



*There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, 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 3:1-2)*

I love the story of Nicodemus for in that one soul is the story of all who come to Christ. We all come out of the dark night of sin and unknowing into the brilliantly gleaming, and blinding, Light of the World that is our Lord Jesus Christ! Do you believe that you were in the Light before you believed and confirmed your faith in the Lord? You were not! We all come forth with doubts and furtive motivations. The chosen of God are drawn to that great Light as a moth to the flame – but with some amazing differences. The moth draws nearer and nearer the flame until it is scorched and falls as dust to the ground. That is the end of the moth! But the Inquirer into Christ is drawn as the moth to the flame, contacts the Light, dies to self and rises a new Creation in Christ. Thusly, came Nicodemus, an important figure in Israel and member of the Sanhedrin.

Read a few stanzas from “*Dark Night of the Soul*,” by St. John of the Cross:

*On a dark night, Kindled in love with yearnings--oh, happy  
chance!--  
I went forth without being observed, My house being now at rest.  
In darkness and secure, By the secret ladder, disguised--oh,  
happy chance!--  
In darkness and in concealment, My house being now at rest.  
In the happy night, In secret, when none saw me,  
Nor I beheld aught, Without light or guide, save that which burned  
in my heart.*

*This light guided me More surely than the light of noonday  
To the place where he (well I knew who!) was awaiting me-- A place  
where none appeared.*

Doubt it not – it took courage for Nicodemus to approach Jesus at any hour owing

to the notoriety that surrounded Him and His disciples in light of the disdain the fellow Pharisees of Nicodemus bore for Christ.

Though the manner by which we are drawn to Christ – whether in sorrow, in fear, during the morning or noonday hour, or at night – is important, the most important consideration is in what condition of soul we leave that encounter. In John 3, we are not given an immediate answer to how Nicodemus departed that night from Jesus; but we are given, repeatedly, an explanation throughout the remainder of the Gospel of St. John.

Nicodemus, in the Greek, means “Conqueror,” and Nicodemus lived up to that title in becoming more than a conqueror once having been conquered by the Holy Spirit of God. *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.* (Romans 8:37)

There is biblical evidence to suggest Nicodemus did not come to Jesus at the midnight hour on a whim of fancy. He had studied the reports circulating broadly in Jerusalem concerning the miracles and teachings of Christ. He perhaps surreptitiously lingered in the background to hear the words of Jesus first hand. Little did Nicodemus know that the same spiritual dragnet that had recovered Jonah from the depths of the sea had already enclosed the soul of Nicodemus and was drawing him nearer and nearer by that elementary faith that ordered his steps that fateful night. Nicodemus was not certain of what he was actually doing in coming to Christ, but he did know Holy Scripture, and he also knew that no man could do the works of Jesus without the direct approbation of God. Very, very deeply in the geologic column of the soul of Nicodemus, there was a truth that could not be hidden. It was that truth that warred in his soul to emerge into the light of day. It even seemed to Nicodemus like a hook to draw him that night to the Door of Jesus as a fish is drawn by the fisherman to shore. No man can resist the sure calling and election of God when the Holy Spirit comes calling – even if at the midnight hour.

Nicodemus was no common fellow. He was a man of high dignity and academic accomplishment. He was a member of the High Council of the Sanhedrin; but he guided his soul by the star of faith and righteousness. More than once, he seems to have objected to the ‘kangaroo court’ approach of the High Priest and fellow members of the Sanhedrin. His objections cost him, no doubt, favor and standing among his peers; but, especially by today’s standards, Nicodemus had the courage of his convictions even if that courage was acted upon under the cover of darkness at first. Very few clergy of our day will stand up against the denominational powers that dictate their church assignments, salaries, and retirement benefits – thus, unlike Nicodemus, they are under the control and influence of mammon.

As was His character, Jesus was not coy with Nicodemus. Even though this was the first man of such stature to inquire of Christ, Jesus knew the heart of Nicodemus. He knew it was a good heart, but ruled by a false understanding imparted by false doctrines of the Jews. He knew that Nicodemus was a man who honestly sought truth; and Jesus delayed not in confronting Nicodemus’ doubts head-on. Without the usual formalities, Jesus went straight to the heart of the matter: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* (John 3:3) Jesus did not delicately beat about the bush, or comment ‘according to His best understanding,’ but went straight for the heart. In fact, God has no opinion about anything (as the modern versions aver). God only has TRUTH, and that unadulterated!

