

## DOCTRINE FOR THE YOUNG

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### SIMEON

by the Rev. J. Clark Echols

I want to tell you a story first, and I want you to know that it's a story that I'm making up. At the end of the story I'm going to read from the Word, and what I want you to do is imagine in your minds a long, long time ago, before the Lord was born. Try to imagine what the world must have been like. Let's say that there was a boy that was born, and he grew up in those times, and his mother and father taught him that happiness comes from success in this world—that if he did a good job and provided a service to the people, that he would be happy and that that would be the fulfillment of his life. And so he grew up that way, thinking that he should get a job and work because that would be his contribution, and that would make him happy on this earth—that it would bring him glory and honor, and it would bring him success. The people would look up to him if he thought that that was what life was all about.

When he grew up and became an adult, he decided that what he wanted to do was to sell camels, donkeys and horses to people. He bought a little camel with all the money he had saved, he fed it well and cared for it, and when it was grown up, he sold it for a lot more money than what he had bought it for. Then he went out and with that money he bought two more little camels, and he raised them very carefully and diligently. When they were grown up, he sold them for much more than he had paid for them. So he was doing this work of selling camels, and he was making a lot of money. He was becoming a rich man, and the people in his village honored him because he was wise; he was smart to be able to do that so that when he was an adult he had all kinds of camels and horses and donkeys for sale—lots and lots of them.

Then he got married and he had some children. He loved those children a lot, and he taught them the same things as he was doing in his life—that is, if you do this work, then you'll get success and happiness. You might even get the respect of the people that you know, and their honor and glory.

Then one day something terrible happened. He bought some baby camels from a man who said that they were very good camels, but as those camels grew up, he discovered that they weren't good camels that he had bought—that he would not be able to sell them, that they were weak. He lost a tremendous amount of money. Suddenly things were hard, and he wasn't able to give the things to the children that he had wanted to give them. And he got angry; he got very mad, because he thought that what he got in this life from the work that he did was the reward for all his labors. He thought that justice and fairness had to do with people treating him right. And he got very mad. So he went out looking for this man who had cheated him, who had told him he was getting good camels when really he wasn't. He found that man and he tried to hurt him back, but he couldn't because that other man was just too cunning, too tricky. So this man was very angry. The years went by and his children grew up, and he saw that his children were being mean to other people. They were being cruel. They weren't being nice; they weren't being honest. They were even cheating people, and stealing from them. And when he went to his children and

said, “Why are you doing this?” they said, “Well, that’s how to make money, isn’t it? That’s how we get success and respect and honor, isn’t it?” And the man said, “Something’s wrong here. I wasn’t taught that. My parents didn’t teach me that.” And he got to thinking about what had become of his life, and he said, “You know, I was wrong somewhere in there.” And he traced it back to when that man had cheated him. That was when his desire to make money and be successful got turned inward to himself. Instead of providing a service to other people, he saw it only as gain for himself.

The man recognized when he was older what he had done wrong, and he was very sad. He realized that in selling camels and donkeys and doing good work, he had made it selfish—he had made it just for this world, and not for helpfulness and charity. And do you know what happened? A miracle happened to this man; the Holy Spirit came to him and said, “You’re exactly right. That little voice of conscience inside of you said, ‘that’s right—you’ve discovered a truth here. You should live for other people. In your work you should provide good things to people, service to them.’” And the miracle was that the Holy Spirit said to this man, “You’ve discovered something very important. In fact, you’re not going to die until you see when all people are going to love the Lord and be good.

He was filled with joy at this—that he had discovered a truth. This man was very happy now, but he was getting old. He didn’t quite know what to do. So he sold his business to someone and he took that money, and said, “I’m going to devote my life from now on to waiting on the Lord.” It doesn’t mean just sitting down and just waiting. It means doing things for people to let them know that the Lord is coming. And he did this for years and years—waiting, and waiting, always remembering that the Lord is going to come. And you know what that meant for the man? Instead of worrying about what was going to happen to him, now there was peace in his heart. He loved his neighbor. And he felt that peace greatly. There was light in his mind, so that he knew what to do with his life. He had a purpose in life—not because he had a lot of money, or was selling a lot of camels, or got great honor and glory from people. It was because of that light, and that peace, and that joy that was in his heart. And he realized that justice and fairness were something that he should do for other people. He should be fair to other people, and not worry about what other people did to him. Now, he also discovered that when he had been hurt—when he was cheated years and years ago—that was a trial that he went through. But it was a sign of what happens in our life when the evil that we have been living suddenly comes out before our eyes—when we suddenly realize that what we did was wrong, or that idea we had was false, or that love we had was from hell. There will be a sign; it may be very traumatic; it may hurt us, but it will teach us what is right. It will teach us the right way to live. And that’s what that man learned. He learned that it wasn’t what he gained in this life that was important; it was his salvation, how he lived in the Lord’s kingdom that was important, because that lasts to eternity.

And so the man became very old, waiting on the Lord. And during that time, unbeknownst to him, the Lord was born. He didn’t know it. He was spending all his time in the temple in Jerusalem. And then Jesus Christ was born, and “when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the

Lord.” And they came “to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.”

Where did they go to make this offering? Yes, to the temple. “And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was...” Yes, Simeon. This man was “just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. So he came by the spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, ‘Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word. For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.’ And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed” (Luke 2:25-35).

*Let us pray: O Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You for the gifts that You have brought us, of Your joy, Your glory, Your peace. We promise that today and every day we will look to how to be faithful to You, looking to heaven, not just the world, looking to be kind and useful to our neighbors, and not just satisfy ourselves. For all this we pray, O Lord, that we may have the strength and the wisdom to do Your will.  
Amen.*

**Texts: Luke 2: 21-23, 34-35**

