

## Simeon's Story

- I preached the Memorial Service for my Great Uncle Wingate Hauser nearly 20 years ago. He was 80 years old and had been in a nursing home for the last three years of his life. Never married, my Uncle Wingate lived mainly for two things: hunting and fishing. Once his health got to the place where he couldn't do that any more, he lost his will to live. I remember the first time I took the family by to see him in the nursing home. He looked so frail in that bed, not at all like the great outdoorsman I had known all my life. We chatted for a while and then I said, "We want to pray for you, Uncle Wingate. What would you like us to pray about?" His answer was immediate and to the point. "Pray that I will get out of this place," he said. He didn't want to be there. He wanted to go home. And although at first, "home" was 4524 Myrtle Ave in Winston-Salem, the longer he was in the nursing home, and the weaker he became, his desire for "home" changed. Uncle Wingate wanted to go HOME! For three years my children would pray during family devotions in the morning "that Uncle Wingate would go home." He finally got his wish, and I can see him now in my imagination, bald head shining in the light of God's glory, grinning ear to ear, wearing his hipwaders and fishing the streams that make glad the city of God!
  - But friends, my Uncle Wingate did not just waste away in that nursing home. No, quite the opposite. Though the outer man wastes away, the inner man is being renewed day by day, and at the memorial service 15 or 20 people stood to testify about the impact Uncle Wingate's life had on their own. Many of those shared stories of how he had ministered to them in the nursing home, talking about his faith or encouraging them with a smile. One of the ladies who worked at the home my Uncle Wingate nicknamed "Chainsaw." When one of his nephews asked him why one time, Uncle Wingate explained: "You know how you can be sitting out in the woods early in the morning and it's so quiet and peaceful? And then all of a sudden the peace is ripped away by the nerve-jangling sound of a chainsaw? Well, that's what it's like every morning in my room when SHE comes in!" We laughed a lot at my Uncle's memorial service. And I thought about Uncle Wingate as I read in Luke's gospel about an old man named Simeon, who also did not "waste away" his last days on earth. Instead, like my Uncle Wingate, he was waiting for something very important.
  - Luke 2:25-35
  - Let's look at what Simeon was doing, why he was doing it, and how God was glorified in it.
1. What was Simeon doing?
    - ***...and this man was righteous and devout, waiting...***
    - Simeon was not wasting, he was waiting. He was not wasting away or wasting time, he was waiting. Some people think, "Waiting is a waste of time! Seize the day! Don't just stand there, do something! Do something, even if it's wrong. If you're waiting on me, you're backing up!" We have heard them all, and we have probably used them all. We don't want to wait. Not for a stoplight. Not for Christmas day. Not for a husband or wife.

Not for a clear word from the Lord about a job or a place to live. Not for anything! But I want you to see that if Simeon had been doing anything *but* waiting, it would have been a sin and a waste! What if Simeon had gotten impatient and gone off to play games for the rest of his life? What if Simeon had gotten depressed and just closed himself off in his little townhouse in Jerusalem somewhere? Either way he would be wasting time, not waiting. What if he had just decided on his *own* which child in Jerusalem was the Messiah? Can you imagine the confusion and the problems that would have caused? That too would have been a waste. But Simeon was committed to waiting on the Lord.

- History records that many people made some of their greatest contributions to society after the age of 60. JRR Tolkien published the first volume of "The Lord of the Rings" at 62. Noah Webster completed a little volume called the American Dictionary at 66. At 69, Hudson Taylor was still vigorously working on the mission field, opening up new territories in Indochina. Galileo made his greatest discovery when he was 73. Grandma Moses started painting at 76 after her fingers became too crippled from arthritis to do her favorite handwork, embroidery. She created more than 1,000 paintings in 25 years and died at 101. When Caleb was 85, he took the stronghold of the giants. God never intends for us to retire from spiritual activity. The Bible says we can "still bring forth fruit in old age." My mom was 70 years old when my Dad died. She could have closed up shop, and simply waited to die, as sometimes happens with spouses who love each other. But I can honestly say that my mom's ministry to the church and to her family and friends was multiplied in the past 15 years. As I said at her funeral, my sweet mom taught me how to live until you die, and she taught me how to die well.
- The great evangelist George Whitefield was relating the difficulties of the gospel ministry to some friends. He said that he was weary of the burdens and was glad that his work would soon be over and that he would depart this earthly scene to be with Christ. The others admitted having similar feelings -- all except one, a Mr. Tennant. Noting this, Whitefield tapped him on the knee and said, "Well, Brother Tennant, you are the oldest among us; do you not rejoice to think that your time is so near at hand when you will be called Home?" The old man answered bluntly that he had no wish about it. When pressed for something more definite, he added, "I have nothing to do with death. My business is to live as long as I can, and as well as I can, and serve my Savior as faithfully as I can, until He thinks it's time to call me Home." Whitefield accepted that word as a gentle rebuke from the Lord, and it helped him go on with his work calmly and patiently.
- Vance Havner said, "Simply wait on him. So doing, we shall be directed, supplied, protected, corrected, and rewarded."
- Eugene Peterson wrote, "Waiting in prayer is a disciplined refusal to act before God acts."

