

(Biographies) Charles Simeon

by John Piper

John Piper's sermon on Charles Simeon highlights the importance of enduring suffering and remaining faithful in ministry despite opposition.

Duration: 1:25:21

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:12

Topics: "Christian Leadership", "Spiritual Endurance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the traits of Simeon, a biblical figure, and how they can be applied to our own lives. The speaker emphasizes the importance of not relying on secondhand information when it comes to matters of faith. Simeon is praised for his forthright and face-to-face approach in dealing with opponents. The sermon also highlights Simeon's endurance through physical weakness and his transformation through God's grace.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God is available at www.desiringgod.org In April of 1831, Charles Simeon was 71 years old. He had been the pastor of Trinity Church in Cambridge for 49 years.

And he was asked by his friend Joseph Gurney how he had endured and surmounted the great opposition that had been his portion for so many years. And this was his response. My dear brother, we must not mind a little suffering for Christ's sake.

When I am getting through a hedge, if my head and shoulders are safely through, I can bear the pricking of my legs. Let us rejoice in the remembrance that our holy head has surmounted all his suffering and triumphed over death. Let us follow him patiently.

We shall soon be partakers of his victory. And so I entitled the message, Brothers, We Must Not Mind a Little Suffering. And I have a very definite aim, biblically, in what I want to achieve in the next hour.

And that is to be used of God to strengthen you to obey Romans 12.12, which simply says, Be patient in tribulation. That's my goal. You can write it down.

I want you to go out of here stronger than you were when you came in, to be patient in tribulation. I want you to see that persecution and opposition and slander and danger and weakness and self-recrimination

and disappointment are the normal portion of a faithful pastoral ministry. And I want you to see it in the life of a man who was a sinner, was a pastor, and who did not allow himself to become embittered by years and years of entrenched opposition to his ministry in his own church and in the university where he served.

Because what I have found in my own experience is that my own personal disappointments and discouragements find resources for endurance when I have before me a model of one who endured. I just find tremendous strength flowing to me if I can put before me in my mind's eye somebody who incurred or experienced what I'm experiencing and more and held on or even thrived in the midst of it. Another thing that makes me so drawn to this issue and this man is that I think we live in a very emotionally fragile time.

And I am a child of my times, much more than I wish I were. When I'm honest with myself, the things I hate about my culture, I see evidences of in myself. By emotionally fragile, I mean that we are easily hurt, we pout easily, we mope easily.

When I say we, I mean the American culture today, inside and outside the church. We break easily. Our marriages break easily.

Our faith breaks easily. Our happiness breaks easily. Our commitment to the ministry and to the church breaks easily.

We are easily disheartened and discouraged. We seem to have very few resources and little capacity for thriving in criticism and opposition. The typical emotional response in a church where your people reject your ideas is, well, if that's the way they feel about me, then I'll just find another church.

That's the typical, I think, emotional response. And we don't see a lot of models of people who live out the rugged words, count it all joy, brothers, when you fall into various trials. I think that when historians write about the character traits of the latter quarter of the 20th century, words like commitment, constancy, tenacity, endurance, patience, resolve, perseverance won't be on the list at all.

Not even at the bottom. And at the top of the list will be an all-consuming interest in self-esteem. Subpoints under that list will be self-assertiveness and self-enhancement and self-realization.

And if you think you're not a child of your culture, then I suggest that you just test yourself and ask how emotionally you respond when significant people in your life reject your ideas. Now, we need help here. We are surrounded in a society of emotionally fragile quitters.

And a good bit of that ethos is in you and me. And therefore, I have found that one of the weapons against being that way is to nuzzle up close to people who aren't that way. Even if they're dead.

And most of them are. Be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Hebrews 6.12 I want to give you a man this morning I think is worthy of your imitation because he through faith and patience, those are his own words at times, endured and inherited promise.

My outline is to just briefly unfold a little bit of his life and times, then to turn to his trials, and finally to the resources by which he endured those trials. So first of all, a little bit about his life and times. If you didn't get it when you walked in, a sheet back there outlining his life with a picture and bibliography will save some time.

So I'm going to be very brief here. He was born the year after Jonathan Edwards died. That's the best place for me to position him in the world history.

The Westleys and Whitfield were still alive and kicking and the Methodist awakening was in full swing for 77 years. He lived from 1758 to 1836. That's through the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and right up to the invention of the telegraph and the railroad.

Give you a little flavor of the atmosphere in which he lived. His father was a wealthy attorney and not a believer, and to Simeon's great grief, never became a believer, though his brothers did under his influence. We know nothing about his mother.

Presumably she died before he knew her. He went, when he was seven years old, to Eaton College. It was a boarding school and he was there for 12 years.

He was known as a homely, fancy dressing, athletic show-off. The atmosphere of Eaton in those days was so degenerate that he once said, in the most amazing indictment I've read of any school ever, he said, I would be tempted to take the life of my son before I let him see the vice I saw at Eaton. Isn't that awesome? Well, here he is without a mom, never going home, unbelieving dad, growing up in a wicked 12 years boarding school.

At 19, he goes to Cambridge. His father enables him to get into King's College. Cambridge is not much better.

It's a very dark place. Even after he was converted, he didn't know another believer, he said personally, on the campus for almost three years. It was destitute of evangelical faith in those days.

The Wesleyan Revival hadn't touched Cambridge, Moules said, for some reason. Let me tell you about his conversion. This is a great story.

This is what I focused on last Sunday night with the people here. Three days after he arrived at Cambridge, the provost, William Cook, sent word to him and a few other freshmen. They would all have to partake of the Lord's Supper in three weeks.

And this absolutely sent him into consternation because for some reason he was afraid to eat the Lord's Supper as a sinner. And he began to do everything he could think of to make amends for his rotten life and to read about the Lord's Supper and about God. He took a book called *The Whole Duty of Man*, which William Cooper said was nothing but self-righteous and pharisaical lumber, which characterized Simeon, I think.

