

Simeon's Song of Solace and Suffering

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[0 : 00] This morning, this song of Simeon, Simeon's song of solace, a song of comfort, and yes, even in the song, a reference to suffering. Four points this morning, as you see there on the screen, saintly service, the service that Simeon gave to the Lord as a servant, our second point, a servant of God, and then salvation revealed through the revealing of salvation through the Lord Jesus, and then the last part, the comfort and the suffering that we see in that prophecy of Simeon. And I think we can say this, that it's one of the great comforting features of the Bible, that God chooses what we might call relatively minor individuals for some particular great work of service. Now, when I say minor, I don't mean minor in relation to God, or minor in relation to God's great plans working out through His servants, but God choosing what we might call minor people in relation to our standing in society. And minor too, when we look at those so often whom God chooses in Scripture, minor in relation to the fact that they're not often mentioned in Scripture, and yet used mightily by God in proclaiming the good news of Jesus.

And two such individuals, as we read here, are Simeon, and if we were to read on from verse 36, Simeon and Anna, faithful servants of God. They only appear in this chapter, in the whole of Scripture, the whole of New Testament only, mentioned here in Luke chapter 2. And yet, they're recorded for us, they're being it here, or there in the temple, given for us to indicate something very important about the Lord Jesus Christ. And as we said, Luke's the only gospel author who mentions these individuals. We're going to look at Simeon this morning, and God willing, Anna this evening. But as we hear again, and I'm sure you've read these verses before, as we hear again what God is speaking to us through these words, that we'll be encouraged, and you'll be encouraged, and what you might consider yourself as perhaps being a minor individual in society. Now, we know that at certain times in history,

God raises up outstanding individuals, people like, if you haven't heard the names of these people, get to know them, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, William Wilberforce, Charles Spurgeon, we could go on, men who raised the banner of the gospel. People whom God used to drive the gospel force.

People who stood before kings and emperors and rulers and weren't ashamed of the gospel. But for the large part in everyday life, in the work of service for the Lord, it's ordinary folks, just like ourselves, ordinary folks whom God uses to speak a word for Jesus, to come alongside a needy soul.

And yes, to give a word of encouragement to a struggling individual and to shine the light of Christ in this dark world. And so as we're going to look at Simeon and Anna, these what we might call minor servants, these were people whom God used mightily. These were people whom God put in position to tell of that great salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. So be encouraged in your responsibilities that God has given you to tell others and to speak of Jesus to others. Because the same God who chose Simeon and Anna is the same God who chooses you to tell of the wonder of salvation in and through the Lord Jesus.

[4 : 26] So use every opportunity that God gives you. Just as Simeon used the opportunity, Anna used the opportunity that God gave them to tell of the Savior, the Savior of the world.

So we're going to focus, as we said this morning, on Simeon, Simeon's song of solace. It's singing, if you like, Simeon's song of comfort. Not comfort, but at the same time as we'll see, a song that speaks of the suffering of Jesus and the suffering of Mary.

So, verses 21 to 24, we're going to look at saintly service. Jesus, the eternal Son of God. Jesus, born in Bethlehem. Jesus, the promised Savior, the promised Messiah.

Jesus has come in fulfillment of prophecy. He's come to redeem His people. He was born of a woman. He's taken our flesh. He's become human like us and, of course, accepted.

He's experienced humanity as a human being and He's come as a baby. And now as a week old, He's been presented to undergo the demands of the law, the law of Moses.

[5 : 49] He's been circumcised on the eighth day after His birth. And then 40 days after Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph and Jesus, well, it's just a short journey from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, and they go on that journey to fulfill the law.

So, Mary's going to offer a sacrifice to indicate the end of her time of confinement. And that's according to the law. And that's what she does in going to Jerusalem.

She presents an offering, an offering to God. And the offering, as we read there, as we read there, the offering of the poor. The whole point is this, as we began reading from verse 21.

Jesus has come to redeem His people. He's come to do what Paul tells us, the Apostle Paul tells us in Galatians chapter 4. He's come to redeem those who are under the law.

Because Jesus did what the law required. In Jesus' human nature, He was born under the law. In other words, He had a Jewish mother.

[6 : 53] He was born into the Jewish nation. He was subject to all the Jewish legal requirements. But Jesus did what no other did, could do or did do.

