

Simeon: Ready to Go Luke 2:29

Simeon is introduced to us by God in Luke 2:25-35, and if it wasn't for that introduction, he would be like untold billions of others throughout human history that were only known by those closest to them during their lives; and who died without leaving a trace.

Even if God hadn't added him to the Biblical record, and even if we had never read about Simeon, what he was will last forever. Simeon was an Old Testament saint, who lived in hope waiting for the coming Christ by faith; and died in faith ready to go when ever God's time came. Ready to go, what a way we all should live.

Simeon sends a message from his life that extends far from the Christmas scenes, reaching all the way to the very end of each of our lives. Simeon was a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led servant; and his life is a model for each of us.

Really Never Ready to Live Until Ready to Die

Simeon was READY to go. He confessed that in Luke 2:29. And what does life look like when you are ready? He looked at all of life as a loading dock where he was busily loading a ship for sailing home. Life was lived to get ready for the cruise, all the prep time before the real event was just that: prep time, not the real goal.

In one short verse, Simeon explains that being ready to go on the cruise called Heaven has three distinct parts. From his life we get a measuring stick for our own lives. We get a guide for trip preparation. Join me for a glimpse into one of the most fascinating and fruitful lives of the first century.

God surrounded the Birth of His Son with some of the most instructive passages in the Bible. The story of Christmas is an inspired collection of pictures captured in His Word.

Each one of the details we know of Christ's Birth are intimate scenes experienced by only a few, and for just a moment; but enjoyed by all of God's children ever since. As we turn to Luke 2:22-35 we can all observe the scene surrounding Christ's birth from a new perspective, as a nearly six-week-old Jesus was on His way in the arms of His parents to be dedicated in Jerusalem's Temple. Joseph and Mary would undoubtedly been walking up the entrance called the Southern Steps. I love to teach this passage standing in the midst of a group of Holy Land pilgrims with Bibles opened. It is one of those moments when you can feel the very place the event happened in God's Word! This is an example of:

Intimate Moments Full of Life Truths

Around Christ's parents would have been the tens of thousands of pilgrims who each day streamed in and out of that astounding structure. The Temple Mount was a 40-acre platform that could easily contain a quarter-of-a-million people standing on feast days. Herod enlarged the platform Solomon had built and surrounded it with one of the greatest colonnades of the ancient world. Among this forest of gleaming white 60' carved limestone pillars, moved the rivers of worshippers who filled the Temple each day in Jerusalem.

Luke captures the moment when just two of these thousands of worshippers met in a Divine appointment. The transcript of their meeting has been preserved through the inspiration of God, and comes to us as part of God's record of Christ's birth.

Please follow along in Luke 2:22-35. As we read we'll meet Simeon and marvel with him at baby Jesus. And then as we listen, the message God wants us to hear comes through the words Simeon spoke as he magnified God for sending Jesus into the world.

*Luke 2:22-35 Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"), 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." 25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and **the Holy Spirit was upon him**. 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. 27 So **he came by 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, 28 he took Him up in his arms and **blessed God** and said: 29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant **depart in peace**, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel." 33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against 35 "(yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."*

Pray

Tonight, if Christ's coming, or an accident He allows, or a disaster He chooses doesn't intervene—each of us in this room will live to be nearly 80 years old. Some of us here may have exceeded that length of days, but for the vast majority, there are many years of days left for us. Since many of us will end our pilgrimage alone with our partner

preceding us, how will we finish well old and alone for some of those years?

Simeon's Choice to Hope in God

Simeon models what it means to **make choices to walk in the power of God's Spirit**. Note the concentration of terms familiar to us on this side of the Cross in the age of Christ's Church, but very uncommon in these end of the Old Testament times Simeon lived in. Three clear statements of the Spirit of God's work in his life:

- v. 25b ***the Holy Spirit was upon him.***
- V. 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.*
- V. 27 *So **he came by the Spirit***

Walking in the Spirit insured for Simeon—a life that mattered, a life that counted, and that pleased Jesus. Walking in the Spirit gives us a life that pleases God, and a life that is “ready to go” at any moment.

A Spirit filled life that gets Christ's well done, and that pleases God is a CHOICE. It is a chosen path. What pathway are you choosing to live?