And he didn't get any help from this book, *The Whole Duty of Man*. He went through that first communion unchanged. I don't know whether he ate or not.

He doesn't tell in his little account. But he knew that he would have to eat again. He knew that Easter was coming.

And he got a book by Bishop Wilson on the Lord's Supper. And this is such a great work of grace. I mean, when I ponder this man's conversion, I want you to consider the odds against this conversion now.

A father who reared him for seven years as an unbeliever. No mother. Twelve years in a debauched and degenerate, all-male, unbelieving boarding school until he's nineteen.

A Cambridge University setting with no believers and no evangelical influence. And alone in his dormitory room, for some reason, by sovereign grace, distraught over having to take communion. As a sinner.

Now let me read to you what happened. In Passion Week, as I was reading Bishop Wilson, he's nineteen years old. On the Lord's Supper, I met with an expression to this effect.

That the Jews knew what they did when they transferred their sin to the head of their offering. The thought came to my mind. What? May I transfer all my guilt to another? Has God provided an offering for me that I may lay my sins on his head? Then God willing, I will not bear them on my soul one moment longer.

Accordingly, I sought to lay my sins upon the sacred head of Jesus. And on the Wednesday, began to have hope of mercy. On the Thursday, that hope increased.

On the Friday and Saturday, it became more strong. And on Sunday morning, Easter Day, April 4, I awoke early with those words upon my heart and lips. Jesus Christ is risen today.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. And from that hour, peace flowed in rich abundance into my soul.

And at the Lord's table, in our chapel, I had the sweetest access to God through my blessed Savior. Now that conversion was out of nothing. You can't find any human explanation for this.

That God would reach down and try to transform. The transformation was remarkable and immediate. He was known as having a terrible extravagance of life, which became much more simple.

He began to witness to his little college servant girl. He went home and witnessed to his family. And servants gathered the family for devotions.

His brothers were converted. He began a life of disciplined Methodism, they called it in those days. Rising early to read the Bible and kept that all of his life.

Three years almost now, he didn't meet another believer, personally. He went to church at St. Edwards often, but he didn't get to know one or two of the other believers who happened to be there. 1782 now.

He's 22, I believe, roughly. He got a stipend as a fellow, lecturer, assistant at the university. And he kept that for the rest of his life.

That's the way he made his money, got his rooms, largely as a fellow in the University of Cambridge, King's College. He was ordained in May of 1782 as a deacon in the Anglican church. And then served in an interim capacity in St. Edwards Church in Cambridge that summer for 17 weeks.

And then November 10, 1782, he preached his first sermon at Trinity Church, which is right there on the campus. And he preached there for 54 years. Until two months before he died, November 13, 1836.

Simeon never married. The only sentence I was able to find about that in what I've read is this from Moole. He said, Simeon had deliberately and resolutely chosen the then necessary celibacy of a fellowship.

That he might the better work for God at Cambridge. If I had time, I would love to develop for you the parallels between the life of Simeon and the life of John Stott. Because, hold up that gray book there, Tom.

That's the book you could get. It's a collection of his sermons from Multnomah, and Stott wrote the introduction to it. And there are remarkable parallels.

Same university, celibacy, pastorate, missions interest, and right on down the line. 54 years at Trinity Church, Simeon became a powerful force in the evangelical wing of the Anglican church. He had a great heart for missions.

He was the spiritual father and the rope holder for the great Henry Martin, you remember? Who died when he was 31 in Persia after translating the New Testament into Hindustani and Persian. He helped found, was the key spiritual influence in founding the church missionary society for the Anglican church. Was involved in the society promoting Christianity among the Jews and the British Foreign Bible Society.

Probably his greatest influence came through his regular biblical expository preaching for 54 years. And he considered this the central work of his life. He lived to give to William IV in 1831 a 21 volume collection of his sermons, which you can find in most libraries even today.

In fact, if you want to know his theology, don't read the biographies. Go to the 21 volume work and just look up texts, key texts. Key texts on Calvinism, key problem texts.

Look up 1 John 2.2 and you'll find out things. That's the best way to get his theology. It's really a compendium of expository thoughts on all the key texts of the Bible.

A word about his theology. He did not like to be called a Calvinist or an Arminian. He wanted to be called a Biblicist or just a biblical theologian.

He was known, however, as an evangelical Calvinist and rightly so. I just tried to track down key Calvinistic pillar texts and read what he said about them. He's absolutely no holes barred in his statement of his own convictions about the doctrines of grace.

He even uses the phrase doctrines of grace in a commendatory way. He did not like, however, a lot of the Calvinism of his day and distanced himself from it very explicitly. He wanted to be charitable.

Let me read you his encounter with John Wesley just to give you a flavor of his approach towards this controversy. He met him one time and this is his own record of the conversation. Sir, Wesley, I understand that you are called an Arminian and I have been sometimes called a Calvinist and therefore I suppose we are to draw daggers.

But before I consent to begin the combat with your permission, I will ask you a few questions. Pray, sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God if God had not first put it in your heart? Yes, I do indeed, Wesley said. And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything you can do and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ? Yes, solely through Christ.

But sir, supposing you were at first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterward by your own works? No, I must be saved by Christ from first to last. Allowing then that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power? No. What then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God as much as an infant in its mother's arms? Yes, altogether.

And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you into his heavenly kingdom? Yes, I have no hope but in him, Wesley said. Then, sir, with your leave, I will put up my dagger again, for this is all my Calvinism. This is my election, my justification, my faith, my final perseverance.

It is in substance all that I hold, and as I hold it, and therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things where we agree. But now, don't get the impression from that that he pulled any punches when he spoke on the most difficult texts. For example, I read Romans 9.16 and Romans 9.21 following, and he is unabashed in his statement of divine sovereignty at those points.

