

The Testimony of Simeon, Part 2

Luke 2:25-30

Follow along as I start reading the text here in verse 25, Luke 2:25, "Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, 'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation.'"

Here's how God saw this man Simeon, there in the rest of verse 25, "This man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel," that is to say, he was a conscientious worshiper of God. Two things that motivated Simeon to be a conscientious, sincere, serious-minded worshiper of God. First, his mind was focused on the future; second, his life was subject

to the Holy Spirit. That phrase, “Waiting for the consolation of Israel,” tells us a lot about Simeon. First, he was looking to the future. Simeon is a man of great faith. He believed the promises, particularly the restoration promises, that God gave through the prophets.

Considering the deplorable spiritual condition of Israel at that time, in light of a general apostasy, with all of its cultural accommodation, with its capitulation to the Romans, with its embrace of pagan religious principals, its rank sinfulness, listen, for Simeon to keep looking for God to fulfill his promises in the middle of that kind of a day, for Simeon to keep waiting for the consolation of Israel, well, that’s something to behold, isn’t it? That’s remarkable faith. No wonder Luke said, Behold this, look at this guy.

Simeon waited for the consolation of Israel. He waited. He looked for better days. His best days, in fact, were all ahead of him. They were all in the future. That word waiting, it doesn’t imply any sense of impatience whatsoever. It doesn’t imply any sense of grumbling. It doesn’t imply the foolish sense of Oh, we had better days back then. He wasn’t sentimental about the old days. He was hopeful for the new days. Simeon is waiting expectantly, eagerly, patiently. Why? Because he believed the

promises that God would one day console Israel; God would one day comfort Israel.

Israel had fallen under the judgment of God. The nation had been subdued, conquered. Most of its citizens were carted off to exile. And even though the people were back in the land, they were no better off for it. Most of Israel continued in its spiritual corruption, preferring the worldly pursuits of wealth and status to walking humbly and faithfully before God. Though the nation as a whole deserved nothing but more severe judgment, there was a faithful remnant, who believed the promises of restoration, who waited expectantly, who prayed fervently, who watched for the signs that God was fulfilling his promises. Simeon is a member of those people. Those are his people, that remnant.

As I said, promises of comfort and restoration, they were written large of the entire Old Testament, beginning with Moses and going all the way through to the prophet Malachi. So from beginning to end of the Old Testament, God promised restoration. The bulk of these promises, the highest concentration of these promises, they're found in the book of Isaiah. Let me give you a few just to give you a sense, a taste of this. Isaiah 40 verse 1 says, "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly

to Jerusalem and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Comfort.

Isaiah 49:13, "Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted. "Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem." Remember what was to happen right after Isaiah prophesied? They were to be waste places. In the midst of that, he's prophesying comfort. Isaiah 66:13, "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem." Such tender words of comfort, consolation. And since God's words of judgment had been fulfilled so literally with such brutal, unrelenting specificity, Simeon had every expectation that the promises of restoration would in the same way be filled in the same literal sense with the same specificity.

One interesting footnote here, you see the word, consolation there in verse 25? You know what that word is? It's the Greek word *paraklesis*. You've heard the word before. Heard the word *paraclete*? Do you know what that word is? That's the

word Jesus used as a name for the Holy Spirit in John 16:7, “I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper,” the Paraclete, “would not come to you.” It’s the same word, Paraclete, *parakletos*. “But if I go,” Jesus promises his disciples, “I will send him to you.” The Paraclete.

Simeon couldn’t have seen that coming, exactly. He didn’t know Acts Chapter 2 was right around the corner, but he was clearly a conscientious believer, putting all of his hope in God. He looked back to God’s promises in faith, trusting God, taking him at his word, believing him and that caused him to look forward to God to keep his word of promise in the future. That’s faith, simple faith. Little did Simeon know that comfort and consolation would come from God by means of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the Comforter, the very Holy Spirit who was active in his life.

As a matter of fact, that Holy Spirit would take an active part in the consolation of Israel. Verse 25 says there at the beginning of the verse, it had begun, “The Holy Spirit was upon him.” That’s the second reason that Simeon was such a righteous devout believer and worshiper. He lived in subjection to the Holy Spirit. Yes, the Holy Spirit was active in Old Testament

times, even before Acts chapter 2, far before Acts chapter 2. In fact, Genesis 1:2, “The Spirit of God hovered over the waters,” right? From beginning and all the way through, the Holy Spirit has been there, ever present, ever active, effervescent in his activity on earth and in the lives of believers.

Church isn’t the only entity with claim upon the Holy Spirit. We’re not the only ones to depend on his power and his activity. Simeon knew his presence as well, even if he didn’t know him as well as we do. He was taught by the clear testimony of the Old Testament. We’re going to see all this more in a moment, but Simeon lived in subjection to the Holy Spirit. He lived in submission to his word. Simeon was directed by the Holy Spirit’s will right into the temple on that day. So all that to say, point one: Simeon is a genuine example of an Old Testament saint. He’s righteous and devout, he lives in faith, he reaches forward in hope. He trusts in God implicitly, fully, such an encouraging example to us, certainly a fit vessel for God’s purpose, someone that is commended to us as someone to listen to.