Before we go through the elements of Simeon's song of praise to the Lord, step back and think about his life with me. If Simeon was old (although the text doesn't say that but it is implied) he must have had much to ponder.

- ***The Temptation of Bitter Memories:*** There were all the disappointments in his life he could choose to relive and feel the sting again and again;
- ***The Temptation of Fears and Anxieties:*** and then there were daily needs he could choose to worry over;
- ***The Temptation of Constant Hurts:*** and all the injustices of life around him he could choose to bemoan;
- ***The Temptation of Crippling Regrets:*** and of course if he was elderly he could choose to dredge up so many things from the past to regret.

But Simeon resisted in the Spirit's power each of these temptations; and he **chose** to not dwell on all the bumps that jolted him on life's rough ride.

Instead, God's Word notes that Simeon had made it a habit in his life to look at God's plans for his future with brightness and hope.

The secret of Simeon's walk was in those many little choices made by faith, to live in hope.

Hope led him to love the Lord more and more; and such love always pours out in worship and expectation for God. Thus we can see from these verses that worship and praise were natural for Simeon because God was at the center of his life.

Now we get to the heart of Simeon's spiritual walk. Simeon is an advertisement to us to:

Enjoy the Benefits of a Spirit-satisfied Life of Hope

Luke 2:28-35 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 "Lord, now **You are letting Your servant depart in peace**, According to Your word"; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel." 33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against 35 "(yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." NKJV

First, Simeon was ready to die at any moment v. 29: The word "depart" in the Greek has several meanings, and each of them tells us something about the death of a Christian.

Each of these pictures gives us a beautiful and comforting hope. Death is only the **start** of the greatest journey of our lives and involves **leaving behind** our slavery to sin, **taking down** our tent of our temporary earthly dwelling, and **setting sail** for our home beyond the stars.

- Depart can mean 'to release a prisoner' which speaks of our redemption from the slave market of sin. This aspect of salvation is the most frequent theme of the saints ("the redeemed") in Heaven. We like Simeon should celebrate that Christ's death has made us long to leave behind our slavery to sin.

John 8:32, 36 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." 36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

II Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

- Depart can also mean 'to untie a ship and set sail', and this is the picture Paul gives when he told Timothy "I am now ready to depart". We like Simeon should celebrate that Christ's death has made us long **to take down** our tent of our temporary earthly dwelling.

II Timothy 4:6-7 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. NKJV

- Depart finally speaks of 'taking down a tent' and this is the metaphor of Paul in II Corinthians 5:1-8 as he talks of his and our death being the laying aside of our

tents. We like Simeon should celebrate that Christ's death has made us long to **setting sail** for our home beyond the stars.

*2 Corinthians 5:1-8 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, **we have** a building from God, a house not made with hands, **eternal in the heavens**. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be **clothed with our habitation which is from heaven**, 3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, **that mortality may be swallowed up by life**. 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. NKJV*

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Spirit-filled Living Makes us Ready to Go

As God's people, we are not afraid of death because it only frees us from the burdens of this life and leads into the blessings of the next life.

God's Word promises us the greatest satisfaction possible in life through trusting and submitting to God's plan for our lives. Paul looked upon life as a race course with clear lines and markings so that he could know that he had stayed "on track" and was "finishing the course" that the Lord had laid out for him (II Tim. 4:6-7).

There is a course laid out by the Lord for each of our lives. We must strive to follow that path, and not run outside the lines and get "disqualified" (I Cor. 9:24-27). We must long to not "lose our reward" by straying from the specific plan God has for us in our lives (I Cor. 3:13-15). One of the clearest parts of our lives that God has mapped out is our death. We should think about that more than the day of our birth (Ecclesiastes 7:1) as Solomon was used by the Holy Spirit to remind us. So, Simeon was ready to go, and:

Second, Simeon saw Jesus as the Light for his life v. 32: "Simeon referred to Jesus as "a light for revelation."

