

The Godly Child

The Godly Family

By Dr. David P. Murray

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Luke 2:52
Preached on: Sunday, June 8, 2014

Free Reformed Church of Grand Rapids

950 Ball Ave NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Website: www.frcgr.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/frcgr

Let's read again in Luke 2 and verse 52.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

Children, it's the end of another school year and no doubt many of you have been receiving report cards that sum up how you've been doing at school, whether you've been going forwards or going backwards, and various subjects are measured on these report cards, English and math and physics, and numerous other subjects. Well, we'd like to look this morning at a report card that we find in the Bible. It's quite an unusual report card. It's unusual in a few ways. It's unusual because, first of all, it's God that's doing the reporting. Although this verse that we read is written by Luke, it's inspired by God. It's God's verdict, God's report card, given through Luke's writing. It's unusual also in that it's an assessment of God's own Son. God the Father is reporting on God's Son, Jesus Christ. But it's especially unusual because of the subjects that are being reported on. We don't find here in this chapter, in this report card, any mention of math or English or physics or chemistry or PE, no, the subjects are different and, indeed, much much more important than these subjects.

We're going to look at some of them this morning and we'd like to look at this report card as part of our series on the godly family. As you know, we've looked at the godly mother, the godly father, this morning, we'd like to look at the godly child. What does it mean to be a godly son or a godly daughter? I believe we have the answer to this question here in the Gospel of Luke because we're going to look at this question by looking at this report card on the only perfect child that's ever lived and that's Jesus, isn't it? He's the only perfect child that's ever lived, and what we have here, really, is a summary of Jesus' life.

It's like two bookends. You see, for example, in verse 40, "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." That's the first bookend and then at the end of the chapter is the other one, verse 52, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." I want you to think of these two verses almost like a window frame, two sides of a window frame that summarize, the sum up, that put in very few words the whole childhood of Jesus Christ, and in between

these two window frames we have a little incident that gives us just a little look into, a little window into the life of Christ. So the two summaries are window frames and then as we look through these two window frames, in between these two frames we find an incident, an event, something that happened in Jesus' life that, again, gives us, really, an example, an illustration, of the whole childhood of Jesus. We actually have very little about Jesus as a child in the Bible and really what we're expected to do with this passage is see this as typical, as exemplary, as a summary, an insight into the whole childhood of Jesus.

So let's look at the first subject that Jesus is measured on and the subject is not very fashionable and it's not a very popular subject today; it's a word that most people, especially maybe children, don't like to hear and it's the word obedience. That's the first thing a godly child is, an obedient child. We see that in a couple of places here. We see Jesus obeying God and we see Jesus obeying his parents. He's obeying, as it were, his heavenly Father and he's obeying his earthly father.

And this is a word, obedience, which we find throughout the whole Bible. The nation of Israel was called God's own son, a national son, a nation that was viewed as his child. And really this is the primary word we hear God speaking to Israel, his son, "Obey, obey, obey." In fact when they didn't, he sent prophets, didn't he? And you go through the prophets and you find the same word. Again and again the prophets are calling Israel back to obedience to their heavenly Father.

You look at the book of Proverbs which is the book of wisdom, isn't it? And it's incredible, it's almost uncountable the number of times that Solomon and the others who wrote that book call out to children, to sons, to daughters, to young people, and again the one word that you keep hearing is, "Obey. Listen. Follow. Do." And here Jesus' childhood, as we'll see, is really summed up in this idea of obedience.

Paul addresses children two times in his epistles, in Ephesians 6 and in Colossians 3, and both times the word is, "Children, obey. Children, obey." And you know, in a sense obedience is really really simple. It's not complicated. It's doing what you're told to do by someone who has a right to tell you what to do. You have superiors in your life, people that God has placed above you to be figures of authority and instruction: parents, teachers, elders, so on and you're called to obey.

But notice here, first of all, Jesus' obedience to his heavenly Father. That's what's brought before us here. I'm sure you all know the incident well. Jesus is about 12 years old. They have gone down at the feast of the Passover to Jerusalem. We read in verse 43 that Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem when his parents were returning home. They thought he was with them, verse 44 tells us. When they couldn't find him, they went back to Jerusalem and they found him in the temple asking questions, hearing answers, but also himself giving some answers, verse 46 and 47. And his parents are understandably upset why he had stayed behind and about all the stress involved in them searching for him and notice his answer to them. This isn't rude and it's not rebellious because it's a perfect child we're talking about, but he says, "How is it that you sought me? Why are you looking for me?"

