

Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas -- Sunday, September 13, 2020

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”
(Proverbs 22:6)

I think it's important to listen. As an elder who this body has selected to build them up in knowledge and feed them gently, I believe it is a duty to listen when questions are asked. I don't always feel like I have light on a thing asked, but if the Holy Ghost sends one of you to me seeking a treatment of a matter, I trust the Holy Ghost will likewise help me in doing the work. In developing my sermon on this passage, I was curious to learn how many times in this body had a sermon been presented on it. I found five times since 2013 where an elder here has at least articulated Proverbs 22:6 in his sermon.

On March 24, 2013 it was quoted as support for the proposition that *“continual teaching, meditating upon, and placing of God's commandments in the forefront of our minds, and those of our children, is an oft-repeated exhortation”*. In a broader sermon about the duties in raising a child, on February 9, 2014, I said this regarding training up a child: *“Training is hard work ... both for the trainer and the trainee! This is the step beyond simply telling. it requires you to present situational application of God's standards in a manner that lets your child see what those admonitions mean in their actual lives. No sterile, milquetoast droning here ... you're in the heat of the fight with your little ones so they smell, feel, taste, hear, and see what it is to serve the King.”* On May 31, 2015 our friend Sam was discussing our duty to not be conformed to this world, and used this passage to say: *“We are to train up a child in the way that he should go, binding the standards of God upon them from their youngest days, keeping it as blinders before their eyes – a straight path of obedience, by which they are mightily blessed!”* On September 9, 2017 elder Charles helped us to see how *“our training ‘up a child in the way he should go’ [] helps us to find greater faith and derive better understanding since it forces us to search the scriptures for that understanding.”* Finally, brother Sam returns to it on November 19, 2017 in discussing the formative aspect of church discipline. These all are supplemental to the work we're going to do today and will in all respects complement it.

This is a one-verse oracle from the book of Proverbs that we're going to look at this morning. We have many parents, younger and older, who are in this body and who have a keen interest in being comprehensively educated on what this short – and often quaintly quoted – passage actually requires of them. A google search for the opening clause will pull nearly 4,000,000 results: books, posters, wall art, chains, shirts, bands, stickers, plates, napkins, etc. Like so many words of this love note we have received from our Father this passage gets humanized into every perverse notion that can be put on display. We need to see it in a way that glorifies God, not the flesh.

So, with edification out of Scripture being the driving force behind the work, I wish to open this proverb up to those who are infused with a sincerity toward God (through grace) so they can feel resolved and grounded about what these words require of you and what they bring you. The

passage requires a work of body, soul, and mind before anything can, or will, be accomplished; and that will simply not be found in the hands of those of whom Christ said:

“For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” (Matthew 13:15)

An awful lot of noise is made in this nation and this world about religiosity, such that nearly every person will audaciously talk about where he or she is regarding the *subject* of religion. Many openly mock it; openly declare themselves agnostic or atheist. Others use it as a battering ram to compel everyone around them to acknowledge them as a Christian, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Hindu, or some specialty within one of those options. And there are those who wear it as an accessory to make themselves mysterious. What you will seldom see is a soul who humbly walks before his God, presenting his body ***“a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Romans 12:1)***. What I hope to do here is quiet the white noise and give a confident understanding of this passage for *that* soul.

“Train up” is where we will start our work.

“¶ Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD’S house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD. And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.” (2 Chronicles 7:2)

This is the Chronicles account of the presentation of the completed temple. The same event is recorded in 1 Kings – in the portion relevant to our present examination – like this:

“¶ And the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD. And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered unto the LORD, two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings: because the brasen altar that was before the LORD was too little to receive the burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings.” (1 King 8:62-64)

Both of these passages have much more about the activities associated with the work of the Jewish people in dedicating the temple constructed by the artificers around 957 BC ... ***“so was [Solomon] seven years in building it.” (1 Kings 6:38)*** This was the temple that was later destroyed during the Babylonian captivity in around 587-586 BC.