But his invariable rule was, quote, to endeavor to give to every portion of the word of God its full and proper force without considering what scheme it favors or whose system it is likely to advance. And he said something here that was very stinging, I felt, and I think it's stinging to Calvinists, and I think it's stinging to Arminians. Let me read it to you, see if it stings.

Of this he, and now he refers to Simeon, he's talking about himself in the third person. Of this he is sure that there is not a decided Calvinist or Arminian in the world who equally approves of the whole of Scripture. Who, if he had been in the company of St. Paul whilst he was writing his epistles, would not have recommended to him to alter one or other of his expressions.

But the author, Simeon, would not wish one of them altered. He finds as much satisfaction in one class of passages as another, and employs the one he believes as freely as the other. Where the inspired writers speak in unqualified terms, he thinks himself at liberty to do the same, judging that they needed no instruction from him how to propagate the truth.

He is content to sit as a learner at the feet of the holy apostles and has no ambition to teach them how they ought to have spoken. That's the spirit of Charles Simeon when it comes to controversial matters. He was not given much to systematizing.

Although, when you read the problem texts, he does his own share of it in actual preaching. Nevertheless, just as I think Dr. Nicole said last night, that he might have been inclined to say to Paul something differently. But, recognizing this is the word of God, we will then try to bring our hearts into conformity, both to the wording and the meaning of the inspired writings.

Let me say a word about his trials now. First, he was his own greatest trial, probably. He was a harsh and self-assertive person by nature and had much sin in his life to overcome, and he never overcame it completely to the end of his life.

Just one story to illustrate his problem. He visited Henry Venn, the elder, in Yelling, which is about 12 miles from Cambridge. Yelling's daughters, when he left, complained to their father about this man's terrible temperament.

They just thought it was put-offish to the extreme. And Venn, who loved Simeon very much and saw more there than they did, took them out into the garden and said, Would you pick me one of those peaches? But it was early summer and the time of peaches was not yet, he says. They asked why he would want the green, unripe fruit, and Venn replied, Well, my dears, it is green now and we must wait, but a little more sun and a few more showers.

And the peach will be ripe and sweet, so it is with Mr. Simeon. And that's true. In fact, he described his own life of suffering as a growing downward in humility and a growing upward in adoration.

He was his own greatest trial, as many of you will say of yourself, I think. Second, his congregation was a great trial to him. October 1782, Charles Simeon was about to leave the university and go home and live with his father.

He had graduated and the vicar of Trinity Church died. And Simeon had often walked by Trinity Church and his quote was, How should I rejoice if God were to give me that church that I might preach the gospel there and be a herald for him in the university? And lo and behold, Bishop York, under the influence of Simeon's dad, this unbelieving man, appoints Simeon to Trinity Church against the will of the congregation. They did not want him.

Mr. Hammond was the associate and they wanted Mr. Hammond. And when Simeon discovered that, he stepped back and said to the bishop, I won't precede Mr. Hammond. And the bishop said, I will not appoint Mr. Hammond even if you quit.

And then Simeon felt like it was God's will that he take the role. Now, the first thing the congregation did in rebellion against Simeon was not to allow him to preach the Sunday afternoon sermon. It was called the lecture.

And they appointed Hammond. For five years they appointed Hammond. Now, picture yourself in a church where you are not allowed to preach the Sunday evening message, but your assistant, whom they want to be the pastor, is given that sermon.

And five years later, when Hammond leaves, they appoint another independent man for seven more years. Because they don't like their pastor. That's the first thing that happened.

Second thing that happened was, they locked their pews on Sunday morning. They had these little pew doors, you know, and the church wardens had the keys, and they locked the pews, and they stayed locked for ten years. And he preached to people in the aisles.

He set up chairs in the aisles and in the corners, and the church wardens threw them in the yard outside. So he preached to people standing, sitting on the floor and on little chairs for over ten years in his church. The third thing that happened, or let me just mention a general thing in the third place.

We mustn't get the impression, though ten years is an incredible endurance in that kind of situation, we mustn't get the impression that after ten years, oh good, now it was forty years of peace. Because after he'd been there for thirty years, in 1812, he writes that the opposition had grown so strong after a period of peace, here's the way he described it. I used to sail in the Pacific.

I am now learning to navigate the Red Sea that is full of shoals and rocks. Now that's after thirty years. And that particular little squall lasted four years.

Now four years doesn't sound like a long time in a fifty-four year ministry, but put yourself in a four year stint of opposition and ask your emotionally fragile twentieth century soul that is so prone to quit and go off and play in another church, whether you would endure first ten years of opposition and then another four later. And many, many squabbles in between. The third source of trial was the university.

He was right there in the university. He was a fellow in the university. And the students held him in derision for years because of his biblical, evangelical preaching.

There were tumults in the streets. There were physical threats against his life. When students were converted, they were ostracized in the university.

They were called sims and accused of simianism. And one story is that the grade, I mean, one of the students won a prize and he was denied the prize academically that he had won because of his, quote, simianism. His peers were ostracizing him.

And just to get the feel of what this was like for simian, first of all, an example, one of them put his Greek class Sunday evening during simian's own service. Because simian had finally instituted a later Sunday evening service. He put the Greek class there so the students couldn't come.

But this particular quote gets at the poignancy of simian's own experience. He said, I remember the time that I was quite surprised that a fellow of my own college ventured to walk with me for a quarter of an hour on the grass plot before Clare Hall. And for many years after I began my ministry, I was, as a man wondered at, by reason of the paucity of those who showed any regard for true religion.

So when he was an old man, he thought back with a heartfelt delight that there was a 15 minute time once when a fellow walked with him. The fourth source of his trial was his physical weakness. In 1807 now, after 25 years in the ministry, his health broke.

I couldn't get the details on this and maybe they didn't even know what it was, but the symptoms were these. His voice would break and after a sermon he couldn't talk for a long time. Sometimes he could only whisper.

He said, after preaching I would feel more like one dead than alive and could sometimes scarcely walk across the room. Now this lasted 13 years. And I want to tell you what happened in the changing of the situation to break this because it shows God's hand upon this man's life and his interpretation of God's chastisement in his own life.

