

A Revelation of Christ

**Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on Lord's day
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by J. K. POPHAM

"And behold there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was upon him." (Luke 2:25)

The Old Testament Scriptures abound in prophecies respecting the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and notwithstanding the fact that certain intellectual men deplore what they call the tacking of the Old Testament upon the New, the Spirit-taught people of God are glad to receive the testimony in the Old Testament Scriptures to the wonderful promise of the coming of the Son of God; and it were a mercy for anyone of us by the Holy Spirit to get beyond the mere reading of corroborative portions of divine truth, having the same sealed home upon the heart by the Holy Ghost.

Some of God's people have dwelt upon the Old Testament Scriptures with real delight and turned to the New Testament with, if possible, a greater delight still as having beheld the fulfilment of the prophecy: "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." And I think particularly was the prophet Isaiah graciously led of the Spirit when in that 9th chapter of his he said, "For unto us," looking prospectively, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

Simeon, a just man, a man I should take it, whatever his calling may have been in life, a man as we say today, whose word would be his bond. It would be a good thing if that could be said of all that profess and call themselves Christians. A man whose walk among his fellows was honourable, his dealings equitable. A very big thing, and I wish we thought more about it today than we do. It is far more important that the church of God in her individual members should bear witness to these things, far more important than perhaps some of us imagine. But whatever he may have been in his outward walk he was a just man, was devout, so that he carefully observed the attendance upon the means of grace, went regularly to the temple, and I should think without a doubt was a careful reader of the Old Testament Scriptures. That was all to the good, if you will allow me to put it like that, and yet if that stood by itself it would not be sufficient. You noticed in the text the particular word "and the Holy Ghost was upon him." The Holy Ghost quickening his desires for the gracious fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies. He waited though he was a just man; and though he was a religious man he was conscious that the all-important thing, the crux of the whole matter of religion, was that he must see Christ. He saw the promise, and I doubt not that sometimes by faith he received it in the love of it; but he was anxious for the fulfilment of it and he waited; and in his waiting, by the power of the Holy Ghost it seems to me there would be no resting, not for a single moment, upon the uprightness of

his character and his honourable dealings with his fellowmen. Most needful indeed, and when we are rightly exercised by the Spirit of God, when He is not a latent power in our hearts; then do we walk tenderly and in His fear, fearing Him and eschewing evil. Neither did Simeon rest satisfied with the performance of his religious exercises which he passed through, but waited in anticipation and in real desire and need for the consolation of Israel, that is for Christ Himself. And whatever you and I may have of religion, and some have a good deal, they can talk very much and somewhat glibly; perhaps never at a loss to quote something which they think will be approved by others but the crux of the whole matter of religion is to have something personal by way of divine communication from Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of God.

Now let us look for a few minutes at the people, the character who is found today waiting for the consolation of Israel, or for Christ. He is a Spirit-taught man, and that is one of the biggest things under heaven that marks the great distinction; it draws the broad line of demarcation between the professor and the living child of God. And it were well for us to see again and yet again whether we have been favoured with this teaching by the Holy Ghost in the heart. It does not lay hold of a man's mind simply and solely; it powerfully affects the heart of a man. Some of us have known, if we are not gravely deceived, this work of the Holy Ghost in the heart. If the Holy Spirit has ever entered in our hearts and minds, there has been a discovery that we never dreamed of, we never thought of. It has been a discovery which has brought us down sooner or later into the dust of self-abasement, consciously and painfully to empty us of all our self-righteousness, though it springs up again and again; brought us down, weakened our strength in the way, made us know how un-presentable by nature we are in the sight of a holy and righteous God; made us go beyond a mere tacit assent to sin. "To see sin smarts but slightly." I should not think that there is a man or a woman here but would say they have seen it, seen it in themselves, seen it in their families, seen it in the community in which they live, see it in the nation, see it in the world. "To see sin smarts but slightly. To own with lip confession is easier still;" and may be each and all of us have gone so far as that, more or less. "But O to feel, cuts deep beyond expression!" And that is the work of the Holy Spirit, to teach us the real nature of sin before that God who cannot look upon unholiness or uncleanness with the least degree of lenience; before whom we are unholy and unclean throughout. It is something more than giving us a consciousness of our forlorn and ruined state. If the teaching of the Holy Ghost ended there, what a sorry plight you and I would be in today, would we not? It goes beyond that and in several degrees beyond that, and in one very great and marvellous degree beyond that. I have been more or less according to that word which Jesus Christ Himself spake to His disciples ere He left them: "In your goings abroad to preach the gospel to every creature," said He, "preach repentance toward God;" and so the Holy Ghost works repentance in the hearts of men. May I ask, when were you last favoured to get down in the dust of self-abasement with a sorrowing broken heart on account of your condition before Him? Have you never been blessed as you have looked at that word in which God said, "I will look to this man who is poor and of a contrite heart and trembles at My word?" (Isa. 66:2) And have you never longed to be that character upon whom God would look in mercy, to whom He would ultimately come and graciously reveal Himself in the power of his atoning blood?

"A contrite heart and broken,
God will not give to ruin."

Some of my sweetest moments have been when I have been favoured to fall down at the footstool of mercy with a soft and broken heart, and yet not without hope in the mercy of God. My dear friends, be careful lest you belittle a broken heart. To sorrow after a godly sort is a very great favour indeed.

Then the Holy Ghost will lead this waiting man even beyond this point; He will discover to him the suitability of Christ for his case, and that is a mercy. If He left you with a knowledge of sin and brokenness on account of the same, why then you would be in a very pitiable state and condition, would you not? "Weary," says one:

"Weary of wandering from the Lord,
And now made willing to return,
I hear and bow me to the rod,
For now not without hope I mourn;
There is an Advocate above,
A Friend before the throne of love."

And the Holy Spirit's office is to take of the blessed and adorable Person of Christ and discover to us His suitability for our poor sin-bitten cases. Have you never seen Him thus? Has He never been presented to your eye of faith and you have felt, "O if I could but get at Him!" You felt like the woman who had the issue of blood, that you could press through everything that might hinder if you were but favoured to touch but the hem of His garment. The suitability of Christ to poor, perishing, needy sinners is a very rich thing; to have this sight of Christ in His suitability is a very big thing indeed. How sometimes the man thus seeing Him is not only willing, but is anxious to let everything go, that he may but apprehend Him, for which purpose he himself has been apprehended. That is a nice line I often think about:

"To know my Jesus crucified,
By far excels all things beside."

And so he is after this very thing as he discovers the suitability of the Son of God. He discovers His suitability in a two-fold sense or even more than that. In His word Jesus Christ said: "I came to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10) "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:32) He said: "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28) It is so sweet sometimes to see the blessed Son of God in the sweet words which He has spoken, and which words are so encouraging to the poor man who feels his need of Him.

And then again, there is a movement towards Him in faith. Faith is a real thing. It lays hold of the things of God which carnal reason would reject. It lays hold of God Himself in the Person of Christ, which the great professors of today declare to be an impossibility. Christ is very real to the eye of faith, and so in our waiting sometimes we become almost you will not misunderstand the word I was going to say, almost impatient. Some of God's people have waited so long a time weeks, months, years. Just look, my dear friends, for a moment at the wonder of being held on at his business for so long a time. "Give me Christ or else I die," has been the broken petition of

your heart many and many a time, and yet you have not had that sweet discovery of Christ in the power of His atoning blood. Listen a minute.

"How oft have sin and Satan strove
To rend my soul from Thee, my God."

What, have you stood in your own power these many years? Have you pursued this one course in your own strength and wisdom through these numerous years? You have been kept undoubtedly at this thing by the power of God, otherwise you must have been overcome long ago. O it is a mercy to be held at it! How sometimes you have feared lest you would never come to this revelation, lest you should never see the Lord's Christ; and yet again prayer and confession have been stimulated and you wrestled. It is no little thing to have the grace of wrestling prayer. I was speaking to some friends of mine last night, and in course of conversation I thought of an experience which I had particularly years ago when they first knew me. My prayer was this: "Make haste, O God, make haste." I wanted Him so badly in the power of His precious atoning blood, and I did not believe for a moment that He was offended when in such broken, but simple petition I poured out my soul before Him and wrestled with Him. He is not against the man who has got a case which so lays hold of Him at times that by the Holy Ghost he says: "Make haste, O God, make haste." It is such an easy matter to sit under the gospel and to sit approvingly; not to hear a word from which you dissent, and sometimes even go so far as to say, "I wish I had got it, I wish I knew it," and yet all the while to be destitute of that wrestling prayer which Jacob-like would say: "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me."

