



*"You will know them by their fruits." Mt. 7:16*

## **Christ is the Focus**

*I certainly have nothing against 'spiritual experiences', visions, prophecies and angelic visitations, as Father certainly utilizes them to make a major impact in our lives. However, true maturity is not a result of spiritual experiences, rather it comes from the everyday outworking of the character and nature of Christ in our lives. Christ, and Christ alone must be our primary focus in all things. Doug Fortune*

## **The Colossian Heresy Revisited**

While driving to class a few days ago I asked God for a theme for that day. I was teaching from the book of Colossians and had a vague idea where I was going, but desired more clarity about a theme for that lesson. As I prayed and worshiped, the phrase "Don't Lose Your Focus" was strongly impressed upon my heart and mind. This phrase remained so pronounced in my heart that, at the beginning of the class, I wrote across the board in large letters "Don't Lose Your Focus" and announced it as the theme for that lesson. I was then astounded at the sequence of events that unfolded. As I taught that morning the Holy Spirit seemed to direct our attention to what New Testament scholars call "The Colossian Heresy." Although I had taught on the subject before, on this particular day I seemed to receive new and fresh insight into the nature of this 1<sup>st</sup> century heresy. In essence, they had lost their focus on Christ.

After the class was over I went to the main auditorium where another well-known guest speaker was addressing the student body. As I listened to this individual, who is well-known in the prophetic/apostolic movement, I was astounded to actually hear The Colossian Heresy, itself that I had just delineated, *being propagated to the student body!* What distracted the Colossians, causing them to lose their focus? It was a preoccupation with their OWN spirituality. They were obsessed with how to be "spiritual" and had become enamored with supernatural phenomena such as visions and angelic visitations.

## **The Nature of the Colossian Heresy**

The problem in Colosse was that the believers had lost their focus and were being distracted by other, even legitimate, things. Paul's answer was to direct their attention back to Christ as the source and fullness of everything they needed. They did not need to look to some other source for knowledge of God, For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9). There was no need to look elsewhere for some plan or process for achieving spiritual maturity for, You are complete in Him who is the Head of all principality and power (Col. 2:10). They did not need to turn to other avenues for obtaining special wisdom and knowledge, for in Christ, Are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). What was it that was distracting the Colossians and causing them to lose their focus? It was a preoccupation with their OWN spirituality. They were obsessed with how to be "spiritual" and had become enamored with supernatural phenomena such as visions and angelic visitations. In Col. 2:18 Paul refers to the worship of angels and what [the heretical teacher] has seen, I.e., visions (NIV). The word "worship" in this passage is a translation of the Greek word "threskia" which is not the normal word for "worship" in the New Testament. Besides Col. 2:18 it is found in only three other places in the New Testament, Acts 26:3 and James 1:26, 27, where it is translated as "religion." The point seems to be that the Colossians had developed a "religious" fascination with

angels and visions.

Why is this a problem? Their fascination with such sensational phenomena has distracted them from their one and only true Source, Jesus Christ. Because of their fascination with esoteric, sensational phenomena, they are no longer, "Holding fast to the Head from whom all the body, nourished and knit together . . . grows with an increase that is from God" (Col. 2:19). This is serious, for only by abiding in Christ and holding fast to Him can the Colossians experience the fullness of salvation and arrive at spiritual maturity. To complicate matters, the spiritual experiences, with which they are so enamored, *have become a basis for pride*. They consider themselves a notch above other Christians because of their spiritual experiences. They are an elite group. Although they purport to be humble, it is a false humility -and that is shown clearly as such by their attitudes and actions (2:18). Perhaps referring to their most prominent teacher, Paul says that this heretical teacher, like his followers, is vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind (Col. 2:18).

### **Has the Contemporary Prophetic Movement Lost Its Focus?**

As I sat on the platform and listened to this "big name" guest speaker, I was amazed at how closely what I was hearing coincided with The Colossian Heresy that I had just delineated. This person talked almost exclusively of visions, prophecies and angelic visitations. This individual emphasized the importance of prayer, not for knowing Christ, but as a means of experiencing these sensational phenomena!! Jesus certainly was not front and center and I am not even sure if He was mentioned! It was incredible! And it raised the very serious question in my mind, "Has the prophetic movement lost its focus?" Is the "The Colossian Heresy" being repeated?

### **Suggestions For Not Losing Our Focus**

Keep Jesus at the center. Don't seek an experience, seek Him. A woman came to William Seymour at the Azusa Street Mission and asked him to pray that she would get the tongues. He replied, "Now see here, Sister Sadie, don't you go seeking tongues. Seek Jesus. He is the One." Let the supernatural happen, don't try to make it happen. When Christians try to make the supernatural happen, they inevitably get in the flesh and open themselves to demonic spirits that are looking for an opportunity to give someone an "experience". Stay humble. Don't allow spiritual experiences to become a basis for pride. Avoid an elitist attitude.

After observing the collapse of several powerful, front-line ministers because of pride, Gordon Lindsay exhorted, "*As one rises higher and higher in spiritual blessing and power, he must ever seek to become lower and lower and lower.*"

I believe that we can expect even greater demonstrations of God's power and blessing in the days ahead. We must not, however, lose our focus. We must avoid repeating "The Colossian Heresy." Let us keep the words of Heb. 12:1b-2 before us, Let us run with endurance the race that is before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Amen!

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*Of course, when you "seek to become lower and lower and lower.", what do you find? You find His Rest. See the "Testimonials" page.*

*In His Rest you are kept as low as can be since the corrupt heart that quests after all these things is gone. Now Jesus and His work within is complete. All you have left to do is to grow in it, and follow the Lord. There are no more spiritual battles -but plenty of conflict with the circumstances of this world, as usual. Earnestly seek His Rest -for that is where you will find Him!!! Earnest Seeker*