13 years now, he labors under this physical distress, whatever it was. 1819 now, here we are 13 years later, he's on a visit to Scotland. He has pressed on faithfully in the ministry during these 13 years.

As he crosses the border into Scotland, he says that it left him. The weakness left him and here are his words. It was almost as perceptibly revived in strength as the woman was after she had touched the hem of our Lord's garment.

Now what was his interpretation of this 13 year period? Listen to this. It seemed to me that God was saying, quoting God now, I laid you aside because you entertained with satisfaction the thought of resting from your labor at 60 years old. But now you have arrived at the very period.

He was 60 now when he was healed. Now you have arrived at the very period when you had promised yourself that satisfaction and have determined instead to spend all the rest of your strength for me to the latest hour of your life. And I have doubled, trebled and quadrupled your strength that you may execute your desire on a more extended plan.

And so for 17 more years, he preached and labored and he interpreted those 13 years as God's chastisement for a planned retirement at 60 years old. Now that's enough on the trials perhaps to give you a feeling. It's the kind of thing, these are not martyr trials in the sense of he was about to be killed, although there was one or two times, there were one or two times when that was true.

So these are things you can identify with, I hope. These are the kinds of trials that we all will go through. Now the question is, where did he get the resources to endure? What were the traits of his spirituality and his interaction with people? And what was the root of those traits? So I've got about eight traits and then a root and then the root.

Okay, number nine will be the root of those eight traits and number ten will be the root beneath the root. Trait number one, what these are, are the characteristics of Simeon that I think enabled him to weather this kind of trial. Number one, Simeon had a strong sense of his accountability before God for the souls of his flock, whether they liked him or not.

A strong sense of accountability for the souls of his flock. Listen to this excerpt from a sermon in his very first year as a young man preaching to the people standing in the aisles of his church. Remember the nature of my office and the care incumbent upon me for the welfare of your immortal souls.

Consider whatever may appear in my discourses harsh, earnest or alarming, not as the effects of enthusiasm, but as the rational dictates of a heart impressed with a sense both of the value of the soul and the importance of eternity. By recollecting the awful consequences of my neglect, you will be more inclined to receive favorably any well-meant admonitions. That phrase, the awful consequences of my neglect, is what he had in his mind that I think prevented him.

He told the story one time to them about a lighthouse keeper who went to sleep and described the shore strewn with mangled bodies and weeping widows and orphans. And the person who was telling the story 30 years later said, I can remember to this day the resounding word through that hall, ASLEEP! And how it just sank in to the pastors and the young men who were there that this pastor might go to sleep in his charge. Number two, his preaching in the midst of conflict was free from the scolding tone.

Free from the scolding tone. How many times have we fallen victim to ourselves or heard pastors preach in such a way that you wonder, who is he talking to? Who is he upset at in the congregation? In other words, he's letting his vindictiveness about one person or a group show in a scolding tone toward the congregation. Muell in his biography said, he was totally free from that easy but fatal mistake of the troubled pastor, the scolding accent.

Joseph Gurney saw the same thing and he said that alongside Simeon's private weeping, it was one of his grand principles of action to endeavor at all times to honor his master by maintaining a cheerful and happy demeanor in the presence of his friends. Now I can imagine somebody saying, but that's called hypocrisy, isn't it? If you're broken inside and weeping over the distress of your situation and you maintain a cheerful demeanor outside. But let me at least put beside the possibility of hypocrisy, Matthew 6, 17.

When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face that your fasting may not be seen by men. Is that hypocrisy? Third, Simeon was no rumor tracker. Rumor tracker, that's my phrase, not his.

Charles Simeon, I mean Spurgeon, came a little later, had a great lecture he gave to his students. Remember it called, The Blind Eye and the Deaf Ear. Great, great lecture.

Every pastor must have one blind eye and one deaf ear. And whenever there's a rumor, he just turns like this to it. Puts his deaf ear to the rumor.

And Simeon said, my rule, he was asked in 1821, how in the world he had handled a situation where he had been slandered so grievously and he had not been retaliatory. He said, my rule is never to hear or see or know. What if heard or seen or known would call for animadversion from me.

Hence it is that I dwell in peace in the midst of lions. Isn't that great? My rule is never to hear or see or know. What if heard or seen or known would call for animadversion.

Acrimony, you know, bitterness. From me, hence it is that I dwell in peace in the midst of lions. In other words, he just resolved not to listen.

In this church, for example, my church, I'll tell you the phrase that makes my deaf ear kick in and my blind eye go shut at the beginning of a sentence. If I hear a sentence that begins with, a lot of people are saying, I turn it off. Because if they're saying it, they better come to me.

I do not want it second hand. It does nothing but cause turmoil in this soul, which doesn't, isn't necessary. Alright? It's a skill you have to develop, I think.

It doesn't come by human nature. Number four. Simeon dealt with his opponents in a forthright, face-to-face way.

Edward Pearson accused Simeon in 1810 of having a standard of holiness in his preaching that was unrealistically high. And he took him to task in pamphlets publicly. Here was his response in a letter to Pearson.

Persons who have the same general design but differ in some particular modes of carrying it into execution often stand more aloof from each other than they do from persons whose principles and conduct they entirely disapprove. Hence, prejudice arises in a tendency to mutual crimination. Whereas, if they occasionally conversed for half an hour with each other, they would soon rectify their mutual misapprehensions and concur in aiding rather than undermining the efforts of each other for the public good.

It's remarkable, I think, as Simeon said, how much evil can be averted with face-to-face talk. I really believe, in the ministry, we try to settle too many issues in writing and on the telephone. Jesus, I wrote this review, commending the book highly, and then a man in our conference wrote with intense disapproval what I said, and so I wrote a 29-page response.

