc. These methods are so tempting because in the short term they really do seem to give better results. When you apply the law heavily and consistently, they say children are discouraged, they don’t want to try hard because they don’t like you. On the other hand, if you speak nicely and offer a reward there are immediate good results. I really need to see my children from a spiritual perspective. I need to go by faith and not by sight. It is a difficult undertaking – no matter how much we do, we may not know for sure if we have been effective in facilitating a work of grace in the hearts of our children. It really is a hard job. But pastor said this is the best legacy we can bequeath our children – the fear of God. You can’t impart the fear of God without applying the law. When Dan started to go to the mission field for protracted periods and I changed my working pattern, abandoned my pension etc, I used to worry about financial security and provision of college fees in the future. Later I felt liberated, to a degree, from worrying about all these things. I desire to commit myself to give them the fear of God and knowledge of the doctrines because everything in this life is so uncertain, especially in these times we are living in. I want to pray for the grace to fight the battle of Gog and Magog in Philadelphia. I pray that more than a few of our children would give us rest in the end, although I admit that the testimony of the Scriptures is not encouraging. Even Eve was not comforted after Abel’s death until Seth was born. Thank God for pastor who preached this.” Sarah Harper’s response to pastor’s message on ‘The Upbringing Of Children In The Fear and Admonition Of The Lord’ from the book of Proverbs, Cameron Highlands, Malaysia; 15 June AD 2014*