

A Night in Darkness — Regeneration.

John 2: 23, 25, John 3: 1-21.

Night Scenes of Scripture

Seventeen Bible Night Scenes, illustrating and elucidating various truths of the Gospel.

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Chapter 6

A Night in Darkness — Regeneration.

We have been glancing hitherto at the night scenes which are specially relative to the history of the Lord Jesus while here upon earth. In the treatment which He received at the hands of man we get the development of the real state of man's heart, and the absolute demonstration of the perfect moral ruin, by sin, of the first man. Completely away from God, and under the power of Satan, he is seen manifestly as an utterly lost sinner, needing redemption and new birth.

In the night scenes that will now pass before us we shall see either in type and shadow, or in plain doctrinal statement, how the sovereign grace of God comes in to meet the state we have described. And first of all we will ponder over the striking scene before us, in the verses I have read, where the truth of new birth by the Spirit of God is developed, for regeneration is the only antidote to man's ruin.

Every man who has been born into this world must be new-born, if he is to see or know the kingdom of God. For observe, the man who is only born once dies twice, but the man who is born twice will certainly not die twice, and, thank God, he need not even die once.

It is very important to get hold of this truth in its simplicity, that man as man needs to be born again. There is an idea abroad today that because Jesus was a man, therefore somehow or other, in some peculiar unknown way, humanity has been raised, and that man as man — I mean sinful man — has been raised into nearness to God. Such a thought, I have no manner of hesitation in boldly affirming, is utterly false, and has no foundation whatever in Scripture. The incarnation of the Lord Jesus does not bring you and me, beloved friends, to God. It only proves how far away from God we were. And therefore I am prepared for the language in which the Lord declares to this interesting religious ruler that he "must be born again."

The history of this man who came to Jesus by night is very charming, because we see in it what I call progress in a man's soul. We do not all get into the light in a moment, by a jump as it

were; as a rule we get on slowly. True, this was the beginning with Nicodemus, for wherever the Holy Ghost mentions Nicodemus, He records the fact that he came to Jesus by night. John 3 tells us of his so coming; the seventh chapter refers to him as "he that came to Jesus by night"; and the nineteenth chapter speaks of him as "Nicodemus, which *at the first* came to Jesus by night." And what did he do *at the last*? He came out boldly for Christ in broad daylight. I wonder whether you have done that or not? I wonder whether you have even taken the first step of coming to Christ secretly? If not, I urge you to take that step tonight.

You tell me rather disparagingly he came by night. Well, never mind, he came to Jesus, and that is more than you have done yet. There are three stages in his history. I call John 3 midnight, John 7 twilight, and John 19 daylight. It was darkest midnight in that man's soul when he came stealthily creeping to Jesus, hoping that nobody saw him; he was beginning to get a glimmer of light when he put a word in sideways for the Lord in chap. 7; but the death of Christ produced in Nicodemus what His life had never effected. When he saw that He was dead, he got the clear revelation of the truth of John 3, and his actions said in the face of the whole world, Think what you like, say what you like, do what you like, Christ is for me, and I am for Him: I identify myself with the Man you have cast out and crucified. He is on the side of Jesus boldly. God grant you may be there from this night forth, if never before.

But it is important to see, and that is the great point in this man's history, that man must have an entirely new nature in order to have to say to God at all. You will have to get an altogether different nature from that which you got from your mother as a child of Adam. Neither you nor I have a single thing in us, or about us, that will fit us for the presence of God. A good many years have rolled by between the second chapter of Luke's Gospel, which we have already pondered, and the second chapter of John. What has taken place? The blessed Saviour has passed through infancy, childhood, youth, manhood. He has come out after years of perfection in private life in Nazareth, and having been baptized of John in Jordan, the heavens are opened, and a voice is heard declaring, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And, forsooth, you doubt that He is the Son of God! I pity your folly, and your unbelief; you are blindly shutting your eyes to the most lovely object that God could put before those eyes, whether upon earth or in heaven. You are closing your eyes to God's beloved Son, and your ears to the heavenly testimony of God, when Jesus, having been baptized, and emerging from the water, is greeted with the salutation, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