And I shared it with the staff. And David Livingston, bless his heart, admonished me. He said, do you think you ought to call him? And it occurred to me to call him, though it should have.

And so I did. I called this guy, I sent the thing off to him, and then I called him on the day I thought it would get there. And it wasn't there yet.

But I talked to him. I said, look, a big response is coming. I'm a real, live person.

Here's my voice, John Piper, my name. I have high regard for you in these ways, but not in this way. And it's coming, and I just want you to know I'm willing to talk any time.

That took a great burden off my load. I can tell you another story. I'll tell you a story, in fact.

Earl Rodmacher spoke at the annual meeting of the BGC in San Diego. And I thought the message was deplorable because of the exegesis of John 15. One of these non-lordship people, right? And so I nailed him in the standard.

Just like that. With my exegetical efforts. I got word secondhand he was just very indignant that I had done that.

And not come to him. And he was probably right, okay? So I was invited to go speak at Western Seminary last February. February a year ago now.

And Bruce Ware, who's there now, told me in the car away from the airport, You know, Rodmacher's still upset at you. He's the president of that seminary. He's still upset at you, and he's going to be leading a few of these sessions.

I don't know what you want to do about it. And Rodmacher was very courteous when we met, and not warm. And one of the sessions, we were to sit down in front for a question and answer session after a lecture of mine.

He was going to sit there, and I was going to sit there. He was going to field questions, and I was going to answer questions. And we were sitting there, and they were milling all over the place.

I reached over and I took his arm and I said, Dr. Rodmacher, I know that you were upset at my response to your lecture seven years ago, or six, or whatever it was. And if I had to do over again, I would do it differently. I would come to you face to face, and I want to apologize for not doing that.

That absolutely transformed the whole week. I mean, he was a totally different person toward me, and the air was cleared. I don't think that could have happened even in writing or on the phone.

I think it took a hand on the elbow and a face to face at about three feet. Fifth, Simeon could take a rebuke and grow from it. This is Utterly Essential Brothers in the Ministry.

To take rebukes and grow from them. If I suffer with a becoming spirit, he said, my enemies, though unwittingly, must of necessity do me good. Here's a little illustration of this.

He went out to a Mr. Hankinson's house, and this temper of his was just awful. There was a servant stoking the fire, in what Simeon called a very unscientific way. And he whacked the guy on the back for how stupid he was stoking the fire.

And about two hours later when he was leaving, the poor servant got the bridle on the horse wrong, and Simeon exploded. While his friend, Hokanson, was watching all this. And he wrote, Hokanson wrote a letter quickly and stuffed it in his bag.

And he got it when he got home. And he said in the letter that he did not see how a man who preached and prayed so well, could be in such a passion about nothing and not bridle his tongue. And he signed it, John Softly.

As though the servant had sent it. Well, Simeon knew what had happened, and this is 1804, if you want to orient it in how mature he should have been. He wrote back to John Softly from Charles Proud and

Irritable.

I most cordially thank you, sir, my dear friend, for your kind and seasonable reproof. And then he wrote to Mr. Hankinson, that was to the servant. And then he wrote to Hankinson, I hope, my dearest brother, that when you find your soul nigh to God, you will not fail to remember one who so greatly needs all the help he can get.

We must respond like that to rebukes if we are to survive in the ministry. Sixth, Simeon was unimpeachable in his finances, and he had no love for money. He was a single man, he lived in the same rooms at Cambridge for 20 years, and then he switched in the rest of the rooms for 30 years.

In other words, he just rented rooms at the college for all of his ministry there. When he received an inheritance from his brother, he refused the estate. He allowed 15,000 pounds to come, but he funneled it right into a trust and to the poor.

He did not spend any of it himself. He gave himself to the relief of the poor. That was one of the big ways by which the prejudice against him as a high professor of holy, being holy and a low actor of holiness, was overcome, namely his involvement with the poor.

It's very hard to hold a grudge against a person who's laying himself out morning to night in good deeds for people. Seventh, Simeon found ways to look at discouraging things hopefully. He found ways to look at discouraging things hopefully.

Let me read you an example. I just love this quote. I think it was when I read this quote that I decided to use Simeon in this conference.

He's talking about the days when the pews were locked and people were standing and there couldn't be a big crowd because you can't fit many people in the aisles and around the edges. In this state of things, I saw no remedy but faith and patience. The passage of scripture which subdued and controlled my mind was this, the servant of the Lord must not strive.

It was painful indeed to see the church, with the exception of the aisles, almost forsaken. But I thought that if God would only give a double blessing to the congregation that did attend, there would, on the whole, be as much good done as if the congregation were doubled and the blessing limited to only half the amount. This comforted me many, many times.

When without such a reflection, I should have sunk under my burden. Have you ever done that on a morning when it snowed? Sunday morning when it snowed and the church is half full? I mean, I heard one of the most heartbreaking stories last Wednesday. We got a young fellow who was trying to rebuild a dead church over here in the neighborhood and they've done this telemarketing and they had 230 people who had said, yes, we want to be a part or something.

And March 8th was the kickoff and it was great. You know what happened Saturday before March 8th? Fourteen inches of snow. And he gets up and there were 80 people in the congregation.

Pretty good, seeing how they only had 17 members. But if I had been in his shoes, you can imagine how discouraged you would have been. But Simeon saw that week after week and he said to himself, now, if God would just come with this 80 and quadruple the blessing on the 80, it would be as good as if there were four times as many people.

And that's what I'll pray for. Well, that's what I do here when it snows or on holidays or weekends and I want to see it full and it isn't full. You preach yourself.

There may be one person out there who will be a Billy Graham someday. God is not constrained to save by many or by few. And that's a very wise strategy in your heart.

Number eight. Simeon saw his suffering as a wonderful privilege of bearing the cross with Christ. One time he was walking alone, desperately discouraged.

He said he took out his Bible. He had one about this size. In fact, I've got a picture of him.