Jesus kept all the requirements of the law faithfully. Every requirement in ceremonial law, in civil law, and in moral law. And these very words there in Luke 2 tells us that, you know, as Jesus started out in His earthly life of obedience, Jesus completed fully all the demands of the law.

So that He would be that sinless sacrifice for sin. He fulfilled absolutely every one of God's requirements for Jesus to be our representative, to take our place on the cross.

If Jesus hadn't been man, He couldn't have redeemed man. He couldn't have redeemed you unless He was the sinless, that sinless man.

If He hadn't been a righteous man, He couldn't have redeemed unrighteous men. So even at age eight days old, what we're seeing there is that He's showing that fulfillment.

[8 : 12] There He has been presented to the Lord now in the temple. He's fulfilling the law. And He's going to continue to fulfill the law until He gets to the cross. Where He pays the price for your sins and my sins.

And the price that God set under the law. The price being death. The penalty being death. And as has been said so often, well, so often even these last few weeks.

And I think we have to continue to mention. And that's this. You can't have Bethlehem without Calvary. You can't have the manger without the cross.

You can't have Jesus there in Bethlehem. You can't have Jesus, the baby in the manger, without Jesus, the suffering servant.

You can't know freedom from the demands of the law for salvation. Unless Jesus kept the law fully. And you see that even in Cameo there in Jerusalem.

[9 : 19] And it's while they're in Jerusalem, they're in the temple. That one man, one woman, Simeon, Anna. Independently, if you like.

And yet under the sovereign control of God. They meet with the baby Jesus. They meet with the Savior. And it's that encounter with Jesus that Simeon has.

That we're going to consider more fully this morning. As we see in Simeon, the servant of God. And in these verses from verse 25 that begins, Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon.

Even in these opening words, this mention of Simeon. It's the only time we see Simeon in Scripture. We don't know anything about his background. Other than, of course, he was Jewish.

We don't know what he did for a living. We don't know his age. Although we can certainly guess anyway that he was old because of what he says in his song about his being ready to die now that he'd seen the Savior.

[10 : 25] It's a very Jewish, common Jewish name at that time. Simeon, Simon. But what we're told is that he was a man there, a man in Jerusalem. But what we do know about him is really what counts.

It's what counts and what counts for him and for you. That it is his relationship with God. His standing before God. You know, Luke, at this point anyway, he's not going to give us anything more than just the key points about Simeon.

He says that Simeon was righteous and devout. In other words, here's a man who had his priorities right. He was right with God.

It was his whole heart's desire to worship God, to live for God. He didn't want to be associated with the world. His chief purpose in life was to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

And he's devout. In other words, he's a man who's so well versed in Scripture. He knew his Bible at that time, the Old Testament. And obviously he searched the Scriptures.

[11 : 37] He wants to find out God's purposes for his people. And in God's Word, he finds the truth. The truth of the promise of the coming of the Messiah who'd lead his people into newness of life in God.

So in Simeon, his devotion, his righteousness, his waiting on the Lord, waiting for the coming of the Messiah. He's waiting, as Luke tells us, for the consolation of Israel.

For the comfort of Israel. For the salvation of God's people. This is a man whom, you know, the world really hadn't taken any notice of.

He's a man in the world, but not of the world. He's a man, as Luke tells us, he's not defined by what he did as a profession. He's not defined by how many shekels he had.

He's not defined by his status. He's not defined by his status. He's not defined by his status. He's a man who's defined by his relationship with God. It has that focus of his heart.

[12 : 48] That's what's crucial in seeing in Simeon, the servant of God. As he looks for God's promised Messiah. God's promised Christ. And as we said, Simeon may well only be mentioned just once in Scripture.

Yet, he knew a blessing from God. The Old Testament prophets. And God's people of the Old Testament.

That they didn't have. He had a blessing that even those who were waiting upon the promised Savior. He had a blessing that they didn't have.

Yes, as with the saints of the Old Testament, he was waiting for the consolation of Israel. Waiting for the coming of the Messiah. But now, the Messiah has come.

Christ has come. And he takes Jesus in his arms. And he blesses God. You know, Simeon must have seen many, many babies. Many babies with their parents in the temple courts.

[13 : 52] But by the leading of the Holy Spirit, he knew that this baby was different. He knew that before him and in his arms was the Christ.

The promised Christ. And in recognizing that this child, this baby is the promised Christ. What does he do? He gives thanks to God. He gives thanks for the gift of Jesus the Christ.