Well, you know that was not the end of it. There is a consummation, there is a sweet outcome of all this waiting. It may be with tears, it may be wrestling hard sometimes with sin and doubts and fears; these are real in the experience of God's people. But you know it is a sweet thing to be enabled to wait till such time as the discovery is made to us. If not lately, at least years ago, I have mentioned from this pulpit how the Lord revealed Himself to me. I will not go into my own case this morning again, but let us look at Simeon who waited for the consolation of Israel. He waited for Christ who was real to him in the fullness of His mercy and grace, in the fullness and power of His atoning blood and justifying righteousness, and he waited. And one day (if some of the half-timers in the church today did but know, if some of those who say, "Well, I might as well remain at home and read a sermon;" if they did but know), Simeon one day went up to the temple by the Spirit. You see, the Holy Ghost was in it, you cannot take the Holy Spirit away from it all. All leadings and teachings which rightly issue in a sight and knowledge of Christ are most distinctly by the power of the Holy Spirit within us. So one day he went up to the temple by the Spirit, the same maybe as you have come into this place sometimes, a poor and weak and tried and exercised man. You came by the Spirit with some real heartfelt petition, and ere you were aware of it, it may be in the reading of the word, or preaching, or singing of the hymn, or the prayer, you received something which for the time being at least satisfied you and you went out of the house of God blessing and praising Him. Simeon went into the temple, and while he was there a woman and her husband came in and she had got a little Babe in her arms. I do not know, we have no Scripture authority for believing that Mary in her appearance was any different from any ordinary woman, no halo about her head; a very humble consistent lovable woman, I should say, that was the beginning and the end of it; and she had got a Babe in her arms. Probably a very common thing to be seen in the temple in those days, but still the Holy

Ghost was upon Simeon and He directed him straightway to the Lord. And yet he did not say a word which would lead us to suppose for a moment that he had any particular regard for Mary; but he beheld the Child, and there was a whisper in his heart: "This is He of whom the prophets have foretold; this is He, the glorious Son of God; this is He born of the virgin Mary; this is He born for the rise and fall of many in Israel; this is He, the glorious Redeemer of the church, the Justifier of the ungodly." Simeon could not hold back any longer, he took this Babe in his arms, and the issue of it was that which some of us in a little measure know. As he held this Child in his arms and by faith beheld Him as the salvation of God, he said: "It is enough; now Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." A wonderful sight, a blessed sight, something beyond all expression!

Have you never in the arms of faith received this blessed and adorable Son of God? Do not you remember how one day you came in here burdened with a load of sin and harassed with tormenting doubt, and your loved Pastor opened his mouth in a sweet setting forth of the suitability, of the willingness, of His Son of God to come into your case, and ere you were aware of it you received Him in the power of His precious blood? The sight is never to be forgotten. The sweetness may depart, but whilst memory retains her seat such a time will ever remain with you, though you cannot command the power again. Now I know what this is, and I dare say some of you do, how by faith one morning when you were mourning over your sad state, by faith in a moment it was revealed to you; He was revealed to your faith, revealed in the power and efficacy of His precious blood. You knew indeed what cleaning meant, and healing too. So that word I quoted a few minutes back was true in your experience, "To know my Jesus crucified, by far excels all things beside." Nothing for the moment was to be compared with Him. "O my Jesus, Thou art mine, with all Thy grace and power!" The atonement revealed, made known in the poor sinner's heart and conscience: "Now if we search to find our sins, our sins can ne'er be found." The crux of the whole matter is this, that the poor and fearing and doubting, those who write bitter things against themselves and sometimes fear they will never come to a knowledge of Christ in the power of His blood the crux of the whole matter is, that sooner or later they come to this spot and they see and receive Jesus in the arms of faith, the mighty Antidote of all the wretchedness and death they felt prevailing. Now what was the effect? You did not go out of this place desponding that particular morning, did you? You did not go home without those about you seeing there was some great change wrought in you, did you? Did you not say to your wives, "I am the happiest man in Brighton?" Did not you say to your husband "I have got Him and I am blessed to all the intents of bliss; I know Him, I know Jesus Christ and Him crucified?"

