

HE'S ABLE --- IF YOU'RE WILLING



Joash Shooting the Arrow of Deliverance (1844)

William Dyce

Now when Elisha had fallen sick with the illness of which he was to die, Joash king of Israel went down to him and wept before him, crying, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and arrows." So he took a bow and arrows. Then he said to the king of Israel, "Draw the bow," and he drew it. And Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands. And he said, "Open the window eastward," and he opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot," and he shot. And he said, "The Lord's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Syria! For you shall fight the Syrians in Aphek until you have made an end of them." And he said, "Take the arrows," and he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground with them." And he struck three times and stopped. Then the man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck down Syria until you had made an end of it, but now you will strike down Syria only three times."

(II Kings 13:14-19)

There's a sinister thing going on in the world these days. Masses of people are being persuaded to believe that they have no will of their own.

They are giving up their will like men surrendering themselves to a hypnotic slumber.

They are like a ship plying its way upstream against the current that suddenly cuts its engines and allows itself to drift wherever the current chooses to carry it.

Maybe people are tired of being pushed from every side....

By voices which say, "Do this!"... "Do That" ...Try my product!"...

Voices that lie: "If you buy our motorbike you'll have lots of friends."

Voices that threaten: "If you don't use our soap, you'll have no friends."

Voices that cajole: "If you don't join our church you're going to hell."

So they give up.

The engineers of the mind behind the commercials go on the assumption that you really have no will of your own. You are nothing but a complex of warring desires. If they can expose you to enough influences to strengthen your desire for what they offer, you'll buy.

They want you to say to yourself: *"I can't help what I am. I am a product of my environment. If I do things that are stupid, don't blame it on me, I'm sick ... If I push and step on others as I go after what I want, don't blame me. I was born with these drives. I've got to satisfy them."*

A man murders his neighbor in cold blood. When they bring him to trial, the experts say, *"Wait a minute!" Don't be so hard on the man! Can't you see he really had nothing to do with what he did? He was driven by a compulsion he just couldn't control. He's not responsible. He has no will of his own."*

More and more people think of themselves no longer as responsible persons, no longer accountable for what they do, heading toward a destiny they choose for themselves, be it Heaven or Hell. They think of themselves as problem---children who really can't help what they are. *"I've got to satisfy this desire, or I'll go out on the sidewalk and scream! I've got to have this; I've got to have that! Don't expect me to keep my promises; I'm too weak."*

And they get away with it, in this world at least.

Because no matter what they do, there's always someone who will stand by their side and say, *"Don't you dare touch Jimmy; He's a sick boy. His father never gave him the attention he needed."* It never occurs to anybody that somewhere down inside his sick little heart, Jimmy might still have a will. That in his sick way, Jimmy is somehow doing what he wants to do. That Jimmy manages to go where he wants to go and to avoid what he chooses to avoid. If Jimmy is ever to be healed, somebody's going to have to talk to that will inside Jimmy.

When our Lord dealt with people, whether they were sick or well, he treated them as people who had power to choose what they wanted to be and do.

Maybe their wills were frustrated.

Maybe they wanted to be good and always ended up being bad.

Perhaps they wanted to be well and were forever getting sick.

But there was will ... desire.

And Jesus spoke: **to their will.**

"What do you want me to do for you?" he said to the blind man.

"Do you want to be whole?" he said to the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda.

"If any one wants to come after me, let them deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me."



Healing a Leper 1913

Niels Larsen Stevns

Never mind their weakness or stupidity or even their faltering faith. Only one thing had to be settled:

"Is this what you really want?"

"Do you want to walk again? Are you willing to take the responsibility that goes with having two strong legs? Do you want to see again? Do you want to be my disciple?"

When it was clear to Jesus that the man really wanted to walk a different road, the miracle happened.

"Come on, get up----your sins are forgiven."

"Go in peace----your faith has made you whole."

But when he came up against people who were unwilling to make up their minds, Jesus did not waste his time.

"Lord, I'll follow you, but first let me go and bury my father."

"Let the dead bury their dead, but you go preach the Kingdom of God."

"Lord, I'll follow you, but first let me bid farewell to those who are home at my house."

"No man, having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God."

When the will was divided, or when it was wishy-washy and listless, Jesus let them lie there and vegetate.

It may seem like a very strange thing for Elisha to tell King Joash to strike the ground with a bunch of arrows. But in telling Joash to do this, he was making Joash express his will. It was not within the power of Joash to conquer the Syrians. The Syrians were too strong. To conquer them would require a miracle. Joash has come to Elisha asking for the miracle. But how badly does he want it? Elisha can tell by watching Joash strike the ground with a hand-full of arrows.

We can picture Joash shrugging his shoulders and making a sour face and wearily tapping the ground three times with the arrows,

"So!" says Elisha. "That's all you care. That's all it matters to you, three times. All right, three times you'll conquer, and that's all. If you had hit the ground five or six times, if you had shown some will, God would have enabled you to consume the enemy, and they would never have bothered you again."

You too are called upon to strike the ground with your arrows to prove whether you really mean business about being a disciple of Jesus

----whether you really want to find the Kingdom of God

----whether you really want to walk as a man or woman of God

----whether you want to conquer this evil that troubles your conscience.

