

Nicodemus.

by Andrew Bonar

Andrew Bonar's sermon on Nicodemus emphasizes the importance of confessing Christ's death and resurrection for eternal life, and encourages believers to follow Christ's example, even in the face of danger and ridicule.

Scripture: John 3:1

Topics: "Boldness in Faith", "Transformation"

Description

Andrew Bonar explores the transformative journey of Nicodemus through three pivotal scenes in his life. Initially, Nicodemus seeks Jesus in the night, receiving profound truths about being born again and God's love for the world. As he navigates his daily life, he begins to share the love of Christ with others, culminating in a moment of courage when he defends Jesus before the Sanhedrin. Finally, at the crucifixion, Nicodemus boldly steps out of the shadows to honor Jesus, demonstrating his growth from fear to faith. Bonar emphasizes that true life comes from embracing the death of Christ, which leads to eternal life.

Transcript

John 3:1-21 ; 7:50 ; 19:39

We have three scenes given us in the life of Nicodemus.

The first is his interview with Christ. How he was awakened we do not know. It is of no consequence when and how it is done, if it is the beginning of the great change. You say, 'I cannot go one step towards Christ till I am born again and feel it.' That is a great mistake, for although the Bible says you must be born again, it nowhere says that you must feel that you are born again.

But Jesus further said, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.' It is by looking to Christ that new life comes in. '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.'

Did you ever think that these wondrous words, the most magnificent the world has ever heard, were all spoken to one man, in a quiet room? If we were asked to whom was Christ likely to say them, we should conjecture that He would gather together all the angels to teach them another new song. But they were not spoken to angels! Or we conjecture such an assembly as that at Mizpah, the Temple at Jerusalem when it was full, and before the many thousands of Israel He would say -'Hear, O Israel, God so loved the

world!'

But no, brethren, He sat in a quiet room in the village of in the chamber that Martha and Mary had fitted up for His use, and there, alone with Nicodemus, He spoke these never-to-be-forgotten words, which have been more used than any others in the Bible. He did not grudge to say His best things to the poor hungering soul beside Him. He did not grudge to lift His golden vessel filled with living water to the lips of this Pharisee. Is it not good news for you and me? Take them all to yourself; empty if you can that vessel into your own soul. You are welcome to all it contains.

The words sank into the soul of Nicodemus as he went away. I can suppose with what solemn feelings he bade the Master farewell, and walked over the shoulder of the Mount of Olives in the calm still moonlight, thinking deeply on all he had heard.

In the second scene we can see Nicodemus going about his ordinary business, for a man does not need to leave his work to follow Christ. He must take Christ with him; and religion does not make a man selfish. It rather makes him want to give away all he can.

I can imagine Nicodemus next day, observing Christ walking with His disciples, going forward and saying to John, 'I was with your Master last night.'

'I thought so,' said John. 'We heard some rumour of it at Bethany this morning.'

'I heard him say strange things. Does He ever say such things to any one else? Did you ever hear Him say that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son?'

At once John treasured up the words, and when he was writing his Gospel the Holy Ghost said to him, 'Take care, John, that you do not forget these words.' See how joy flows from one heart to another. Nicodemus having received the love of God was the means of communicating it to others.

It was the great day of the feast. The Sanhedrin or Seventy Elders, seeing the crowds and Jesus speaking to them, ordered officers to go and fetch Him into their presence. Nicodemus was present but did not interfere. He thought it would be another famous opportunity of hearing Him. By and by the door opened--the officers entered with awe-struck faces, but without Christ, exclaiming, 'Never man spake like this Man.'

'Are ye also deceived? Have any of the Rulers or the Pharisees believed on Him?' And they went on to curse the crowd who listened and the One who taught. Then Nicodemus could not be silent any longer. He burned to speak for the Master he loved. Rising up calmly he said, 'Does our law judge any man before it hear him and know what he doeth?' And as he looked around fearlessly, prepared to defend Christ, he was met with a storm of sneers and contempt. 'Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet!' Thus, like men in a passion, they made a blunder historically.

I have a strong conviction that this was the hour of the conversion of Joseph of Arimathea. I can suppose Joseph touching Nicodemus and saying, 'I would like to speak with you about this Jesus of Nazareth. Come home with me and tell me more about Him.' And so I would say that it is a good thing sometimes to be laughed at. Young followers of the Lamb--take encouragement from this, and remember that a little touch of persecution will do you no harm.

In the third scene we find Nicodemus at the Cross. He came out of his hiding-place. He could not bear that his Master should hang on a Cross. When Jesus was condemned Nicodemus was not present in the Council. He was journeying, perhaps. But see how he has been growing. Compare his first coming to Christ with this his last. Then full of fear, now bold and courageous. I am not sure that Joseph did not call on him, on his coming back to Jerusalem, on the day of the Crucifixion, to say, 'I have a new tomb where I would fain bury our Master. Will you help me?' Nicodemus had evidently intended something of the kind, for he had brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight.

Look at the scene. As the two good men stood by the Cross, what would pass through the mind of Nicodemus? Would it not be this: 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.'

How reverently and lovingly they two handle that body! What a funeral! only two mourners, but many spectators, for all the angels in heaven were looking on. It was the burial of the King of kings. Dr. Mason of New York was once at the funeral of a young man, and he thought the pall--bearers were going a little too fast. He went forward, and touching them softly, he said, 'Walk softly; you are carrying a temple of the Holy Ghost.' If that could be said of a follower of Christ, what of the blessed Master Himself?

Nicodemus is hazarding his life as well as his reputation. He is lavishing his wealth on Christ. Christ's dying love has filled his heart. He counts it an honour to roll the stone to the sepulchre-door, as the angel did to roll it back.

Learn like Nicodemus to confess a Christ that died.

Men preach the imitation of Christ, but it is the death of Christ that brings life to the soul. Woe to the sinner who tries to get to heaven by simply imitating Christ. We must die, be crucified with Christ, and then we shall rise with Him to life eternal.

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