

The Arrow of God

by Brian J. Bailey

In this article, we will develop the theme of Christ as the Arrow of God. The Lord Jesus Christ was sent forth as the Arrow of God to hit the mark for His life, which was the cross of Calvary. In studying this we will consider the preparation that was needed to enable Christ to fulfill His calling.

In a certain sense, every believer is like an arrow. God has a mission for each one of us to accomplish and a mark for each one of us to hit. The whole purpose of an arrow is to hit a planned target. The same is true of the Lord Jesus and each one of us. The purpose of our lives is to hit the mark that God has ordained for us.

WE HAVE A CALLING TO FULFULL

Because God has a specific plan for each of our lives, when we die we will be held accountable as to whether or not we complete it. The Lord made this very clear to me many years ago when I asked Him to end my life and take me to heaven because of the opposition I was facing in the ministry at that time.

God answered my prayer. The angel of the Lord appeared to me one night while I was sleeping. When I awoke, I found him standing above my bed. I came out of my body and stood next to the angel. For a brief moment, which seemed like an eternity, I looked down at my body lying beside my wife who was sleeping peacefully. The realization that my life was over gripped me. I could do no more on this earth to serve the Lord. It was an awesome feeling that everything was over.

The angel turned and I turned together with him. No word was spoken between us. Then it was as though the roof of the parsonage was no longer there and we went quicker than lightning towards heaven, which I could see in the far distance. The nearer we came to heaven, the sadder I became. Although I knew that I was saved, baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit, and living in the light that I had received, strangely, I was not looking forward to going to heaven.

We arrived at the gates of heaven. Standing there, I was shown my whole life from birth to that present moment in a series of pictures, one after another in a matter of seconds. Some of the pictures were blank. I understood that these blank pictures were times in my life when I had failed God, but because I had asked for forgiveness, all memory and record of them had been washed away by the blood of Jesus.

The Lord revealed to me God's purpose for my life. I realized that I had not fulfilled it, for I was dying before my appointed time. In an agony of spirit, I pleaded with the Lord to send me back to earth and give me another chance to fulfill my calling and hit the mark for my life. The angel must have received an order from the Lord, because at that very moment, he and I turned again without a word being spoken, and we went down towards earth at a tremendous speed.

Arriving at my bedside, I saw my body lying there. The angel then touched me and I returned to my body. After a few days I asked the Lord why He had given me that experience. The Lord told me to warn His people that we have to give an account not only of the works we do in our lifetime, but also whether or not we have fulfilled God's calling upon our lives.

Since that time, the burden upon my heart for the Church of Jesus Christ is that every believer hits the mark of God for his life and finishes his course, as Christ did. As the Lord was preparing to go to the cross, He said to His Father in John 17:4, *"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do."*

HOW CHRIST WAS PREPARED TO FULFILL HIS CALLING

In Isaiah 49:2 we see how Christ was formed to become the Arrow of God Who could hit the mark and finish God's work for His life. In this scripture Christ prophetically says: *"And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand has He hidden Me, and made Me a polished shaft; in His quiver He has hidden Me."*

There are basically two parts to an arrow: the arrowhead and the polished shaft. The sharp arrowhead speaks of the Word of God, which was like a sword in Christ's mouth. The arrowhead was already developed in the life of Christ at a very young age. By the time He was twelve years old, He could astound the doctors of the Law in the Temple (Lk. 2:46-47). All these elderly scholars were amazed at His tremendous knowledge of the Scriptures. We could think that Christ was ready to begin His ministry at the age of twelve, but further preparation was necessary.

The second part of an arrow is the wooden shaft. The shaft of an arrow has to be straightened and polished until all the rough edges are removed. If an arrow is not perfectly smooth then its flaws will create air pressures that will deflect it off course when it is shot by the archer. These aerodynamic forces will cause it to miss the target if the shaft was not properly prepared.

The wooden shaft represents our humanity. This shows us how Christ's human nature had to be polished. This was accomplished through the things that He suffered in His parents' house. Hebrews 5:8-9 says, *"Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him."* Christ learned obedience and was made perfect through sufferings (Heb. 2:10).

Now, you might be asking yourself: *What do you mean when you say that Christ was perfected? Wasn't the Son of God already perfect?* Perfect, in this verse, means "to be fully equipped to fulfill the purpose that God sent Him into the world to perform." The Greek word *teleios* translated *perfected* means "complete" or "fully equipped."

We can only become polished and equipped to hit the mark through years of suffering and discipline. The arrow does not decide where it wants to go or when. Neither does it determine its mission. That is decided by the archer. We are made obedient and submissive to God, the Divine Archer, through sufferings. This is the way that we learn obedience.

The sharp arrowhead represents Jesus as the Son of God, the Incarnate Word. The wooden shaft represents Jesus as the Son of man. As the Son of God, He could not fail. Yet as the Son of man with the frailty of human nature, Jesus could fail. That is why this long period of preparation was so essential.

WAITING IN THE QUIVER

It is believed that Christ was polished and ready to begin His ministry before the age of thirty, possibly by the age of twenty-eight. However, another period of preparation was necessary. Christ was next placed in the quiver, the container where an archer's arrows are stored. Christ said in Isaiah 49:2, *"In His quiver He has hidden Me."* It is very clear that the Father hid Christ in the quiver until it was His ordained time for Christ to begin His ministry.