We’re going to consider the *Scriptural* significance wrapped around this event of dedicating Solomon’s temple, so that we will have the lesson regarding the duty of the parents in raising children. Young Solomon grew up – together with all that generation of Jews who had watched his father David subdue the enemies of Israel roundabout – with a consuming understanding that God had appointed David to prepare things for the building of this temple, to wit:

“And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.” (1 Chronicles 22:5)

King David was expressly told that he would have a son who would be established and given ***“peace and quietness ... in his days” (1 Chronicles 22:9)*** so the work of building the temple could be successfully completed. We know – at least we here should know – that this work was not for the beauty of a building. We know – at least we here should know – that this work was not for the glory of the work. When David wrote the words of the Psalms, it was before this temple was constructed and yet we find some of the most beautiful poetry about the matter that I have ever seen written:

“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.”
(Psalms 27:4)

Since the physical temple has not been constructed – the ***“house of the LORD”*** scheduled for building by David’s son – it is clear that the focus of his passion is the sincere worship and service to God from his heart as a lifelong behavior, wherever God has set His place in the earth. The work that all those souls, inspired by the Holy Ghost in the days of Solomon to construct that magnificent structure, was to build a *type* of God’s dwelling place in the earth. A type of the church of God in the dispensation we presently live in. A type of that grand temple observed by Ezekiel and determined for presentation as Christ’s magnificent dwelling place during His millennial reign. A type of that glorious city – the New Jerusalem – that will come down for God to dwell forever with His people at the appointed hour and for eternity. A type.

So, when we read of the events of Solomon to present this finished work to the world, we have to understand it as a *type*. God prepared – in His eternally-righteous providence – his father David to have a heart in making preparations for that work. God prepared – in His eternal wisdom and governorship – Solomon to have a heart to expend the resources at his disposal in the building of

that house and all those things attenuated to the worship required therein. It was God's providence. It was God's goods and skills and power that wrought within builders to bring it to pass. It was God's! glory that was required to be seen in it.

So, it was an imperative to dedicate it. It was an imperative to inaugurate it as being wholly and completely – and *exclusively* – for the purpose of displaying God's glory in the earth. This word used for **“dedicated”** in both passages reporting the historical account of Solomon's activities is *“chanak”* (*“khaw-nak”*), and is the same word as used in Proverbs 22:6 for **“train up”**. A soul who has been purchased with the blood of Christ, and has been granted by that same God the blessing of a child, knows that the *first order* of business is to dedicate that child to God.

I was reading with my family some weeks ago, going through the first four books of the New Testament. We came upon this passage, and I was unexpectedly chilled:

“¶ Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.” (Matthew 19:13-15)

In examination of this passage over my years, I have never focused on the strength of the words I underlined above, ***“Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me”***. My focus has always been on the comforting truth that ***“of such is the kingdom of heaven”***, since that teaches us of how the children of God trust in Him as a young child fully trusts in his father for all of his needs. That is absolutely true, and it is a continually comforting thing for all of us to consider.

The initial mental inclination when reading the words ***“suffer little children”*** is to conclude that Christ is telling them to “allow” the little children to come to Him, as if He is telling the disciples not to prevent the parents of those children from sending them so that He could ***“put his hands on them, and pray”***. In Luke's account it reports ***“they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them”*** (Luke 1:15), which would seem to suggest that there was no capacity for those tiny souls to make the decision to approach unto Christ on their own, but rather would be carried by their parents.

Some of the leaders of various Christian denominations have clung to the words in this passage to imagine justification for infant baptism, as if Christ was instructing them to send these small children to Him so he could baptize them with the Holy Ghost. Arguments are spun out and pressed hard for this position, with the Catholic church wholly committed to convoluted argumentation, including using this passage as their authority, saying that Christ calls for infant baptism: *“[Christ's] words can be taken to apply to anyone capable of belonging to his kingdom. He asserted such even for children: ‘Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven’*

(Matt. 19:14).” You can see by how their quote of the passage begins that they translate “**suffer**” into “**let**”, as though Christ is providing permission for the parents to bring their children forth.