## 2. Why was Simeon waiting?

- Because he wanted to see something the Lord had promised! Verse 26, "It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." What an incredible thing. This was 33 years before Pentecost. But this righteous man of God had heard from the Holy Spirit, and he believed that word, and he

would not be turned away from it. He would not have peace until he had seen the Christ. He was not satisfied just going to his grave like the other elderly folks in Jerusalem. Like Anna, Simeon had an inconsolable secret from the Lord. He was not going to settle for anything less. You might say, "I wish the Lord would give me a word like that, a promise I could hold onto, something to look forward to like that." He has! The Word is filled with promises for God's people. Read them and believe them. It was the promise that heaven waits for those who die in Christ that gave Mom courage and even joy in her last days. She knew what Paul said was true, "To live is Christ and to die is gain." She believed with all her heart that what Jesus spoke to Mary and Martha was true for her as much as it was for these sisters who were grieving their brother's death. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" We will never die. We go to sleep here and wake up there, because to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, if we are in Christ. The birth of this one who brought us salvation had just happened, and Simeon was waiting for its fulfillment.

- Scripture records that out of the thousands who lived in Jerusalem at that time, only two recognized the most important event that the world had ever seen. These two seasoned saints, Simeon and Anna, saw what millions had longed to see.
- But what did Simeon see? He saw Jesus, and proclaimed...
- **For my eyes have seen YOUR salvation...** The only salvation is God's salvation. All others are cheap imitations! Empty promises that leave us in our sin. But Simeon understands Who he is holding. And he breaks forth into praise as he sees what Isaiah prophesied that every nation would see and the ends of the earth would see. "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. (Isaiah 52:10)
- One of the nurses at the retirement home came to see Wingate during his last day. She shared with us at his memorial service that when she walked into his room, she knew that he would die that day. She talked to him for a while, but he was too weak to respond. As she got ready to leave her shift, she said, "Wink, I'll see you in the morning." She knew she wouldn't, and he did too. My Uncle Wingate looked at her reprovably, and she quickly said, "Well, whether I see you here or I see you on the other side, I will see you in the morning!" Last Saturday night, when I left Hospice at around 7pm, I kissed Mom and said, "I love you, Mom. You can go be with Jesus. And I will see you in the morning."
- It was with THAT hope that Simeon held the Savior and beheld his salvation. What was Simeon doing? Waiting, not wasting. Why was he waiting? To see the promised Messiah, to see the **light for revelation to the Gentiles**. To see the **glory of God's people, Israel**.

### 3. How was God glorified in it?

- **God is always glorified in his people who wait on him.**
- As John Piper says, *God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.*
- God was glorified through Simeon's praise. He was glorified through his testimony. He was glorified through his prophecy. But most of all, I think God was glorified through

Simeon's quiet obedience. He was satisfied in God enough to wait, to listen to the Spirit, and then to obey his leading. Simeon was never mentioned before or since in Scripture. You might say he played a very minor part in the grand scheme of things. Just like my Uncle Wingate and my mom. There will be no books or songs written about them. But does that mean that what they did is insignificant? No. God was glorified because they each lived well. But perhaps more than that, he was glorified because they each died well.

- My Uncle Wingate's last day and my mom's last day were the same: quiet, peaceful. And Simeon's death must have been as well: ***Lord, now you are letting Your servant depart in peace.***
- Prayer
- **Communion**
- Greet One Another