Few metaphors capture Jesus' mission as well. Light makes the stillness come alive; light settles fear; light reveals mystery; light enables relationships. Jesus is God in the flesh, eternal light breaking into a spiritually dark world. Jesus is your light. He is not a distant sun, remote and driven by physics' laws. Jesus is the light of your life—your

courage, your enabler. Start each day by turning on the light—a moment of meditation on God’s Word, a prayer of dedication to live for God all day”.¹

So. Simeon was ready to go, he saw Jesus as his light, and:

Simeon made the choice to praise God through life. Look at v. 35. How did Simeon praise God? Notice how he “blesses” those around him. He is not trapped by his situation (weak, and elderly as he may have been), rather he is choosing to praise God.

Praise is a choice, and in Simeon’s life it had to start by a conscious decision to push aside all of his problems and complaints in order to see and then celebrate God’s generosity. In those days just getting daily necessities took much more work than we are used to. So as he made it through each day, Simeon learned to thank God for his “daily bread” as Jesus would call it. But the clearest choice this passage reveals is that Simeon had chosen to reorient his heart around God’s message in His Word and the priorities that the Bible taught him.

Simeon chose to live in hope. He walked in step with the Spirit of God, and his life was an offering of praise. That is the beautiful portrait that God’s Word gives us of this man we only see here in the entire Bible. I hope he will become an example and inspiration for many of us to also live in hope, energized by God to live this life of praise.

As you hold God’s Word in your hands, let this truth overflow into your mind, your heart, and your life—nothing is as bleak as the life of an unbeliever. They must live only for today because they have no firm hope in God’s promises of a glorious tomorrow.

With the promises of God to cling to, every day has hope and good cheer. As believers we know the truth of the Scriptures that nothing can separate us from God’s love—neither old age, nor grim circumstances. Remember today that nothing but your own wrong choices can keep you from God’s comfort.

He is sufficient for our needs today and forever. Allow God’s Spirit to use Simeon’s example to energize you to look ahead to God’s great plan for each day. Choose to live in hope one day at a time like Simeon.

Now as we walk back through the text, look at these elements we can glean from the life of Simeon. We could call these elements to insure that you live each day of your life as fully as possible for Jesus. I call these the...

The Pillars of a Godly Walk

Luke was guided by the Holy Spirit to get not only the events of Christ’s dedication in the Temple, he also gets the very words that were spoken. Listen to this mighty Old Testament saint as he is introduced and described by God.

¹Barton, Bruce B. ; Veerman, David ; Taylor, Linda Chaffee ; Osborne, Grant R.: *Luke*. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 1997 (Life Application Bible Commentary), S. 51

First, like Simeon live the Spirit-filled life God offers:

Luke 2:25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and **the Holy Spirit was upon him.**

Simeon surrendered to the control of another. That is what a servant is. The One he surrendered to, was God. God controls surrendered people by filling them with His Spirit. Simeon lived the Spirit-filled life that God offers.

- How much do you really know about the Holy Spirit?
- Are you aware of His Presence in your heart and life each day?
- Do you rely upon Him to lead and guide you?

Next, like Simeon find the Spirit-illuminated life God offers:

Luke 2:26 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.

Simeon knew what God wanted him to do in life. He was confident that the Lord had a plan and he rested by faith in God will for his life. Simeon sought to follow God's plan. He said not my way but yours. Simeon found the Spirit-illuminated life God offers.

- Do you have that calm assurance that you are following the plan of God?
- Have you allowed the Lord to illumine His Word and open your eyes to see what He has planned for your life? The greatest joy in life comes from knowing and doing God's will for your life.

Thirdly, like Simeon rest in the Spirit-led life God offers:

Luke 2:27 So **he came by 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 knew that God wanted to show him the path, so he just set out to follow the Lord day-by-day. He knew the secret of Psalm 16:11 that God wants to guide us; and when we stay in step with Him we overflow with joy; and when we surrender to His authority we have endless delights. Simeon rested in the security of the Spirit-led life that God offers.

- Do you walk through life being consciously led by the Spirit? Being led by the Spirit is one of the evidences of salvation (Rom. 8:14), and we should be very conscious of His guiding work in our lives.

But the greatest message from this whole passage is that we like Simeon can have a:

Spirit-Filled Like

Look back at Luke 2:25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, **and the Holy Spirit was upon him.**

If we are truly saved, we have the Spirit. He lives within, we are His temple.

