

True Confession

John 3:1-2

1

3 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; **2** this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

At the end of chapter 2, beginning in verse 13, we read the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple of the money changers. Note His comment...

John 2:16

2

16 "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business."

It seems that Jesus's frustration and disgust with how the worship of God had been perverted came to the surface. The people had forgotten how to love and respect God in their worship of Him. The money changers in the Temple courtyard illustrated how the Israelites had defamed their worship to God. They had made it something that it was never intended to be or should have become. They forgot to respect God and what He had done for them. Because they had forgotten to respect God and His commandments, they had lost their respect in their worship of Him.

This brings us to their next question...

John 2:18-19

3

18 The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" **19** Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

The Jews come to Him and seek a sign to affirm His authority by which He did these things. Jesus says...

4

"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

Jesus tells them He will indeed give them a sign...

John 2:21

5

21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

They didn't understand what he was saying at all. They thought He was referring to the Temple, but He wasn't, He was speaking of Himself. This is evident in their response to Him...

John 2:20

6

20 The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

This brings us to the introduction, if you will, to chapter three...

John 2:23

7

23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.

Jesus was performing the signs and miracles that were used to confirm the fact that He was from God, was God, and that the words He was teaching were indeed a new Law. Many were believing because of these signs, now here comes Nicodemus. As we saw in the first passage we looked at, he was a Pharisee and came to Jesus by night. The scriptures don't say, but it sure seems that he was trying to avoid being seen. What I find interesting is his statement...

8 *"Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."*

John makes a connection between the story of Nicodemus and the discussion of chapter 2. He has just been saying that on the occasion of Jesus' first visit to Jerusalem during the Passover, there was a lot of excitement generated by His signs and teaching. John says that many believed, there was a kind of imperfect faith that the people developed in Him, based solely on His miracles, the signs He did. That's the statement that Nicodemus makes when he comes to Him, we know you are from God. Note what is being said here. In...

John 2:24-25

9

24 But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, **25** and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

John seems to be saying that the faith that came from seeing these signs, was not the kind of faith needed. He illustrates that Jesus exercised great reserve in His dealings with the persons who professed it, for the reason that He knew all men, and didn't need any man to testify who He was. The kind of faith that comes from only seeing signs is not a saving faith. Jesus knew men, and He knew that this kind of faith was rooted not in a submissive attitude but in something else. It is from this that Nicodemus comes to Him. That is when we see Jesus' response to him...

John 3:3

10

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

It might be difficult to see the connection between Nicodemus' statement that they knew Jesus was from God and how Christ responds to that, but the connection is found in what John says in verses 24 & 25 of chapter 2, Jesus would not trust Himself, who He was and what His purpose was, to men that believed only in signs. The key to abiding in Christ and He in us, is found in a faith that is not self-serving, not based on sign only, but rather is found in a complete acceptance of Jesus as the Christ, the son of the Living God...

Acts 8:36-37

11

36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, Look! "Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" **37** [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."]

Philip tells the Eunuch that the prerequisite to being baptized is to accept totally who and what Jesus is and has done. We want to look at some thoughts from these interchange in this lesson...

The discussion begins with Nicodemus coming to Jesus. This must have been almost impossible for him. The Pharisees had banded together with the scribes and Sadducees in their denial of Jesus as the Christ, but they could not explain how He did what He did, and further they knew that no man could do those things unless He were from God.

So, then, our first point of discussion is...

12 1) The imperfect confession of Nicodemus

Looking at the confession of Nicodemus, just about everything about it is wrong. He came to Jesus by night, seemingly ashamed and afraid of speaking out concerning the conviction that was apparently starting to work in him. He was a man in position. He didn't want to compromise himself in the eyes of his peers. He did not want to be seen in conversation with this new Rabbi and prophet. Is how the world views us really that important? Is slinking about and coming to Christ in secret so that no one sees the kind of obedient faith Christ demands, really the right response? There is something wrong with any conviction about Jesus Christ which allows it to be couched in secret. The true acceptance of Jesus as the Christ, our savior, should be like a fire in a man's bones. It is that fire burning within that compels him to leave the world behind and give himself to Christ, God, wholly. It is that fire that forces him to call out the perfect confession. If Christians proclaim their faith by saying nothing, there is something dreadfully wrong with their Christianity and with their faith. If someone does not regard Jesus Christ with such a faith as to cause them to stand out in the world and say,

13 *“Whatever anybody says or thinks about it, I am Christ's”*

then they truly don't know Him or believe in Him as they should.