But the word that is translated “**suffer**” in this passage does not let that conclusion work. The word here is “*aphiemi*” (“*af-ee’-ay-mee*”) which has multiple applications in context including “*to leave, go way from one ... in order to depart from one and leave him to himself so that all mutual claims are abandoned. To go away leaving something behind.*” A more impressive truth is to examine the root word behind this Greek term, which is “*apo*” (“*apo*”). Separation. “*of any kind of separation of one thing from another by which the union or fellowship of the two is destroyed.*” You’ll find the same root word in this passage:

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you”. (2 Corinthians 6:17)

Christ prepared in providence the falling out of the scene where parents were moved to bring their children and infants to Him so that He might instruct His disciples – His saints in the earth – about some powerful truths related to His kingdom. Just as He prepared in providence the outpouring of people who were sick and crippled so that His power would be displayed for His saints. What is it that we should do with our children? Separate them to Christ!

“in the way”.

How, then, is this accomplished? If your heart is convicted of the absolute duty to “**train up**” that child given to you by God, what is it that you should do? Just down the street, in nearly every direction from this house, you can take that child dressed up in some spectacular garb and hand it over to a human being to conduct a ceremony. The ceremony will be billed as an official dedication of the child to God. A little water on his head, a few chants over him ... then the parents can proceed to instruct that child in every form of abominable life practices that render the child not just disinterested in serving the Lord, but passionately opposed to every good thing. That is the closest thing to any sincerity expressed in the duty imposed by this passage – and truly the whole of Scripture.

Interestingly, the El Dorado fire in San Bernardino County, California that has destroyed better than 14,000 acres, was started by a passel of fools gathering for a gender-reveal party. This silliness, where parents make a large social to do about pronouncing the gender of the child, is just the latest way that humans treat the blessing as though it is about them. It is truly a grievous condition that has been judicially imposed upon this generation of human beings. What business have parents with making big ceremonies about the child? How does it glorify God to exalt the child in such a way?

Since the Hebrew word provided for this three-word English clause ***“in the way”*** is *“derek”* (*“deh’-rek”*) refers to *“way, road, distance, journey, manner [of life]”*, there doesn’t need to be a lot of attention on this component of the verse. Particularly when combined with the opening salvo that parents are required to dedicate or sanctify the child to it. If you ask Strong’s to give you every time the word is used in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, you’ll find 627 times when it refers to the path that taken by a man or men ... either in the whole of life or on a specific assignment. We want to look at samples when it refers to our duty with children whose parents desire to know how to train them up.

“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.” (Genesis 18:19)

Here we see the duties that served as the underpinnings of the promise to the patriarch that he would dedicate his children to the LORD by commanding his seed regarding the way in which they should live their lives to Him. Hundreds of years later, when the law was being established to his offspring coming out of Egyptian captivity, the standard was reiterated and further defined.

“¶ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

The commandment regarding children in this passage is repeated in Deuteronomy 11:19, and was integral to the children being sustained in the land that was promised to Abraham their father. Solomon, the last man to hold the throne of the full nation of Israel, reiterated the knowledge imbedded in the promise not just to Abraham, but to sustain his own offspring on the throne:

“Therefore now, LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me.” (1 Kings 8:39)

There are some good verses to provide a flavor of the duty we have. Every person who has ever occupied the earth has pursued a path of life. As the proverb says, ***“the way of a fool is right in his own eyes”*** (Proverbs 12:15). But as these passages require, the duty we have with our children is to train them up in what the Scriptures require of us ... of our way ... of our lives. All good stuff. All substantive mandates to our young parents, and indeed even to those whose children are grown –

because it is a lifelong battle and it has to be a lifelong work. The way we are required to instruct is the **“way of truth” (2 Peter 2:2)** though we know some have caused to be **“evil spoken of”** by their pernicious conduct. Christ reported it to be a narrow way and that few find it (Matthew 7:14), indicating the precious importance it holds, as well as the difficulty of the path. Our duty in the times we find ourselves living, I sincerely believe, is to prepare the **“way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Luke 3:4)** for the generation that will **“see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6)**. These are all Scriptural words that must translate into concrete actions where we take the young souls put into our care and daily instruct them in how the God of eternity has prepared and governed providence ... made a plain record for us to shine bright light upon our paths ... driven the kingdoms of men across the whole of the globe and universe to fulfill the prophecies ... and brought our lives to this most precipitous of times so that His glory might be revealed in every hour of every day. How else could we fulfill our duty with them of **“looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God” (2 Peter 3:12)**.

