

# GOOD CHILDREN

## A SERMON

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“Yea, you shall see your children’s children, and peace upon Israel.”  
Psalm 128:6

THERE are, I think, fairly four things we may notice. First, *distinction of character*, his children. By his children, I understand the apostles, whom he very frequently called children; and by his children’s children, I understand all Christians that have lived from that day to this, or that shall have a spiritual existence down to the end of time. So that the apostles were his immediate children, and all brought to know the Lord afterwards are in this relative, mystic sense, the children of his children. First, then, I will notice the distinction, *children*; secondly, *the increase*, that is another doctrine contained in the text; third, *the longevity*; fourth and lastly, *the ultimate tranquility*, “and peace upon Israel.”

First, then, we notice the distinction, that the children of God are distinguished, when brought into a state of grace, from what they were while in a state of nature, by certain marks and evidences. And, of course, as they are made to differ from their former selves, so they differ from what those are who are still dead in trespasses and in sins; so that while I this morning point out this essential and all important distinction between the person who is a child of God, and the person who is not a child of God, if I am speaking to any who may not be believers in Jesus Christ, may the Lord carry home the word and bring them into a concern to be one of his children, to be one of that happy number, to be interested in that family establishment which the Lord our God has established by his dear Son, and that ultimate blessedness of which it is written, “Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” Let us, then, just notice a few items in this Psalm, as pointing to the Savior, and connect herewith the experiences that distinguish the people of God from others. It is said here, speaking to the Savior, “For you shall eat the labor of your hands: happy shall you be, and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of your house: your children like olive-plants round about your table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that fears the Lord. The Lord shall bless you out of Zion; and you shall see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life.” Then our text sums up the whole, “Yea, you shall see your children’s children, and peace upon Israel.” First, “You shall eat the labor of your hands.” Now, to understand this rightly, we must take it like this: The Lord brought the Israelites into the land of Canaan; and all the time they remained by him as the true God, rejected all false gods, and

abode in his covenant, and feared him, and stood out decided for him, all the time they did this, the land yielded her increase, and there was neither famine nor mildew, caterpillar, cankerworm, locust, pestilence, nor any evil whatever; but when they apostatized from this, which, as you know, they did a great many times, and at last finally left the land desolate. You will observe here, and I wish you to take notice of this, that they had no other foundation upon which to rest for their continuous plenty but their own constant conformity to God's covenant; the moment they turned away from their righteousness, all failed. Now, then, let us go on to the antitype of this. Jesus Christ comes in, and he obtains eternal redemption. By his sacrificial power he has put away all the sins of his people, all the sins they were the subjects of in the first Adam, all the sins they were the subjects of before called by grace, and all the sins they are the subjects of after called by grace; so that his atonement makes a clean sweep of the whole, and leaves not a vestige behind, leaves not a spot, or wrinkle, or blemish, or blame behind. Then, in addition to this, he brings in a righteousness, namely, his obedient life, that has in it all the worth of his wonderful person. Hence, he is called "Jehovah our Righteousness." Now, then, before any famine can come into the gospel land into which the people of God are brought, there must be a deficiency in Christ's atonement. It matters not about their deficiency, their goodness, or their badness. The plenty in this gospel land, a word upon which we will have presently, depends entirely upon the labor of the Savior's hands, that he has hereby secured; as his work is always the same, there therefore cannot enter any famine into the land. Hence you read such a scripture as this, and what you want is to see this, that God will not sustain you, that he will not feed you, that he will not deal with you, that he will not walk with you, that he will not talk with you, according to your good or bad, or worth or worthiness, but, "according to your faith be it unto you." And if you are brought to see that Jesus, and Jesus only, is the bread of life, that he is the way of the bread of life, that he is the way of the tree of life, that he is the way of the water of life, that he is the way of abundant harvest, that he is the way of green pastures, that he is the way of abundant vintage, that he is the way in which such promises as the following become realized, "My people shall eat in plenty, and shall be satisfied, and shall praise the name of the Lord their God, which has dealt wondrously with them;" and then, again, "I will lay no famine upon them; I will raise up for them a plant of renown" namely, Christ Jesus, "and they shall no more be consumed with hunger" as we are in the first Adam, and as those are that lift up their eyes in hell, "they shall no more be consumed with hunger, neither shall they bear the shame of the heathen anymore." When a poor prodigal is brought to feel that, spiritually, he is perishing with hunger, and sees that Jesus Christ is the way of escape, that Jesus Christ has brought in that sacrifice that shuts famine out for ever and ever, that he has brought in that righteousness that makes famine utterly impossible. David, a spiritually minded man, seeing this, said that he never saw the seed of the righteous begging bread. No; they have enough here in Christ Jesus, and to spare. Now, then, I say that the people of God, that one mark of distinction is that they are brought to see what Christ has done, and brought to see that his sacrifice is eternal, and that your sins are so many recommendations of his atonement, rather than so many arguments against you; for our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God, our sins commend the salvation of God, our guilt and misery commend the mercy of God. And if you see yourself thus lost, without Jesus Christ, and see that he has brought in this everlasting sacrifice, and this everlasting righteousness, and your hope is here upon what he has done; if you hope to live in this way, if you hope in this way to see God, if you hope in this way, God will be on your side; and if you are seeking in this way to find God, you will not be cast out. And you know what is written, "Blessed are they that hunger now, for they shall be filled; but woe unto you that are full" of self, and of the world, and of the things that satisfy you apart from Christ, "you have received your

