

Confronting the Pharisee in All of Us

Proclamation Life Groups; Week of Sunday, February 8, 2015; Steve Thiel

John 2:24-25 makes it clear that Jesus knew what was in all men; He knew their hearts. This was true of those with spurious (false) faith in John 2:23 and it is also true of Nicodemus, whom Jesus knew was ignorant of who He was and what He required. As a teacher of Israel, Nicodemus should have understood what was required for entrance into the Kingdom of God; but instead, he was steeped in the perversion of the Old Testament, which taught a works-based righteousness. Therefore, Jesus instructs Nicodemus to the way of true righteousness through a radical transformation called the new birth, received only through faith in Christ. Read John 3:1-21 and answer the following questions.

I. Confronting the Darkness of a Pharisee

- A. When and why did Nicodemus come to Jesus (vv.1-2)?

- B. List all the different things that come to your mind when you hear the title Pharisee?

- C. In verse 7, what do you think Jesus means when He says, “You must be born again”?

- D. Read Ezekiel 36:22-27 and 37:7-14. How do these verses help us to know what Jesus is talking about when He says that one must be born of water and the spirit to enter the Kingdom of God?

- E. Nicodemus marvels at Jesus’ words (v.9). How does Jesus respond to Nicodemus’ shock and do you think that Jesus is being too hard on Nicodemus? Why or why not?

II. Confronting the Works-Based Theology of a Pharisee

- A. Read Numbers 21:4-9 and answer the following question. What happened when the sinful people of Israel who were bitten looked up at the bronze serpent on the pole?

- B. How does Jesus apply the bronze serpent story from Numbers to Himself?

- C. According to John 3:16-18, what promises are given to all men, Jews and Gentiles?

- D. Read John 3:19-21. What keeps each sinner from turning to Jesus, who is the Light?

III. Confronting the Pharisee in All of Us

- A. In what ways are you depending on your own efforts to earn favor with God?

- B. What areas of your life do you try to hide from others and how can you come to the light?