Are you giving the ground a couple of half-baked taps? Or are you taking your arrows and striking the earth like you mean business?

The power is here. The hands of the Son of God are stretched out toward you, and in those hands is power. But the power of Jesus Christ cannot work in you....

.... until you will it to work in you....

... until you want it.

Sometimes people say, *"If only I could pray; If only I could lift up my voice to heaven and know that God hears me!"* Elisha says to them, "You want to pray? All right, take these arrows and strike the ground. Give me a sample of how badly you want to pray." Soon he finds that most of them are only talking. Oh yes, they'd like to be able to pray. It would be nice. But watch them fooling around with their little bunch of arrows.

They aren't even tapping the ground.

There's no will there.

Tomorrow they'll be on another kick.

The man who wants to pray takes those arrows and pounds the earth with them.

He starts.

He does something... Even if it's just to get down on his knees and weep.

To him the Spirit of the living Christ draws near, opens his eyes to the unseen God, makes him to know that Someone is listening, His prayer is answered.

"Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you"

Strike the ground with your arrows.



Cache Wayne Forte

Show that you mean business.

And God will answer.

Or perhaps there's a certain change you need to make in your way of living, a secret problem you have that nobody knows about. You tell yourself that this thing that you're doing doesn't matter. It isn't hurting anybody. But you know it's destroying you.

"Lord, deliver me from this problem!"

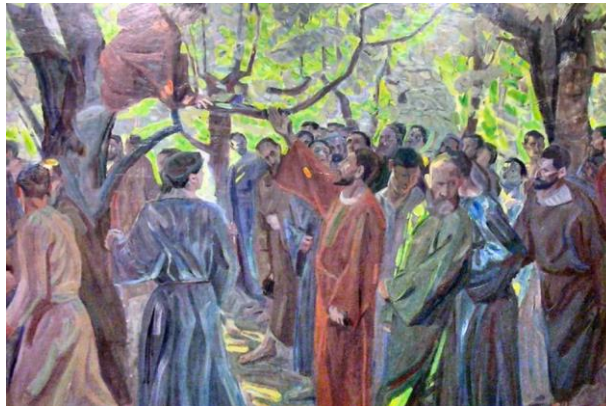
"All right," he answers, "Take your arrows and strike the ground. Let me see how serious you are."

There's some simple thing that you can do that will show God that you really want to change the way you're living.

The instant you do that, he'll come in with all the power you need.

There was this little man who was very rich and whose past was very sinful. He was like the leader of the Mafia. He was the chief tax collector in the city of Jericho. Nobody knew, to look at him, that this wealthy sinner was troubled.

Nobody had any idea that he was yearning somehow to be able to change his life. He stood in the crowd that day waiting for Jesus to come through town, and the desire that was in his heart to be a better man, a different man, caused him to do a strange thing: Suddenly this wealthy leader of the publicans is climbing a Sycamore tree. He's puffing, sweat is rolling from his neck, but he keeps going until he gets up where he can see.



Zaccheus 1913

Niels Larsen Stevns

And what is Zacchaeus doing, climbing that tree?

He is hitting the ground with his arrows.

He's expressing his will.

He's shouting in his heart to Heaven, "Help me;"

And Heaven hears.

"Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at thy house," says the Son of God. That day salvation came to Zacchaeus. God changed his life.

No doubt we have a few Zacchaeus's reading these words....

You are looking for the Master. So far, you haven't found him. You're in the crowd, but you don't see him.

One question: How badly do you want to see Jesus?

Do you want to meet him badly enough to climb a tree?

To strike the ground with those arrows with all your strength?

To cry out to God with all your heart?

Jesus Christ is able to reveal himself to you.... able to transform your lifeable to make you into a son

or daughter of God, when you prove to him that you are earnestly looking for his help.

"What do you want me to do for you?"

Do you want him to take you by the hand right now and lead you into the kingdom of God?

Now! Not tomorrow. Not the day after tomorrow, Not after you've said goodbye to all your friends.

Now!

If you do, tell him. Show him.

The power is God's.

But the will is ours.

God never violates your will. God is not going to move your will for you. He sends his Son to give you what you want. If you want Heaven, he'll give you Heaven. If you want Hell he won't stop you.

On the day when you are assigned your final place in this universe, don't try to tell God you were sick, that you couldn't help what you were. God will tell you that on this day....

The nail-pierced hand of his Son knocked on your door.



It didn't force the door. It knocked.

You choose whether to open it or leave it closed.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we open the door to you now. Come in. Come in. We want you with us. We need you with us. Forgive us for allowing ourselves to drift, for surrendering ourselves to whatever comes our way. Forgive us for giving up, for not being serious in seeking you. Lord, we want to find you. We want to know you. We want to follow with all we have. We answer your call.... You are what we really want. Your way is what we really want. Make your presence real to us. Conquer every evil in our lives. Take our undefeatable issues, our helplessness, our anguish, the sadness, and the needs in our lives and work the miracles that only you can do. We strike the ground. We pound the earth with all the strength we have. We know you are able. We know you can do anything. We are willing to be healed, we are willing to see your hand, we are willing to open the door to your power, grace, and mercy. We are willing and you are able. Amen.

Richard E. Bieber 2015

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THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN

