



# GRACE

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI † DEO † GLORIA

## THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

### *Simeon Beholds Jesus*

Sermon Notes

**Luke 2:25-32**

**July 31, 2011**

<sup>25</sup>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. <sup>26</sup>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. <sup>27</sup>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, <sup>28</sup>he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

<sup>29</sup> 'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,  
according to your word;

<sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen your salvation

<sup>31</sup>that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

<sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and for glory to your people Israel.'

- In 2007, Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman starred in the box office hit, *The Bucket List*. The movie followed two terminally ill men as they traveled the world, completing the various items on their "bucket list," that is, the list of things they wish to do prior to dying, or "kicking the bucket." Although I have personally never seen the movie (and therefore, do not recommend it), I did notice shortly after the movie that the concept of a "bucket list" became a part of our contemporary vernacular.
- In fact, I began wondering to myself, "What are those things I would like to do or experience before I die?" Although such a question may sound morbid or depressing, I believe it is certainly an important one. For me, I have often dreamed of standing on top of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, or atop the ancient Incan ruins of Machu Picchu in the Andes of Peru.
- Yet, as a Christian father, none of these compare to my desire to see each of my children come to saving faith in the Person and Work of our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, if I were to write a "bucket list" this would be at the top.

- Here in Luke 2, we read of a “bucket list” of sorts. That is, we read of a man named Simeon whose sole desire in life is to, prior to his death, behold the person of Christ face-to-face.

<p><b>I. Simeon Awaits the Fulfillment of God’s Promise</b></p> <p><b>II. God Fulfills His Promise</b></p> <p><b>III. Simeon Responds in Prophetic Praise</b></p>
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<p><b>I. Simeon Awaits the Fulfillment of God’s Promise</b></p>
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<sup>25</sup>*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.* <sup>26</sup>*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.*

- In Verse 25, we are introduced to a man named Simeon.
- We are told very little about this man, Simeon, but the manner in which Luke introduces him is quite simple, almost anti-climatic.
  - Simeon is not presented as a priest or a man of wealth or influence.
  - Again, he is presented in the simplest of terms. In fact, his very name, *Simeon*, was a common name in ancient Israel, being the name of one of Jacob’s sons in Genesis 29:33.
- Rather than presenting him as powerful, influential, and wealthy, Luke simply states that Simeon was **righteous** and **devout**.
  - Such a simple statement speaks volumes as to what is important in the eyes of the Lord. He is the Creator of the entire cosmos, and is therefore, not impressed to power or wealth, for nothing compares to Him. Rather, God is concerned with one thing: our spiritual condition.
  - First of all, Simeon was **righteous**. The Greek word for *righteous* is *dikaios*, and essentially means that Simeon is in the company of the Old Testament saints.
    - The Scriptures clearly state that “none is righteous” (Romans 3:10); however, Luke’s description of Simeon is a statement of his position before God. He was righteous because he was a man of faith, having the righteousness of the coming Christ imputed to him through his faith. This

was the same faith as Abraham (Genesis 15:6), who “believed the LORD,” and it was “counted” [or reckoned] “to him as righteousness.”

Darrell Bock writes that “The term [“righteous”] refers to the spiritually sensitive God-fearer, the faithful law-abider.”

Romans 1:17: “<sup>16</sup>For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup>For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.””

Galatians 3:11: “<sup>11</sup>Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.””

- Secondly, Luke also states that Simeon was **devout**.
  - The Greek word translated “devout” is *eulabes*, and in classical Greek it meant “cautious.”
  - Within the New Testament context, “devout” refers to being careful to do all that God had commanded in His word.

- **Therefore, for Luke to refer to Simeon as “righteous and devout” meant that Simeon was a man of genuine faith who looked forward to God’s provision in His Messiah as promised in the pages of the Old Testament.**

- Then, Luke writes that Simeon was:

“waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup>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.”

- Luke states, in Verse 25 that Simeon was “waiting for the consolation of Israel...”
  - The idea of “consolation” means “comfort” or “encouragement.”
  - Yet, it is important that as a “**devout**” man, Simeon was not “waiting for the consolation of Israel” because that was what *he wanted*.
  - So often today, we as Christians do this. **We** want something, and make up our minds that we should have it, and then place the burden upon God to fulfill our desires.