To the well trained and sophisticated Nicodemus, the words of Jesus made no sense. *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?* (John 3:4) The age-old confusion of Nicodemus persist today perhaps more among the ‘theologically educated clergy’ than among the simple and common. With ‘nasalized affectation’ I can imagine these wonders of the jet-

set pulpit questioning the same issue, but from the pulpits of false doctrine instead of the honest inquiry that characterized the visit of Nicodemus. *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. <sup>8</sup> The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* (John 3:5-8) Herein lies a great spiritual principle. The wind has its own mind and purpose. We cannot know from whence it cometh, or thence it goeth. Neither can we fully comprehend the mysteries of God though you may be hard put to find any theologian who will admit to any that escapes his understanding. Nicodemus was not one of them!

Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus meant, but he did not deny it. He simply asked the next question: *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?* (John 3:9) Now Jesus makes a point that would be just as valid if asked of 99% of the clergy of our own time: *Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?* How many ministers today fully understand, or will admit to an understanding, of this 'unsophisticated' doctrine of Christ – of the new birth! If they do admit to it, they cover it over with modern philosophical jargon and meaning that is imagined and not valid.

Jesus continues, *<sup>11</sup> Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. <sup>12</sup> If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. <sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: <sup>15</sup> That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. <sup>17</sup> For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. <sup>18</sup> He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. <sup>19</sup> And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. <sup>21</sup> But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.* (John 3:10-21)

Two additional points of great depth here:

1. Jesus draws His own unto Himself as an iron magnet draws other objects of iron to itself. The iron magnet, like Christ, knows those who have a like spirit unto Himself even if cradled in the mortal flesh of the sinner.
2. True, the world loves darkness, and Nicodemus came during those hours of darkness, but the world REMAINS in darkness by choice; Nicodemus came in darkness and departed bathed in LIGHT!

### Postlude:

Though Nicodemus came under cover of darkness to Jesus on this first encounter, he never again concealed his discipleship. He seems to have grown in courage and faith as time progressed. Later, Nicodemus timidly defends Jesus before the Sanhedrin: *Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them, <sup>51</sup> Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?* (John 7:50-51) There is a mighty revelation in the manner in which John makes reference to Nicodemus, and does each time his name is mentioned after that midnight meeting with Christ. John refers to Nicodemus as "*he that came to Jesus by night.*" Why do you suppose John does this? I believe John is emphasizing the fact that Nicodemus came covertly to Jesus at first, but now comes openly to His defense after becoming a true disciple.

On the dreadful occasion of the crucifixion of Christ, all of the enemies of the Lord were affected with excitement and a sense of power. They believed they had laid to rest the trouble-maker of their comfortable little nests as rulers. They were keen to persecute even the followers of Jesus since their spirits were swelled with pride and confidence. Even the disciples of Jesus abandoned Him that night in the Garden at Gethsemane. Only the women, and the disciple John, remained at the foot of the cross as our Lord suffered and died. Love constrained them, and John is best known as the Apostle of Love. But there were others who demonstrated the courage of conviction in publicly revealing their discipleship of Christ. Joseph of Arimethaea, a wealthy man of means, and, yes, Nicodemus, came publicly to Pontius Pilate and desired the body of Jesus for burial. This required great courage because the Jewish rulers had their surveilling eyes upon all events of the day.

*38 And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. 39 And there came also Nicodemus, **which at the first came to Jesus by night**, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. 40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. 41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. 42 There laid they Jesus. (John 19:38-42) Once again, note the stipulation by John that Nicodemus had at first come by night. John had a purpose for pointing this fact out with every subsequent mention of Nicodemus.*

Yes, we all came out of darkness into the Light of Christ; and, if we went away with that Light in our hearts as did Nicodemus, we will have the courage to give public testimony in our lives by word and deed of the glorious Lord who saved us.