consolation.” One sign, then, of your being a child of God, is a consciousness that the Lord can, in accordance with holiness and justice, be on your side only by this eternal righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Now, you fail, and I fail, and we all, in many things, we all offend, and there is not a just man upon the earth that does good and sins not; so that if we stood upon no better covenant, established upon no better promises, than the Israelites did, we should come as badly off in spiritual things as they did in temporal things; that as they lost everything, were scattered, and came into privation, so we should do spiritually. But then we stand upon a better covenant, established upon better promises, have a better Mediator; and that Mediator says concerning all his Peters under their faults, let them be what they may, “I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.” And if sin abounds, grace shall much more abound; grace was never conquered, and never will be, the Savior was never conquered, and never will be no, bless his holy name. This, then, is one feature of being a child of God, being thus brought to see that it is by Christ Jesus this eternal plenty is brought in. “You shall eat the labor of your hands.” Let us hear what another scripture says upon this in relation to Christ. “He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.” He has by his work, he has by the eternity of his redemption, and righteousness which he has obtained and brought in, he has brought himself into eternal plenty. You will not deny this, will you? The Lord Jesus Christ is not living in poverty, he is living in plenty, he is comforted on every side. He has fountains of living water at command; he has infinite resources at command; he has by what he has done brought himself into a land of infinite and eternal plenty. And he says, “Where I am, there shall you be also.” So, then, if he has plenty, we shall have plenty; if he sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied, “we shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, even of your holy temple.” Is this way of being eternally supplied through what Christ has done at all attractive to you? If so, be not afraid of Jesus Christ; he is meek and lowly in heart; and be not afraid of God, not in the slavish sense, for God humbles himself to look upon the man that is poor, of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at his word. And besides, Jesus Christ is the image of God, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. And if your eyes are opened to see this is the only way in which you can have eternal plenty, then it is the Lord that has opened your eyes, and rendered the same attractive; and if he had intended to kill you, he would not have done this. Then it goes on to say, “Happy shall you be.” The Savior is happy in God’s everlasting love, and that will be a distinctive feature in you. If you are seeking to be happy there; if you can say, If I thought the Lord did not love me, I could not be happy; but if I could see, and feel, and know that he did love me, then I could be happy, I cannot be happy anywhere else. I know that every other river will run dry, that every other consolation will pass away, but the love of God never.

“His is love that never falters,  
Always to its objects true.”

