

# Corporal Punishment

I am writing this opinion because of a conversation I had yesterday with a gentleman who like so many others I have spoken with over the past couple of years, recognizes the fact that the problem of crime is not being effectively dealt with.

I believe that while this gentleman agreed with much I had to say concerning an effective way to deal with criminal activity, he was never the less fearful that the approach I suggested would be poorly received by law makers and various "Rights organizations". But as I pointed out, the current system in place is not working to combat the ever increasing levels of crime in our communities, so something else must be done.

As all the evidence is considered, it must be obvious to you citizens that attempts to legislate away crime are a dismal failure. More laws, more police, more prosecutors, more jails, prisons, etc. have become a self-perpetuating system that will do nothing but grow and continue to bleed society. This cannot be allowed to continue if we as a society want to function in a healthy way.

What if all of the money spent on prosecutors, attorney's, courts, prisons and jails was recouped and converted to use for positive public endeavors? How much money are we talking about? Hundreds of millions... billions? As I write this, it is currently costing the people of Alaska \$36,000.00 per year or more per inmate that is locked up in jails and prisons. As that number approaches 5,000 individuals, we are talking about an annual cost of \$180,000,000.00 just to warehouse people accused or convicted of crimes. That is just the cost of housing these people; this does not take in to account the attorneys, prosecutors, clerks, judges, police, and all of the other agencies staffed with people playing their parts in the current criminal justice system. We are most likely talking about annual costs that run in to the billions to address crime in Alaska. We can do so much better!

And what if this money was spent on infrastructure development, education, medicine, real treatment for addicts and our mentally ill? Even if we spent what was needed to address these issues, there would still be plenty left over for hefty PFD dividend checks at the end of each year.

This brings me back to the subject at hand; corporal punishment for people who break the laws of our society. I am not talking about some misplaced sense of revenge being played out against transgressors, I am talking about swift, fair punishment being meted out in full view of the citizens of the community. Upon completion of the punishment phase, an appropriate penance is proscribed to be completed before a person is free to rejoin the community with their debt paid and a real lesson learned. If the person refuses to make amends, by not completing their proscribed penance, they are issued more punishment until they comply.

Does this sound draconian? Well, let me put it this way. If 19-year-old Jonny is caught by citizens in the act of stealing from Mr. Smith's garage and is handed five good lashes with a

leather strap and given 120 hours of service in the community to pay for his transgression, how do you suppose other young men are going to react when one of their buddies suggests that they go rob old man Joe's cabin while he is out of town for the next six weeks? I suggest the scenario would play out something like this...

"Hey Mark. I hear old man Joe's gone for the next six weeks, let's go over and see what he's got that we can steal." (Mark) "didn't you see what happened to Jonny when he got caught stealing? He was whipped in public and now has to do two weeks of work to repay what he stole. No thanks! I am not about to be whipped in public for being stupid."

What is the more humane approach to addressing crime? Locking up the offenders and thereby setting them on the revolving door path? Or swiftly dealing with them in a manner that does not allow them to easily forget the consequences of their actions? If a person bears the physical scars of a lash, they are unlikely to ever forget what that felt like.

I am a prisoner in the Wildwood Correctional Center. Throughout my younger adult years, I was a liar, thief, and occasional drug abuser. If I had received a public punishment of lashes rather than being locked up, I would have been far more likely to repent of my thieving ways. In fact, often times while I was locked up as a young man, I met other criminals who expanded my knowledge of criminal possibilities. Prison was in essence a "finishing school" for becoming a career criminal.

How many citizens would rather see crime punished in a manner that results in true reform? And I would be willing to bet that even those who were whipped for their transgressions would shamelessly display the scars they bear when it saved them from a lifetime of failure and shame. I know I would.

Make no mistake, I am not writing this piece just to spout off. I am truly advocating for enacting legislation that mandates public corporal punishment for almost all crimes. The primary goal should be the correction of unacceptable behavior. Justice, not revenge. Restoration and repentance, not a cancer draining the life blood of society.

I look around me day after day and see many men who would benefit from just such justice. The current practice of making longer prison sentences for criminal acts does not work. And the reason it does not work is quite simple really... because men and women who are committing crime are not thinking about the consequences of their actions. They are not stopping to say to themselves "if I get caught I am going to prison"; that possibility is the furthest thing from their minds when they are engaging in that next score. But, if they have been given stripes for transgression, or if they have seen others suffer such punishment, you can bet they will think twice before acting.

Take it from someone with the experience and real life knowledge to speak with authority on this issue, corporal punishment is a viable and humane way to solve much of the crime problem we face as a society.

*O. Mason*

*August 24, 2019*