1 Peter 2:9

14

9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may *proclaim* the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, and by doing so proclaimed the weakness of his faith. He said, “Rabbi, we know.” What did he know? That Jesus was from God, as any other prophet was, or that Jesus was the Messiah? If he knew and truly believed the latter, then why didn't he act upon that faith? There are so many in the world today who claim to believe in Jesus, but choose to hide in the shadows and not proclaim Him as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Why won't they act on their faith? What prevents us from acting on the faith produced by God's Word? What is our excuse?

Our next point is...

15 2) The way Jesus deals with this imperfect confession

Does it seem strange to you that Jesus seems to have no response for what confession Nicodemus did offer? There is not even a “Thou sayest,” as the Lord gave to Pilate. Jesus responds to Nicodemus simply by saying...

16 *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

Faced by, and recognizing the imperfect faith, based on works and signs, Christ responds with “You must be born again.” Interesting response. How does that address the implied question in Nicodemus’ statement...

17 *“Are You”*

The point Christ is making that imperfect faith based on works alone, won’t get man into a right relationship with God. It takes more, it takes a response of faithful obedience from the heart. It takes a man surrendering himself to God’s Word and coming to Him through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. It takes a faith based not on signs only, but from the heart. Jesus answered Nicodemus with the answer that would save His soul, if he would but listen, believe, and obey.

When we look at birth, we see a new beginning, we see the start of growth, we see an innocence in its infancy ready to bloom. This is no different than the spiritual birth that happens in baptism.

Rom 6:3-4

18

3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? **4** Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

When Christ tells Nicodemus that he must be born again, He is saying that just the acceptance and acknowledgment that Jesus is from God because of the miracle He performs is not enough, It doesn’t change who we are, and change is required. Being born again, starting new, working to grow in our faith. Isn’t that what Peter says in...

1 Peter 2:1-3

19

1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, **2** like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, **3** if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

Growth is the key, when we apply God’s Word in our lives, we grow. We grow in faith, we grow in conviction, and we grow in love.

This brings us to our last point...

20 3) Notice that an imperfect confession can grow into a perfect one

We don’t know the immediate result of this conversation. The scriptures don’t tell us. What they do tell us is...

John 7:49-51 21

49 But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed." **50** Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them, **51** "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?"

Beginning in verse 40 of this chapter John tells us that the people were divided over what to do with Jesus. Some wanted to seize Him, others were proclaiming Him to be a prophet, and others said He was the Christ. When the officers came to the Chief Priests and the Pharisees they were asked why they hadn't brought Him with them.

John 7:46 22

46 "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks."

Not only were the signs that Jesus did impressing people, but His words touched those who would listen. The Pharisees then said to these officers,

John 7:47 23

47 "You have not also been led astray, have you?"

Then Nicodemus, John tells us that it was the same Nicodemus that had come to Jesus earlier, makes his statement. I have often wondered about this. Had he learned what true commitment and confession was or was he still trying to hide? It seems that he was trying to help, but in the face of what was being said...

John 7:48 24

48 No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?

Nicodemus was still did not have the courage of his conviction to openly stand up for the Lord and make the "GOOD CONFSSION."

I come back to the statement Christ made to the people when they were looking for a sign,

25 ***"Destroy this Temple and I will raise it up in three days."***

John 2:22 26

22 So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

John points out that the disciples remembered Christ's words and they believed.

Do we believe? Or does our confession come up short like that of Nicodemus does? Do we have the strength of conviction to proclaim Jesus as the Christ, as our Savior to the world, to our friends, to our family, before God.

Matt 10:32-33 27

32 "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. **33** But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.