

The Purpose of Punishment

Hebrews 12:5-6

Introduction: When you see a child throwing a temper tantrum, do you think that child obviously has been punished way too much otherwise he wouldn't act like that? Or do you think that child needs a good spanking?

When your child talks back to you do you think it's wonderful how he has developed an ability to defend himself? Or do you recognize a need for correction?

We are going to explore the purpose for punishment.

I. Punishment is defined as “suffering, pain, or loss that serves as retribution; a penalty inflicted on an offender...” (Webster's)

- A. Punishment is often used as a means of discipline or training.
- B. Punishment is also used as a penalty for inappropriate conduct.
- C. Punishment can also be the consequence of our actions.

II. Punishment is for correction.

A. God as well as our parents uses punishment (chastisement) for training (Heb. 12:4-11).

1. It is not meant to be pleasant.
2. It is suppose to hurt in some way in order to produce a desired end result.

3. Despite the feelings that might tell us the one giving the punishment hates us, it is actually the opposite. A parent who punishes is someone who is showing their love. Wrong conduct that goes uncorrected only breeds more evil conduct. If correction is made through punishment “afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.”

B. An excellent example is the man who had his father's wife (1 Cor. 5:1-5, 11-13). The punishment was the withdrawing of all social contact from those within the church. What resulted was his repentance, which was followed by forgiveness (2 Cor. 2:6-8).

C. Punishment when needed is a tool to train us to recognize, admit, correct and repent of our errors.

III. Punishment is a motivator.

A. Punishment should motivate us to sorrow (2 Cor. 7:9-10).

1. If true sorrow for our evil deed is achieved through the inflicted punishment, then repentance will follow.

2. Illustrated: SIN > PUNISHMENT > SORROW > REPENTANCE > FORGIVENESS (asked and granted).

B. Unfortunately, not everyone will repent even when punishment is administered.

1. They might appear sorry, but they don't change their conduct. Their sorrow is of the worldly sort that is only sorry they got caught or felt humiliated.

2. Illustrated: SIN > PUNISHMENT > SORROW > Forgiveness asked to avoid further punishment. Notice the absence of repentance.

IV. Punishment is not always necessary.

A. Punishment is needed for those who are not trained to recognize or admit their sins.

1. As we mature, we should recognize our sins and correct them well before someone else has to inflict punishment.

2. This explains why children need punishment far more often than adults (1 Cor. 13:11). Due to immaturity, children are not motivated to correct their conduct unless a reason to change is introduced (Prov. 22:15; 29:15). Spare the rod; spoil the child.

B. A lack of punishment after sin occurs can be a sign of maturity.

1. What parents desire of their children and what God wants of us is the ability to recognize and correct ourselves. Repentance is strictly our choice.

2. We can sin, become sorry, repent and ask for forgiveness without any punishment involved.

3. Illustrated: SIN > SORROW > REPENTANCE > FORGIVENESS (asked and granted).

V. Punishment can also be a consequence of our sins.

A. We often bring punishment upon ourselves. We choose to do wrong.

1. Our judicial system uses punishment as retribution. If I commit murder I can expect the punishment justly given for my actions (Acts 25:11).

2. King David was justly punished for his sins in regard to Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:9-14).

3. Likewise, the punishment for sin is eternal damnation for those who don't achieve the Lord's forgiveness (Matt. 25:46; Heb. 10:26-31).

B. Is it better to be punished from time to time so we can learn to make correction **or** resist all punishment, never make corrections and burn for eternity in Hell?

1. Put that way, punishment doesn't sound bad at all.

2. Since that is the choices in life concerning punishment, bring it on. Let me feel the love! I'm not going to like it at the time but I will recognize the good it will do me in the end!

Conclusion: Let's conclude with a review question.

Which of the following statements concerning punishment is not true?

- A) Punishment helps us to develop sorrow for our sin.
- B) Punishment is often the consequence of our sin.
- C) Some people won't change no matter how severe the punishment.
- D) Punishment only makes a bad situation worse.

Hopefully, you don't need me to give you the answer. If you recognize the sin in your life now is the time to ask for forgiveness.