- We say things like, “I am waiting on the LORD to fulfill my desire for a promotion or a better job so that I can use my finances to help missionaries.” Or we say, “I am waiting on God for a bigger home.”
- Or, a barren couple may even say, “We are having faith and waiting that God will provide us a child.” Or someone may pray for a loved-one, saying, “We are waiting on the Lord’s healing of this person.” [Note: We should fervently and unceasingly pray for these things, yet God’s faithfulness is not dependent upon Him answering our prayers for them.]
- And, whereas none of these are necessarily bad things, **God never promised them in His Word.** In fact, if our hope does not find its fulfillment in Christ, then God has not promised it.
- Biblical waiting, therefore, is the type of waiting that Simeon exhibited: waiting for the things that God has promised in His Word, and knowing, without a doubt, that they will come to pass.
- For it was in the Scriptures that Simeon, the devout, learned that God would bring about “the consolation of Israel.”

Isaiah 40:1-5: <sup>1</sup> Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. <sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

<sup>5</sup> And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Isaiah 49:13: <sup>13</sup> 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.”

Isaiah 51:3: <sup>3</sup>For the LORD comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden,

her desert like the garden of the LORD;  
joy and gladness will be found in her,  
thanksgiving and the voice of song.”

Isaiah 57:18: “<sup>18</sup>I have seen his ways, but I will heal him;  
I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners,”

Isaiah 61:2: “<sup>1</sup> The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor;  
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  
<sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;

Jeremiah 31:13: “<sup>13</sup> Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,  
and the young men and the old shall be merry.  
I will turn their mourning into joy;  
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.”

See also Ezekiel 14:22-23 and Zechariah 1:17.

- What is interesting here is that Luke associates the consolation, or the comfort, or Israel with the coming Messiah. Whereas, John associates the consolation, or comfort, of Israel with the coming of the Person of the Holy Spirit (John 14-16).
  - However, this in no way means that Luke and John are contradicting one another. For, in John, Jesus, the Messiah, makes it clear that when He leaves His disciples (i.e., He is crucified, resurrected, and ascended), He will send the Holy Spirit:

John 15:26: “<sup>26</sup>But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.”

- So the consistency is clear: in order for the Holy Spirit to come, Messiah had to first come. So, the consolation of Israel will come with the Messiah and the Holy Spirit.

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- Then, Luke states:

“<sup>25</sup> and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup>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.”

- The fact that Luke states “the Holy Spirit was upon him” places Simeon in the company of the Old Testament prophets.
  - Consider Isaiah in Isaiah 61:1: “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me...”
  - Consequently, the next statement is perfectly consistent with the manner in which God worked through the Old Testament prophets. Luke writes: “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.”
  - We are not told how, but clearly the Lord revealed Himself to Simeon in a special way, telling him that before he died, He would see the long-awaited Christ.

<b>II. God Fulfills His Promise</b>
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- Next, we read, in Verse 27:

<sup>27</sup>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,

- In this one verse, we read of this beautifully orchestrated fulfillment of God’s promise to Simeon.
- Luke states that Simeon “came in the Spirit into the temple...”
  - That is, Simeon was led by the Spirit into the temple.
  - The exact location in the temple would have been either the Court of the Gentiles or the Court of Women, as Mary would have only been permitted in these two areas.

- Yet, one of the most significant aspects of the meeting together of Simeon and Jesus is that it represents one of the “Triadic Events” of the New Testament. That is, it is one of the events in the New Testament whereby all three Persons of the Trinity are explicitly presented in union.
  - In fact, we see the following “Triadic Events” in the New Testament:
    - **The Presentation of Jesus at the Temple (Luke 2:21-38; especially 27-28)**
      - Simeon came “in the Spirit” [the Holy Spirit]
      - Simeon took Jesus into his arms [the Son]
      - Simeon blessed God [the Father]

- **The Baptism of Jesus (Mark 1-9-11):**
  - Jesus [the Son] was the one in the water being baptized by John the Baptist.
  - The Spirit [the Holy Spirit] descended as a dove upon Jesus.
  - The Father speaks from heaven to/about the Son.
- **The Upper Room discourse (John 14:16, 26; 15:26)**
  - Jesus [the Son] speaks of His return to the Father
  - Jesus also speaks of the sending of the Holy Spirit
- **The Atonement**

“how much more will the blood of **Christ**, who through the eternal **Spirit** offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living **God** [the Father]?” Hebrews 9:14

