

## Seeing the Light

The word "epiphany" is one you may not be familiar with. You don't see it often. It has several meanings, two of which are not important for this message, so I'll mention them only briefly. I want to focus on a third meaning, and then expand on its theme a good bit.

First, Epiphany is the name given to January 6th, which for some churches is the day for celebrating the coming of the Wise Men, bringing gifts to the baby Jesus. This is considered to be the event that revealed Jesus as the Savior of the whole world—not just of the Jews, but also of the gentiles (non-Jews).

The second meaning is related to the first. For many churches, Epiphany is also the name given to the season of the church year between Christmas and Lent. It covers the days from January 6 up to Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, which is the six weeks before Easter..

A third definition of "epiphany," the one we will focus on now, is "a sudden realization or recognition or understanding of something that is true." It's what is often called an "Aha!" moment, as in, "Aha! Now I get it!"

This idea was captured in the Hank Williams song from the late 1940s, "I saw the Light." Here are the first verse and chorus, as recorded by Johnny Cash and Jerry Lee Lewis:

I wandered so aimless, life filled with sin  
 I wouldn't let my Dear Savior in  
 Then Jesus came like a stranger in the night  
 Praise the Lord I saw the light  
  
 I saw the light, I saw the light  
 No more darkness, no more night  
 Now I'm so happy, no sorrow in sight  
 Praise the Lord, I saw the light

For many people, coming to realize their own sinfulness and their need for a Savior is an epiphany experience. And, of course, there are many of our family members, neighbors, and friends who really have not yet received that sort

of a "wake up call." In most cases they have never heard the truth, or if they have heard it, it didn't register. They haven't yet seen the Light.

Sometimes, as it was for me, the epiphany is not just realizing the desperate need for a Savior; it is coming to understand that Jesus is that Savior — that His sacrificial death on the cross has paid the penalty for all of our sins; that salvation is freely available to all who will receive it.

Seeing the Light — that's what it's all about. That's what it has always been about. Consider these prophetic words from the prophet Isaiah, foretelling the birth of Jesus, the Messiah:

**The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. (Isaiah 9:2)**

**For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Ever-lasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)**

Consider also John 8:12:

**Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."**

Have you seen the Light? Have you recognized the fact that you are a sinner, deserving of God's condemnation; that you are in desperate need of forgiveness; and that God's merciful grace has freely given you that forgiveness because His only Son paid for it with His suffering and death? Can you joyfully proclaim, with believing Christians everywhere, "Praise God! I am delivered from the curse of sin and death! The blood of the Lamb has washed me and made me clean in God's sight. "Praise the Lord, I saw the light!"?

That's Step One — seeing the Light. Step Two is walking in that Light. This is absolutely necessary. If you just say, "Oh, yes, I see that I need to be saved. Thank you, Jesus," and do not let God



begin to make drastic changes in your life, you are simply fooling yourself. Jesus said, "You must be born again." You must be born "from above."

It's a process. It begins when you say "Yes" to Jesus the first time. Then, with the help of the Holy Spirit, you keep saying "Yes," especially each time you take your eyes off of Jesus and mess up.

The Apostle Paul gave us two very meaningful thoughts in his letter to the Philippians. He said,

**... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Phil 2:12b-13)**

**... and I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil 1:6)**

These are very reassuring words. The Bible tells us that, in one sense, God demands a lot from us. He demands that we let Him be in charge. But on the other hand, He doesn't ask us to change ourselves. He begins, continues, and completes that work Himself. He pours out His Spirit upon us and instills it within us, and the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, and more—comes forth from us as He transforms our sinful selves into new creatures, made in the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Can you say, "Praise the LORD!"?

We must cooperate, of course. Our part in "working out" our salvation is to read and study the Bible and to pray, so that we will have insight about what He is doing in our lives.