Wist ye not, did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" He's speaking here of his heavenly Father, isn't he, and of his Father's calling, his sending of him into the world to teach and instruct and to enlighten. He calls this, "My Father's business," and he's saying, "I must be about it." You hear that note of obedience in there. He's sensing this obligation, this duty, something his Father has told him to do. "Do my business, Son." And Jesus says, "Well, I must do it."

And that's our first calling, isn't it? To obey God as our Father instructing us as his children; to obey God's rules which are summarized for us in the Ten Commandments, that's why we read them every Lord's Day, isn't it? We want to hear what Father wants us to do and like all children, we so quickly forget and so we have this weekly reminder. This is Father's business for us and when we hear it, we must be saying also, "I must. Whatever else I do, I must be about this business of obedience, obedience to God's rules."

But especially today, there's obedience to God's roles. God has given various roles in Scripture, various functions, and we're speaking here, of course, of the difference between men and women and this is one of the reasons we wanted to do this series of teaching because there is so much confusion in our society. You're going to hear different versions as you grow up, children, of what a man is or what a woman is, or even if there is such a thing as a man or a woman. I understand on Facebook now, you choose your gender and it's no longer just male or female. Apparently there are 50+ genders to choose from. And we are just facing multiple confusion and multiple contradiction of God's word, God's roles for men and women, there are only two genders, and how these are to relate. They are different but they are complementary. They work together when fulfilling our own God-given roles and this is something, young people, you've got to work at and study and learn. There are multiple good books out there and if you don't study and you don't learn and you don't listen to Father's roles for you, you're just going to be swept away by the culture.

So obedience to God's rules and God's roles, but there's also obedience to parents here. After the Son here, Jesus has explained what he was doing, "I was obeying my heavenly Father," he then obeys his earthly father, doesn't he? He explains what he was doing. They didn't understand but he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject unto them. He was subject to them. He was obedient to them even though in some ways he knew more than them. He didn't know more than them in some areas of life when he was only 12, but he knew more than them in this area of life, as to his function, his purpose, his role, his mission. And even when they didn't know or understand, he subjects himself to them, he submits to them, he obeys.

I'd like to just pause a moment and just give you some points to ponder as to what your obedience to your parents should look like. First of all, it is total obedience. Not selective. Not partial. Not what you agree with but total. As long as your parents' instructions are not against the word of God, you don't have an option. There is no debate. When Paul speaks of this in the book of Colossians when he addresses children in chapter 3, verse 20, he says, "Children, obey your parents in all things." That's total, isn't it? That's 100%. There is no small print here. There are not qualifications in "all things." Total obedience.

Secondly, this obedience should be speedy obedience. Delayed obedience is disobedience.

Thirdly, it should be cheerful obedience, not done with a long face and a bitter heart and a grumpy spirit but done cheerfully. Why? Well, again, if you go back to that verse in Colossians 3, Paul gives us a tremendous motive for obedience. He doesn't just say, "Do it and do it all," he says, "for this is well pleasing to God." Surely every one of us wants to please God. Here he says, "You do this obedience totally, speedily, cheerfully because it's pleasing to God." It doesn't just put, as it were, a smile on mom and dad's face but in God and, therefore, it should be in your face and heart as well. Cheerful obedience. Unquestioning obedience.

Now, there comes a time in a child's life as they grow older, coming maybe into teenage years as Jesus was here, where an element, a kind of questioning is acceptable and appropriate. Jesus here when he's called to obedience, he does have some questions for his parents but these questions were not rebellious, they were not to put his parents down, they were not a way of avoiding obedience, it was seeking, as it were, explanation, understanding. And there's a level of that, not in our youngest years when we're very young, it's mom says it, dad says it, you do it, but there comes a point where some kind or degree of questioning is appropriate as long as it's not all the time, as long as it's in this submissive spirit, and as long as it's with an aim of obeying and not avoiding it. It's unquestioned obedience.

Fifthly, it's unseen obedience. Not just obedience when mom and dad can see you but when their eyes cannot. Honoring our mother and father doesn't just mean doing it when they're there but doing it when they're not there as well.

Sixthly, this should be volunteered obedience. In other words, we're not just waiting for commands, we're not just sitting there passively waiting for mom or dad to say, "Do this. Don't do that." But we're coming forward actively, voluntarily, and saying, "Tell me what you want me to do. Is there something I can help you with? Is there some chore I could do today?" Voluntary, volunteered obedience.

