

Proverbs 22:6 and the Misuse of Bible Examples

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

I Corinthians 10:11 “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”

“Proverbs 22:6 cannot mean 'he will not depart.' Just look at David's children, look at Solomon's son Rehoboam, etc....” “Hey, even God failed as a parent! He made Adam, and look what happened to all of creation.”

At first glance, the use of Bible examples can be very compelling. But we must remember a very important truth: they are examples, not commands. **God did not give us the true life stories of sinners in scripture to encourage us to follow their sinful examples!** Our text, I Cor. 10:11, tells us that they were written for our admonition. God did not want us to repeat David's sin of adultery, Israel's complaining in the wilderness, Peter's denial of Jesus, and Jonah's disobedience to God's call. **Those were merely examples to help us avoid their mistakes.**

God's Word is filled with various types of passages: promises, principles, precepts (commands), and pictures (illustrations). It is important that God's people interpret God's Word in proper perspective. **Proverbs 22:6 is a promise**. Its principle is taught in passages like Pro. 23:14 “Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.” The precept is commanded in passages like Eph. 6:4 “And, ye fathers... but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” The picture of Prov. 22:6 can be seen in passages like Genesis 18:19 with Abraham, “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....” **It is crucial that we not mix the scriptures up and make pictures (illustrations) the precepts (commandments) of God.** Much false doctrine has sprung forth from this practice. For instance, much of the modern-day “tongues” movement is almost entirely centered on the books of Acts. However, **most of Acts is the story of the early church. It is not mainly a book of biblical principles and precepts.** To fully interpret the book of Acts, the believer must apply the rest of scripture. The principles and precepts of I Corinthians 14, for instance, helps clarify the “tongues” stories of the book of Acts. **Never interpret a command of God through the lens of scriptural examples, but rather, always interpret Bible examples through the lens of God's commands.**

Without the principles, precepts, and promises of God's Word, pictures/illustrations/stories in the Bible are easily misinterpreted and misapplied. Yes, it is true that God created Adam, and Adam sinned. However, Adam was a **creation of God**. Jesus Christ is “the only begotten of the Father” and “the only begotten Son” of God (Jn. 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18). **Studying the entirety of God's Word helps us see that Adam and God were not a father/son relationship and, therefore, shouldn't be used to interpret Proverbs 22:6.**

Using the failures of parents in scripture is not a proper interpretation of Proverbs 22:6. David, Solomon, and most of the Old Testament kings married multiple wives which was against God's clear precepts found in Deut. 17:17. The foundation of their homes started off wrong. There is no possible way that these men were the proper fathers they needed to be for their many, many, many children. Actually, many of the Bible examples are supposed to help families know what not to do! At the same time, though, there are examples of parents who raised godly children. **The main thing is that Christians get their parental instruction from distinct Bible principles and precepts on the home.**