  - Christ [the Son] offers Himself
  - The Offering is made through the eternal Spirit [the Holy Spirit]
  - The Offering is made to God [the Father].
- **The Resurrection**
  - It is attributed to the Father (Acts 2:32)
  - It is attributed to the Son (John 10:17-18)
  - It is attributed to the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:4)
- **Our Redemption**
  - The Father chooses us before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3-4)
  - The Father chose us “in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3-4), and gave us to Christ, and Christ lost not one (John 6:37-39)
  - The Holy Spirit is given to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38-39).
- Perhaps the most foundational truth of historic Christianity is the truth that God is Trinity. That is, the one true and living God exists eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
  - Here, in the story of Simeon, we behold the work of all three Persons of the Godhead:
    - Simeon came “in the Spirit” [the Holy Spirit]
    - Simeon took Jesus into his arms [the Son]
    - Simeon blessed God [the Father]

- What is critical to understand is that **every work of God is a work of all three Persons of the Godhead.**
  - That is, no single person of the Trinity ever acts alone or in isolation.
  - If, for example, the Holy Spirit acted in isolation to the Father or the Son, then this would equate to disunity and disharmony within the Trinity, and what would essentially exist would be multiple gods.
  - Yet, **because there is only one God – one divine essence – all three Persons act in perfect harmony and accord.**

NOTE: This is perhaps the greatest defense of Particular Redemption (also referred to as Limited Atonement). That is, those that the Father gives to the Son are the same as those that the Son dies effectively for and are the same as those the Holy Spirit regenerates. Basically every Christian will readily agree that the Holy Spirit only regenerates believers, but they will then go on to assert that Christ died equally and in the same manner for everyone. If this is the case, then, there would seem to be disunity within the Godhead. That is, in the act of Redemption, the work of the Son was different than the work of the Holy Spirit.

- Furthermore, since the Scriptures are the written Word (and Christ is the living Word), God always acts in accordance with the Scriptures as well.
- We see this truth evident here, as Simeon and Jesus meet in the Temple.
- Notice again:

<sup>27</sup>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,

- Simeon “**came in the Spirit into the temple**” and at precisely the same time, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus in the Temple “**to do for him according to the custom of the Law.**”
- The Holy Spirit “breathed” the Law, so it is no coincidence that this is how the meeting came to pass (that is, through Mary and Joseph’s adherence to the Law, and the Spirit’s leading of Simeon).
- Again, there is always perfect harmony within the Trinity, and the Holy Spirit always acts in accordance with Scripture.
  - However, in the modern Christian world, we are often more influenced by Charismatic movement than we are the truth of Scripture.



- So often, it seems, Christians speak of the “Spirit leading them to do this or that” with no reference to God’s Word.
- In fact, in practically, many Christians today act as though the Holy Spirit is a separate god, acting independently of the will of the Father, the work of the Son, and the revelation of God’s Word.
- Yet, we must commit ourselves to the truth that when the Spirit leads, He does so in accordance with the Word of God. This is not as “exciting” as many Christians would like, but it is the truth of biblical Christianity.

### III. Simeon Responds in Prophetic Praise

- Finally, we read:

<sup>28</sup>he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,  
<sup>29</sup> ‘Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,  
 according to your word;  
<sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation  
<sup>31</sup> that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
<sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
 and for glory to your people Israel.’

- What we read here is **Simeon’s prophetic praise to the Lord.**
- **God has fulfilled His promises to Israel and Simeon, and Simeon responds in what is often referred to as the *Nunc Dimittis* [“Now you are dismissing”].**
- Simeon opens his praise by stating, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word...”
  - This does not necessarily mean that Simeon immediately dies after this.
  - Rather, it is like a watchman on an ancient city wall who keeps watch throughout the night. Once dawn breaks, he is relieved of his duty by the rising of the sun (and of course another guard).

Norval Gelnhuys writes that in this passage, we read “of a slave who is instructed by his master to keep watch through the long, dark night on a high place to wait for the rising of a special star and then to announce it. After wearisome hours of waiting he at last sees the star rising in all its brightness. He announces it and is then discharged from keeping watch any longer.”

- So it is with Simeon. His appointed task and duty was to wait for the coming of the Messiah, and declare that the Messiah had come once he laid eyes on Him.