God is God; you are not, and I am not. We can ask Him for favors and blessings, and if we ask in agreement with His will, Jesus promises that the Father will do what we ask. But we may not give Him orders, and we cannot do anything (as the pagans think they can) to persuade Him to do something that is not His will.

So, seeing the Light is the beginning of a lifelong process. Our part in this process is to say "Yes" as whole-heartedly as we can, to pay attention, and to enjoy loving and being loved by God through it all. We may have to suffer, because of past mistakes or even because God requires it of us, but it will always be totally worth whatever it costs us.

There is a Step Three, of course. God saves each one of us so that we may share with Him in joy

and peace and Heaven's glory forever. But He also wants us to be His hands and voice, to extend that blessed invitation to others. Jesus said it this way to His disciples, just before He ascended into Heaven:

**"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)**

This is known as the Great Commission. It is the instruction to every Christian to share the Gospel, the Good News of God's grace through His Son Jesus Christ, with people everywhere.

For me, understanding this involved what I call a "second epiphany." As this passage became clear to me, I finally understood that this commission is not just for missionaries and pastors, it's for me. And it's not just for somewhere "out there" or overseas, it applies right here where I live and work and play. And it's not meant for someday in the future when I have nothing better to do, it's for right now, today and every day.

**Here. Now. Me.**

Jesus didn't only say that He is the Light of the world. To His followers (including you and me) He said,

**"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house." (Matt. 5:14)**

In other words, "Jesus and me" just doesn't cut it. It has to be, "Jesus and me and my whole family and some of the neighbors and anyone else who will listen and accept God's gift of salvation."

How about you? Have you seen the Light of the world, Jesus? Have you understood how God loves you so much that Jesus died for you? For you. And have you seen yourself becoming that candle, that lantern, that torch that brings the Light to others?

There is much joy in seeing, and also in being a carrier of, the Light of the world.

God bless us all, as He has done and so wants to do,

*Brother Roland*

# Becoming A Happy Person

by Merlin Carothers

We must practice on a piano if we want to learn how to play it well. No matter how much we *wish* we could play a musical instrument or paint a beautiful picture, we must do whatever is necessary to reach our goal.

To become a happy person we must practice being a happy person.

Learning to play the piano is easier for some people than others. Having good hands and the ability to memorize are very helpful, but people with determination can conquer many obstacles.

Learning to be a happy person is difficult for some people. Some of us face greater hardships than others, but God's desire is for every believer to have His happiness; Jesus came to make it possible for everyone.

If we have serious problems it is easy for us to decide, "I can't do it." Or, "I don't know how to do it." We then end up being unhappy and we often cause others to be the same.

We can decide, "I can't be happy on my own, but because of Jesus I can learn how." Because of Him we can do the "all things" in Philippians 4:13. For example,

we can believe we have eternal life. Because of Him we can also do the seemingly impossible by being happy in very difficult circumstances.

Sickness, poverty, and loneliness are a few of the many obstacles we may face. But Jesus offered us the gift of receiving whatever we believe He will give us. True, we have to *learn* how to believe, and that isn't always easy, but we *can* learn if we determine to practice what Jesus taught us. His disciples had difficulty learning, but they *did* learn. They caused their hardships to work *for them*. Some of them recorded what they learned, in the Bible, and we are free to learn from them.

We can learn, and then practice the joy that Jesus came to give us. Some of us have to work harder but we can end up with greater joy than those who have not been "blessed" with difficulties! Jesus said, Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28 NIV).

Such a promise may seem impossible to receive if you are weary or burdened, but God makes the impossible possible! Multitudes of people have learned that God wants to give rest to *all* who are weary and burdened. As you learn, you can have the even greater joy of helping others who carry heavy burdens.

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If your address changes, please let me know. If you have suggestions, or if you have questions about the Bible or the Christian life, write to me and I will try to give you helpful answers. My address is:

**Brother Roland, PO Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222**

## Fear of the Lord

The Bible says that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Proverbs 1:7) To fear God does not mean to be afraid of Him; it means to respect Him and His authority over every aspect of our lives. Those who have "seen the Light" have a profound, healthy fear of our loving and awesome Father in Heaven.