Like all these old guys, they sit with their hand like this, you know, and get their picture taken and their finger in their book like this. Like if you see the reformers at the Geneva Wall in Geneva, Switzerland. Is that the way it is? Is the Bible right there? And the Geneva Wall in Switzerland, these four big reformers, you can see them.

They got their, they're like this with their finger in their Bible. That's no accident. You know, when you have to pose a long time to get painted, you choose where your fingers are.

And this is no accident. You've got your finger in the Bible. He went out, but he didn't have his finger in the Bible.

It was shut. And he just said, I'm going to open my Bible. He said, now, I don't do this for guidance.

I do it for support. And he said, it's okay to do this for support. And you know the eyes, I mean, the verse that his eyes fell on? The calling of Simon to carry Jesus' cross, which is his own name, Simeon.

And he said, what a word of instruction was here. What a blessed hint for my encouragement. To have the cross laid open for me, I mean, to lay it upon me, that I might bear it after Jesus.

What a privilege. It was enough. Now I could leap and sing for joy as one whom Jesus was honoring with a participation of his sufferings.

And the quote that I started with when he was 71 years old and Gurney asked him how he had endured. He said, my dear brother, we must not mind a little suffering for Christ's sake. Now those are the eight traits.

There are many more. Let me move once the traits to the root and then the deepest root. The root beneath these traits was, you can call this number nine, massive doses of meditation and prayer.

A friend of Simeon's named Hausman lived with him for a few months, and this is what he said. Simeon invariably arose every morning, though it was winter, at four o'clock. And after lighting his fire, he devoted the first four hours of the day to private prayer and the devotional study of the scriptures.

Here was the secret of his great grace and spiritual strength. Deriving instruction from such a source and seeking it with such diligence, he was comforted in all his trials and prepared for every duty. And that just makes tingles go up and down my spine.

That you are so alone with God, so much, that whatever else is happening in the world, you and God will make. That was not the basic root, however, because the basic root, which I turn to now in conclusion,

number ten, is what he experienced when he went to the Word. And I'll sum it up like this.

He grew downward in humiliation before God, and he grew upward in the adoration of Christ year in and year out through his sufferings. He grew downward in humiliation, these are his words, grew downward, and he grew upward in adoration of Christ. And let me take the last minutes here on this.

Moole captures, I think, the essence of his secret of longevity with these words. Before honor is humility, and he had been growing downward year by year under the stern discipline of difficulty met in the right way, the way of close, adoring communion with God. Now those two things, growing downward in humility and close communion and adoration of God, are not separated in Simeon's life.

And this is the remarkable thing, and this is what will stun some of you, perhaps, as you hear him talk about how he maintained his strength. Simeon was utterly unlike American Christianity in this regard. Utterly out of step with contemporary American evangelicalism, because he did not think it was helpful or appropriate to get rid of feelings of vileness or of unworthiness as soon as he could.

For him, adoration grew in the freshly plowed soil of humiliation. Adoration grew best and tallest and strongest in the freshly plowed soil. Let me read something.

I have continually had such a sense of my sinfulness as would sink me to utter despair if I had not an assured view of the sufficiency and willingness of Christ to save me to the uttermost. And at the same time, I had such a sense of my acceptance through Christ as would upset my little bark if I had not ballast at the bottom sufficient to sink a vessel of no ordinary size. Now what does that mean? What that means is that he never, ever thought that we should throw the ballast of humiliation overboard.

After he had been a Christian forty years, listen to what he said, with this sweet hope of ultimate acceptance with God. Now mark those words, sweet hope of ultimate acceptance. I have always enjoyed much cheerfulness before man, but I have at the same time labored incessantly to cultivate the deepest humiliation before God.

I have never thought, now here he is totally out of step with our day. I have never thought that the circumstance of God's having forgiven me was any reason why I should forgive myself. On the contrary, I have always judged it better to loathe myself the more in proportion as I was assured of God's being pacified towards me.

Ezekiel 16.63 Therefore, there are but two objects that I have ever desired for these forty years to behold. One is my own vileness, the other is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And I have always thought that they should be viewed together, just as Aaron confessed all the sins of Israel while he put them on the scapegoat.

The disease did not keep him from applying to the remedy, nor did the remedy keep him from feeling the disease. By this I seek not only to be humbled and thankful, but to be humbled in thankfulness before my God and Savior continually. Now if he's right, vast portions of contemporary Christianity are dead wrong.

And I can't help but wonder whether one of the reasons we are emotionally capsized so easily today and are so vulnerable to criticism and opposition is that in the name of forgiveness and grace we have thrown the ballast of our boats overboard. Simeon's boat drew a lot of water, but it was steady, on course. The masts were high and tall.

I've seen these big sailing ships and I've looked down and said, good, why doesn't that thing fall over? His mastheads were tall, his sails full of the wind of the spirit of adoration were broad. And all that steadiness was kept there by the ballast of brokenness. The ballast of contrition and humiliation before God, weighing the ship deep down into the water.

I think there is a correlation between the height of the mast and the breadth of the sail, on the one hand, and the weight of the ballast on the other. And contemporary evangelicalism batters home the message, throw it overboard, throw it overboard, throw it overboard. That's the constant message of our day.

Throw the ballast overboard. Simeon's missionary friend, Thomason, writes about 1794. He'd be the age of many of you here in that time.

Marsden entered his room and he found Simeon, quote, so absorbed in the contemplation of the Son of God, so overpowered with a display of his mercy to his soul, that he was incapable of pronouncing a single word, till at length he exclaimed, glory, glory. And then, a few days later, Thomason visited him and he found Simeon almost incapable of coming to the evening service from a deep humiliation and contrition. And Mool, the biographer, comments, these two experiences, almost immobilized by the awareness of his sin and speechless before the glory of God, are not two excesses of an ill-balanced mind, but are, quote, the two poles of a sphere of profound experience.