Christ is happy in the love of God, and the people are loved with the same love, he is happy in the choice of God. and so, you are to be happy there. Why, what more could you wish? Chosen to salvation, chosen to draw near to God, chosen to be like Christ Jesus, chosen to eternal glory, chosen and constituted by that stupendous act of mercy indissolubly one with Christ Jesus. You are also to be happy in electing grace. Christ is happy, then, in the love of God, happy in electing grace. Christ never regretted that God the Father had chosen him; Christ never fell out with his eternal election of God, and I am sure he never fell out with the eternal election of the people; he

is happy there. And so, if you are a child, you will feel your happiness there also. Again, the dear Savior is happy in the immutability of God's counsel. Why, the Savior is the same yesterday, today, and forever; he would not have the counsel altered for ever so; he was always delighted with it; it was his delight to carry out the eternal counsels of God. God in his counsel had settled a certain glory upon the dear Savior and upon the people; and to carry out that counsel, to reach that glorious end, develop the infinite resources of the blessed God, and bring untold millions to enjoy the same, he shed his precious blood. And he is happy in that counsel; and if you would have strong consolation you must be happy there too, for the counsel of God shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure; and he is abundantly willing to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel. If you are enabled by faith in Christ Jesus, in what he has done, to take your stand here, you may smile at all the threats of the little gnats and little moths that are great in their own eyes, and think their thunders will shake the universe, when they are but the threats of poor impotent mortals; you may stand and smile at the whole. Hence, when mighty monarchs in ancient times threatened the poor little daughter of Zion, she, in the name of her heavenly husband, could shake her head at her mightiest foes, could laugh them to scorn, despise the whole, and rejoice that while they were saying, "Look upon Zion; let her be defiled; let our eye look upon Zion! But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsels, for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hoofs brass; and you shall beat in pieces many people; and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord." Jesus is happy in the love of God, and happy in the choice of God, and happy in the counsel of God. Again, Jesus Christ also is very happy in the service of God; he will never go out of the service of God, never. 50th of Isaiah: "The Lord God has opened my ear," says Jesus. And while he is God's Son, he is also God's servant forever. Jesus was happy in the service of God here below; he delighted to serve God, and though he had to be on our behalf a man of sorrows, though he had to go through scenes of grief and of opposition, yet, honor to his dear and blessed name, he so delighted to do God's will, he was so happy in God's service, that he never for one moment stepped out of it. He was always in God's service, from morning till night. He ascended to do what? To cease from God's service? No; he pleads there atoning blood; he pleads there the righteousness of God; he governs the world, causes his sheep to hear his voice, gathers them in; and he is still happy in this heavenly service of God. And when he shall come at the last great day, and shall call his people out of the graves, change those in the twinkling of an eye that shall be then living, how happy will he be in that part of his service. "Come you blessed of my Father;" I have been happy, and I am happy, and you shall be happy; for I ascend to my Father, to my God and your God. And happy is the people that are in such a case; yes, happy is the people whose God is the Lord. And how happy will he be in the service of God to all eternity, for he shall never cease to feed all that he has saved, and lead them to living fountains of waters, when God has wiped away all tears from off all faces. Now then, he is happy in the service of God, So, am I with him, but not without him. Let me have Jesus, I can preach, I can pray, I can live, I can die; I can smile at trouble, I can carry mountains, I can run through troops, I can leap over walls; yes, all things are possible unto him that believes. Now then, if you are one of these children, you will see that it is by faith in him that all your supplies must come, and you will see that as Jesus is happy in all these and in a great many other respects, so if you would be happy, it must be with him in all these respects. One more, which I scarcely need mention, that he is exceedingly happy in the presence of God. "Thou shall make me full of joy with your countenance." "In your presence is fulness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore." "In my Father's house are many mansions;" in my Father's house there is every variety of adaptation to your convenience

and happiness; there is plenty of room for all; enough to fill you all with a fulness of joy; “were it not so, I would have told you.” These then are his children, that are brought to see and know that all supply is by the eternal righteousness he has brought in, and that all happiness is by his being happy in God, and God happy in him; for there is God’s happiness as well, that is, as a covenant God considered. I am not now, of course, speaking of God in his abstract character as God; I am speaking of him as a covenant God, and I say that the happiness of our covenant God lies in Christ Jesus; not apart from the people, nor the people apart from Christ; he himself holds the people in Christ Jesus. Hence it is written, “The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over you with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over you with singing.” Here, then, Christ is happy, God is happy, the people are to be happy; and they may well be said to be a blessed people. “And it shall be well with you,” it goes on to say. It was always well with Jesus Christ, because he was always right.

