

**Luke 2: 25-32; "What Simeon Saw", A Christmas Sermon delivered
by Pastor Paul Rendall, on December 23rd, 2007,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

If I were to ask you this morning what kind of believer in Christ you want to be; what would you say? How would you answer me? If you are a true believer you will probably say to me - "I want to be a person of faith, a person who is faithful in God's sight, one who keeps His commandments and has faith working by means of love in relation to God my Savior." "I want to be a Christian who is strong in the Lord, mature in wisdom and knowledge, and zealous for His kingdom and His righteousness." "How can I be this?" And I would answer you, "It all depends on what you are looking at, and whether you are truly seeing all that God has given to us in Christ." Are you a person who spiritually sees? Are you a person who is looking unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith? Simeon was a man who saw the Lord's Christ. And what he saw he declares in the 30th verse - "For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples." When Simeon looked and saw Christ, He saw the salvation of God. But what does this mean in depth; what does this mean in detail to us who this morning would be saved and be strong when we are Christians? Simeon saw what we truly need to see. Let me make 4 observations on these verses.

1st- He saw in Jesus all True and Lasting Consolation. (Verse 25)

Simeon is described for us as being a man who was just and devout, and waiting for the Consolation of Israel. The word Consolation is *paraclesis* in the Greek. *Paracletos* is the word often used in the New Testament for the Holy Spirit; the Comforter. Christ is described for us in this verse as being Comfort or Consolation itself. Christ is the substance or matter of all true and lasting Consolation; the Holy Spirit is the One who applies all true and lasting comfort to the soul of the believer. What Simeon was doing was waiting for the appearance of Christ to the Jewish nation.

"Come Thou long expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free, from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in Thee." "Israel's strength and Consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art; dear Desire of every Nation, joy of every longing heart."

Many millions of Jews from many generations had longed to see what this man with his physical eyes would see that day. Consolation was greatly needed by Israel now that so many generations had come and gone, looking for the fulfillment of the Promises of the Messiah. Consolation is needed when something

has long been looked for and not been found or realized. Consolation is also needed if something has been lost and we have been disappointed. A person who loses in a game may receive a consolation prize. They have lost in a definite way but they still have the prize. Isaac lost his mother, Sarah, whom he dearly loved and missed, but he was comforted (consoled) when he was able to see Rebecca being brought to him by Abraham's servant, from afar; and when he was able to take her into his mother's tent as his wife. Israel had lost much in the way of blessing, because of so much sin in her history. It is a sorrow and a shame and a loss what sin does in our hearts and lives. So much blessing is missed, so much good left undone, so much dishonor is brought to God. But still there is comfort, consolation, and hope for those who see and believe in Christ. Simeon knew; and he realized that many would be saved; many would rise up out of the muck and mire of sin because of the Mighty work that the Lord Jesus would do in the Salvation of sinners. There would be great and abounding Consolation given to a grieving nation which had so little righteousness or righteous people in it.

You and I also need to see that we have lost our original righteousness. We lost it when Adam sinned in the garden of Eden. In Adam's fall we lost many wonderful aspects of the beautiful image of God in which he was created. The image of God's righteousness, His holiness, and His truth which had been built right into the soul of Adam. By his sin, he defaced and marred that image. The inclination to do what pleased God was gone. And this image, ruined by sin, was passed down to every child descended from him through the natural generation of children by their parents. We are all born in sin and in a short time we come to practice what is in our hearts. We do not want to keep God's Word or His holy commandments by nature any longer. If we are religious, we want to stand in our own righteousness and we insist that we do not need to be converted and receive the perfect righteousness of God. We think that our religious works; our going to church, our prayers, our penances, our taking the sacraments, and our engaging in good works will be that which merits favor with God. Truly we are deceived in this. Even the best of our righteousness and religious efforts falls far short of the glory and perfections of our Great and Holy God. We must fall down to hell and lie down in the torments of that awful place forever - except - we see the Lord's Christ by faith. Do you see Christ by faith? Simeon saw him physically and held him in his arms. But you and I see Him by faith as He is revealed to us in the Scriptures. And when we look to Him in faith; all that we lost begins to come back...a work begins in our heart to once again restore the fallen image and to lift it up to be like Christ our Savior and Lord. Much was lost, but in Christ there is something greater even than original righteousness that has come to us...a Perfect and Complete Righteousness, a Perfect legal Standing, and a New Heart; a mind being transformed by the power which comes to us from the Risen Christ! Christ has

fulfilled God's Law perfectly. There is nothing left incomplete. There is nothing that was left undone. His is a Perfect Righteousness worked out on behalf of every sinner that receives Him. What a Consolation it is to know that when we see Him by faith, that we are saved. And when we see Him face to face someday, we shall be Perfect and Holy like Him! We shall eventually be greater in an established personal righteousness than Adam ever was. Christ stood where Adam failed. Christ's righteousness is not only imparted to the believer, it is also being cultivated by grace in the heart of the believer. This is why the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2: 16 breaks out into a doxology of praise and prayer, "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work." Simeon saw that in Christ all this would come to every heart that rests upon Him.

