

PREFACE

*“On the previous Saturday, I was at Jael Chia’s house. After collecting their dinner, the sisters dispersed. Huldah Grace Teo, 5, was with us, preparing to go back with Dorcas. When we told Dorcas to go off first, Huldah cried and wailed. When we asked her why she was so desperate to follow Dorcas and not keen to stay with Julia, she replied, ‘Because of the Law.’ We then asked her if she knew what good the Law of God could do for her, she answered and said, ‘It can deliver me from hell.’ I was surprised at her understanding and appreciation of the role of the Law. I attribute her ability to give the correct answer to pastor and the upbringing of her mother. However, to the next poser, ‘Do you then like to stay with Julia’, her answer was still, ‘No!’ (To the children, Julia is a disciplinarian.) It is a hard saying. Pastor said that this book of Proverbs is especially meant for the children. I see from the message today on ‘Scriptural Parenting and Nurturing’ that it is very much directed to the parents. I really marvel at the wisdom of God. For pastor only picked out and elaborated on some five to six verses. Yet these few verses encapsulate comprehensively what the law can do. For the children, the cane is the school master to bring them to Christ. Not pinching, not slapping but it is literally the rod. Many questions and subterfuges in the mind of the parents are answered. They fear that the children might die (physically) from the caning. The answer of the Scriptures is not only that ‘he shall not die’ (Proverbs 23:15) but the enjoinder to parents is to fear the death of the soul of their children. The parents may think that the children are too young to be caned. The Scriptures says, ‘Chasteneth him betimes’ (Proverbs 13:14, which means early, in their young age). God knows that the parents’ hearts would melt when their children cry. The Scriptures says, ‘Let not thy soul spare for his crying’ (Proverbs 19:18). The counsels of God are so plain. God sees the heart. Though my children have grown up, yet I know that in the past I am worse than all the mothers. I am very soft and hardly lift up the rod on the children. When the children cry a little, then parents would put down the rod and say, ‘Come, let me tell you.’ It will turn out to be a counseling session again. The Scriptures teaches us to cane till it brings a yielding. God knows the parents. The hearts of the parents are exposed today; of what we ourselves really are, therefore it accounts for the way we are towards the children. There is a great travesty of justice and cruelty when parents withhold the rod. But we may say, ‘I do, I really whack them up’. It is not that the parents do not beat the child but we do not beat them enough. What we should fear is not that the children will die when we beat them up, what we should fear is that we have not beaten them enough. It really takes a spiritual mind to think so, ‘I have not done my work, I have not used the rod enough.’ Today pastor underscored the role of the mother in the upbringing of children. Children left to themselves bringeth shame to the mother. Shame is upon on me when I see the waywardness of my children. It is a reflection of my own wayward ways and my own liberal values. I still remember, when Hannah Grace was 4 years old, and we would think her skin was very tender then. However, once she did something wrong and she would not say sorry. Pastor just whacked her till she broke down and apologized. Such was the stubbornness and wilfulness that the beating had to take nearly ten minutes. Yet that ten minutes application of the rod was like an eternity. I could remember this very vividly because she broke down to finally spew out the word ‘sorry’. Pastor really believes in the doctrine of the depravity of man. He also believes that there is power in the rod and he sees the need to break the will of the children while they are young. I saw Hannah Grace’s blessedness. We are so earthly-minded, filled with the philosophy of this world; but the wisdom of God is high above us. In a sense, in our midst, there is great safety as the rod is applied by proxy through pastor and the uncles and aunts. There is nothing to lose, but everything to gain in applying the rod. In fact, it is gaining heaven and losing hell. Encapsulated in these verses is the love of God. I saw the preciousness of the soul to God, so that **He would also charge the parents, ‘Don’t spare, even if the child cries, give it to him till the power of depravity be broken.’** This is the blessedness of our children. I like it when pastor says he ‘loves’ to lay traps for the children to allow their hidden darkness to emerge. These are blessed snares whereby opportunities are provided for the rod to be wielded. For when you fall into them, you will be delivered from falling into the snares of the wicked and shall escape from hell. I felt the doctrines that underline the charge to apply the rod faith-strengthening. One, there is the doctrine of man, of the depravity of the heart. I also learned the doctrine concerning the constitution of man. He is body, mind and soul. I see that often there is so much investment made for the*

children's body and mind; hence, education has become an idol. Yet, so little care is given to the soul. Along the way we may give some thoughts to the soul, but all too soon, we rush back to cater to the body and mind. I also see the role and niche of the law. These doctrines are underscored in no uncertain way. For myself, I know that I do not like the application of the law upon me. However, under the ministry of the servant of God, God puts the rod of preaching into the hand of His servant, to wield it skillfully. I really thank God that I bear upon me the marks of the bruises of the law; I know it is really meant for my salvation. Thank God for the new-comers who came for the Sabbath worship. Providentially they also brought their children along. The message is an eye-opener for them." Deborah Thomas' Sabbath vespers in response to presiding pastor's sermon on 'Parenting And Nurture', John Bunyan house, Johor, Malaysia, 12 July AD 2009