

Pillar Passage – Proverbs 22:6

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Welcome to another Pillar Passage. Today we are looking at Proverbs, chapter 22, verse 6, a famous verse about parenting. A verse that has been used by many people and relied upon by many people in the past; but also is also commonly misunderstood as I hope to demonstrate.

The passage says, *Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

The question is, is this a promise to us as parents? Or is it communicating something else? If we train up a child in the way he should go, does God promise us that that child will go in that way no matter what?

The first thing we ought to do when we're examining a passage—and this includes the proverbs where the individual passages often seem a little bit disconnected from each other. We still must look at the context and ask ourselves what is happening in the flow of the text—and the flow of the entire Bible—but here I think the context tells us enough.

Let's look at the first few verses that come before this. *A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches and favor is better than silver and gold.* That's verse one. Verse two; *The rich and the poor meet together; the lord is the Maker of them all.*

There is something here about living under the reality that we are created beings and we have a Creator. In that truth, there is this reality that there is a created order to things—an order that we must understand. That's what the writer is trying to communicate to us; that there is a created order and to live wisely—which is what the whole book of Proverbs is about—means understanding this order and living in harmony with this order. *That* will lead to flourishing. That will lead to flourishing whether you are rich or whether you are poor. We all stand before this God and the Lord is Maker of this all.

Then verse 3; *The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.* So far what we're seeing here, this is just the way the world is. This is the way the created order works.

Verse 4; *The reward for humility and fear of the lord is riches and honor and life.* This is in *general*, not a promise, in general the way things work in in this order—the way God has ordered the world. In the same way; *Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked; whoever guards his soul will keep far from them*—meaning both the thorns and snares, and the crooked.

Then we come to verse 6, our passage, but let's keep going here. What we find is two other proverbs which clarify things even further for us. Number 1: *The rich rules over the poor.* This is actually verse 7. *The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.* This

isn't telling us, be a rich person and in order to rule over the poor. That's not what it is saying. And it's not saying, be a lender so that you can be a slave master to the borrower. Nor, of course, is it commanding us, be a borrower so that you can be a slave of the lender. Of course not. Of course, it's not saying this to us. It's simply saying this is the way things are in the way God has ordered His creation. And in the same way, verse 8, the writer's not saying, be someone who sows injustice. No, quite the opposite but he's saying the opposite by means of just saying here's the way it is. If you sow injustice you will reap calamity. If you sow injustice with the rod of your fur, it will fail—it will turn back on you.

Okay, so how does this context help us understand verse 6? It is this, very simply. Let's start with the second half of the verse. It is simply say, in God's created order people, in general, do not depart from the way they grew up with—the way that they were shaped into as a child. Even when they are old, even when decades have passed, you see that the way people were brought up continues even into old age. The proverbial spoiled child; or the proverbial—you know—seventeenth child out of seventeen; or the proverbial firstborn; or the proverbial only child. All of these, you see these peoples' traits all the way through their entire life. Even when we are old, we do not depart from these.

We are shaped like trees. You see this in trees. Trees, when they are young they will grow up into a certain shape and they will retain that shape throughout their lives. This is why in construction areas you see trees all over the place and you see a little rope and a stake. The stake is tied with the rope to that tree. Why? So that the tree would grow up straight. So that it will remain straight for whatever it may face in the future.

Because of that reality, the proverb writers says, therefore be intentional; be focused; be biblically intentional toward God and train up a child in the way that he *should* go, because this part—the second half—is going to happen no matter what.

The second part of this verse is a promise in the same way that Newton law of gravity is a promise. It is going to happen no matter what so since it going to happen, no matter what, be intentional; be focused; be deliberate; plan; work; labor, and labor with specific goals to train up your child in the way that he could go. Then leave it with God. Leave it with God, the Maker; the Creator; the Sustainer; and the Grower of trees.

In the end, it is all up to God because He is our Creator and it is His order; His soil; His structure that we are working with