And lastly this is revealing obedience. The way we obey our parents reveal the way we obey God. The nature of our relationship to mom or dad tells everything about our relationship with God. Is there an exception to this anywhere in the world? I haven't seen it. There may be but you can tell almost everything, almost everything about a person's relationship to God by their relationship to their parents. Children, think about that. Your relationship with mom, your relationship with dad, tells the world about your relationship to God. For good or for ill.

Obedience to God, obedience to parents, obedience also, thirdly, to the teachers in our lives, those whom God has put into our lives and schools and Catechism class. These too are God's representatives in our lives in places and positions of authority that we are to obey. But I want to move on. Secondly, the godly child is a teachable child. He's obedient

and he's teachable. Remember when we looked at the roles of mom and dad, the two big, big responsibilities of our parents are to require obedience and to teach and, therefore, the child's responsibility is to be obedient and to learn and God in his great mercy, children, has put many people in your lives with information, with knowledge, with skills and talents to communicate so much that's helpful into your lives. Lots of kids don't have that in this world. You have it to the greatest degree possible. Are there any children in the whole world who have better teachers? More instruction? Who have more knowledge and truth poured into their lives than you? You'd be really hard-pressed to find it.

What a privilege. What a gift. But are you responding to it? Are you learning? There can be so much teaching but not enough an awful lot of learning going on, and part of that can be because of a lack of teachability, a proud spirit that says, "I'm not going to admit I don't know this." So you don't listen or you don't ask questions. Notice here, even Jesus, we read here he was sitting in the midst of the doctors, that's the religious teachers of the day, both hearing them and asking questions. Hearing and asking questions and that's why in these summary statements we read the child grew and waxed strong in spirit filled with wisdom. Also in verse 52, Jesus increased in wisdom. How did he increase in wisdom? He did it by learning, by asking questions and by listening to the answers.

It's amazing that even Jesus in his human nature learned and he learned as you learn. It's hard work. It's tough. It's demanding. It's draining. Sometimes very boring. And yet Jesus here uses the means that God had provided even amongst these people who, in many ways, had a lot of flaws in their teaching, and yet Jesus gets the best he can out of them and uses it and thereby increases in wisdom.

I think that's a really important thing to press and stress for the godly child. This is not about becoming good at math or physics or trigonometry or whatever subjects you have. That's part of our learning, of course, but it's not the most important. It's not the first subject. It's not the subject we should be aiming for, honors in. No, it's the Bible. This is where our greatest focus should be and not, again, just in accumulation of facts like as if we have all these doctrines like computer data in our minds that we can recall and parrot forth. That's not wisdom. That's knowledge but it's not wisdom and the Bible's great stress is wisdom and it's a contrast, really, to the Greek philosophies and ideas of the day which stressed just a kind of intellectual attainment, an ability to gather lots of facts and make clever arguments. No, the Bible's wisdom was always much more practical, down-to-earth, a learning and a knowledge which resulted in obedience and faith and love and doing. Especially the Old Testament word for "wisdom" was a word that stressed doing, practice, hands-on. These were people who knew how to live successfully and to thrive well in this world. They had not just intellectual skills but social skills and practical skills.

That's the kind of wisdom and interestingly, most of Christ's education was probably in a workshop working with wood under his father's instruction. But you know, teaching doesn't just involve learning, it involves correction, discipline. Remember, the father was given this responsibility which he may delegate at times, but he still carries ultimate responsibility for this, and this is one of the ways a child is teachable by the way that they

respond to discipline. Remember when Paul told the fathers to bring up their children in the nurture, that's the teaching, and admonition, correction, discipline of the Lord.

Again, I want to just pause for a moment and think about the kind of discipline and how we should respond to it as part of our learning, as part of being taught. There are a number of ways not to receive discipline; how to be disciplined and not learn anything from it. That's the whole purpose of discipline, it's to change, it's to teach, it's to make you progress and improve. But if you want to just stay where you are, you want discipline to have no effect whatsoever, then first of all, just refuse it. Fight against it. Run away when it's coming for you or fight it off. Resist it. Fight it. Refuse it.

Secondly, you can make discipline pointless in your life by resenting it. Okay, you may take it, you may suffer it, you may endure it, but boy, do you hate it and do you hate the one who does it. You feel murderous in your heart maybe even. Given opportunity, you would kill or at least maim or hurt and you bitterly resent it and you carry it with you for days and brood on it. Well, there's no profit there. There is no gain. All the pain was pointless. You resent it.