Do you really know about the Holy Spirit? The key chapters in the Bible to understand are—Galatians 5, Ephesians 5, Romans 8, and John 14-15. But more than anything else, the Spirit of God can totally alter the way we live; God's Spirit can change us into brand new people! We need to look again at the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. NKJV

Fullness of the Spirit is first described as **a change in our Internal Walk with God.** The Scriptures show us that a truly spiritual person will be growing in a visible way in each of these areas.

1. **LOVE** is the absence of selfishness. Can others trace my progress in expressing God's love? Am I less selfish and self-seeking than I was last month or last year?
2. **JOY** is the spiritual quality that releases us from circumstances. Because Love and self-centeredness can not coexist. Do those that know me and watch my life see me as a joyful person?
3. **PEACE** is the internal serenity that only God can give. Troubles are not absent. Rather, God is present! Has peace become more and more a way of life for you this year?

Secondly, we will see the Fruit of the Spirit in **a change in our Public Walk with Others.**

4. **LONGSUFFERING or PATIENCE** is the absence of personal irritation at the actions of others. Ask yourself, "Am I more patient than I was three months ago, or less?" If we are not increasing in patience it is only that we are not yielding and submitting to the Holy Spirit.
5. **KINDNESS** is a beautiful reflection of Christ's behavior in our lives. It is the absence of an abrasive manner in my dealings with people. Kindness will soften any word or act that might hurt another. Is my character showing an increasing tendency toward personal kindness in my way with others?
6. **GOODNESS** is being Godlike! It is the opposite of fallen humanity. Am I a visibly better person than last year? Do people see me doing good to all those around me?

Finally, we will see the Fruit of the Spirit in **a change in our Personal Choices we make**

7. **FAITHFULNESS** *is the idea here.* A trustworthy and dependable life. The kind of person that keeps their own life in order so that you can count on them. Am I making strides in reliability and dependability?
8. **GENTLENESS or MEEKNESS** *is the opposite of asserting ourselves.* What shape is my personal agenda in? Is it intact and my rights being defended? Or, is it in hopeless shape, crucified with Christ and fading?
9. **Self-control or DISCIPLINE** *is the mastery of the appetites and passions, especially the sensual ones.* The only force that can control or flesh is the Holy Spirit. Do others see me as graciously under the control of God's Spirit of Discipline?

Well, are they present? Are they growing? The proof is in how we are with our relationships

Simeon chose to live energized by God's Spirit of hope. He walked in step with the Spirit of God, and his life was an offering us praise. That is the beautiful portrait that God's Word gives us of this man we only see here in the entire Bible.

I hope Simeon will become an example and inspiration for many of us to also live in hope, energized by God to live this life of praise.

APPENDIX:

JESUS ASSURES US THAT DEATH FOR HIS CHILDREN IS ONLY A GOOD GRIEF

1 Corinthians 15:55

“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

I for one would like to have dying grace long before I need it! But the famous English preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon says that death is the last enemy to be destroyed, and we should leave him to the last. He adds:

Brother, you do not want dying grace till dying moments. What would be the good of dying grace while you are yet alive? A boat will only be needful when you reach a river. Ask for living grace, and glorify Christ thereby, and then you shall have dying grace when the time comes. Your enemy is going to be destroyed but not today. ...Leave the final shock of arms till the last adversary advances, and meanwhile hold your place in the conflict. God will in due time help you to overcome your last enemy, but meanwhile see to it that you overcome the world, the flesh and the devil².

Our greatest³ enemy is not death, but despair. Death is so limited. . .

It cannot cripple love,
It cannot shatter hope,
It cannot erode faith,
It cannot eat away peace,
It cannot destroy confidence,
It cannot kill friendship,
It cannot shut out memories,
It cannot silence courage,
It cannot invade the soul,
It cannot reduce eternal life,
It cannot quench the Spirit,
It cannot lesson the power of the resurrection.

...though the outward man perishes, yet the inner man is renewed day by day...we look not at the things which are seen, but at things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." II Corinthians 4:16 & 18

The Great Physician isn't expensive, but His work is priceless!

² Erwin Lutzer, One Moment after you die, electronic edition, n.d.

³ From a card designed by Pat Bartlett and sent to Bill Robinson as he died from a brain tumor May, 2000 in Tulsa.