“He should go”

“¶ And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.” (Exodus 4:10-15)

The Hebrew word for this phrase is *“peh”*, and it is found 460 times in the Old Testament. It is most often translated “mouth” or even used to refer to what comes out of the mouth, like “commandment”. This passage from Exodus does a good job of articulating the import of the term. There’s a way that Moses needed to address the mighty Pharaoh, that was decreed from before the foundation of the world. Nobody walks into the court of the most powerful human being that exists in the earth when you do ... and tells him that he will either do what you tell him, or his kingdom will get smitten with the most grievous consequences. That doesn’t just happen! Moses understood the magnitude of what he was facing. He was the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, yes. But that experience, possibly more than any other, ensured that he knew the stakes.

When the conflict was to be initiated, it began at his – Moses’ – mouth. Unless he could open his mouth and begin to form the words that needed to be said, it was utterly worthless for him to be present in the room. It had to be able to come out of his mouth. What a peculiar way for this

amazing historic event to open up for us. When Christ is speaking about eschatology, he says ***“take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.”*** (Mark 13:11) God formed the mouth ... He formed the mechanisms within the creature to bring forth thoughts that translate to words. Before we open that organ and form the words, those parts of the creation directed to the work have been put into motion from before the world began.

The event of Moses ... and all that follows, both temporal and eschatological (by type), begins with this remarkably simple lesson. The mouth opens up – then things go in ... and things go out. The mouth is ***how*** things go in and things go out. It is the beginning of things going in and things coming out, as is also articulated by Christ:

“¶ And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” (Matthew 15:10-11)

So, what does all this mean for us, in examining this passage from Proverbs? Dr. Gill provides some good words here, though I fear not complete: *“according to the mouth of his way’, as it may be literally rendered; as soon as he is able to speak or go, even from his infancy; or as children are fed by little bits, or a little at a time, as their mouths can receive it;”*.

Every child will go through his or her life. They will drink in and spew out from the mouth, and that will have more to do with what their life is made of more than anything else. The mouth is the entry port ... and the exit port, for ***“by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned”*** (Matthew 12:37). This is where the child has to be met. This is where the child will drink in the truth or the damnable lies they receive – and this is where the truth will flow out like honey, or spew forth like vomitous. This is the import of the words.

“When he is old, he will not depart from it.”

This is the most distressing part of this passage. I dare suggest that everyone here – certainly every parent who has raised a child to adulthood only to see him or her flee to the ways of the world as though they had not once been introduced to the beauties of this land – feels distress at these words. They seem quite literally to say that if the child is trained up properly, they will not depart from that light ... that truth ... that doctrinal and practical guidance. So, why then have they departed? By necessary force of logic, was it the departure of that child evidence that the parent failed to train him or her up like this passage requires? It’s an unavoidable distress.

Many times when I examine the Hebrew word I can find some additional light on an expression that deepens the import. Yet, when I look to the word here used for **“he will not depart”** – “suwr” (“soor”) – every version I consider leads me to the same immovable, definitive conclusion.ⁱ

The expositor Adam Clarke, as well as some others, wax poetic in their expositions of this component, as though by bringing creative literary expression to the subject they can avoid the solemn truth. Here’s a taste of his reference to a poet’s treatment: *“The docile colt is form’d with gentle skill To move obedient to his rider’s will. In the loud hall the hound is taught to bay The buckskin trail’d, then challenges his prey Through the wild woods. Thus, in your hour of youth From pure instruction quaff the words of truth: The odours of the wine that first shall stain The virgin vessel, it shall long retain.”*