Now, if it’s being well with us was left with us, it would go very ill with us; but as it was always well with Christ, because he was always right, so it must be always well with us, because such is the counsel of God concerning us that there is no bereavement, there is no loss, there is no cross, there is no trial of any kind, let it be what it may, that the Lord did not foresee, that the Lord does not wisely suffer, and that the Lord will not make to work for our deepest advantage and highest advantage. “Say you to the righteous” ah, if they live and wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, and if they have to be burnt at last as to the poor body, “Say you to the righteous, it shall be well with them.” These are the children of God, then, that are brought to see that this plenty is by faith in Christ, so they live a life of faith; that this happiness is by faith in him, and so they are at times filled with joy and peace in believing; and that this well-being is abiding by him. Simply abide firmly by him; don’t move. I feel from time to time that, God helping me, I would rather be cut up into mincemeat, or ground to powder, than I should be left, even for one moment, to sanction anything contrary to this dear covenant, ordered in all things and sure. I glory therein boundlessly, with all my heart, with all my soul. Oh, when I think of it, that all the advantages that the devil fancies he gains over the saints shall turn out to the devil’s disadvantage, to the saints’ advantage, and to God’s glory; that his wisest schemes of opposition shall fall back upon his own pate, and that the counsel of the Lord shall stand, that the blessed God shall be glorified, and it shall be well with us, and we shall triumph at the last! We live in a day of great reasoning, but not of much believing. The custom in our day is, like the mouse in the tub, we take a survey; well, I do not see anything in all the world, supposing this tub is all the world, I do not see anything in all the world how we can do so and so. That’s about our plan, the plan of some at least; I know it is my plan sometimes, when I get into an infidel state of mind. But what in the world have I to do with what I see? I have to do with what God wills, and whatever he wills he can do. His counsel shall stand. And were he to tell me to stretch out a shepherd’s walking-staff over the Atlantic Ocean, and assure me that that act would divide that ocean from here to America, I would stretch the staff out, and it should be done, as it was at the Red Sea. If he were to tell me to go and let the rod fall upon a burning, flinty rock in the burning desert, and tell me that rivers of water would flow from that rock to supply two millions and a half of people, I would go and smite the rock, and the water would come. If he were to tell me to place the ark on the shoulders of the priests, and as soon as ever their feet touched the Jordan, the Jordan should part hither and thither, and all the hosts of Israel tranquilly should pass clean over, I cannot see how this rod is to divide the sea; I cannot see how this rod is to bring the water; I cannot see how the feet of the priests can divide the Jordan; I have nothing to do with that: I have to do with God’s almighty power, with God’s *wills* and *shalls*.

He always has reigned, does reign, and will reign, and I smile at the man that talks of our God as though he was a heathen God, and could not help himself.

But again: it is said of these children that they shall be “like olive plants round about your table.” There is their evergreen character; ever green, not in the sarcastic sense in which we use it in our common parlance, but in the living, good sense of the word. The olive is an evergreen; and so, bless the Lord, once alive, alive for ever. And if you do not think much of these blessed truths, it shows you never knew them; I make no hesitation in saying it is utterly impossible to know them, it is utterly impossible to understand them, and to taste the sweetness of them, and for them not to be dear to your heart.

Here it is I shall not want; here it is he prepares a table for me in the very presence of my enemies; my cup runs over all shall be well here. These, then, are some of the marks of children.