And I like the phrase, his adoration of God grew best in the plowed soil of his own contrition. He had no fear of bringing up the sins in his life. He once wrote a letter to the sister of the writer of Just As I Am, her name was Mary Elliott, and here's what he said to her.

I would have the whole of my experience, one continued sense, first, of my nothingness and dependence on God, second, of my guiltiness and desert before him, third, of my obligations to redeeming love as utterly overwhelming me with its incomprehensible extent and grandeur. Now I do not see why any one of these should swallow up the other. And as an old man, he said this, I have had a deep and abundant cause for humiliation, but I have never ceased to wash in that fountain that was opened for sin and uncleanness, or to cast myself upon the tender mercies of a reconciled God.

He went to the continent one time and he explained how the Bible captured these things. He said, Bible doctrines at once most abase and most gladden the soul. Now that's an incomprehensible experience to most American evangelicals.

Most abase and most gladden the soul. And then he said about the Bible, I opened to her, this was the Duchess de Broglie, he had gotten a chance to talk to her in the Netherlands, I think, I opened to her my views of the scripture system and showed her that brokenness of heart is the key to the whole Bible. He actually took refuge in this humiliation and brokenness.

Repentance is in every view so desirable, so necessary, so suited to honor God, that I seek that above all. The tender heart, the broken and contrite spirit are to me far above all the joys that I could ever hope for in this veil of tears. I long to be in my proper place, my hand upon my mouth and my mouth in the dust.

I feel this is safe ground. Here I cannot err. I am sure that whatever God may despise, he will not despise a broken and contrite heart.

In the last months, he said of his life, he said, in truth, I love to see the creature annihilated in the apprehension and swallowed up in God. I am then safe, happy, triumphant. Now why? Why would he say

that it is safe, happy and triumphant to be annihilated and to be in his proper place, hand upon his mouth, mouth in the dust? That's where we are fleeing.

We are fleeing with a passion from that place in our day. And our little barks are being overturned right and left. Now here's why.

Quote, by constantly meditating on the goodness of God and on our great deliverance from the punishment which our sins have deserved, we are brought to feel our vileness and utter unworthiness. And while we continue in this spirit of self-degradation, continue in this spirit of self-degradation, everything goes on easily. This guy's crazy, isn't he? I mean, there's no categories today for understanding this guy.

Everything goes on easily. We shall find ourselves advancing in our course. We shall feel the presence of God.

We shall experience his love. We shall live in the enjoyment of his favor and in the hope of his glory. You often feel that your prayers scarcely reach the ceiling.

But oh, get into this humble spirit by considering how good the Lord is and how evil you are. And then prayer will mount on wings of faith to heaven. The sigh, the groan of a broken heart will soon go through the ceiling up to heaven, even into the bosom of God.

My conclusion, therefore, my conclusion is that the secret of Charles Simeon's perseverance was that he never threw the ballast of his own contrition and humiliation for sin overboard. And therefore, the masts of his life were extremely tall. What are the horizontal pieces called? I don't know.

The bars were wide. Spars, thank you. They were wide.

These big white sails were huge. And what they were full of were the winds of adoration. And you have a greater capacity to go with the adoration of God when there's ballast in the bottom.

And so he grew downward in the pain of contrition. He grew upward in the joy of adoration. And the weaving together of these two things is the achievement of the cross in his life and the secret of his perseverance.

Almost the last thing he said when he died, October 1836, was somebody sat down on his bed and they leaned over and they said, Brother Simeon, what are you thinking of now? And he said, I'm not thinking now. I'm enjoying. Let's pray.

Father, before we take time to talk a little bit with questions about these things, we just want to repent of our cavalier attitude towards sin. And we repent for our people who are greatly infected by false teaching today. And that our wounds have been healed lightly by the purveyors of cheap grace.

And we feel responsible in large measure that we have not understood better ourselves how things go on better. Joy is deeper. Obedience is firmer when we are in the safe place of contrition and brokenness with our mouth in the dust before the cross.

And I pray that in equal measure we would feel broken for our sin and a mighty spirit of adoration at the all-sufficiency of Jesus, whose sufficiency grows in proportion as we see our own unworthiness. In His name we pray. Amen.

Well, I'm sorry that I went so long, but there's maybe ten minutes for questions. Would you comment on the teachings in the church today about self-love, self-respect in relationship to sin in you, particularly the viewpoint that says that before you can love God and love your neighbor, you have to first love yourself? I think it's extremely wrong-headed. And I would treat it much the way Dr. Nicole treated all those inadequate views of the Atonement and say there is, of course, a seed of truth in it.

Namely, we must not deny that we are created in God's image, and we must not deny that God in His grace has a great purpose for every person and can use us significantly no matter who we are. But it's wrong-headed. I mean, I would have answered Steve Roy's question differently than Dr. Nicole did the other night, and that may just have to do with our relative position.

Steve said, what do you feel about the view that says Christ died to rescue valuable humanity? And thus, we see a reflection of our diamond-like quality in the price paid for us. To me, that's almost blasphemy because it inverts Romans 5. In this, God shows His love for us in that while we were diamonds, He recognized our value and paid the necessary price that would correspond perfectly to who we are. That's heresy, I think.

Rather, I think the text says, while we were yet sinners, godless, helpless, unworthy, God does something utterly unlike tradesmen who barter with diamonds. He gives His Son for the unworthy. I'll tell you what I do very practically in my own counseling.

I have never counseled self-esteem. I counsel grace-esteem. I believe that the reason people are immobilized by their sin and the rottenness of their background and their dysfunctional families is because they are not able yet to grasp grace.

They're not able to see the cross and feel the cross, and I'm willing to work with counselors as to why that is. That is why they're not able to feel that. As I talk to counselors, that's what they say.

There are people who have blockages from able to do what Simeon did. This guy is incredible that he could live with the hatred of himself in glory, joy, power. That's the way I think.

So I think that we heal people lightly when we commend self-esteem as the solution. I really don't think it is. I think we've brought it over because that's the best the world can do in psychology.

