The Gospel of John  
**2.6—SAVING A PHARISEE – JOHN 3:1–21**

**INTRODUCTION**

TODAY I WANT TO SHOW YOU HOW MUCH JESUS LOVES EVERYONE … AND HOW HE SPEAKS TO EACH OF US—RIGHT WHERE WE ARE—THAT WE MIGHT BE SAVE … AND HEALED … AND PROTECTED … AND PROVIDED FOR … ETC. TODAY, WE’RE GOING TO WATCH JESUS CARE FOR SOMEONE, THE LIKES OF WHICH WE DON’T HAVE MUCH RESPECT FOR … WE’RE GOING TO WATCH JESUS TRY TO SAVE A PHARISEE.

**LET’S READ JOHN 3:1-21**

**John 3:1–21 (ESV)** Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. **2** This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” **3** Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” **4** Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” **5** Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. **6** That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. **7** Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ **8** The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” **9** Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” **10** Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? **11** Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. **12** If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? **13** No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. **14** And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, **15** that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. **16** “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. **18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. **19** And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. **20** For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. **21** But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

V1 – “of the Pharisees”

**WHO ARE THE PHARISEES?**

**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHARISEES**

1. They threw aside God’s commandments and made doctrines out of the commandments and traditions of men. (Mark 7:7–9)
2. They were more concerned with outer purity rather than the purity of the heart. (Luke 11:39; Matt. 23:25, 27, 28)
3. They tithed on herbs, which was good, but ignored more important matters like justice, mercy and faithfulness. (Matt 23:23)
4. They loved the highest seats and public greetings in the market because they were selfish and wanted to be seen by people. (Luke 11:43; Matt. 23:5–10; Mark 12:38)
5. They made people fall. Jesus said that they were like hidden graves that made unsuspecting people fall in. (Luke 11:44)
6. They did not want people to be healed on the Sabbath. (Matt. 13:11–17)
7. They burdened people with unnecessary traditions, but wouldn’t help the people carry them out. (Luke 11:46; Matt. 23:4)
8. They took away the key of knowledge. They actually blocked people from getting into heaven. (Matt. 23:13, Luke 11:52; John 12:42–43)
9. They devoured widows’ houses! (Matt. 23:14)
10. They said long prayers to appear righteous. (Matt. 23:14)
11. They traveled long distances to convert people, and then they made the converts twice as much child of hell as themselves! (Matt. 23:15)
12. They honored the gold and riches of the temple more than the temple itself. (Matt. 23:16–17)
13. They talked and do not did not do anything. (Matt 23:3)
14. They would not humble themselves before God to confess their sins, but rather exalted themselves above other people. (Luke 8:10–14)
15. Jesus called them fools, blind guides and hypocrites. (Matt 23:16-25; Luke 11:44,46; 12:1–3)
16. John the Baptist and Jesus called them a brood of vipers (offspring of snakes). (Matt. 3:7, 12:34)

**JESUS SAID IN Matthew 5:20 (ESV)** “… unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

**SO THAT’S WHAT THE PHARISEES ARE LIKE … BUT WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?**

* Scholars debate this.
* Though not certain, it appears that the word, “Pharisee” originally meant, “Persian” (Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John, Eerdmans, 1971, p. 139)
* Persia is modern-day Iran
  + What is the primary language of Iran? “Farsi”
* Still, many bible students cannot see the connection between the Pharisees and the Persians. But remember:
  + From about 605–536 BC, the people of Jerusalem and Judah were exiled from their land because of persistent disobedience
  + They were exiled to Babylon, but what happened to the nation of Babylon, they were replaced by Persia … remember Daniel 5:24–28?
    - **Daniel 5:24–28 (ESV)** “Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. **25** And this is the writing that was inscribed: Mene, Mene, Tekel, and **Parsin**. **26** This is the interpretation of the matter: Mene, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; **27** Tekel, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; **28** **Peres**, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and **Persians**.”
    - Dr. Schell points out that “Parsin” (v25) and “Peres” (v28) are the plural and singular forms of the name for the people of Persia.
  + So when God began bringing the Jews back to the Land, they were coming from Persia.
  + Remember Ezra? He was a scribe:
    - **Ezra 7:1, 11 (ESV)** Now after this, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah … **Verse 11** This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, a man learned in matters of the commandments of the Lord and his statutes for Israel:

* + - * So Ezra was a Jewish Priest and a scribe while still in Persia.
      * Ezra strongly confronted the compromise of the people who were (back) in Israel.

V3 – “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

* Remember “anothen” = “from above”

V5 – “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

V7 – “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”

V9 – “How can these things be?” = (lit) “How can such things be born, or become, or happen?

V10 – “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?”

* Why would Jesus say that?

**Jeremiah 31:31–34 (ESV)** “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, **32** not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. **33** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **34** And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

**Ezekiel 34:23–24 (ESV)** And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. **24** And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken.

**Ezekiel 36:25–27 (ESV)** I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. **26** And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

**JESUS WAS SPEAKING TO NICODEMUS TO SEE HIM SAVED. HE WAS CUTTING THROUGH ALL OF HIS WRONG THINKING, MISGUIDED BEHAVIOR AND CHARACTER FLAWS TO ADDRESS THE CHRONIC PROBLEM … THAT HE HAD NOT ACKNOWLEDGED HIS NEED FOR A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT … AN INTERNAL TRANSFORMATION … IN OTHER WORDS, BEING BORN FROM ABOVE … AND THEN HE NEEDED TO BE BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

**WHEN YOU ARE BORN AGAIN, YOUR SPIRIT BECOMES NEW … YOU ACTUALLY WANT TO SERVE GOD … OBEY HIM … AND PLEASE HIM. THAT’S THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE TRANSFORMATION. BUT THERE’S A SECOND PART … BEING FILLED, OR BAPTIZED, WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. THAT’S WHEN YOU RECEIVE THE POWER TO CARRY OUT WHAT YOU NOW WANT TO DO … THE WILL OF GOD.**

**Philippians 2:13 (NKJV)** for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

**EX – In a conversation with Steve Schell, he said something that really struck me. He said, “Many people focus on the healings and miracles that happen when a person is filled with the Spirit, but they overlook that we need to be filled with the Spirit to walk in righteousness.”**

**NICODEMUS MUST HAVE BEEN WONDERING … “BUT WHAT ABOUT ALL OF THE SIN? THE COMMMANDMENTS OF GOD CLEARLY CALL FOR JUDGMENT … AND FOR PUNISHMENT FOR ALL THE SINS.”**

**AND BEFORE HE EVEN ASKS … JESUS EXPLAINS THAT THE COMMANDMENTS ARE TRUE … AND THAT GOD WILL NOT JUST LOOK THE OTHER WAY AND IGNORE ALL OF THE SINS, WICKEDNESS AND EVIL. ON THE CONTRARY … SIN WILL BE JUDGED … AND IT WILL BE SEVERELY PUNISHED.**

**John 3:14-16 (ESV)** “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, **15** that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. **16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”