We have already seen that on the Mount of Transfiguration, when Peter would have put Jesus on a level with Moses and Elias, and said, "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias". (Luke 9: 33), the Father's voice is again heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son: hear him." He did not say "hear him" at the baptism of Jesus by John; He took it for granted, so to speak, that when He was proclaimed Son of God, everybody would listen to Him; but when Peter would put the Saviour on the same level with the Lawgiver and the Reformer, the Father instantly steps in and sweeps Moses and Elias off the scene. Do not forget this. Moses is gone, for the law could not save you: Elijah's day is gone by, for reformation could not meet your case: and we are in the day of the Son of God, the day of the revelation of the Saviour, and the Father's voice says, "Hear *him*."

And did people hear Him, and did they believe on Him? Well, the end of John 2 tells us that many believed on His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But what follows? "Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man." Do you think there is any saving virtue in the faith that believes in miracles? Plenty of people nowadays try hard to get what they call evidences of Christianity. If you could fill this hall with what are called external evidences, I would not give a "thank you" for them. Why? Because they would not produce in my soul or yours or any man's, living faith in the Person of the Son of God. If I cannot trust Jesus for what He is, and for what God tells me about Him, I shall never trust Him because of the external evidences that people are so desirous of having. Do I not believe in miracles? Yes, I delight in the miracles of the Lord Jesus. But do those miracles lead the heart to trust Him? Not a bit. I trust Him because of the revelation God has given to my soul of what He is. And observe, the faith that is produced only by miracles seen by the natural eye, — that faith, the Lord says, I do not trust.

There is a great lesson, I think, for every person who hears me, and for every one throughout Christendom, in those words of the Lord Jesus in the last verses of John 2 He as it were says, You believe in Me when you see My miracles: you do not trust Me for what I am, but because of My power to do: then, slays the Lord, I do not trust you. He knew what was in man; He knew that man had got a nature which was irretrievably ruined, — a nature in which there was evil that could not be eradicated, — a nature which was of no value at all before God, and that there must be brought in something entirely new. And therefore in this third chapter of John the Lord passes on to tell of the way in which the soul gets this new nature, to tell of the new birth which all must pass through if they will see God's kingdom. It is of vast importance for the soul to see this, God cannot trust me. The voice of Jesus in John 2 says, I cannot trust you; and the same voice in John 3 says, You will have to trust Me. Can you say, "Ah, blessed Lord, I can trust Thee, and if I had a thousand souls I would trust Thee with them all"? Who would not trust in Him, the Son of the living God?

I said this morning to a young man, who had a doubt about Jesus being the Son of God: "How could you be the image of your father if you were not your father's son? And how could Jesus be the revelation of God, the image of God, if He were not God's own beloved Son?" And just let me say this in passing: if the Lord Jesus Christ be not God's Son, He is not worthy of the credence or the confidence of a single heart in this hall. And why? Because He said He was the Son of God, and if He were not, He has been guilty of falsehood, and therefore He was not a good man. Did He not say to the man whose eyes He had opened in John 9, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" And did He not also tell him, "Thou hast both seen him, and he it is who talketh with thee"? The dear simple fellow fell down and said, "Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him." You cannot do better, my friend, than follow his example; and if you have any doubts about the divinity of the Lord Jesus, may God dispel those unworthy doubts, and lead you to listen to the language and testimony of the Son who only knows the Father's heart, and nature, and who came from heaven to earth to reveal the Father's love, to make known the nature of Him, whose eternal Son He was, but who became also in time a man in lowly grace to meet the need of man, and that by His own death.

But first of all in this night scene Jesus brings out the solemn truth that man needs to be born again, and the way it comes out is very interesting. There is a little word connecting the second and third chapters of John's Gospel which does not appear in our ordinary English Bible. It says in the end of chap. 2 that "Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man"; and then the third chapter really begins with, "*But* there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus," etc. The Spirit of God, so to speak, says, I will bring before you the very nicest piece of humanity that the world can produce, a man who would be supposed to have claims to anything and everything, on the ground of his moral character, and religious activity. The very best specimen of a man that the earth can produce, as the expression of religiousness in the nature of man, comes now to the Saviour, and becomes the means of bringing out the truth on this subject.

"Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews . . . came to Jesus by night;" and you may ask, What brought him? I have no doubt whatever that he was brought by the distinct sense in his own soul, that whatever he was, and whatever he possessed, he could not meet the claims of God; he desired to have something better than he had. He is a picture of thousands and tens of thousands of religious people today. Although they have a great amount of religion they are not satisfied, the heart is not happy, the conscience is not purged, they are not at rest: they would like to have something they do not possess, but they have not yet come boldly to Jesus. Well, Nicodemus came to Jesus, and he came by night. The reason why he came by night is, I think, pretty plain. He hoped nobody would see him, he did not wish anybody to know about it. And that is what generally takes place when a man — above all, a religious man — really comes to Jesus, and is born of God, in the end of his days. It is an immense mercy, surely, but still he does not like to let everybody think that he has been wrong all the bygone days of his history.

Now look here, my friend, if you have never yet been born of the Spirit of God, let nothing hinder you from coming now to Jesus. Let me urge you by all the joys of heaven, and by all the certainties of eternal damnation, if you die in your sins, to turn now to the Lord in uprightness and truth; for remember, "he that doeth truth cometh to the light." Nicodemus really came to the light though he came by a tunnel. He said to himself, I will get to the One who will give me light, but I will take care to let nobody know about it, for the very fact would be a tacit confession that I am not right. Well, beloved friends, it is infinitely better to find out and to own you are wrong, than to go on wrong without knowing it. I said to that young man today, "If I am wrong in my faith I will for ever thank the man who will put me right." Do you not want to be put right? Do you not want the truth? Do you not want to know the Son of God, if as yet you know Him not? Surely!

Let me ask you, friend, Have you come to Jesus even as Nicodemus did? Perhaps not yet. Well, would not this very night be a good time to come to Him? Could you ever have a better time for coming to the Lord? At this very moment, where you sit, let your heart turn round to the blessed precious Saviour, who died and rose again, and if you have never gone through in your soul's history what is described here, let it be this night. Unsaved man, unconverted man, unwashed, unpardoned man, it is high time you came to Jesus.

I trust some here are like Nicodemus, troubled, anxious, burdened. He had not got the truth, he felt that, and he came to Jesus to get it. He came like a scholar going to school. He

believed that Jesus was a teacher come from God. He was of that class, of whom I spoke, who are convinced of things by their eyes, but that is not faith.

The Lord at once sees where he is: the darkness is no hindrance to Him. He reads your very heart. He knows the secrets of your inmost soul. He knows your deep need. He knows that you have eternity before you, and that you have the sins of a whole lifetime upon your guilty soul, if unsaved to this hour. He will tell you the truth, whether it be palatable or not. It was exceedingly unpalatable to Nicodemus I think I see the look of amazement on his face, as the Lord answered his first inquiry that night. He, so to speak, takes the place of a pupil, and recognises the Lord as a divine teacher. He implies by his words, I believe you are a divine teacher, and I am quite willing to be a scholar, though I should not like anybody to know it. But the Lord immediately answers, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." I am persuaded the astonishment of Nicodemus was great to be told that he was not fit to enter the kingdom of God, and did not possess the capacity to understand divine things. But he did not, nor do you, nor I, save as the fruit of God's own sovereign grace working in our souls. Go to a man born blind, and describe to him the beauties of some lovely landscape in the country. Does he understand you? No, he is absolutely by his very condition unable to comprehend what you have been describing. He has never seen a mountain, or a river, or a wood; he can form no idea of a landscape. You may endeavour as much as you like to picture it to him, but he has not any adequate power to understand what is perfectly familiar to you. Man's sin has carried him into distance from God, and he has now a nature that cannot apprehend divine things. "There is none that understandeth" (Rom. 3: 11).

This is Nicodemus's first lesson, and at once he says: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Most foolish, you might say, but the Lord does not rebuke him. He only makes it the occasion of patiently opening out the truth: "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." What this meant Nicodemus did not understand. What it means, many, alas! nowadays do not understand. There are many who think it means baptism. I am persuaded it means nothing of the kind. A man might be baptized, and live the life of a Christian professor, and at the end pass into hell for ever.