And surely, you know, when we think of this in relation to yourselves, it's for you and for me to bless God.

When you, by faith, see Jesus. When you recognize Jesus. When, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you're led to see Jesus as the one who came from heaven to earth for you.

When you see in Jesus the consolation of the new Israel of God, the church of God. It's for you and for me to bless God, to praise God, to thank God.

[14 : 50] To give God the, if you like, to accord to God the highest honor. To come before God and to praise him for his goodness, for his grace, for his greatness, for his love for sinners such as me and such as you.

Praise him for his great kindness in sending Jesus to redeem his people. And that's the blessing that Simeon gives, or blessing God we see there in the song.

That song, that famous song, some people know it maybe better with the first two Latin words. Now dismiss, now dismiss, now dismiss your servant in peace.

Now let your servant die in peace. So what do we see in the song from verse 29? We see salvation. We see salvation revealed.

You know, when Simeon entered that temple there that morning, he had obviously no idea that he was going to meet with the promised Messiah, the promised Christ. But God in his sovereign mercies, God in his sovereign purposes, God ensured that on that very day that Simeon entered the temple, at the same time Jesus would be brought into the temple by his mother Mary and Joseph.

[16 : 14] The very same day that faithful Simeon stepped into the temple courts, was the same day that Jesus was brought in and Simeon would praise God.

So what does Simeon say that's resonated through the centuries? Well, Simeon, first of all, Simeon recognized that his own life is finite.

He recognized his life, yes, will one day come to an end. But he'll die in peace because he's seen, as he says, he's seen your salvation.

Simeon's seen the one through whom God would bring salvation to his people. Here's this man of faith who was content in the Lord. Here's this righteous man who'd been waiting on the Lord and now he's going to receive that reward of faith.

Of course, he'll receive his full reward in heaven. But on earth, he's receiving the reward of patience, patiently waiting on the Lord. And in seeing Jesus, he's fully satisfied.

[17 : 23] The Savior had come. God's Word was true, is true. He doesn't need to fear the grave. He doesn't need to fear death.

The Savior had come to redeem his life. The Savior had come to free him and to free all, to free all who are Christ's from death's sting.

And so by the Spirit's leading, Simeon knows that, well, his own time on earth is short. But to Simeon, that didn't matter. He's consoled with the comfort of Christ.

Consoled with the comfort of Christ, that whether in life or in death, this man of faith trusts in God for his salvation. Isn't this just a timely reminder, even at this time of year, and this time even the life of our nation?

You know, death lurks at every corner. And certainly the pandemic has brought this very much to the fore. But of course, pandemic or no pandemic, loss of life is ever before us.

[18 : 34] Even the statistics that we see in our screens every day really bring home that truth. They tell of the large numbers of nameless people being cast into eternity.

Of course, every death is a tragedy. But for the person who dies in the Lord, he's safe. She's safe for all eternity.

Because Jesus has made that eternal life possible when he conquered death. When he conquered death. When he conquered sin.

When he conquered Satan. You know, and you know, I know, you know, that this time of year can be very much a raw time of year.

When you see the empty chair. When the corner is now silent. The absence of a loved one who was loved in life. But for the Christian, for the believer, there's joy amidst the tears.

[19 : 33] There's that true hope of eternal life for all for whom Christ came to give us life. And for any here this morning, whether you're watching from home or in the building, maybe you've suffered through bereavement even recently.

You can still have that peace that Simeon had when he saw Jesus. Still know that peace regarding your life and the life, and the eternal life of a loved one now in eternity.

Yes, I mean, this Christmas season, this season that we're still in as it were, it won't take away the pain of loss. It doesn't. But it does give the believer hope. Hope, yes, for himself, for ourself.

Even as we await the time when God calls us home to himself. Even as you have that hope, that true hope of a loved one who's passed on into eternity.

And she's now in glory. And there is light beyond the darkness. Why? Because of the light of the world. The light of the world that came to save sinners, to come to bring eternal life to all who are in him, so that you might know peace with God.

[20 : 51] And that hope, that promise, is for all peoples, as Simeon sang of, as he spoke of there, when he sang of Jesus, verse 32, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

Simeon had been given this, well, had been revealed to him this great message of hope. Hope through Jesus that not only Jew, but also non-Jew, Gentiles, with no salvation, God's salvation. This baby, the baby in his arms, has come to save the world. The baby, that baby in Jesus in his arms, has come to do what no other could do.