Now 2ndly- Simeon saw and understood that revelation is necessary to seeing the Lord's Christ. (Verse 26)

Simeon had it revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he saw the Lord's Christ. Now this kind of revelation (direct prophetic revelation) does not take place in our day. We do not need it., but these people did need it in the infancy of the New Testament Church. But what we do have and what we must have if we are to see the gospel as true, and to see Christ's work take place in our hearts; the one thing essential for our salvation is to have revelation come to our minds. We must have our minds illumined to the truth of the Scriptures, to our need to receive the words of Jesus and the Apostles so that we might be saved and have guidance for our lives. Simeon had received revelation; the very word of God to him. You are receiving written revelation-the very Word of God to you this morning. But you must pray - "Lord open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things out of Your law." Have you come to see this blessed and wonderful work of the Spirit is not only necessary to becoming a Christian, but also to living the Christian life?

"I know not how God's Spirit moves convincing men of sin, revealing Jesus through the Word, creating faith in Him." Hymn # 712 Trinity Hymnal

"The Spirit breathes upon the Word to bring the truth to light. Precepts and promises afford a sanctifying light."

"The hand that gave it still supplies the gracious light and heat; His truths upon the nations rise; they rise, but never set."

"A glory guilds the sacred page, Majestic like the sun: it gives a light to every age; it gives but borrows none." Hymn # 258 Trinity Hymnal

It is revelation. Look at Matthew 11: 25-27. "At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.'" "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father." "Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Revelation comes to babes, not those who are wise in their own eyes; not to those who are careful not to commit themselves to Christ! No one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. The beauty and glory of Christ, and the truth about His grace and His Deity, and the absolute necessity to believe in the Son for our coming to know God is a revelation of God Himself to the minds of sinners such as you and I. If the Father does not draw us to Jesus we do not see His perfect beauty in Holiness. We do not see His desirability that he become our Savior. We do not see His suitability as a Savior for our sins. And then Jesus must will to reveal the Father; His holiness, His Wisdom, His power and right to judge all men, His love and compassion and mercy and grace which are only found in Jesus Christ. These things must be revealed for a person to be saved from their sins. All things have been delivered to Christ by the Father.

Simeon had it revealed to him and he was led by the Spirit into the temple at just the right time. Is it not a wonderful thing to contemplate; that this dear man who had waited all of his life to see the Lord's Christ, was led by the Spirit into the Temple at that very time when His parents had brought him there. There was no mistake; there was no chance of Simeon's missing Him. The Spirit would make sure of this. And it is also true of the salvation of all of God's Elect; those who will most definitely find salvation in Christ according to the Eternal purpose of God. You too, have been brought here today to this church - to the temple of the living God, to sit among the company of God's people - Christ's saints, and to worship with us, the One who has revealed Himself to many here this morning. But perhaps there are also many for whom the Word of God is a dead letter because it has not come with revelatory power. Oh may it do so! May He shine His glorious light upon the sacred page and into the dark places of your heart and mind! May you be led to see Christ here this day by faith!

For 3rdly- Simeon saw that salvation is embracing the Lord Jesus and finding peace when he did so. (Verse 28)

"Simeon", it says, "took the Lord Jesus up in his arms." He would like to hold God's salvation to Himself. And this, too, is the place where you will be led by faith if you would find salvation and peace with God. This is where you will find true contentment in every and all of your circumstances. This is where peace with God is found. Peace with God comes first by taking Christ into your spiritual

arms; receive Him to yourself this day, and you will find that He is yours; your Savior today, now, and forever! Jesus is not only beautiful as a little child; being sinless in that state as an infant. He is beautiful in all of His life, in all of His ways, in all of His words, in all of His teaching, and in all of His works. He is most beautiful in His going to the cross to die, for it is in His death that the beauty of His love for you, O sinner, is seen! It is so terribly beautiful that He would die for such a one as I, so that I would find that His grace would so definitely save me! Simeon had to give the child Jesus back to His mother, but you will never have to give Him back once you take Him in your spiritual arms. He is yours now; yours forever!

"Oh I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved's mine." "He brings a poor, vile sinner into His house of wine."