Oh, but you say, there is the Spirit. Yes, if there be the work of the Holy Ghost, all well and good. But what is this being "born of water and of the Spirit"? There can be no manner of doubt as to the meaning of the Lord's words. Water is the figure used frequently in Scripture for God's Word. Do you not recollect in Ezekiel 36, to which the Lord alludes here, it is prophesied that when Israel is restored by-and-by, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you" (ver. 25). Isaiah uses water likewise as a figure of the Word. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed" (Isa. 44: 3).

Coming now to the pages of the New Testament, I find the Lord in John 13 washing the disciples' feet, and then in chap. 15 we find Him saying to them, "Now ye are clean." How? Through the water? No, but "through *the word* which I have spoken unto you" (ver. 3). In Ephesians 5 I read that "Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (vers. 25, 26). The apostle James

says, "Of his own will begat he us *with the word of truth*, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures" (1: 18); and again Peter says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by *the word of God*, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1: 23). It is the Word of God, in the living power of the Holy Ghost, that is ever and only the means of the new birth.

Now what the Lord presses upon Nicodemus here is that the new birth is an indispensable necessity for every soul of man ere he can see or enter into the kingdom of God, whether you look at it on its earthly side for the Jew, or its heavenly side for the Christian now. You say, But I have been baptized. Nevertheless you will go to the lake of fire, unless you are born again — "born of water, and of the Spirit," as the Lord puts it here. Baptism is not new birth. I value baptism greatly; it is an integral part of the faith of my soul; but it will not convey to you or to me a new and vital principle of existence before God, and that is what we need. You and I need a new life and nature to put us in a state in which we can know and enjoy God.

It is the Word of God used by the Spirit of God that is the means of the new birth. I do not exclude faith; no doubt faith has its place. There is faith in the soul with regard to the Word; but you will find that souls are always born by the Word of God. The Lord adds immediately, as the proof of this necessity, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Educate it, it is but educated flesh; make it religious, it is religious flesh; improve it, reform it, it is still flesh. Another has well said, "You may sublimate the flesh as you like, you will never distil spirit out of it." Why? Because "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." It partakes of the nature of its source.

From the Lord's words which immediately follow, we can gather the perfect consternation that must have filled the heart of this Jewish ruler. "*Marvel not* that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Let me press on you, with the greatest earnestness, that the Lord Jesus Christ says to you, and to me, as well as to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." That is what I call an inexorable "must" — viz., the necessity of man's nature as a ruined sinner before God, and the question raised by God for you is this — Have *you* been born again? There is another "*must*," which we shall look at presently.

"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." This brings in a new life and nature altogether. You and I have been born according to the laws of natural generation; we are children of Adam; but we have in us the flesh. Will it ever do for God? It will not. We have a nature with all the faculties and capabilities necessary for man's existence here on earth, but that does not fit us for relationship with God, because it is corrupted by the flesh. Hence man must have a new nature altogether; he must be born of water, and of the Spirit.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth." God is sovereign, but He always uses the Word, and He can use a very feeble instrument to bring His Word to a soul. He may even use a dumb creature as an instrument of His grace, as in a case of which I know. You may think it a strange thing if I say that a cow was the means of a man's conversion. An infidel was out walking one Sunday evening — and you know Sunday is always rather a dismal day for a man who is not a Christian — and was wishing the day was over. He went into his park, on the other side of which grazed his cow. The cow came across the park when she saw her master, to whom she was

attached, and licked his hand, which was on the railing. He suddenly recollected a scripture which he had learned when a child: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isa. 1: 3). (Parents, teach your children the Scriptures.) As this scripture flashed upon his mind, the poor infidel exclaimed, "Upon my word, after all the Word of God is true; that beast knows me, and I do not know God." And he was converted, thank God! Conversion is always by God's Word, and He uses that Word as the means of blessing to souls, perhaps years and years after the Word has been heard.