Jesus has come to break down the division between Jew and Gentile and bring all of God's people into his kingdom. The Jewish people received the Messiah, the Christ, the Gentiles, grafted into the kingdom.

As Paul would say later, to the Jew first, and then to the Gentiles. And so, when we read again these words of Simeon, we see what a glorious revelation that God had given through Simeon.

[22 : 05] This promise that we, that we still hear of, and still hear again spoken of, even when we think in the story of the coming of the so-called wise men, the Magi, when they came to visit Jesus, probably sometime two years after Jesus' birth, these Gentile worshippers of the Savior, well, two

years before these Magi came, Simeon had been given this revelation of the kingdom of God for all peoples, Gentile, as well as Jew.

Jesus had come to bring in true inclusion. You hear a lot about inclusion these days.

But the true inclusion, the inclusion that truly matters, is the inclusion of Gentiles with Jews, believing Jews in the kingdom of God. So rejoice then.

Continue to rejoice at this time of year that Jesus came for you. And you can rejoice with Simeon. You can rejoice that the solace, the comfort that you have as a believer is because Jesus came to save you.

It brings you comfort, may it be a comfort to your soul this morning when you again hear that truth that Jesus came for you. But also, in that song, there's a warning for those who will not believe.

[23 : 34] So, our final point then, solace and suffering. Let's read the words again just to capture what we're seeing here. Verse 33, And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him, about Jesus.

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many and Israel and for a sign that is opposed.

And a sword will pierce through your own soul also so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed. That's what we might call a realism here in Simeon's prophecy, something that we just can't dismiss, we can't just overlook.

Because Simeon is telling of what's going to happen as a result of Jesus' ministry. Because Jesus' ministry is going to bring about a division.

Jesus is going to be that rock of offense. People who reject him are going to stumble on that rock and that stone. But you and all who build their lives on the rock, you're going to know not a falling but a rising, an eternal salvation.

[24 : 46] And what else do we see? Jesus will be opposed. The words literally are he'll be spoken against. And whether it's in first century Israel as in the passage here, whether it's in 21st century Scotland or wherever else, well, of course, Simeon's words have been proved true.

Jesus was viciously rejected by so many of his Jewish countrymen. Some did accept him as his apostles, disciples, his followers, converts to Jesus during Jesus' earthly ministry.

And then converts such as the apostle Paul, Jewish apostle Paul, after Jesus ascended into heaven. But many stumbled. Many stumbled.

Many spoke against Jesus, just as Jesus is still spoken against today. But there's no despair for the believer.

You who know the Lord Jesus as your Savior, you know that you're safe in the solace, in the comfort of Christ. And yes, you'll suffer.

[26 : 02] The Lord's people will suffer in your association with the Savior whom the world speaks against. Mary herself, she suffered. She suffered in her soul when Jesus died.

And you'll suffer in your soul when your Savior is mocked and rejected and spoken against.

Especially when you hear of Jesus being spoken against by many who claim to know Jesus.

But your suffering, our suffering, well as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4, our suffering is but a momentary affliction which is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

That eternal weight of glory that's not going to be a burden to any of you. But it's going to be a joy.

An eternal joy because Jesus came as the consolation of Israel.

He came as the light for the Gentiles. He came as that glory to Israel. So what's your response as you've heard again Simeon's words, Simeon's song, Simeon's song of solace and suffering.

[27 : 13] Are you content in Christ? Do you know that saving relationship with the Lord Jesus? Can you echo Simeon's words? Can you praise God for Jesus?

Are you still cold and unconcerned unconcerned for your soul? Well, turn to him now. Give your life to the one who came when he gave his precious life for you.

I know the blessing, I know the blessing of the saints of God who know that for you to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Amen. Let us pray. Lord, our God, our loving heavenly Father, you who love us so much you sent your one and only Son for us.

Lord, help us. Help us in our faith. We believe. Help our unbelief. May we truly grow in faith and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

[28 : 19] Be with everyone who has worshipped in the service this morning. May they know the reality of salvation through the Lord Jesus.

Hear us, Lord. May we truly trust in you. May we truly put our hope in you. May we truly look to you and love you. Hear us as we continue in worship before you now.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.