Brother Gill attempts to take the sting from the implied force of the words vis-à-vis life experience for those who **“bring [their children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”** (Ephesians 6:4) and yet they are like those of whom Isaiah’s words lamented:

“The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” (Isaiah 1:3)

Gill: *“[A]nd when he is old he will not depart from it; not easily, nor ordinarily; there are exceptions to this observation; but generally, where there is a good education, the impressions of it do not easily wear off, nor do men ordinarily forsake a good way they have been brought up in {t }; and, however, when, being come to years of maturity and understanding, their hearts are seasoned with the grace of God, they are then enabled to put that in practice which before they had only in theory, and so continue in the paths of truth and holiness.”*

The present light will have to suffice for us, because the wonderful wisdom of an eternal God does not condescend to our understanding and experience as weak and insipid humans. The proverb directs us what we must do, and gives us some assurance or hope that there will be instilled in that child the eternal gift of grace. The decision both regarding *if* grace will be granted – as well as at what point in that soul’s temporal existence that grace may be shared by the Holy Ghost – is eternally fixed in the terms and conditions of the Covenant of Grace that was entered before the world began. As in all things, our will submits to His.

It has been an unexpected journey introduced to me when one of my kindred here asked for a sermon to be prepared on this verse, and my spirit was moved toward it. When I consider the endless ways that parents of a child might champion this directive – or falter because of the **“cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in”** (Mark 4:19) – it feels like we need to discuss it. The children are so intellectually and spiritually malleable. They drink in what all parts of the world present, so what we provide them must in all respects **“sanctify the Lord God”** (1 Peter 3:15). It must always **“make straight paths for [their] feet”** (Hebrews 12:13)

by being continually pointing to doctrinal and practical purity. It must begin as soon as the mouths of their heart and spirit are able to absorb it – through our walk and our words. Then, what we must absolutely do is say, even if we **“have done all those things which are commanded”**, that **“we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”** (Luke 17:10)

I love all of you here, and pray that the Lord will bless you continually and give you an abiding hope that we will stand without shame before Him at His coming. Amen

ⁱ Here are the three Hebrew expressions you find in the Online Bible dictionary options:

HebEng:

1) to turn aside, depart

1a) (Qal)

1a1) to turn aside, turn in unto

1a2) to depart, depart from way, avoid

1a3) to be removed

1a4) to come to an end

1b) (Polel) to turn aside

1c) (Hiphil)

1c1) to cause to turn aside, cause to depart, remove, take away, put away, depose

1c2) to put aside, leave undone, retract, reject, abolish

1d) (Hophal) to be taken away, be removed

NASHeb:

NAS-abolished (1), avoid (1), beheaded* (1), cut off (1), degenerate (1), depart (45), departed (7), deposed (1), deprives (2), do away (1), escape (1), get (1), go away (1), gone (1), keep away (1), keeps away (1), lacks (1), leave* (2), left (2), move (1), pardoning (1), pass away (1), past (1), put away (12), relieved (1), remove (45), removed (43), removing (1), retract (1), return (1), separated (1), strip away (1), swerve (1), take (2), take away (7), take off (1), taken away (14), takes away (1), took (3), took away (2), took off (2), turn (8), turn aside (25), turn away (12), turn ... aside (1), turned (2), turned aside (24), turned away (3), turning aside (1), turning away (3), turns aside (1), turns away (3), undone* (1), wanderer (1), withdrawn (1).

Strong_Hebrew:

05493. סוּר suwr soor; or סוּר suwr (Ho 9:12) soor; a primitive root; to turn off (literal or figurative): — be[-head], bring, call back, decline, depart, eschew, get [you], go (aside), X grievous, lay away (by), leave undone, be past, pluck away, put (away, down), rebel, remove (to and fro), revolt, X be sour, take (away, off), turn (aside, away, in), withdraw, be without.