Let’s take a look at our second point: Simeon’s spiritual purpose. Look at the text again, verses 26 to 28. We’ll start at the end of verse 25, “The Holy Spirit was upon him.” Then verse

26, "And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God." Let's stop there.

Here, we see the convergence of two law-abiding parents and a Spirit-directed man, and they come together to reveal a divine purpose. The Spirit and the word once again, in lockstep harmony. It's impossible to imagine how the Holy Spirit's revelation to Simeon, that he wouldn't die until he saw the Lord's Messiah, it's impossible to imagine how much that inflamed Simeon's already fervent and passionate desire. I mean, based on faith in Scripture, Simon already hoped in God's promises. He's waiting, anticipating, expecting, but this personal promise by the Holy Spirit had to leave him restless, had to leave him anxious to see the Lord's Christ. When is it going to come? He's looking at his watch. Is it now?

We don't know how long Simeon had been living with this burdensome revelation, but it couldn't have been too long. The text gives every indication, I think, that Simeon is an old man. Young men don't anticipate death in the same way old men do, so

the Spirit's promise had to have filled Simeon with great hope. Had to have filled him with an unshakeable confidence; probably felt a little bit invincible, too. Sure, I'll have a second donut; it really can't kill me, trust me! My personal belief is that the Holy Spirit told Simeon about the soon arrival of the Lord's Christ probably months earlier, not likely more than a year earlier. It would seem to be too heavy a burden to carry for too long a period of time, to be knowing that the Messiah was coming soon. It would make sense that this revelation came later in his life to encourage a man who was already anticipating death, wondering if God would fulfill his promises in his own lifetime. But, nevertheless, we're not told exactly.

What we do know is that the Spirit decided to send him into the temple; decided on the very same day that Joseph and Mary arrived there to send him there. Providence was active in Joseph and Mary; special direction was active in Simeon. And the meeting between these three probably took place in the court of the women where Mary was allowed to go, allowed to go no closer. And it's in that setting, in the temple in the court of the women that Simeon realizes the culmination of his life and his spiritual purpose. And notice there it's a twofold spiritual purpose, one that is shared by all true believers, incidentally.

This is the same purpose for our lives as well. First, Simeon would testify that this baby, the one named Jesus, it's the Lord's Christ. That's our purpose, too, isn't it? We tell others that Jesus of Nazareth is the Lord's Christ, the Messiah, the one anointed by God, the one approved by God. We tell others that Jesus is the one who fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies, that God sent him to be the Savior and the ruler of the world. We tell others that there is "salvation in no other name, for there is no other name under heaven by which men must be saved." It's a purpose that started right there in Luke Chapter 2 in the heart of the temple. It was Simeon's purpose, as well, his spiritual purpose, that we show solidarity with, and we find continuity of fellowship with him by doing the very same thing, fulfilling the very same spiritual purpose.

The text says in verse 28, Simeon took Christ Jesus in his arms. This isn't like the picture of the Lion King holding the baby up high, you know, showing him to the watching crowd. It's not that. It's an old Greek word used only here in the New Testament, and it refers to the curve or the inner angle of the arm. Literally, this pictures Simeon, as you might imagine older men doing, cradling Jesus in the crook of his arm. He's cradling Jesus. Can you imagine holding the baby Jesus?

It's a picture here of tender affection of an old man who's at the end of his life, embracing in his arms his own Savior, who's at the beginning of his life. Just like Simeon, we embrace Jesus as our Savior in the same way, with tender affection, with reverent appreciation. In what he said, in what he did, in the way he did it, Simeon testified that this is the Lord's Christ. That's what we do, too.

Second aspect of Simeon's spiritual purpose is in those two words at the end of verse 28, Simeon "Blessed God." Simeon blessed God. By witnessing to the Christ of God, Simeon was also giving glory to God. Christ came to glorify God; all of us likewise we exist to give glory to God, and Simeon is no different. In fact, notice how theocentric his prayer is. Look, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for the glory to your people Israel."

Six times Simeon directs his praise and blessing to God, and he does so publicly; he does so out loud, such that all within earshot can hear it. Lord, you, your word, your salvation, your preparation, your people; whether it's personal

or national, this is all about you, Lord. Like Simeon, we also exist for a spiritual purpose, don't we? And it's the same spiritual purpose, to give a true testimony to Christ and to give glory to God. What's more important than that to live for, to talk about? What's more important than that to tell other people about, to have conversations about? That's why we exist.

