

**Introduction:** Over the last two studies in parenting we have considered our responsibility to teach our children the consequences of actions with the use of the rod. We saw that this is to particularly take place in the formative period.

- Something I did not emphasize in these studies is the need to praise the child when they do the right thing, not just punish with the wrong.
- At some point the use of this means begins to diminish and another which increases. That which replaces the physical pain is the broadening of consequences into other areas as they grow and develop.
- At this point I suggest that we have responsibility to target specific areas in which the character of our children fall short of God's requirements in the Word, and address those areas with rewards and punishments of other sorts.
- I want to introduce you to one method in which this could be done known as the behavior contract. I am not saying this is the only way, but a suggested way to incorporate certain biblical principles in a clear way.
- The basics of a BC are simple: make clear expected behavior, promise reward in obedience, and punishment in disobedience. A simple chart looks like this:

EXPECTATION	REWARD	PUNISHMENT

**Objection:** some suggest that there should be no reward for doing the right thing. As I understand this objection, it is rooted in at least these three things:

**1.) The suggestion that rewards/punishments is more secular behaviorism than biblical training.**

***Behaviorism** (also called learning perspective) is a philosophy of psychology based on the proposition that all things which organisms do — including acting, thinking and feeling—can and should be regarded as behaviors. The school of psychology maintains that behaviors as such can be described scientifically without recourse either to internal physiological events or to hypothetical constructs such as the mind. (from Wikipedia).*

- **Four major differences** from mere behaviorism. (1.) It has no absolute standard (2.) It deals with a person merely as biological (i.e. no soul) and (3.) It seeks to motivate without reference to the heart. (4.) It deals with a person without reference to the heart in relation to God. What differs is that we want to address the heart in relation to God. If this is done without reference to God, then it is mere behaviorism.

**2.) The parable of the servant's duty in Luke 17:5-10.**

- The first question is "Is this the parable's primary purpose?" It is in reference to forgiveness, and the question for more faith.
- Second, does it teach that there is no reward for doing the right thing? There actually is "reward" in that having done his service he does eventually get to eat.
- Third, does it teach (in conjunction with the rest of Scripture) that God does not "thank" or praise His servants?
- I suggest that the thrust of the parable is the disposition of the servant in recognizing that we merit nothing because all is our duty.

**3.) An emphasis on a philosophical and abstract commitment to what is good, just, and right.**

- This says that people ought to do right because it is right, regardless of the consequences.
- I am very sympathetic to this, and at its core I believe that it is right. We should love what is right and good for its own sake.
- But another question arises which is essential. Is this how God deals with us in Scripture? Does God motivate by consequences, or does He merely hold out good and say "do it because it is right?"
- Let me preface all that I will say about God's dealing with mankind in that all of His actions are in grace. No one deserves anything, and all forfeit His blessings through sin. Our hope in the Gospel of Grace is that God does not deal with us according to our sins, but in mercy and forgiveness.
- Fundamental to all these cases, it is always the duty of people to obey God, first because it is right and God is the Creator and Judge of all the earth.

**I. God's Dealing with Adam - Genesis 2:15-17; 3:24**

- There is the blessing of eating of all the trees of the garden. There is also a warning about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they eat, they will die.
- The consequence is the withholding of blessing, and being cast out of the garden.

**II. God's Dealing with Abraham – Genesis 12-22**

- God promises to make of Abraham a great nation and bring blessing through His seed. While there is not explicit warning, as the narrative unfolds it becomes clear that when Abraham does it God's way there is blessing, but when he lacks faith there are bad consequences.

**III. God's Dealing with Israel – Deuteronomy 28**

- God had redeemed them out of Egypt for His own special possession. He is preparing to take them into the land of promise by the leadership of Joshua.
- He sets before them the conditions of blessings and cursings.

#### IV. God's Dealing with David – 2Samuel 7:12-16

- These promises and threats God gives to David's son, referring first to Solomon and ultimately to the Lord Jesus, the Son of David.

#### V. God's Dealing with Men in Proverbs – Proverbs 1:28-33; 13:15

- The book is saturated with motivations to do the right thing. It ordinarily brings tangible blessing, and yet the way of the unfaithful is difficult.

#### VI. God's Dealing with the New Covenant Church

- Matthew 6:1-6 Jesus points out that the problem with the Pharisees is not that they seek favor, but that they seek it from men instead of God.
- John 15:10-11 motivation to obedience for joy.
- 2Corinthians 5:9-11 Paul motivating to please God for reward, and avoid His terror and punishment.
- Ephesians 6:1-3 in relation to children, the Apostle Paul instructs them to obey parents not only because it is right, but also that it may be well with them.
- Revelation 20:12-15 books opened that the dead would be judged.
- What keeps us from being motivated merely for the blessing? What keeps us from merely doing the right thing for our own pleasure? The problem isn't primarily that of the pursuit of pleasure (blessing, good), but rather the object. We are called to pursue the greatest blessing which is God Himself. Obedience fosters joy in relationship with God, disobedience brings break in that fellowship. It isn't for the good in and of itself, but this blessing and cursing.
- There is also the issue of timing. There are rewards/punishments at two levels: temporal and eternal. Faith recognizes that there are some things that are worth losing in this life to gain in the life to come. Hebrews 10:34.
- What I have sought to demonstrate is the biblical reality that God motivates by setting before us blessing and cursing. God is most concerned about our heart does not negate this reality, but calls us to examine our hearts in the process.
- Because God deals with us in this way, it is the paradigm and example of how we are to deal with our children. It sounds more spiritual to say that people should do the right thing for its own sake. But isn't this seeking to be more spiritual than the Bible and God's dealing with us?
- So, out of these things I suggest that it is proper for us to be motivated by God's favor and blessing, and it is perfectly proper and even necessary to teach them in the same way.
- We are seeking to teach these realities to our children day by day. We are teaching them in the stuff of life these realities in a way that is tangible and reflects God's dealing with us.
- This brings us to the behavior contract. This is one clear means to communicate to them what God has communicated to us. (see chart) What this clearly communicates is:
  - 1.) What is required.**
    - This method makes clear our expectation, and allows opportunity to target trouble areas.
    - It could be reviewed daily and prayed over.
  - 2.) What will be the blessing of obedience.**
    - We should seek to find things that truly motivate them individually. There can be negotiations as to what they desire.
    - Distinguish between "rights" and "privileges."
  - 3.) What is the curse of disobedience.**
    - Again, we should find things that truly motivate them.
- While this doesn't HAVE to be done, we are doing it at some level. This allows for concentration and clear guidelines instead of unclear and abstract (and thus possibly misunderstood).
- As parents, we should strive for **unity** (among parents) and consistency so that we follow through.
- We make clear that THEY have made the decision and the consequences are a result of their decision.
- While doing so, we must keep from mere behaviorism (see above).