I now hasten to the next part, “You shall see your children’s children.” This implies an *increase*. And if any one thing for these last ten or fifteen years has grieved, distressed, and discouraged my mind, it is a deficiency of this in this place. How few our conversions have been in comparison of the number we could wish to have had! You do not know how it preys upon a minister’s mind. I have gone so far in times past as to think, Well, perhaps I ought to leave the Surrey Tabernacle altogether. There is a great number of people there that know the truth; there are large towns in England where, perhaps, there is scarcely a cause, or if there be, a very small one, of truth in it. Perhaps I ought to leave the Surrey Tabernacle, and go and preach in some large place, in some large town, for four or five years, and then go from there to some other place. I ought not to consult my own happiness, the comforts of my home, or anything else; I ought more to consult the welfare of the souls of men. You well know that our country, notwithstanding all its advantages, is certainly not overloaded with what we believe to be vital godliness and gospel truth. And it has been my prayer for a long time that in some way or another we may be favored to break forth on the right hand and on the left, and that sinners may yet, in connection with us, spring up as willows among the grass. My soul rejoices with unspeakable joy when I see sinners brought vitally, I do not mean by a false conversion, but brought to see and feel their need of Jesus, and to see numbers added to those that are already living. And there are promises to this effect. And there is one thing here in this increase I would just remind you of, and it is very worthy of your attention, for the sake of your clearly understanding the truth. You will always find in the word of God that wherever there is a promise or an indication of an increase of ingathering, that promise or that indication is sure to stand in close connection with the work of Jesus Christ or with the new covenant. You will find through the old covenant and other scriptures no promise or indication of the kind; but whenever there is a remarkable promise of an increase, that promise always stands in close connection with that which you and which I, as in the sight of God, hold to be the gospel of God. I will just give you two or three instances in this part. Take, for instance, the 2nd Psalm. In the 2nd Psalm we have the enemies united against Christ, saying, “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us?” But “He that sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision.” And so it goes on there to declare the resurrection of Christ, “You are my Son; this day have I begotten you;” and there he is, in spite of all, set upon Zion’s heavenly hill. Now, in connection with this conquest of Christ, in connection with this resurrection of Christ, in connection with this exaltation of Christ, it is said, “Ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.” How were Gentiles gathered in at the

first? By Christ Jesus. This was the character in which Peter went to Cornelius, and in which Paul went to the Gentile world. So, then, my hearer, if we want a new or a larger chapel, for the sake of gathering in souls to Christ, we do not want another Jesus Christ, nor another gospel; no, the Lord helping us, we hope to be kept in the same simplicity, in the same sincerity.

Then, again, you will find the 54th of Isaiah follows, as you know, upon the 53rd; and you know what the 53rd of Isaiah is descriptive of, the humiliation and sufferings of Jesus Christ; and in the 54th, based upon the 53rd chapter, there is the promise that “more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife;” that the Gentiles should sing and rejoice, and that the Gentile church should be abundantly increased. And what are the doctrines of the 54th of Isaiah, by which sinners are to be gathered in? Why, the doctrines are these, or the substance of it is this: “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you.” And how does the prophet sum up the doctrines there by which sinners are to be gathered in? “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, says the Lord.” Men say these truths will not gather sinners in. Hence some say, Ah, Wells is very well to help Christians, but not the means of gathering others in; though I have been the means, I believe, of gathering in hundreds. And my confidence is in these truths; I look into the Bible, I see what kinds of doctrines are to be preached for the ingathering of those that are not gathered, as well as for the building up, and sustaining, and refreshing of those that are gathered. I have no faith in any doctrines but in the doctrines of the blessed God. We are to speak not in the words that man’s wisdom teaches, but in the words which the Holy Ghost shall teach. Then again, if I remind you of the 55th of Isaiah, take then the 2nd Psalm, 54th of Isaiah, large increase, all what you call high doctrine; then the 55th of Isaiah, “Let the wicked forsake his way,” God’s imperative mood, “Let there be light,” meaning, there shall be light; therefore the meaning is, “The wicked shall forsake his way, the unrighteous man shall forsake his thoughts; he shall return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Thus then, my hearer, Jesus was to see his children’s children, and it was by their hearing his life-giving voice. It is the Spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing. I am fully aware that the doctrines of men, such as free will and duty faith, perverting God’s word; I am fully aware that such preaching may convert thousands; but then they are converted from one shape of Satanic service to another, and for aught I know, twofold more the children of hell than they were before they made any profession at all. So, then we must aim at real conversion; it must be vital; it must be by the truth, it must be after the order of truth.