Let's consider a third point that helps us understand the godly character of this special agent of God's truth: Simeon's self-identity. Simeon's self-identity, verse 29, take a look just quickly. "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word." At this point, I think our modern translations mute the significance a bit of what Simeon has said. Listen to that verse, that verse again, but from the CSB, the Christian Standard Bible translation. "Now Master, you can dismiss your slave in peace." That's very literal. That's very literal. The word translated Lord or master, it's not the typical word, *kurios*, but the word *despotes*. That's where we get our word despot. We've come to see a despot as someone who is despotic, someone who's tyrannical in his rule. We think of a dictator, right? We think of a cruel leader of a totalitarian regime.

But the word itself doesn't necessarily mean tyrant. The emphasis is on absolute power, totalitarian authority, and that is with our master exactly the same. But not the malevolent nature that accompanies despotic rulers that are human. God, when God is the despot, his slaves find him to be benevolent and kind, not malevolent. We willingly, readily come to Jesus and submit ourselves to his lordship. Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke," you know what yoke is? Sign up for slavery, folks. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is," what? "easy and my burden is light."

Simeon here sees himself as a slave of his master. His own self-designation here, it's the word *doulos*, which literally means slave. Yeah, owned by someone else. That's the word he uses and the verb he uses there in verse 29, "Now you can let your servant depart," your slave depart. It's the verb *apalulo*. That's a common verb that was used to speak of the manumission of slaves, of setting slaves free. For most of human history, economies worldwide were built upon, dependent upon slave labor. The Bible acknowledges that fact and it makes use of that imagery, in a way that helps us to understand an aspect of truth

about the believer's personal identity and his relationship to God.

This concept of slave ownership it's absolutely critical for a proper self-understanding. God's people belong to him. Why? They were created by him and they were bought with a price. Notice here, Simeon doesn't mourn belonging to God, does he? He's delighted to belong to his master. It fills him with joy to be a slave of the Lord. That's because God takes very good care of his slaves. To be owned by God means dignity, worth, significance, and purpose. To be owned, like this world would tell you to do, to be owned by yourself and yourself alone that makes you very small. Simeon was happy in his master's service, and now that his mission was complete; he requested a release from service to be brought home.

Having patiently waited for the consolation of Israel, having waited eagerly to see the Lord's Christ, Simeon is content to wait patiently for God to release him, to allow him to depart in peace, according to his faithful word. Timing is up to you, Lord. That reveals one more aspect of Simeon's godly character we need to see. A fourth point in your outline: Simeon's simple ambition. Simeon's simple ambition. We might call this a humble ambition. Just quickly take another look at verses 29 to 30,

“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation.”

Notice the quiet contentment expressed in one simple, but
incredibly profound ambition, to see the Lord’s salvation. Having
seen the Lord’s salvation in the person of baby Jesus, Simeon is
ready to depart in peace. That’s good enough for me.

J. C. Ryle points to Simeon as an example of how completely
a believer can be delivered from the fear of death. He writes
these words, “Simeon speaks like a person for whom the grave has
lost its terrors and the world its charms. He speaks as one who
knows where he is going when he departs this life and cares not
how soon he goes.” Are you unafraid of death like that? Do you
look forward to the future with fear and anxiety, or with great
anticipation and joy? For Simeon, there is nothing else he needs
to accomplish. There is nothing else that’s important on this
earth. Nothing else is necessary. Nothing else that can hold his
affections. He has seen the Lord’s salvation embodied in the baby
Jesus, and he is ready to go home. What else is there?

Do Simeon’s godly qualities characterize you? There’s a sense
in which Simeon isn’t anyone special; he’s just a guy. But
there’s another sense in which he is absolutely remarkable,
especially considering the surrounding social and cultural

context. Jerusalem was an absolute cesspool of sin and corruption and out of nowhere walks Simeon, testifying about Jesus Christ and giving glory to God. He's the picture of an Old Testament saint, righteous and devout, trusting God, putting all his hope in God's promises. He's a man devoted to spiritual purposes, devoted to be used for God's work. He's a slave serving a master whom he loves dearly. His one ambition, his singular aim, is to see the Lord's salvation. Having seen it, he's seen all he needs to see. He's ready to depart in peace.

That's character, folks. That's a believing character right there, and character counts with God. God works through those who are characterized by holiness, by truth, by righteousness. God works through humble people, godly people, especially when it comes to representing God as a vessel fit to proclaim divine revelation. God chose Simeon to speak to the holy family. He designed, qualified, and commissioned him for this very purpose. "Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use set apart as holy useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work." Well, now that we're tuned in, now that Simeon is commended to us as a reliable witness, we're ready to listen to what he has to say. We'll do that next time. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we give thanks to you for the example of a humble saint like Simeon. As we'll see later, also a humble saint like Anna. Beautiful people in your sight. Dear saints as Psalm 116 says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." The death of his godly ones. And as these two departed to be with you, you received them with joy, with open arms, commended them as heroes of the faith. Father, we long to walk in their footsteps as well.