If it was a blessed experience for Simeon, it was a blessed experience for you when you had it, for it was certainly a blessed experience for me when I had it. Consolation, peace which passeth all understanding, was made known to us. We joyed with a joy unspeakable and full of glory at such a time. I do not know of anything to be compared with this. O Simeon, to think that by the Holy Ghost thou shouldest set forth such a sweet and blessed truth, and that the people of God in succeeding ages should be favoured to have a similar experience to thine now in embracing the Lord's Christ! Christ is the consolation, not only in the forgiveness of sin, but in that glorious justifying righteousness of His. "We are justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:39) "He died for our sins, He rose again for our justification, (Rom. 4:25) and He wrought such a glorious robe of righteousness, the imputing of which to the sinner, the enveloping of which for we are enveloped in the righteousness of Christ

from head to foot, the whole of God's church is but I mean some of God's people are so experimentally. We know something of that truth: "Bold shall I stand in that great day clothed in the righteousness of Christ." How otherwise can God the eternal Father say, "Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot or wrinkle or any such thing in thee?" (Songs 4:7; Eph. 5:27) Covered the wounds which sin has made for ever, absolutely covered, to stand before Him complete as we stand in the Person and finished work of Jesus Christ. Child of God, what are your trials, what are your afflictions and distresses, inward and outward, spiritual or providential? If you have Christ what else matters? If you have Him you have all things and abound.

I will never forget how for three months in the goodness of God I walked in the experience of this word, after I had had this sense of forgiveness and Christ's righteousness put upon me. I remember distinctly in the midst of outward trials walking in the strength of this word: "The Lord is my Shepherd;" I shall be well supplied...

"He that has made my heaven secure,
Will here all good provide;
While Christ is rich, I can't be poor;
What can I want beside?"

A hope centred in that blessed and adorable Person. One day all will be past, all the trials and afflictions, and you will be accepted in the Beloved.

"The consolation of Israel" is in heaven now and the needs and condition, the state and condition of His people are well known to Him, and it is no little consolation to believe I know this part of myself; it is not what I have read in any magazine, or in the life and experience of any other man, I know it for myself. It is a wonderful line that expresses a truth: "A Man there is, a real Man;" and the other line: "That human heart He still retains;" you know the whole of it. Is it not an experience with many of God's people that when they are passing through the waters or through the fires and all beneath them seems to give way, that then by the eye of faith they look upwards and behold the glorious consolation of Israel in heaven, that blessed human heart of His towards people on earth? He does not forget His people. In that glorious state above His heart moves with tender pity and compassion towards His tried and exercised people who are upon earth; and I am glad of it, and I think I know it for myself; and I have known it like this sometimes, when trials have been so pressing that I could not speak. Because you know this, that God's people cannot always draw near to a throne of grace with any nicely set, orderly set sentences. It is with the heart, sometimes the upward lifting of the eye, and it is sometimes the silent tear which nobody else can see when you are quiet. But I have known sometimes when walking about the street and in my own garden, what it is to feel the pressure and weight of things, and in a moment to stop and have just a faith's view of Christ in heaven and to say, "O Lord!" just like that, and to have some sweet intimation in return that He sees and knows and cares; and it is a wonderful consolation for the tried and afflicted people of today. He is in heaven but His heart is toward His children who are upon earth. It does not mean that you simply believe in His compassion and pity; it does not mean that. It means you experience it, that underneath are the everlasting arms. But when thou passest through the fires thou art not burned. By His wonderful grace and mercy thou camest through the waters and through the fires, and they have not hurt thee or harmed thee in the least. But God by bringing thee through has accomplished two very particular things for

those who know it. The first is some sweet discovery to these poor tried and exercised men of His faithfulness: "Though ye believe not, God abides faithful," faithful in Christ. Having called thee, having discovered His mercy to thee, He holds thee on, He will bring thee through. And the other thing is this He gets to Himself praise, if you have been in some particular affliction or sorrow and you have been mercifully brought out, sustained in it and brought out in God's time. Did you not know what it was to fall down and "weep to the praise of the mercy you found?" He gets Himself praise and it belongs to Him, and the heart moves and makes melody to His dear and precious name.

This word in closing whate'er your state, your condition may be, wait. "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage and He shall strengthen thy heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord." Amen.