When you take Him in your arms and embrace Him, spiritually speaking, He will undertake to save you from all of your sins. He does not do this as a Child. He does this as the Risen, Glorified Man that now sits in the glory at the right hand of the Father. He will redeem you; He will buy you back from your lost estate. He will be your kinsman-redeemer. "He will bring you into the banqueting house, and His banner over you will be love." "His left hand will be under your head and His right hand will embrace you," as it says in Song of Solomon 2: 6. And you will be brothed to Him forever. You will say to Him, "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death...." In this case it is the love of Jesus Christ that was and is as strong as death. When it comes your time to die, you will care for nothing else, nor will you consider anything else but the love of Jesus Christ. "Many waters," the floods of trials and tribulations, and even death itself, "cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it." "If a man were to give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised." So too, once you have Christ in your heart, Christ in the arms of your heart, you will never let Him go. So do not hesitate to take Him. He will not kick and scream. He will not refuse your taking Him. He will sweetly reside in your spiritual arms and in your heart and you will find peace.

Then lastly- Simeon saw that no one can remain neutral with regard to the Lord's Christ. (Verses 31-34)

Verse 31 says that the Lord has this salvation "before the face of all peoples...." The Lord Jesus is not just the Savior of white Europeans or Americans, or only for the Jews. He has come to call sinners from all nations, tribes, tongues, and peoples. None ought to refuse Him whom God has sent. How great and precious and costly a gift the Father has given. And shall we refuse it? What you will do with God's Son will decide your eternal destiny. Listen to what Simeon states in

such an unreserved and prophetic way. "This Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which will be spoken against." Many in Israel would fall in relation to Jesus Christ, and many would rise. What does this mean? I believe that it is a statement related to the spiritual state of people in Israel in that day, but it is a truth which is just as applicable to our own day. Their eternal spiritual state before God would be determined by how they thought about Christ, and what they said and did in relation to Him. People would fall to eternal destruction and perdition who spoke against this sign of God's; that eternal salvation would come only for those who believed in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. How could it be otherwise? God had appointed it to be this way. God had destined Jesus to be "His salvation". But those who believed that their own religious works and their circumcision had brought them into favor with God, and were trusting in their own righteousness; they would stumble and fall unless they could be brought to see the error of their ways. Many did not see the error of their ways. They fell, and fell finally and eternally. But there were many others who believed in Christ, and they rose. They rose in their rising in favor and position before the Almighty and Holy God, being brought to this privileged position of being seen as righteous by God because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

All of this still applies to all men and women and children alive today. Let us ask ourselves whether we will stumble over Christ and fall because we do not want Him to save us or rule over us. Will we embrace Him and be raised from our deadness in sin to a new life of faith and following Him? It all comes down to this; you cannot remain neutral. You cannot ignore Him. It may be very painful at times to follow Christ; to see, as Mary did what it cost Him to deal with our sin. Mary knew that her son, the Lord Jesus was the Savior of the World. Why did they feel that they had to mistreat Him, and speak against Him, and persecute Him? Why did they have to falsely accuse Him when He was only trying to do good and teach people the way to God? Why did they have to degrade Him and scourge Him and nail Him to the cross? It was a sword that pierced through her own soul. It wounded and grieved her. But this is what He was sent for; this is why He came; to die for sinners. The precious, righteous, holy, loving Savior had to die for sinners. He had to die for you and me if we would ever be saved.

Let me ask you in closing this morning whether a sword has pierced your own heart in relation to Jesus having to suffer and to bleed and die in order that God could take away your sins? There are many sins in your heart and mine; sins which would never be dealt with, wounds in relation to sin which would never be cared for, griefs for sin and the shame of our sin that could never be atoned for, were it not for the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. O how we ought to mourn over our sinful hearts when we truly see how hurtful, how destruction, how God-

dishonoring they are. But O how we ought to rejoice when we see how lovingly, how deliberately, how selflessly Jesus went to the cross. Jesus' lowly birth, the things that He endured as the Prince of glory, and the death that died, is a sign to be spoken against by those who think that they do not need a Savior. But it is a sign to be gloried in by all who have come to know the power and the reality of Christ's grace coming to forgive them for all their sins. In Isaiah 8: 18 Christ says prophetically, "Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me!" We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion." Yes a sword may pierce our heart when we have to put sin to death in ourselves by the power of His Spirit. You look at yourself and you still find sensuality and pride and foolishness there in your heart. You find so little evidence of godly devotion and obedience to Christ. You find so little love toward God and men at work in your heart. And yet, rejoice, dear Christian; it is all found in perfection in Christ and it can and will be yours by faith. And as you begin to grow in holiness you will sometimes find that you yourself may be spoken against; you yourself and the godliness which you pursue and develop may become a sign to be opposed in your identification with Him, and His cause of meekness, truth, and righteousness. But it will all be very much worth the suffering. This is how we become a person of faith and a faithful person in God's sight. This is how we come to keep His commandments, how we come to be strong in the Lord and mature in wisdom and knowledge, and zealous for His kingdom and His righteousness. We find these things by looking to Jesus and seeing Him even as Simeon did. Take Him in your spiritual arms and hold him in your heart, and understand that everything that you need to live the Christian life is found in Him. It is all there in your Savior.