- Now that this task is complete, Simeon is prepared to “depart in peace,” for his job is done.
  - There also appears to be a tone of deep satisfaction in the voice of Simeon.
  - He is satisfied and imminently blessed in the LORD, and completely content at this point with whatever God would do to him – whether that meant death (and life with the LORD forever), or a prolonged life on earth.
- Simeon’s prayer of praise is a beautiful declaration of **God’s universal work of salvation in the Person of Jesus Christ. That is, salvation is not just for the Jews, but for the Gentiles as well (“all peoples”). This certainly does not mean all people will be saved (this is not *universalism*), rather, it is a declaration that salvation is not restricted to the Jewish people.**
- Notice the specific truths of Simeon’s praise:
  - First, **Jesus Christ is God’s salvation.**
    - Simeon declares: “for my eyes have seen your salvation...”
    - Indeed, salvation comes only through faith in the Lord’s Christ.
  - Secondly, **God “prepared” Christ “in the presence of all peoples.”**
    - Again, God never planned salvation to be restricted to the Jewish people.
    - Rather, salvation is available to “all peoples” – both Jews and Gentiles.
    - This is why Simeon states that Christ will be “a light for revelation to the Gentiles...”
  - Finally, Christ will be **“for glory to your people Israel.”**
    - That is, as despised and insignificant as the nation of Israel was in the Ancient Near East, out of her would come the Savior, Jesus Christ.
    - Therefore, the “glory” of Israel was not anything that the nation did (for the nation failed miserably in keeping God’s commandments); but, the “glory” of Israel is Christ.

Deuteronomy 7:6-8: “<sup>6</sup>For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the

face of the earth. <sup>7</sup>It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, <sup>8</sup>but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

- Three years ago during the 2008 Presidential campaign, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the fact that Barack Obama’s father was from Kenya. In fact, in Kenya, President Obama is viewed with incredible admiration. The reason is because of his roots in the country. Regardless of how people view him in America, the fact that President Obama has roots in Kenya is the source of pride for many in the nation. He is, in a sense, the “glory” of the nation, now that he has risen to such prominence in America.
- Consider also, the state of Illinois. It has been referred to as “the most average” state in the country, yet, one of its mottos is the “Land of Lincoln.” To this day, the state takes great pride in the fact that Lincoln was “from” Illinois.
- In a much more profound way, Christ is the “glory of Israel” in that He is the Savior of all peoples, yet, He came out of the small and insignificant nation of Israel.

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- As one reads Simeon’s praise, one last thing is apparent. **Nothing he says is new.** In fact, Simeon’s “prophetic praise” comes directly from the Old Testament – further demonstrating his own personal commitment to the Word of God.

Isaiah 60:22:

<sup>1</sup> Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.  
<sup>2</sup> For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,  
and thick darkness the peoples;  
but the LORD will arise upon you,  
and his glory will be seen upon you.  
<sup>3</sup> And nations shall come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your rising...  
<sup>21</sup> Your people shall all be righteous;  
they shall possess the land forever,  
the branch of my planting, the work of my hands,  
that I might be glorified.  
<sup>22</sup> The least one shall become a clan,  
and the smallest one a mighty nation;  
I am the LORD;  
in its time I will hasten it.”

Isaiah 52:10: <sup>10</sup> The LORD has bared his holy arm  
before the eyes of all the nations,  
and all the ends of the earth shall see  
the salvation of our God.

Psalms 98:2: <sup>2</sup> The LORD has made known his salvation;  
he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.

Isaiah 42:6: <sup>6</sup> “I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness;  
I will take you by the hand and keep you;  
I will give you as a covenant for the people,  
a light for the nations,”

Isaiah 49:6: <sup>6</sup> “he says: ‘It is too light a thing that you should be my servant  
to raise up the tribes of Jacob  
and to bring back the preserved of Israel;  
I will make you as a light for the nations,  
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.’”

Isaiah 45:25: <sup>25</sup> “In the LORD all the offspring of Israel  
shall be justified and shall glory.”

Isaiah 46:13: <sup>13</sup> “I bring near my righteousness; it is not far off,  
and my salvation will not delay;  
I will put salvation in Zion,  
for Israel my glory.”

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- Philip Ryken writes, “*Anyone* who has seen Jesus with the eyes of faith is prepared to die. And anyone who has not seen him – whether young or old – is not ready to die at all. When we see Jesus and his salvation, we are ready to be dismissed from this life in peace and enter the life to come.”

Isaiah 9:1-3a, 6:

<sup>1</sup> But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

<sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,  
on them has light shined.

<sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation;  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,...

<sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.