Thirdly, you reduce it to nothing. You minimize it. It's like water off a duck's back. It's like you pride yourself, maybe, in having like the hide of a rhinoceros. Nothing is going to impact you. You're defiant. You're just, "No, this doesn't affect me. Or they think this is big, it's nothing. It's just pitiful." And you just regard it as worthless and pointless and, again, there's no profit.

Or fourthly, you can despair under it. Instead of saying, "How can I make things better? How can I change?" instead it's, "Oh, there's no point. These people are never happy with me. I can never please my mom or my dad. I'll just give up. I'll just tolerate them for a few years and then I'll be rid of them." And that's what the Bible calls despising the chastening of the Lord and fainting under it, which the book of Proverbs and other books tell us not to do.

Lastly, retaliate. "How can I get back? How can I make it even worse? I'll show them that for every act of discipline they bring into my life, I'll bring something much worse into theirs, now or maybe later." And so you plot and you plan revenge.

Well, all of these make all the correction and discipline worthless. No profit. In fact, that just leaves you worse. So how should you respond to it? How would a godly child respond to it? Well, first of all, expect it because you're not a godly child. You're not the perfect child. Here's a question for you: do you think Jesus was ever disciplined? He never deserved discipline, for sure, because he was perfect but he didn't have perfect parents and it's very very possible that they disciplined him sinfully. But we who are sinful should fully expect to be disciplined. We're going to fall. We're going to fail. We don't know everything. We forget things. We deliberately reject knowledge and instruction and so we deserve and we should expect it.

2. Accept it. Receive it. Take it humbly, quietly.

Thirdly, repent of it, of what caused it. Seek to use the pain or the sense of loss to focus on what's caused this, what deserved this. Don't focus on the discipline so much, that's a means to an end and the end is to correct and change what was wrong and sinful and that involves saying sorry to God and to the person you have offended: mom, dad, brother, sister, friend, neighbor, whatever. True repentance, true conviction, involves greater pain in the heart than pain anywhere else. "I've done this. I deserve this punishment. I'm so sorry, Lord. I'm so sorry, mom. I'm so sorry, dad." That's a liberating, that's a freeing word, sorry. It restores relationships. It rebuilds friendships, brings together and reconciles and clears the air and provides a foundation for the future.

So expect it, accept it, repent of it, pray over it, and fifthly, thank for it. Not at the time. No, it's unlikely any of us would ever manage that but as you grow older you will begin to look back and see, "This was mercy. This was love. It wasn't perfect, maybe at times it was excessive, it was wrong, but you know, I know their aims, the great purpose, what was to save me and to turn me from folly, to point me in the right way." So if you have a parent still alive that has disciplined you and you've never thanked them, oh, why not go and put their heart at ease because I can tell you many parents look back with huge grief and fear and worry. "Was it me? Did I do wrong?" Why not encourage them?

So the godly child is an obedient child. The godly child is a teachable child, involving both learning and correction. The godly child, thirdly, is a loving child. We see the love of Jesus here for his father. We see the love of Jesus for his own parents and it's all summed up here as well, isn't it, when it says, "he increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men." This is speaking of, first of all, his relationship with God. His relationship with God, his Father, grew. It strengthened. It deepened. It became even more intimate in his human nature. That love blossomed. That communication developed. He grew in favor with God. It's really quite a remarkable statement that Jesus developed in his spirituality and developed in as he aged, as love became more of an ability and a capacity in him, so it flourished towards his Father and his father to him.

But also with man. It's not just spiritual skill but social skills. There are, of course, many warnings in the Bible against being a man-pleaser but that's not saying we should never try and please other people, it's saying we should never please other people at the expense of displeasing God. But every child, every one of us should aim to be a true man-pleaser. We should aim to grow in favor with man, to develop our social skills and ability so that we do become, in a biblical sense, popular, a friend that people love to be around. And do you know where that begins? It begins with our siblings. It begins with brothers and sisters. This is God's training ground for you in society. The way you relate to brother and sister is really, again, a prediction of how you will relate outside the home.

This is the training ground for growing in favor with man and woman. Again, you think of that and I want to give you just a few words to develop this relationship with your brothers and sisters and the first word is this: speak, communicate, talk. Say please to them. Thank you to them. Sorry to them. Ask about their lives. Talk to them about yours. It's amazing that brothers and sisters can live in the same home for many years and hardly

have a one minute conversation with one another. That's not growing in favor with man. Speak.

