

SAVED (Part 3 of 6)

It may surprise you to learn that Scripture teaches not everyone who calls himself a Christian really is. Unbelievers do make false professions of faith in Christ, and people who are not truly Christians can be deceived into thinking they are believers.

Cheap grace and easy faith of a distorted gospel is ruining the purity of the church. The toning down of the gospel message has brought about a putrefying effect that sees almost any kind of positive response to Jesus as tantamount (equivalent in effect) to saving faith. It has been said, “Christians today are likely to accept anything other than utter rejection as authentic faith in Christ.”

However, Jesus was not so quick to accept people’s acceptance of him, as the case in John 3 and His meeting with Nicodemus shows.

You might expect when reading John 3:1-21, that Jesus would welcome Nicodemus warmly and interpret his positive response as a true profession of faith, but that was not the case. Far from encouraging Nicodemus, Jesus, who knew the unbelief and self-righteousness of Nicodemus’s heart, dealt with him as an unbeliever.

Some view and teach this passage of Scripture as a statement about how easy it is to believe on Jesus Christ. However, this is not the point of the episode at all. It’s true that here we see the simplicity of the gospel, but Jesus was not bringing this self-righteous Pharisee a message of easy-believism. On the contrary, Jesus challenged everything Nicodemus stood for. In the context of their dialogue, Jesus confronted Nicodemus’s authenticity of faith, his works-based religion, his self-conceded righteousness, and his biblical illiteracy. Nicodemus was clearly jolted by Jesus’ words.

The narrative flows out of John 2:22-25, which says Jesus “knew all *men* . . . knew what was in man.” The story of Nicodemus goes on to prove Christ’s omniscience (His ability to know all things) by demonstrating His ability to read Nicodemus’s heart.

Nicodemus was one of those John described at the end of chapter 2 and verse 23, which says “many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.” Their kind of belief had nothing to do with saving faith, as we see from John’s testimony that “Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*” (John 2:24). Jesus knew their faith was artificial – it was not true saving faith. Nicodemus, then, stands as an illustration of false faith – his mind accepted to some extent the truth of Jesus because of the miracles, but his heart was unregenerate.

Nicodemus began his conversation by saying, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with

him” (John 3:2). Nicodemus was intrigued with Christ. However, Nicodemus did not fully understand with whom he was speaking. Jesus, without confirming, denying, refuting or even acknowledging Nicodemus’s statement that He was from God, gave an answer that demonstrated the fact that He knew all things. Nicodemus was not dealing with a mere human teacher as he supposed, he was standing in the presence of God Himself. And God (Jesus) knew what was in this man’s heart. Therefore, “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again [born from above], he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

Nicodemus is now faced with a truth that far exceeds any religious encounter that he has ever had – the truth of life after death and where he will go, Heaven or Hell. Jesus did not minimize the challenge that He put before Nicodemus.

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