We have suggested the age of twenty-eight from the life of Joseph, who is a profound type of Christ. Joseph was ready for the throne before he was summoned by Pharaoh. He was ready at least two years beforehand when he interpreted the dreams of the baker and the butler, but it was not until Joseph was thirty that he was brought to the throne and began his ministry.

Waiting in the quiver could very well be the most difficult time of our preparation. It is not easy to wait and to do seemingly nothing, but it is during this time that God further prepares us for our mission in life. Christ had to humbly wait in the quiver for possibly two years until His Father decided it was time for Him to begin His ministry. When Christ was thirty years old, He was presented by John the Baptist at the Jordan River. At that time, He was placed in the bow and was shot forth toward the target that God had ordained for His life—the cross of Calvary.

Satan did everything he could to deflect the Arrow of God from the cross. Even while Jesus was upon the cross, Satan tempted Him to come down. Yet all his efforts were to no avail. The Polished Shaft hit the mark and completed His mission in life.

HOW GOD PREPARES US TO BECOME ARROWS OF GOD

As pastors, leaders, parents, and believers of all ages, we all have a God-ordained course. The Lord wants to make us arrows that hit the target. From the life of Christ, we can see the preparation that is necessary. First of all, the Word of God must be developed in our lives. We must become dedicated and diligent students of the Scriptures, using every spare moment to study the Bible. We are exhorted in 2 Timothy 2:15, *“Study to show yourself approved to God, a worker that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*

Not only is it important to study and memorize the sacred Scriptures, but we also must allow the Lord to write His words upon our minds and hearts. The essence of the New Covenant is that the Lord will take the outward laws and commandments and write them upon our heart (Heb. 8:10). David declared in Psalm 51:6: *“Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.”* For the arrowhead (the Word of God) to be fully developed within us, it must actually become part of us.

The next stage in the development of an arrow is that the wooden shaft, which represents our humanity, must be polished. This speaks to us that it is essential to allow the Lord to polish our human nature and smooth out all the “rough edges.” Have you ever rubbed your hand over an unpolished piece of wood? What happened? More than likely you got a few splinters in your hand. It is the same with us.

This is also what can happen with us if our human nature is not polished. Like splinters we will irritate people and offend them. The Lord wants to remove anger, harshness, unkindness, criticism, and all the other works of the flesh from our lives. These characteristics of the carnal human nature are like unpolished areas of a wooden shaft—they will deflect us from God’s mark for our lives. We must submit to God’s chastenings until we become polished shafts, learning obedience in the school of suffering.

Satan will try everything he can to deflect us from God’s goal for our lives. He will send offenses our way to try to turn us off of God’s path. We have to learn to overcome offenses. If we don’t, we will be taken off course by one thing or another, as in the case of the Apostle Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41). Barnabas became offended because Paul did not want to take his nephew John Mark with them on their second missionary journey. Paul, however, had very good reasons for not wanting to take Mark with them again. Mark had deserted them on their first missionary journey, and Paul did not think it was wise for him to go with them at that time.

Barnabas became offended because of family ties and took Mark with him to Cyprus, which was probably his home country (Acts 4:36). Barnabas was never heard of again in Scripture. Silas took his place and went with Paul, having the blessing of the church (Acts 15:40). Remember, in Acts 13 the Lord revealed through the Holy Spirit the call that was upon the lives of Barnabas and Paul. They were called to minister to the Gentiles.

What happened to a man who started out so well and had so much potential? Barnabas was called of God, anointed of God in Acts 13, and shot forth as an arrow with Paul toward the mark of God. Yet he fell short of

God's best for his life—he was a *deflected arrow*! The problem is that Barnabas became offended. He took up the offense of John Mark and it destroyed him. How sad indeed, because over time Mark overcame his immaturity and became profitable to Paul (2 Tim. 4:11). Mark became one of the four Gospel writers. In the end, Mark triumphed, but Barnabas did not finish his course.

After the Lord has developed His Word in our hearts and has polished our human nature, He does not shoot us forth toward the target immediately. He “hides us” in His quiver for a time. This time of being hidden is necessary to further settle and prepare us. Just think of the Apostle Paul for moment. Shortly after he was saved, the Lord sent him back to his hometown of Tarsus, where he waited for about seven years. This waiting period is so essential in order for us to hit the mark. Many people refuse to wait and they take off on their own, but they ultimately fail because they did not wait for God's time.

In conclusion, let us diligently and prayerfully consider the mark that God has set before us. What is God's will and plan for your life? What is the specific ministry He has for you? What is the preparation you must go through? Are you sincerely committed to finishing God's course for your life?

When we reach the end of our earthly life, we want to be able to say with Paul, “*I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my race, I have kept the faith*” (2 Tim. 4:6-7). May God grant that each one of us becomes an arrow that hits God's predetermined mark for our lives!

- by Dr. BRIAN BAILEY, the International President of Zion Ministries. He is well known throughout many nations for his ministry and leadership positions in organizations that have brought renewal and revival to the Body of Christ.