Secondly, rejoice. When good things happen to them, when nice things happen in their lives, rejoice with them. Say, "I'm so happy for you!" Don't sit there brooding, resentful, jealous. "I wish it was me. It's never me." No, rejoice with them. Also, weep with them when bad things happen. Don't say, "Yes, he had that coming. Ha, glad he finally met his match." No, you weep with them. "I'm really sorry for you." Give to them. Seek to bless them. Be generous. Take opportunities at birthdays and other times of the year to give them something worthwhile. Help them. "What can I do to help you in life?"

Just grow in these areas: speak, weep, rejoice, give, help. Speak, weep, rejoice, give, help. It's not difficult, is it? And in these areas, you'll follow this perfect model of Jesus increasing in favor with God and man, growing in love and loveableness.

The godly child is obedient. The godly child is teachable. The godly child is loving. But lastly and just briefly, there is no such person, is there? And that's why my fourth point is a godly child is a believing child. You might be sitting here today and thinking, "Okay, I'm going to do that. I'm going to obey more. I'm going to learn better. I'm going to receive discipline better and I'm going to love and love and love on everyone around me." You might last a lunchtime. If you get to Monday, you're doing well. You're going to collapse and fail. You're just not going to make it. Those of you who have grown up a bit know this. You've made your resolutions too, haven't you, with your parents and your brothers and sisters and your teachers? And all these resolutions lie shattered but this is, again, where Jesus comes in not as a model but as a Savior. He doesn't just set himself up as this wonderful example and say, "Jump!" He knows you'll never make it. That's why he came down.

Jesus lived for us, his perfect life. He has a report card here and it could become yours today because the message of the Gospel is he has done it all. He has met every standard. His perfection can become yours. Imagine, you look at your report card and you think, "That's so awful." Then you notice this in the class, this star student and you think, "Boy, what I would give to have his report card." Well, you can have the star pupil's report card. You can have the perfect child's report card because that's what Jesus offers you. He says, "Here's my life and if you put your faith in me, it's yours. It's credited as yours. It's reckoned to be yours. God looks on you as if you lived like I did," says Jesus. Jesus lived for you.

Secondly, Jesus died for you because you know that even if you got a sixth grade perfect report card, or a fifth grade, or a fourth grade, or a third grade, and you look back and you think, "Well, this is great for going forward but what about the past?" Schools have their own mysterious systems of discipline, don't they? We can never figure them out. All the tardies and demerits and it's just like a huge bundle of laws and rules and regulations and punishments. Who can get through that unscathed? What do you do? Well, in some schools you can actually work off demerits. You can't do that with God. That's why Jesus came down to take your tardies and demerits, to serve your suspensions, to be punished

in your place, to die your death because that's what every single act of disobedience and unteachability and refusal of discipline and hateful attitude and action deserves. Jesus didn't only live for us, he died.

That solves everything, doesn't it? Past, present and future. And more than that, he sympathizes with us. Lived for us, died for us, sympathizes with us. He knows what it's like to be a child. It's amazing. God comes down to this earth as a baby, grows up as a toddler and as an infant and as a teenager, as an adolescent, as a 20 year old. He's gone through all the phases. He knows all the struggles, all the stresses, all the temptations, all the frustrations. You may say, "Oh, mom and dad know nothing." He knows everything. Mom and dad may have forgotten what it was like to be a child, he doesn't forget and you can go to him with your struggles and your agonies and your difficulties and your frustrations and you're imperfect parents and he sympathizes. He understands. He listens. He cares.

And also this: he not only lived and he not only died and he not only sympathizes, he resides. He comes into your life. His Spirit is promised us, the Spirit of this perfect child is promised the believer to come in. So you don't only get a life and you don't only get a punishment taken and you not only get sympathy, you get power. You get the Holy Spirit of power in your life to enable you to do what you cannot ever do on your own poured out. We live in the era of post-Pentecost. The Holy Spirit poured out in an unparalleled way available for you.

So children, what report care are you presenting to God today? Your own? Or Christ's? Why not just rip up your own? Whatever you've attained or achieved, whatever you've failed, just shred it, burn it, turn it to ashes and pick up by faith this perfect child's perfect report and trust your whole life and eternity upon it. It will never fail. Amen.