More than a century ago there was a boy listening to a preacher in a church in the town of Dartmouth, About four miles distant from the spot where I was born in Devonshire. That boy became a man, and lived to a great age. He lived to be a hundred years old in the backwoods of America. One day, when he was still able to do a little work in the woods, he got down, and began thinking. "This is my birthday," he said to himself; "today I am a hundred years old;" and he turned back upon his past life. Back and back he went till he remembered when, as a boy of about seventeen, he sat in Dartmouth parish church and heard John Fletcher preach from this text: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema-Maranatha" — cursed when He comes (1 Cor. 16: 22). The preaching and the text came up in his mind after eighty-three years, and the old man said to himself, "I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ; I shall be lost." He was a convicted sinner, and soon believed in the Lord, and was saved. That scripture, heard eighty-three years before, was the means of his conversion. Thank God!

Ah! my friend, God's Word is quick and powerful, and He often sends strange parts of it to awaken a man, for "the wind bloweth where it listeth." What do you suppose was the scripture used of God to my conversion? It was this: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble" (James 2: 19). That scripture was quoted to me thirty-five years ago, and I saw the truth, that I had no more real faith than a damned devil in hell. I am not ashamed to say that I saw my company, and fled. I was awakened, and said to myself, "I had better turn to God at once;" and I did, praised be His name. Oh! beloved friends, give heed to the Word of God, and if you have never yet turned to God, will you not turn to Him just now?

Nicodemus is now thoroughly aroused by what the Lord had said to him, and he exclaims, "How can these things be?" The Lord tells him that, as a teacher in Israel, he ought to have known what Ezekiel says in Ezek. 36, which we have already considered. And He adds: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness." Man does not care to believe God. You will frequently find people saying, "I cannot believe." You cannot believe whom? Pick up a newspaper, and read of some horrible crime, or accident, and you believe it every word. Take up Bradshaw, to consult his time-tables for a journey, and you trust him implicitly. But you take up God's Word which tells you that you are a lost sinner, and that God in love gave His Son for you, and you say, "I cannot believe it." Yours is a downright bad case. You cannot believe the God of truth! You can believe a man like yourself, but God, the living God, you say you cannot believe. What an insight this gives us of man's heart! The Lord says, "We speak that we do know." He knew God's requirements, and He knew man's necessities, but yet man did not believe.

Having spoken of earthly things, the Lord passes on to tell of heavenly things. He alone was qualified to speak of them. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down

from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." He alone knew what suits heaven, what God requires, and what God desires; and He came down from that scene of heavenly light to make all this known, and not only to make known God's requirements, but also to meet the need of man. How He meets that need He now unfolds. He was on earth, He had come down from heaven, and He was going up to heaven again; but, wondrous truth, He was in heaven at the very moment when He spoke to Nicodemus. He says, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." Only the Son of Man, who, as to His divine nature, was in heaven, could bear witness to what suited it, as having come from thence. To quote the words of another: "We have a revelation of heavenly things brought directly from heaven by Christ, and in His Person. He revealed them in all their freshness — a freshness which was found in Him, and which He, who was ever in heaven, enjoyed; He revealed them in the perfection of the Person of Him who made the glory of heaven, whose nature is the atmosphere which all those who are found there breathe, and by which they live; He, the object of the affections which animate this holy place from the Father Himself down to the last of the angels who fill heaven's courts with their praises, He is the centre of all glory. Such is the Son of Man, He who came down to reveal the Father — truth and grace — but who divinely remained in heaven in the essence of His divine nature, in His Person inseparable from the humanity with which He was clothed! The deity which filled this humanity was inseparable in His Person from all the divine perfection, but He never ceased to be a man, really and truly a Man before God."(Notes on the Gospel of John, by J.N.D.)

As He passes on to tell of the heavenly things, He again replies to Nicodemus's query, "How can a man be born again?" Jesus tells him, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" — i.e., you must be born again, and I must die. Alone upon the ground of My death, and My passing under God's judgment, can you be brought to God. You want life, Nicodemus, but for you to get life I must take death. Observe the "as" and the "so" in that fourteenth verse. You know the story of the brazen serpent. Israel was bitten by the fiery serpents, and the people were perishing. The serpent on the pole was the figure of the creature that did all the mischief. What has wrought the mischief in regard to man? Sin. And what is the fruit of sin? Death. And the Lord, in applying this figure to Himself, unfolds to us the truth that He must die, and pass under judgment. His incarnation alone cannot bring blessing to lost sinners, though it is very blessed to look at it in itself. I must have His death. I can only feed upon Christ as the One who has died and risen again.

