

## A SWORD FOR HER SOUL

Luke 2:21-35

Intro: As we come again tonight to the Lord's Table to remember our Lord, I want to use a passage in which we see the involvement of Mary in the life and ministry of her Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke has recorded for us those events which took place immediately before the birth of Christ, and just after the birth of Christ, and, for the most part, they are events of great joy. Prophecy was being fulfilled. The angels were communicating with the people of God on the earth after approximately 400 years of silence between heaven and earth. And an angelic chorus proclaimed that all of this would lead to the greater glory of God--a subject which should appeal to every true child of God.

But the joy was not all that was to be expected from the coming of Christ. And it was to be Simeon's part to speak to Joseph and Mary about the influence and effect of our Lord's ministry on earth. That is what we have in this text. In verses 34, 35 we see that just as we could not think of the birth of Christ apart from the involvement of the virgin Mary, so we should not think of His life or His death without continuing to think of Mary, His mother according to the flesh.

Note the marked contrast between vv. 28-33, as compared with vv. 34, 35. In the former passage we see the widespread effect of our Lord's ministry; in vv. 34, 35 Simeon broke it down to show how men's hearts and lives would be affected by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note first,

# I. THE BLESSING OF JOSEPH AND MARY (Luke 2:34a).

As we are going to see, this was a strange place for the word, "blessed." In v. 28 we read that Simeon blessed God; here in v. 34 he blessed Joseph and Mary, and Mary in particular.

He stood somewhat in the same position as Melchizedek in Genesis 14--between God and man; here it is between God and especially a woman. In v. 28 we have praise and worship; in v. 34 we really have intercession. Simeon was praying for Joseph and Mary because of what they would experience (and again we need to see that it had to do especially with Mary), that God would sustain and keep her through all of the severe trials that would lie ahead.

How gracious of God to lay such a burden upon the heart of

Simeon! The Lord is so faithful to us in burdening others to pray for us.

In the second place, note . . .

## II. THE APPOINTMENT OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

It is to be seen in the word, "set." It speaks of a divine appointment. It indicates that what was to happen to the Lord Jesus was according to the divine plan. God had willed that it would be the way that it would be. How important it is for all of us to understand this, and especially for Mary. She needed to keep her mind filled with thoughts of a sovereign God, and His will for His Son. To know that everything was according to the divine plan is to learn a truth that is one of the greatest of all blessings.

## III. THE TWOFOLD RESPONSE OF PEOPLE TO THE LORD (Luke 2:34b).

Some would fall and rise. Others would speak against Him.

Some would accept Him; others would reject Him.

Those who would rise would fall before Him first, would be humbled, would repent of their sins, would see their need of the Saviour's salvation. And how glorious their resurrection from spiritual death would be! They would be "raised to walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). They would be "new creatures" (2 Cor. 5:17). They would be the possessors of eternal life and would "never die" (John 11:25, 26).

But others would see nothing good in Him. They would not hesitate to speak in the worst way about Mary's Son. They would not believe His claim to be the Son of God. They would hate Him, and finally they would humiliate Him and crucify Him, and gloat over their apparent success. This would include the leaders of Israel, and it would include the leaders of the Gentiles. They would show that Mary's Son would be "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3a).

The world of our Lord's day would be divided over Him--some for Him; others against Him.

And it was important for Mary to understand all of this because, in the providence of God, she was going to live all through it, and even afterwards.

This brings us to those next words of Simeon, which in reality were the words of God, spoken with the same authority as the

angel spoke his words earlier.

#### IV. MARY'S APPOINTMENT (Luke 2:35a).

Many expositors take this as an announcement of Mary's martyrdom (because tradition teaches that Mary was martyred for her faith). And it is true that the word "soul" is used in Scripture for this life.

But it seems to me that there is a greater suffering that is predicted for Mary--that unseen way in which only a mother suffers because of what is happening to her children. Just as it appears that no mother ever rejoiced more than Mary did over the birth of her Child, so no mother ever suffered more over the death of her Son than did Mary.

She was there at the Cross. Cf. John 19:25-27. She stood by Him to the very last. And Simeon is the one who told us here what was going on in the soul, in the heart, of our Lord's mother, Mary.

There is no hint of hysteria. No panic. Perhaps these words of Simeon were still in her heart at the time because you will remember v. 33 of Luke 2:

And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him (Christ).

And she may have remembered the word, "set." This was the Father's appointment for His Son, and her Son. He came to provide salvation for unworthy sinners, and this was what it would cost. But it was as a sword in her soul.

Perhaps it would be good for us to remember Mary tonight as we remember the Lord, thinking of how her joy was turned into the greatest grief, only to be turned into great joy again following the resurrection. We see her for the last time in Acts 1:12, quietly submitting to the last words spoken by her Son.

But what can we say of such words. Is it not amazing that all who saw the Lord, all who heard Him teach, all who saw His miracles--is it not amazing that they all did not accept Him?

Yes, it is until you begin to realize the last thing that I want to point out from our text.

#### V. ONE REVELATION WHICH BECAME CLEARER AT THE CROSS THAN IT HAD EVER BEEN BEFORE (Luke 2:35b).

The Cross teaches us many things:

- 1) It teaches us the width and length and depth and height of the love of God. Cf. Rom. 5:8.

- 2) It teaches us the same thing thing about the love of Christ for us. Cf. Gal. 2:20.
- 3) It teaches us the submission of the Son to the Father's will. Cf. John 18:11.

But the Cross also teaches, nothing bad about the Lord Jesus, but the darkness, the badness, the awful corruption of the hearts of men.

You see, the first statement of v. 34 stands by itself; and the other three statements down to the end of v. 35 stand by themselves. It was in man's rejection of the matchless, sinless Son of God, that they revealed what was in their hearts.

Concl: But are not the hearts of all men alike? Yes, they are! How do we account, then, for the difference-- that some fell and rose, while others continued on in their sin?

There is only one explanation: the grace of God fulfilling the plan of God in salvation.

How grateful we should be tonight if we have fallen before the Son of God, and have been raised up to a new life by His mighty power! As such we gather at the Lord's Table. Let our hearts be filled with praise for His wonderful grace to us.