**Training Children**

***4****The reward for humility and fear of the Lord
    is riches and honor and life.****5****Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked;
    whoever guards his soul will keep far from them.****6****Train up a child in the way he should go;
    even when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:4-6, ESV)*

 Training up a child means driving out the crooked ways out of them, and planting and growing within them the fear of the Lord. Welcome back to all of you on this Rally Sunday, as our children and grandchildren enter into the academic and Sunday School seasons. My prayer is that God grant success to all our students, but also to us parents, who need to keep up with both their academic and extracurricular activities. May the Lord give us patience and wisdom to raise our children just as the Lord wills. Our topic is exactly this latter point – it should answer the question within us that asks, “On what foundation should the child be raised?” Of course, the answer to this is found in every corner of the Bible. Let’s spend some time analyzing the subject further…

 According to the Bible, a child’s education begins in the home in which his faith and virtues are priority areas of development. Beginning from the topic in general, we see that the chapter is about man’s status when he is wise or foolish. Wisdom, which is the Hebrew word “Chokma”, can mean “ability, skill, moral sense,” and/or “prudence.” True wisdom is always tied to the fear of God (or the reverence/respect of God, if you don’t like the word “fear”). A child’s upbringing begins in the home, when he or she sees that the fear of the Lord is there, and that the parents are humble people. The child learns to stay away from life’s thorns and traps according to the parents’ words. If the parents themselves know to live carefully and to stay away from life’s traps, the child will grow to be aware of those pitfalls as well. When the parents caution the child to steer clear of crooked practices and people, the child learns to live cautiously. Thus, the sixth verse of the Scripture passage has much more meaning because of its surrounding verses. The verse itself is trying to say the following:

 “*Train up a child not only when he is starting out in life, but also in a way that*

 *Is appropriate and understandable to them, teaching them right and wrong, and*

 *As they grow and develop into adults, they will not stray from those teachings.”*

 If crooked practices and folly are kept far from a child, they will get used to doing what is right and wise. The question begs itself, however: What is the right path, and what is the wise path?

 Scripture says that humility and the fear of the Lord are the right path. Wisdom is to stay awa from crooked paths of life, and to have the fear of God. Very often teaching a child can happen by spending time with them:

 There was once a father who had written in his diary about a time where he spent a day fishing with his son. He wrote, “I went fishing with my son – I wasted my time, what a loss of it…” The son, on the other hand, had also written about the same incident in his own diary, saying, “My father once took me fishing – it was the most amazing day of my life!” One knew the value of that day – the other not. One had wisdom to know right and to express it, while the father could not recognize what was valuable due to his foolishness.

 We also, dearly beloved, are strongly urged by the Bible to raise our children on the fear of God, on a straight and wise path. Today, many think that it is wisdom to allow the child to choose their faith and religion. The Scripture, however, says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10). That “Lord” is not any god. That god is the God of the Bible, the One who gave the Ten Commandments, the one who spoke through the Prophets of the Old Testament, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Bible says to raise up children in the fear of the specific God about which the Bible informs.

 God reminds us today that our children are to be trained up with Him as part of their lives. Listen, the years already pass by quickly; suddenly you find that they are going off to college, or that they have already started working. We cast another glance, and they have already reached a station in life, they may have family, and we might not even believe it. God is telling us today, *“Teach your children my ways from an early age.”* Let them not only hear the Bible on Sundays – but every day. Let them hear us pray, hear us as we express our faith. Let their ears be filled with our advice, so that they can be God-pleasing people, pleasing the Lord first before any other human being.

 Again, According to the Bible, a child’s education begins in the home in which his faith and virtues are priority areas of development. Training up a child means driving out the crooked ways out of them, and planting and growing within them the fear of the Lord. The Lord bless you all. Amen.