

Simeon took him into his arms and praised God. He said,

²⁹Lord, you now dismiss your servant in peace, according to your word,

³⁰because my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹which you have prepared before the face of all people,

³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel. (EHV)

Theme: The Lord Acts According to his Word.

Promises—we all make plenty of them. “I promise to take out the trash. I promise to finish that report right after lunch. I promise to be faithful to you as long as we both shall live. I promise to continue in the word and sacrament after my confirmation. I promise I will come to church more often.” Some promises we keep, many others we don’t. Is the problem with the promise itself, or is it in the person who makes the promise?

We aren’t the only ones who make promises. God also makes many promises. But the difference is that God always keeps his promises. God always acts according to his Word.

And yet, we often doubt God’s promises. Why is that? Well, it all depends, the reasons vary. Perhaps it’s because the evidence seems stacked the promises being kept. God promises to take care of us and to provide for us—but look at everything that is happening all around the world because of a virus! Maybe you are suffering in some other way—financially, with your health, and so on. How can we say that God keeps such promises when it clearly seems as if he doesn’t even know that you exist, let alone care about you or love you? Or maybe it’s his promise to come again—and come again soon. But as we’ve talked a lot about lately, it’s been 2000 years since making that promise, how can we say that God keeps all his promises, when he hasn’t kept this one? Or maybe it’s not lack of evidence that leads you to doubt God’s promises, but your feelings and emotions. Take, for example, the ultimate promise of free and full forgiveness of sins and an eternal life to come—maybe you doubt because you have committed some horrible sin recently, or your many sins in your younger days, and you wonder how God can honestly forgive you, let alone take you to heaven—you feel as if your sins are just too great.

Another reason why we often doubt is because we are used to people not keeping their promises. Others fail to keep promises they made to us all the time. And we’re no better. We make promises to our spouses, our children, or employers, and so on—maybe we do so with the best of intentions and yet we fail to keep them for whatever reasons. And because of our experience with so many promises not being kept, we often doubt that God keeps his.

But Simeon didn’t doubt God’s promise. The Lord promised him that he would not die until he saw the Promised Messiah. The Lord’s people had been waiting for thousands of years for this promise to be fulfilled and the Lord graciously made it known to Simeon that he was going to see its fulfillment! And so, Simeon believed that he would see Christ.

Now, we aren’t sure when the Lord gave this promise to Simeon, or how long he had to wait for the promise to be fulfilled. All we know is that he was an old man when our text takes place. We are told that Simeon was led by the Holy Spirit to go to the temple that day and when he saw the Christ child, he took him into his arms and sung this song of praise to the Lord.

Why? Because the Lord acts according to his word! He promised to send a Savior, and that’s exactly what he did when Christ was born of a virgin! Simeon sings, **my eyes have seen your salvation.**

Simeon knew when he laid eyes on Jesus that he was the fulfillment of God’s promise to send a Savior. God was putting into effect his plan of salvation that he had promised so long ago to do. That plan involved giving up his one and only Son, who took on human flesh, and serve as our substitute on the cross. And three days later he rose from the dead to win for us the ultimate victory!

Jesus wouldn't do this till over 30 years later, by this time Simeon would long be in heaven. And yet, Simeon could rightfully say that his eyes have seen God's salvation. Because Jesus' birth mean that God was beginning to fulfill his people. Now that the Savior had been born our salvation was all but complete!

That is, after all, why Jesus came. He came for one purpose and one purpose only—and that is to save us! Simeon sang this song 40 days after Jesus was born. Eight days after Jesus was born he was circumcised and named. Joseph and Mary gave him the name that Gabrielle told Joseph to give him: Jesus. Why Jesus? Because Jesus means, “the Lord saves,” and as Gabrielle told Joseph, **he will save his people from their sins.**

Christ's people are all people—Jews and Gentiles alike. Jesus came out of love for the whole world, and he paid for the sins of the whole. As Paul tells the Romans, **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.** Simeon sings that salvation was **prepared before the face of all people.** When Jesus finally came, he didn't hide himself. He didn't preach the gospel in secret, but he came for all and preached to all. The fact that Jesus prepared this salvation before all people and that he died for all people, gives us comfort and assurance. We don't ever have to wonder if Jesus died for us; if he really did win for us eternal life. As part of all people we know that we are forgiven by Christ because he died for the sins of all people! He is a light to the Gentiles. To those who were not part of God's chosen nation, who didn't know God's promise to send a Savior and so were living in the darkness of unbelief, Jesus came and shined the light of the gospel on their sin-darkened hearts. In Jesus we see the light of salvation through faith in him alone!

And he is the glory of the people of Israel! What a great honor for the Jews that the Savior of the entire world came from them! That God himself took on human flesh; and out of every nation in the world; God chose them by his grace!

Simeon knew God's salvation—that he came to save all people from their sins, and so he had peace. He had peace because he knew that his sins were forgiven. That no matter what he had done—and how many times he had done it, that baby in his arms was the long-promised Messiah, who would remove all of his sins. He had peace knowing that he was going to live in heaven forever. He was going to be next to his Savior in eternity.

So he asked God, **dismiss your servant in peace, according to your word.** Now that God had fulfilled his promise, Simeon wanted to go home. He had seen salvation in the baby Jesus and so, as God promised him, he wanted to be taken to heaven—to leave this veil of tears to the paradise of eternal glory with God forever.

Simeon had the peace that the angels sang about to the Shepherd's that first Christmas night—and we too have that peace because we know Christ and have seen him with the eyes of faith! We have peace knowing what Christ would do on the cross to pay for all our sins. We have peace knowing that God does not treat us as our sins deserve, but that he has removed them as far as east is from the west. This is peace knowing that you are not a sinner in God's eyes, but pure and innocent. Peace knowing that you don't have to do anything to be saved because Christ took care of it all—peace knowing that you'll live a perfect life in heaven, where you'll see Christ as he is—not as the baby born in Bethlehem, but in his full divine glory! That's God's promise to us!

We make all sorts of promises. Some we keep, while many others we don't. God, however, keeps every single one of his promises. He kept his promise to his children to send a Savior, and he kept his promise to Simeon that he would see that Savior. And so he keeps all his promises to us—even if all the evidence seems to the contrary! The Lord acts according to his word. So, we know that Jesus came to save us and give us eternal peace. Amen.