No doubt the Lord read the thoughts of Nicodemus's heart at that moment. Nicodemus might think, But where is the man who could die for me, and bear my judgment? The Lord answers that immediately: "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." Look at what we have here: the Son of Man in verse 14, and the Son of God in verse 16. God has emptied His heart, if I may say so, in giving His own beloved Son. His interest in man was so great, His love for man was so deep, that nothing less could express it. Satan in the Garden of Eden had told man, God is not good enough to give you the fruit of that tree; and what is God's answer here? My love to you is so great and deep that I will give My only Son, My well-beloved for you, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

How simple and how full that sixteenth verse is! It has two sides: God's side, and man's side — God loving, and giving; we believing, and having. How simple God's way of salvation is, and how precious the Person in whom it is all wrapped up! It has been well said that Christianity is not a set of dry dogmas, to which you have to give your assent, but divine truth wrapped up in the Person of a living man. The glories of His Person none can fully unfold, they are simply unfathomable and inexpressible, but I love to sing —

"How wondrous the glories that meet

In Jesus, and from His face shine.

His love is eternal and sweet

'Tis human, 'tis also divine

His glory — not only God's Son —

In manhood He had His full part —

And the union of both joined in one

Forms the fountain of love in His heart."

It was love, divine, precious, unspeakable love that led Him to die for us on that accursed tree, and, if you believe on Him, you have eternal life through His death. I say receive it, believe it. You may tell me you cannot understand it. No, but what I cannot understand I can believe, what I cannot fathom. I can swim in, what I cannot comprehend I can enjoy. I know that God's Son has died for me, and I know that the source of all blessing is in His perfect love. It was a lunatic, it is said, who wrote these words: —

"Could I with ink the ocean fill,

Were every blade of grass a quill,

Were the whole heaven of parchment made,

And every man a scribe by trade

To write the love of God above

Would drain the ocean dry,

Nor could the scroll contain the whole,

Though stretched from sky to sky."

Think of being loved by God after such a sort, and yet not believing it. Believe it now, my friend, and you will have everlasting life. But you tell me, I do not know for whom this everlasting life is. The answer is here: it is for "whosoever believeth in him." Believing in Jesus, you shall not perish, but have everlasting life. You will be brought into everlasting blessing, in association with the Son of God. What you have to do is to trust Him, bow down your heart to Him, and then confess Him. That is the way of salvation. For it is added, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

Nicodemus went away that night, and thought a good deal, I have no doubt, and after a while the Jews began to plot to take away the Lord's life, and then Nicodemus began to think, It is time for me to come to the front a little, and show which side I am on. The moment he does speak a little word, indirectly, on behalf of Jesus, how is he met? With scorn and derision. "Art thou also of Galilee?" say the Pharisees; "search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John 7: 52). The speakers begin to think he is almost a pervert or convert. Ah, my friend, do not you be turned aside by the laughter of some person who knows less than yourself: do not let the sneer or the jeer of a worldling turn you aside from coming boldly out for the Saviour.

Now that the truth is out, and the world has shown what it thinks of Jesus, do as Nicodemus did in chap. 19. In John 3 it was midnight darkness in his soul; in John 7 twilight marks his state; but in John 19 it is what I call daylight in his soul. The Son of Man was lifted up, and Nicodemus then understood the meaning of John 3: 14, and therefore he comes forward boldly, with his hundred pounds of spices, and he says to the whole world: I believe in Him, the Son of God, and Son of Man; I accept Him, I trust in Him; He has died, and died for me, and I am His from this hour forth. Will you say that from this hour? Then you will be able to sing that hymn —

"The gospel of Thy grace
My stubborn heart has won
For God so loved the world,
He gave His only Son,
That 'whosoever will believe,
Shall everlasting life receive."