### Puzzle:

O R X S G K H W S Z R I K T Q H S P N U N X A Y U G E H L M V C  
V F V F N I R P M E X M E S Z H C F A A G W M A O F B K Q U E M  
M F D Z H S H A E H D N O U U W U V R N H U C M Z S X Z T O A K  
S R E H O B O A M S Y I A C A Z H Z X H N T W P J P N S X O O S  
F C R Y K E F H N U O U V S A I D O R E H A A P A A I L B A E A  
C Z G V Z L K H V O N J M A R Y M A G D A L E N E T B O K M E C  
G B H I E A N U L T J O B M D D A W J P H R A H P A R A A H G O  
F R X R O C M R L M L X E A U W H J Y K K N Y A R E R J S A O U  
G R M G X N R C U F U S K D U L A A Z Y I T B N J A U O H P L K  
S O Z I M W E H T T A M U F I D B L Y A W E A I B P H S N C I J  
P J A N T Q A A U Y S H V O P G O A S Y H B W A D B I E N B A D  
A E H M P G U B G B G D F S B O C A J T A E D R C L Y S Q V T Q  
G R A A C Q H R V R N H G A A R N N N S N K Q Z E B Q O P H H A  
P E Q R O C V A K P I V R I K D Y H J E Z E B E L B C M T B R Y  
V M C Y O S Y H K Q K C Z N S V O I J L R Y H H Z O X E W E M K  
H I I N I H U A R E T E P A J J T J L S Z G G E R P B H W Y Z Y  
M A E L A F T M C Y I T P N E R K A F E V P C N M A W F O W X P  
L H A N E Y J M S G B P Q A L E R P C B E I E J Z I P B E J I E  
J S N S J R Y A M F H D F I Y N G H W B L L S I O M A I S L R S  
X A T S U W Z I F I D I S A A C A I R P I A L A T S H H L E I O  
H U N T A A R S R Y O I U E Y R A X Y U J E E K I C H E I A I X  
S Y H C R M O A D A N I E L I H D R S E A U B S W A A U R L T C  
Y N P I F L U B I Y Y M O A H A H B D R H N Z U J W H I A O V E  
J Z A H O Y O E Q U T N H V D Z C A D Y R C O Z A N L B N X D Y  
I H H M P A U L L P L V I T H I M V I F P B S A A B T X E S D X  
R F O Z Z I K N K M C Q R S E P V K Z H X D P V H H E M R O D V  
W N X K L D H L D V O F Z S P K C T A X W K T Y E H A L H G X H

### Words:

#### \* Some who feared God

ABEL  
ABRAHAM  
ANANIAS OF DAMASCUS  
ANNA  
BARAK  
BARNABAS  
BOAZ  
CALEB  
CORNELIUS  
DANIEL  
DAVID  
ELIJAH  
ELISHA  
ELIZABETH  
ENOCH

EZRA  
GIDEON  
HANNAH  
ISAAC  
ISAIAH  
JACOB  
JAMES  
JEREMIAH  
JOHN THE BAPTIST  
JONAH  
JOSEPH  
JOSHUA  
LUKE  
MARK  
MARY MAGDALENE  
MATTHEW

MOSES  
NATHAN  
NEHEMIAH  
NOAH  
PAUL  
PETER  
RUTH  
SAMUEL  
SILAS  
SOLOMON  
VIRGIN MARY  
ZECHARIAH

**\* Some who didn't**  
AHAB  
AHAZ

ANANIAS AND  
SAPPHIRA  
AZARIAH  
CAIN  
FELIX  
FESTUS  
GOLIATH  
HEROD  
HERODIAS  
HOSHEA  
JEROBOAM  
JEZEBEL  
KING SAUL  
PILATE  
REHOBOAM  
UZZAH