

62-01-02-Personal Epiphanies of Christ

Epiphany, Jesus Christ, testimony, witnessing, eternal life

1 John 1:1-2

We can't witness for Christ without experiencing Him personally.

INTRODUCTION:

–**1 John 1:1-2**, *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. This is John's personal testimony. **HOM.idea.***

–Jesus wants us to have **personal epiphanies** or *revelations* of Himself, so we can testify what we have experienced. [**In a court**, people on the witness stand must testify what really happened. They're dismissed, if they say, "Rumor has it that..." or "I heard it through the grape vine that..." Judges and juries have no use for hearsay or opinion. They want to know, "What really happened?"]

–In our life's journey, **faith is progressive**. It's a *progression of coming closer*, as John testifies here. He shows us how we grow in giving our testimony for Christ. John starts with: "That which was from the beginning"...

I. The Minimum Distance Required is *Knowing Theological Facts*

- A. We were *told Jesus existed* "in the beginning" (we weren't there): **We**
1. **learned it** from others [**i.e.**: parents; teachers, sermons, Christian tracts or magazines, TV or radio broadcasts, and today, online blogs or podcasts].
 2. **read it directly from the Bible** (*primary resource material...*)
- B. The mind is equipped with logic to assimilate the message about Christ. (But for *saving faith*, the mind needs a mental epiphany...)

TRANS: [A **bulb lit-up** over a cartoon character's head shows an idea clicked.] *Saving faith happens* by the *Gospel in the mind hearing an "Amen!" in the heart*– **Rom 10:8-9**, "...The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. When *theology about Christ* becomes *inner revelation*, then we'll want to share this *logical epiphany*. But *we must get closer*,

II. Close Enough to *Hear the Voice of Christ*

- A. True witnesses must move from "we've heard of" to "we have heard"
1. Theology reports words about Jesus, but in the Incarnation– **John**

1:14a, The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

2. [**Red-letter NT editions** aren't essential.] But "*red-letter experiences*" of Christ *are crucial!* (In Scripture, Jesus is God "the Word" in the "flesh" speaking— **Heb 1:1-2a**, In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son... [**The Bible** is a *sacred book* only because it broadcasts a sacred Word; and reception of that *broadcast* depends on tuning in to the *right wavelength* and turning up the volume to *hear to the message*.]
- B. Scripture's wavelength for hearing "the word of the Lord" is a heart of obedience [In **both OT and NT**, the word 'to obey' comes from the word 'to hear, to listen.'] (*Epiphanies of Christ* require engaging the will.)
1. *True knowing* [an *epiphany*] is God-given, but Jesus makes it a test of the will— **John 7:17**, If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.
 2. Christ's invitation becomes a trial choice. It either will or won't become the *epiphany of experience*— **Mat 11:28**, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. (We can *test* this!)

TRANS: Jesus gives another invitation to *obey* in **John 14:21**, Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him. *Again*, Jesus lays it on the line: "*Either I show up, or I'm not Who I say!*" **Our witness for Christ** stands or falls on that test: *being willing* "to do God's will," choosing to obey Christ's "commands" of *loving God* and *others*. Only then can we bear **an authentic witness**. We can quote Him or the testimonies of others about Him, but unless we're tuned in to hear and obey, we will receive no epiphany to share.... *We also need to get*

III. Close Enough to See Christ's Miracles

- A. Christ's miracles were epiphanies to identity Him with the Father— **John 14:11**, Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.
- B. A miracle "*which we have seen with our eyes*" is like a divine stamp of approval on what we've already believed theologically or read for ourselves in Scripture. (But we have to keep our eyes open!)
- C. Often miracles need to be more closely "looked at" ("*seen with our eyes*" = we *watched*; "*looked at*" = we *examined*, we *contemplated*.) [**Rosemary's PPD** healing had a physical manifestation of God supporting her: I realized this, once I got past my worry for her and contemplated what I saw.]

TRANS: The progression or growth of our witness is from *mental distance* to *personal closeness*. The next step is the closest we can get...

IV. Close Enough to Touch Him and Hold His Hand

- A. How do we get epiphanies in "*which...our hands have touched*" Jesus, so that we can "*proclaim*" Him as "*the Word of life*" to others?
 1. [**Textbook knowledge** is no match for *hands-on experience*.] We hold on better to *our own walk with Jesus* than to others' talk about Him.
 2. "The Word became flesh" to give us a Human hand to hold onto... [That song, "**Reach Out to Jesus**" says, "When you get discouraged just remember what to do— // Reach out to Jesus, He's reaching out to you..."]
- B. Thomas said he literally had to touch the risen Christ to believe....
 1. When Jesus showed up, Thomas could have penned John's words: "*The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.*"
 2. But Jesus offers us an even greater blessing— **John 20:29**, Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

CONCLUSION:

— Faith grabs Christ's hand, when everything seems to be going wrong. By experiencing Christ in such trials, our strongest witness can come. (Jesus extends His hand to us in one of life's hardest trials—the loss of a loved one [as **Rossiter W. Raymond** shows in his poem "**Christus Consolator**":

Beside the dead I knelt for prayer,	Restore her to our hearts that ache!"
And felt a presence as I prayed.	He smiled: "She is not gone!" //
Lo! it was Jesus standing there.	"Alas! too well we know our loss.
He smiled: "Be not afraid!" //	Nor hope again our joy to touch,
"Lord, Thou hast conquered death we know;	Until the stream of death we cross."
Restore again to life," I said,	He smiled: "There is no such!" //
"This one who died an hour ago."	"Yet our beloved seem so far,
He smiled: "She is not dead!" //	The while we yearn to feel them near,
"Asleep then, as thyself didst say;	Albeit with Thee we trust they are."
Yet thou can'st lift the lids that keep	He smiled: "And I am here!" //
Her prisoned eyes from ours away!"	"Dear Lord, how shall we know that they
He smiled: "She doth not sleep!" //	Still walk unseen with us and Thee,
"Nay then, tho' haply she do wake,	Nor sleep, nor wander far away?"
And look upon some fairer dawn,	He smiled: "Abide in Me!"]

We can't witness for Christ without experiencing Him personally.
Abiding in Him is the secret to all epiphanies... and to our witness....