

FOCUS

“When anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived” (Nu. 21:9)

The human eye can see many things at the same time, but can only focus on one. We can see hundreds of people at the same time without recognizing anyone. To recognize someone, we need focus. We can see our watch without knowing what time it is. We can shoot a gun in the air, but to hit a target we need focus. The Hebrew people sinned and God sent venomous snakes among them. Those bitten by these poisonous snakes died. The people pleaded with Moses to help them. He prayed and God instructed him to make a bronze snake, put it on a pole, and everyone who “looked” at that snake lived.

This assignment was not easy. Every human instinct emphasized danger. Under normal circumstances a person standing in the midst of poisonous snakes would do something to defend himself. Against all human wisdom, however, those who were saved had to abandon human effort and focus on a bronze serpent that was lifted up in their midst.

This, as you know, was done by God to teach us about salvation in Christ. Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, the Son of Man would also be lifted up (Jn. 3:14). To be saved, we must reject every inclination to save ourselves by human effort and focus on Jesus.

- Peter, as you recall, was able to walk on the water until he took his eyes off Jesus. When he “saw the wind” he became afraid and began to sink (Matt. 14:30).
- Jesus said that no man who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the Kingdom (Lk. 9:62). To plow a straight furrow you must focus on a goal.
- Paul said that he forgot the things that were behind and pressed toward the goal to which Christ had called him (Phil. 3:14).
- The writer of Hebrews reminds us that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. Our focus, however, is not on those witnesses. We are to lay aside anything that would distract us and fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith (Heb. 12:1, 2).
- Paul wrote to the Romans that the mind of the flesh is death. We cannot save ourselves. To be saved we must have the mind of the Spirit so that whatever we do in word or deed we do in the name of Christ giving thanks to God and the Father through Him (Col. 3:17).
- For those who are saved, “Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:11).

The importance of Christ is summed up on words reported to be on the breastplate of St. Patrick: “Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.”

Every person on earth does many things. Whatever we do, however, is to be done in the name of our Lord Jesus. We love our wives because of Christ, and we submit to our husbands for the same reason. To lose that focus is to lose all.

When an airplane is in danger of being shot down by a guided missile, hundreds of pieces of chaff are released to confuse the missile and cause it to lose focus. The devil does the same thing. He is a master at distraction and we should not be ignorant of his devices. Paul was afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, we too might be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). Paul was busier than most, but all of his earthly activities can be briefly summarized by these words he wrote to the Philippians: “One thing I do” (Phil. 3:13). That one thing Paul did was to please Christ. What are you doing?