

## The Polished Shaft

### Other Articles

Often we think that the Lord will work with us quickly and then be done with us. Or often we consider that when the Lord has taught us something that we are “ready” to be sent into our ministry that He has called us to. Yet the Lord sent out His disciple time and again, each time bringing them back to teach them more and more, building upon their experiences.

I see a prophetic description in how the Lord works with us and prepares us for His service in Isaiah 49.

In verse 2 we read; “And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, And made Me a polished shaft; In His quiver He has hidden Me.” In the analogy of arrow making I can see an example of how the Lord works with us.

When the Lord first finds us we are like a wild branch plucked from the forest (Rom 11:17). This is comparable to our salvation, when we are taken from the world into a new and living dimension with Christ. We are so blessed by the salvation of the Lord that we often think that since the change in our lives is so dramatic that the Lord has completed His work in us. He is not done, only faithful to continue His work in us (Phil 1:6).

In making an arrow the Arrow maker must continue his work after finding a suitable branch to transform into an arrow fit for his use. After finding the branch and cutting it from its original source, he must begin to transform it into something more useful than simple firewood. The next thing the arrow maker must do is to strip the bark away and expose the tender under side of the branch. This is as it is with us, the Lord will attempt to remove our callused exterior which we have grown over years of abuse in the world (Ezek.11:19). The arrow maker will cut the bark away, but also he will scrape the stick with a sharp blade to clear off any residual inner bark and begin the smoothing process of the branch. The Lord likewise cuts away our callused exterior, and often scrapes against our will with His. This is not usually an enjoyable process, but it is part of the process of becoming useful to the master.

But the arrow is not completed yet. After the rough exterior is removed, then the branch must be straightened out or it will never be able to fly straight later. If it can not be counted upon to fly straight later, then the Lord will never be able to release the arrow as it can not be counted upon to hit the proper mark. It is better to never release an arrow than to release one that will miss the intended target and hit another target. So it is with us, the Lord will work to straighten out our life so that we will be of use to Him. He can never release someone who is still twisted or bent in some way by the world as they will miss the mark and perhaps cause unintended hurt (Heb 12:15; Eph 4:24-5:1).

In order to straighten an arrow the arrow maker must bend the branch. Where ever there is a bend in the branch, he must bend it the opposite way. But in order for the new bend to remain in the wood, causing the branch to straighten out, the branch must be heated and then bent. This is similar to how the Lord allows us to go through the fire of adversity in order to help change us and shape us. If we allow Him, through each situation that is a trial for us, He will use the heat and the pressure to help straighten out our lives so that we will be able to serve Him faithfully (1 Cor 3:13).

Now that the branch has come to this point, some may think that the process is complete, but far from it. Now the master craftsman must smooth the shaft by rubbing it with some kind of grit. Perhaps sand or sand paper will be used on wood, but in our lives the Lord will use the circumstances of our lives to rub us. If we will remain pure hearted and walk with forgiveness and love, we will become smooth through the things that rub against our nature and will. Otherwise we will never be smooth enough to be used as an arrow (Pr 28:23). Once the shaft is smooth the craftsman will now polish it, and then oil it, to make it very smooth and supple. Likewise the Holy Spirit is like the anointing oil that smoothes us and makes us polished in the things of the Lord.

Now that the branch has gone through all this process, it has become a polished shaft, but the process is still not complete. Now the shaft must receive both the arrow head and the fletching (feathers). The arrow head provides the power. Without the power of God we will never be able to penetrate the darkness with the gospel (Act 1:8; 2 Cor 10:16). Then the fletching must be applied. The fletching will make the arrow fly straight and without it the arrow will not hold its course. The fletching represents the true doctrine of the Lord that brings balance into our lives (1 Tim 4:6; 2 Tim 4:3). It is the fletching that allows the arrow to fly straight.

If we have the arrow head, which is the power of God, but not the fletching, we will be like one who has a form of authority, but not much aim. This is like the person who has power in their words, but uses those words to wound the innocent rather than to wound the enemy. This is like the person with authority and gifting, but not grounded in love and in true doctrine so their power is miss-applied.

If we have sound doctrine, but not the presence of the Holy Spirit's power, then we are like so many who have a form of godliness but no power (2 Tim 3:5). We may be very discerning, and may be able to hit the mark, so to speak, with our insight and knowledge, but we will not be able to penetrate deeply into the target when we hit it. There are many with knowledge of God not coupled with the power of God, and this will not make a legitimate arrow for the Lord's bow. Likewise there are many who have power and gifting, but who have not taken the time to lay sound doctrine as a foundation. Consequently they often can penetrate deeply, but often this causes wounds and division in the body of Christ because it is misdirected.

Now the arrow has all the components, the polished shaft, the arrow head, and the fletching, and it must be provided with glue and string to attach the parts to the shaft. This is like the relationships that we build in our Christian life; if we do not build strong relationships we will not have a ministry that will hold together for the Lord's work (Eph 4:16; Rom 12:4, 5). Also the length of the shaft is important, as the length may be used to represent the supply needed for any righteous endeavor - if the shaft is too short it will not be able to be sent even if it has all the other components (Lk 14:28).

Now that all the parts are complete, and assembled into the arrow, it is quite normal to expect that the process is complete. Now that the arrow has been brought in from the wild world, cleaned and tempered, straightened and smoothed, equipped with power, and endowed with doctrinal wisdom it should be ready to go. It has built the relationships of the body to hold all the aspects of life together, and has even acquired the proper supply needed to accomplish the desires of the Lord's heart. Yet there is still one more aspect of God's plan shown to us in Isaiah 49 when it says, "In His quiver He has hidden Me."

Just when the arrow had every expectation of being sent, there is a delay. So it is often in our lives when we feel we are ready to be sent by the Lord. We have heard his call, "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Me?" Yet something may seem to cause a delay. This is the quiver. To an arrow the quiver is like a long dark tunnel. A dark depth with a little light at the end sometimes. So it is with us as we feel ready to be sent, but enter into a place that is not a target rich environment. We may feel like we have entered a tunnel with only a little light or hope at the other end.

Yet, the quiver which seems like a delay to the arrow, is actually the means by which the archer carries the arrow from the workshop to the field. It is exactly the thing which God uses to move us from where he has formed us to where he will let us fly at the target of His choice. He promises us that if we are faithful we will have authority and ministry in due season (Lk 12:42). However, we sometimes do not interpret His timing "in due season" the same way that He does. Often we are with other arrows in that quiver, just as he often places us with others that He is carrying to the battle to fight for Him. If we remain faithful we will be in our place when He reaches for us to send us, not once, but again and again for His purpose.

Is 40:31, "But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint."

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