

In 2 Kings 13:14-19 king Joash was told by the prophet Elisha to take some arrows and strike them upon the ground to represent the victory that God would give the Israelite forces over Syria. When Joash smote the ground three times with them, Elisha was very angry. Why? Had not Joash performed the commandment which he had been given? Yes, but he had shown no real enthusiasm! Elisha said, "You should have smitten five or six times; then you would have smitten Syria till you had consumed it: whereas now you will smite Syria but three times." I think that God wants us to be aggressive in our approach to His service. There are too many of us that are couch potato Christians. But we should be careful not to bring down the anger of the Lord upon us, just as Joash did.

There are many cases in the Bible of servants who took the difficult path. There is the story of Caleb, who when he asked for his portion of land he said (Joshua 14:10-12):

*So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day... but, the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said.*

Then Jonathan chose the aggressive path against a Philistine outpost in 1 Samuel 14.4-14. He said to his armor bearer, "Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few." Then Jonathan climbed up, using his hands and feet, with his armor-bearer right behind him. In that attack Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed some twenty men in an area of about half an acre. And then the great king David, as a boy, was aggressive towards the giant Goliath. In 1 Samuel 17:48 we read, "As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him."

Christ wants us to launch out even though the road is rough. He once said, "But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." In Matthew 14, we find that Christ invited Peter to walk on the water, but he did not still the water first. Though it was evidently very rough, Peter started out anyway. Peter lost his faith a little and began to sink, but Christ saved him and then quieted the wind and the sea. The missionary to Africa, Dr. Livingstone, was once asked by a missionary society to send a map of the roads to his location so that they could send him some help. He replied, "I want men who will come if there is no road at all." Sometimes we must make the journey even though the road is not easy.

Christ's own path on this earth was very difficult. He was threatened constantly during the latter part of his ministry, especially from those in Judea. He learned of the death of Lazarus while he was in Galilee. When he said that he would go into enemy territory and see Lazarus, the disciples warned him that some there were trying to kill him. Then Thomas said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." (John 11:16) Thomas was not always a doubter, but sometimes an aggressive servant. Ultimately, Jesus' path took him to the cross. Christ knew this all along, but he chose this for the salvation of mankind.

The lesson for us is that if we take the aggressive approach, God has promised to be with us. This is the way that he wants us to take on life. We must not be afraid of it. We may not have the results that we want every time, but God gets the results that He wants. The ultimate victory will be ours, just as it was with Caleb, Jonathan, David, Peter, and Thomas. Christ had to take the hard path through death, burial, and resurrection so that we could live forever. We have to take up his cross in the same way.