It works, by and large, in this world. If you can get people to feel good enough about themselves, they will treat others better. They will be more inclined to think of a benevolent deity.

But it may be sand that they're building on. And so I think we need to help people discover the secret of Charles Simeon and how to have a ballast of humiliation in the bottom of our boat that doesn't sink us, but enables our mass to be high. Which means in our preaching, we need to be not battering away at sin incessantly, but just lifting up the magnificence of God continually.

Because if you do that, people will see their insignificance and their sin. Go ahead, Chester. Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? Romans 7, what, 24, 25? His grace toward me was not in vain, but I worked harder than any of them.

Nevertheless, it was not I, but the grace of God that was with me. 1 Corinthians 15, 10. God forbid that I should speak of anything except what Christ has worked in me to win obedience from the Gentiles.

Romans 15, 18. God be merciful to me, a sinner. This man went down to his house justified.

Psalms 51. Maybe that's enough to give you a flavor anyway. Tom? I totally agree that self-esteem business is not right.

My question is, is there a sense in which we have to forgive ourselves for our own sins? Okay, sure. I struggled a lot with that. A sense, there must be a sense.

Here's, the text that I thought would maybe present Simeon with the biggest problem at that point is Philippians 3, where Paul says, Forgetting those things which lie behind, I press on to what lies ahead. Which must mean failures that would tend to just destroy you in your past. Now what I want to put alongside the word, I thought of a standard article.

This is our denominational magazine, this morning as I was meditating on this. If somebody asked me to write a standard article right now, and I had time to do it, which I don't, I would entitle it, Forgetting and Remembering to the Glory of God. Now tell me any of you, this is a little quiz.

What text would I choose to put alongside the forgetting text from Philippians 3 for remembering? Ephesians 2, verse 11, 12, something like that. Where it says, remember from what you've been, how's it go? There in Ephesians 2. Therefore, verse 11, Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision by what is called circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands. Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope without God.

Now why would he say remember that? Why not just forget that? And why not forget the muck of those years? And my answer to that is, there is a salutary remembering and there is a destructive remembering. And to the degree that sin is salutary in humbling us and exalting Christ, we ought to remember our sins. To the degree that sin is laming and paralyzing, we ought to forget our sins.

That's the mystery of the walk, I think. So if what you meant was, isn't there a sense in which we forgive? If forgive means forget in the sense of not dredging them up so that you are then paralyzed by them, I'd say yes. If you mean they should be put out of the mind and never thought about again, I think Ezekiel 16 would contradict that experience.

We'll come from the back, Tim. I think he was burdened by a sense of guilt. There seemed to be a rhythm.

He said, I have much reason for humiliation, but I have never ceased to lay my sins upon Christ and avail myself of His cleansing. 1 John 1.9 He's never ceased to continually do that. That's kind of a rhythm.

But now, the other thing, go ahead. While I say humiliation, in other words, to say I'm sinning twice, it doesn't make sense. It would be an insult to me.

I see. Yes, I think that would be an insult to think that you are not forgiven by God. And if that's what the distinction between guilt and humiliation is, then I think that would be a good distinction.

In your reading, because you obviously read most of the biographies and so on, what did you find the secrets of his influence in the sense that, like, you know, Henry Martin would be a disciple of his. You mentioned Thomason. But there were people all over England, and he sort of became the beginning of the evangelical movement in the Church of England.

What was the key to his influence in their lives other than his pulpit? Well, besides the pulpit at Cambridge, there were the pastoral discussion, conversation parties he called them, which he had weekly on Sunday nights, I think, or one night. So there would be these weekly gatherings. People, 20, 30 guys would come in and sit down, and they would discuss issues together.

So I think that personal touch, and then just getting personally involved in a lot of their lives. As a single man, he simply gave himself to the students, it seemed like, instead of a wife. He just was there for them in the rooms at King's College.

So that, then there were some really strategic things that he did. He used some of his money and the Simeon Trust to purchase, what do they call them? Livings. Yeah, he purchased pulpits for guys, in other words, basically.

When pulpits came free, he would see that evangelical young guys got those pulpits, and that way really spread evangelicalism. And then he became known by the East India Company, what do you call it, East India Company, as their most trusted advisor for chaplains. You couldn't be a missionary outside the compounds in India in those days, and so all the people who were called missionaries went as chaplains.

Well, the East India Company for 30 years looked to Charles Simeon for all their recommendations. So that was another way. Now there was here, I'm watching the clock and I realize we're over time, maybe just a couple more.

Just a statement and then a question. I think one of the stories that focuses is expressed so beautifully in Jesus' conversation with Simeon. When he was illustrating, you remember, the person who had two deaths, one who had a great death and one who had a small death.

I think this, for me, would cancel a part of his experience because Jesus said to the woman, therefore I tell you her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much, but he who is forgiven little loves little. And that raises the question that I wanted to share. I've often struggled and I did early in my Christian experience.

Why is it so difficult for us raised in evangelical circles to see our sin? Is it harder for us than others? I'm just asking. I don't think it is, but it's still a good question because my answer just leaves to mind is because of sin. Or Satan, who is the father of lies, and the essence of Satan and sin is deception.

And thus at the root of sin is the lie that it's not serious. And so it sort of carries its own explanation with it. Steve, and then that'll be all maybe.

His character, at least the way the biographers talk about it, is that his character was just so unimpeachable and his preaching so doctrinally impeccable and carried so consistently what one called the force of truth. And his heart was so given to the poor in the area and his integrity was so consistent that basically he either outlived or overcame prejudice. That was it.

I chalk it up to patient, faithful doing of duty. There are so many quotes I wish I could have included where he says things that are so encouraging about not thinking big thoughts about impact, but being faithful to the duty in which you're called when you're surrounded by lions. Just getting up knowing you have these duties to do, doing them with all your heart and laying your head down with a sense of faithfulness like Kent said and pressing on in that year in and year out.

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