

PROVERBS 22

THOUGHTS ON RAISING CHILDREN

A hiding-place for the prudent (verse 3)

“A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.”

One main element of safety is a proper estimate of danger. Many of the great disasters that have occurred in war are due to the rashness which springs from undervaluing the enemy’s power. He who foresees the evil will hide himself until it passes. In the ordinary business of life, there are evils which may be foreseen by the prudent; and there are places of shelter in which he may safely lie. Nor is that shelter far away! His daily labor and his legitimate business will be a sufficient defense against many temptations and pitfalls. When the Lord appoints labor for His people, it is a strong wall built around them to keep dangerous enemies out.

There are also evils that lie before us in the region of practical morality – evils for which the prudent keep a sharp outlook. Frivolous and wicked companions, idle entertainments, impure amusements, and a multitude of other enticements press upon young people especially; and if they are like chaff, they will be carried away before this wind. The wisest course is to go into hiding! In your parents’ house; in your siblings’ company; among sober associates and instructive books; in the study of nature or the practice of art – a multitude of hiding-places are at hand. But an even deeper and safer refuge is found in the strong tower of defense, from which all the fiery darts of the wicked will harmlessly rebound. This refuge is none other than the Lord Jesus, into Whom the righteous run (chapter 18:10; Ps. 32:7). All the power of the world can neither drive a refugee forth from that Hiding-place, nor hurt him within it!

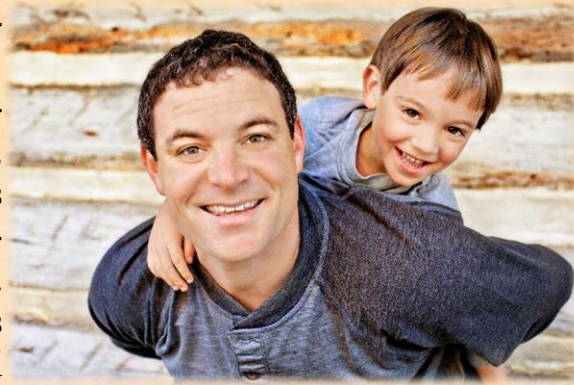
Thoughts on raising children (verse 6)

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

The hopes of at least two generations hang upon this important rule. How can we look upon a child without thoughtful anxiety? The existence of a soul is commenced for eternity, and no power of earth or hell can crush it. He or she is like an “arrow in the hand of a mighty man” – a powerful instrument of good or evil, according to the direction that is given to it. Everything depends upon the child’s training. Two ways lie before him – the way in which he *wishes* to go, which is headlong to ruin; and the way in which he *should* go, which is the pathway to heaven. Begin the training of the child, as Hannah did, with his dedication to God. This being done, train him as God’s child – as one who has been entrusted to your care – asking for the Lord’s guidance from day to day. Pray for him, and teach him to pray. Instruct him in the Scriptures as the sole rule of faith and life. Never was there such a training as this, which is so momentous!

Wisely does Solomon direct us to begin this training in a child's earliest days. The more early the training, the more easy the work – and the more encouraging the results. The ceaseless activity of the great enemy of our souls teaches us the value of early training. Fill the ground of your child's heart with good seed, so that there is no room for the evil tares! Be at the entrance of the way with wholesome food, before he has the opportunity of partaking of the forbidden fruit, and before he becomes hardened by the habits of sin and vice.

But this training must also be practical. Mere *talk* to a child about religion, without bringing it to bear upon his *life*, is utterly ineffective. Here also lies the momentous weight of Christian consistency. If the child hears about Godliness and sees only wickedness, this is bringing him bread with one hand and poison with the other. It is beckoning him to heaven with the hand; and at the same time, taking him by the hand and leading him in the way to destruction.



This work of child-training often involves painful and long-protracted exercises of faith and patience. Truly, no father or mother could persevere in it, except for the Divine support of the parental promise: "When he is old, he shall not depart from it!" The adult will generally turn out as the child has been trained. Education is very distinct from grace; but when education is conducted upon the principles of the Word of God, with the blessings of the Holy Spirit, it is a means of imparting grace! Sometimes the fruit is immediate, uniform, and permanent to the end. But even if the fruit is late, it will be no less sure. The seeds of instruction will burst forth into life.

Pray for grace, then, to cultivate the exercise of parental faith – trusting not to what we see, but to what God has promised. Expect the fulfillment of the parental promise, as confidently as any other free promise of the Gospel! Exercise faith in the full energy of Christian diligence, and in the patience of Christian hope; and leave God to accomplish His own gracious will. His faithfulness secures the promise to us, which is and always must be certain and sure: "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee!" The majority of mankind deals with their children as if they were only born for the world; and so in all important matters, they educate them consistently for time – not for eternity. But the Lord promises great rewards to those who make the salvation of their child's soul the primary objective of their education. "I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed," He declares, "and my blessing upon thine offspring!" (Isa. 44:3)

We praise You, Jesus, as our true Hiding-place, where we are invited to seek refuge! We also pray that You would fulfill Your promises and give grace to parents, so that they may train their children – from their earliest days – to love You. Amen.