**Charles Simeon**

*A Portrait in Perseverance*

1. **Biographical Information**

* Born Sept. 24, 1759
* Jonathan Edwards had just died and Methodism from the Wesleys and Whitefield was in full bloom.
* Father was a wealthy attorney, and his mother probably died when he was young.
* Lived a debauched life while in boarding school at Eton, where he had the reputation of a fancy-dressing, athletic show-off.
* Converted at 19 while at King’s College in Cambridge
* He describes his own conversion like this: “In Passion Week, as I was reading Bishop Wilson 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 into 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 own soul one moment longer. Accordingly I sought to lay my sins upon the sacred head of Jesus; and on the Wednesday began to have a hope of mercy; on the Thursday that hope increased; on the Friday and Saturday it became more strong; and on the Sunday morning, Easterday, April 4, I awoke early with those words upon my heart and lips, “Jesus Christ is risen to-day! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” 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.”
* Ordained a deacon in the Anglican church in May 1782
* Called to Trinity Church as vicar (pastor)
* Preached his first sermon on Nov. 10, 1782
* Was pastor at Trinity Church for 54 years until his death
* Never married
* Preached up until 2 months before his death.
* Died Nov. 13, 1836, at the age of 77.

1. **Ministry at Cambridge**

* One reason he remained celibate was so he could better minister to his students at Cambridge
* One of the first things he did after being converted, was to teach the Christian faith to his servant girl at the college.
* He lived a life of simplicity, even turning down the fortune his brother had left him. He channeled all his extra income to religious and charity groups.
* When he would return home for the holidays, he would hold family devotions. His father never came, but his 2 brothers were both converted.
* He could properly be considered a “Methodist Anglican Calvinist” as he was part of the Church of England but practiced what was then known as “Methodism” which consisted of strict disciplines of prayer and Bible meditation, but affirmed “the doctrines of grace.”
* He became a powerful, evangelical influence in the Church of England.
  + Recommended most of the men who went out as Anglican chaplains (“missionaries”) to the East (including Henry Martyn who in 5 years had translated the NT into Urdu, Persian, and supervised the translation into Arabic)
  + Recruited, mentored, and trained many young evangelical Anglicans who then went out to fill pulpits throughout England
  + Helped found the Church Missionary Society
* Not without trials
  + Ostracized by his peers for being evangelical
  + Converted students were mockingly called “Sims” and “Simeonites”
  + Students carried on debauchery and revelry in the streets leading up to the church, even throwing stones at him from their windows as he walked up from the college to the Church on Sundays.

1. **Ministry at Trinity Church**

* *Trials*
  + The congregation didn’t want Simeon who had been appointed by the Bishop. They wanted the “assistant pastor” who had been there a long time.
  + For 12 years they refused to let Simeon by the Sunday afternoon lecturer. The assistant pastor was the Sunday afternoon lecturer for 5 years and when he left, they gave it to somebody else for 7 more years.
  + He tried to start a later Sunday evening service but got locked out of the church. He Hired a locksmith to unlock the doors, but when it happened again, he dropped the later Sunday evening service.
  + Also, in the first 12 years as vicar, his congregation opposed him so much that “pewholders” locked their pews, staying away, and forced him to preach to a standing congregation who fit in the building where they could.
  + His diligence in preaching the Word and patience paid off as the church gradually accepted him so after 12 years he became the Sunday afternoon lecturer.
  + Another surge of opposition arose in 1812, after he had been there for 30 years, but by 1815, there was peace in the church again.
* *Expositor of God’s Word*
  + 3 great aims of preaching
    - to humble the sinner
    - to exalt the Savior
    - to promote holiness
  + *“Discourses (Principally in the form of Skeletons) forming a Commentary upon every Book of the Old and New Testament…”*
    - Desired to have trained Anglican clergy as the Church of England offered no preparation for formal ministry.
    - It was comprised of 21 volumes.
    - Presented a copy to King William IV, each of the Archbishops, all the leading libraries in Europe & America, and one to each Cambridge college library
    - Simeon dreamed of clergy, young and old, using his outlines to help them create and preach sermons like his own, smoothly polite in style yet thunderously powerful and searching in substance, sermons that would be delivered with passion on the lips due to unction from the Holy Spirit in the heart.

1. **Lessons**

* Patient Endurance
  + “One of the pervasive marks of our times is emotional fragility. We are easily hurt. We pout and mope easily. We blame easily. We break easily. Our marriages break easily. Our faith breaks easily. Our happiness breaks easily. And our commitment to the church breaks easily. We are easily disheartened and it seems we have little capacity for surviving and thriving in the face of criticism and opposition.” –John Piper
  + “The Blind Eye and the Deaf Ear”
  + “Face to Face”: A gentlemen criticized Simeon for setting too high a standard of holiness in his preaching. To this, Simeon responded that it’s easy to criticize people from afar, but if they occasionally talked face-to-face with each other for 30 minutes, any misapprehensions could be avoided and any efforts to undermine each other.
  + Willing to Receive Rebuke and Grow from it
    - Got irritated at servant for stoking fire wrong and hit him on the back to stop
    - The same servant got the bridle mixed up and Simeon let fly his wrath
    - Said servant wrote to Simeon rebuking him for his actions (“how can a man who preaches and prays so well be in a passion about nothing and wear no bridle on his tongue?”)
  + “Suffering as a Privilege of Bearing Christ’s Cross”
    - “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.”
* Source of Strength
  + As the trials continued year after year, Simeon grew more “downward” in humility and upward in adoration of Christ
    - the more he knew his sinfulness, the more he adored Christ and His benefits
    - “By constantly meditating on the goodness of God and on our great deliverance from that 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, everything else will go 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.”
  + The Importance of Meditation on God’s Word
    - “Meditation is the grand means of our growth in grace; without it, prayer itself is an empty service.”
    - He would get up at 4am and devote 4 hours to private prayer and devotional study of the Scriptures.
  + “The cross of Christ gave rise to a ‘shuddering delight’—shuddering at his own remaining corruption that may betray his soul by fear of man and the love of the world; delight that rises higher than all that man can take or give, and therefore triumphs over all threats and allurements. Christ is all.”
* Continuing to Minister in old age: “Is there any biblical warrant for the modern, western assumption that old age or retirement years are to be years of coasting or easing up or playing? I am not aware of such a principle in the Bible. In fact, it is a great sadness to see so many older Christians adapting to this cultural norm and wasting the last decades of their lives in innocent lounging around. Who knows but that greater strength and health would be given if there were resolves to move toward need and not comfort in our old age? Who knows whether God would give awakening and renewal if we would renew our dreams of ministry to the perishing world and not just the “ministry” of playing with our grandchildren?” --John Piper