But my third point was *longevity*; that I must say but little upon. Christ should see his children’s children. When he died, “I will not leave you orphans.” Not like the earthly parent. The earthly parent dies, he cannot return to see how his children are faring in the world, how they are getting on, what troubles have overtaken them, what calamities or what sorrows have followed them, what their lot is, where they are, whether they are sunk lower or risen higher; the parent cannot come back to see this, and the place thereof shall know him no more. Not so with our blest Redeemer, he rose from the dead, returned to his children. “Have you any meat?” No. He soon had some for them. Were they troubled? He soon breathed peace into their souls. Were they in doubt? He soon wrought conviction in their minds that he was the very Jesus with whom they had walked and talked, and who had died for them; but he was now risen from the dead to die no more; death had

no more dominion over him; and he says, "Because I live you shall live also." Oh, what continued sociality, what divine sociality, what privilege here. No separation here between the dearest Father and most glorious family that ever did or ever can exist; no separation here between him that died to save and those for whom he died. All will meet at last; he shall see his children's children, and see them all at home around his table, and happy for evermore.

But lastly, "and peace upon Israel." There is the *ultimate tranquility*. What ought we to look for now? Peace. God is a God of peace; Jesus Christ is your peace; the gospel is a gospel of peace, and the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of peace, and the people of God are children of peace; and we have to live in this, and we have to die in this, and we have to rise in this, and to enjoy this for ever and ever. And there is a scripture where the Lord speaks of our peace being as a river, and our righteousness as the waves of the sea. I had intended this morning, but time and space will not allow it, to have read two or three extracts from two or three letters of our members and friends that have lately been taken home to glory. One I may mention, a friend, though not a member with us, to whom our Sunday morning sermon was for months before she died, unable to get out, a wonderful solace, a wonderful support, made her happy; the Lord blessed them wonderfully. That is encouraging to us to go on and to circulate them. And I am sure if the two young men are here now, her two sons, they have done everlasting honor to the memory of their mother. Their mother while living needed their support; they gave that support affectionately and willingly; deplored her loss, and felt as though she had supported them, instead of they supporting her. If you are here now, I say to you, the Lord bless you; he will bless you; you have obeyed his commandment, children honoring their parents. And I hardly ought to say it, but she told them, "Ah, never leave Mr. x for if what he preaches be not gospel, I know not what gospel is, nor what truth is. I want no more; I can live upon it I can die upon it." Such testimonies are truly pleasing. But as time does not allow me to refer to letters much, I will just read a few words, one little extract, relating to a member of ours that died at Plymouth. I received a very kind letter, and a very nice account, from a good minister of Jesus Christ, Mr. Westlake, of Plymouth, who is worthy of a better position than he there holds; and that minister writes: "Amidst other things, just before her departure, she broke up and said, "Hark! hark! Hark! oh the music, oh the sound, oh the light, oh the grandeur on the throne, oh the multitude, and all alike!" When I saw her on Saturday morning, she repeated it, and said, "The sun is a dark star compared with the light I saw. Oh, the music! Nothing on earth can be compared to it. I stretched my ear to hear what it said but could not catch it. I hear it now at a distance." Then said she, "I cannot tell why I am thus brought back into the body again." Then I said, "Very likely I shall write to Mr. Wells; shall I say anything to him from you?" "Tell him," said she, "all the grandeur, all the glory, all the ecstasy that I ever heard from him, or heard him describe, was not to be compared with what I witnessed. None but the ear that heard it can tell, none but the eye that saw it can form any idea of it." But after this a cloud rested upon her mind; but this subsided, and her end was that peace which ultimately must be upon all Israel.