

Fresh Oil Releases

Passing the Baton - Part One

Precious friends

Many of us find ourselves in a place of transition, somewhere between 'the already' and the 'not yet'. Its a difficult place to work out one's bearings; a place where we are moving out of the past and into God's glorious future yet not being quite sure whether we have arrived! This race of life we are part of is a relay race, where the prophetic or preparatory phase is followed by the final leg of the race - the manifestation of all that God has spoken. It is this final leg that brings us successfully to the finish line so that we are able to say like Paul, "I have finished the race, I have kept the faith".

All of us are the developing manifestation of a spoken Word that is proceeding from the mouth of God. This Word cannot return void but will accomplish the purpose for which it was sent. In just the same way as God released a Word which in the fullness of time brought the manifestation of His Son and His salvation plan, so too the Father releases a prophetic Word over our lives which carries within it the complete DNA needed to bring forth the fullness of all He has spoken. What we need to remember is that this happens in stages and not suddenly and explosively. John the Baptist knew that he was the voice in the wilderness, preparing the way for the Lord. He was not a face but a voice, a creative sound which had been released to carry God's purpose to the end of the preparation phase - in order to hand over the baton to Jesus Who would carry that baton to the finish line.

Jesus was the mirror image of the prophetic Word that John carried within Him. This is why when John sent his disciples to ask if Jesus was the One or should they expect another, Jesus answered him by speaking words that would reassure John that the prophetic word was indeed being manifested in the natural. Many of us know that there have been times in the past when we have been so convinced that the performance of the promise was upon us, only to discover that we were mistaken. After a while we become unsure about our ability to discern the breaking forth of the manifestation. The problem is that during the long waiting years we have studied our word of promise from every angle and developed mindsets about the way everything will unfold. The pharisees had done this with the Torah. Unfortunately their mindsets were so entrenched that they did not recognize the manifestation of the written Word even when He was standing right in front of them!

The season of the passing of the baton is therefore a pivotal time. It is crucial to traverse this time successfully in order to avoid the dropping of the baton and the derailing of the race. I believe there are many people who find themselves right in the center of this season, not understanding the stress and tension they are experiencing. Consider that you are the baton, the spoken Word encapsulated in flesh. You have been carried by God's specific prophetic period of preparation to the very point of transition; the season when the voice meets the Word made flesh. This is the point of handover, the season in which you move from a period of preparation into a period of manifestation. However in a relay race, there is a brief period of handover when both the runner of the previous leg and the next runner are holding the baton. The previous runner is slowing down and the final runner is speeding up.

This creates opposite forces on the baton and much tension is experienced within its depths. The past is still holding on and pulling it back and the future is pulling and urging it forward into the next leg of the race. Herein lies the source of the turmoil and stress that many of God's seasoned saints are experiencing at this juncture.

There are some keys to successful journeying through this stressful transition phase. Paul said:

Philippians 3:12 Not that I have now attained [this ideal], or have already been made perfect, but I press on to lay hold of (grasp) and make my own, that for which Christ Jesus (the Messiah) has laid hold of me and made me His own. *13* I do not consider, brethren, that I have captured and made it my own [yet]; but one thing I do [it is my one aspiration]: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward.

It is very important to let go of the past, of every mindset and understanding we have had about how the promise will manifest. If we do not do this, we are in danger of being unable to recognize the manifestation when we meet it face to face. John the Baptist was very different to Jesus; so much so that some people were confused as to whether Jesus could possibly be the person God had promised would come.

Mat 11:18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He has a demon. *Mat 11:19* The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man who is a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners.

The transition phase is the time when everything that can be shaken within us is thoroughly shaken. Only that which is truly of Christ must remain. All fleshly understandings about God's ways must be cast aside. We must let go of all our pet theories about how God works in order to have empty hands which can embrace the fullness of what He is bringing to pass! That baton must allow the past with all that it has contained to gradually slip away so that we find ourselves with only the hand of the Living Word supporting us.

The running style of the preparatory phase is so different to that of the manifestation phase. John has a different stride and a different grasp to Jesus.

Luk 5:33 And they said to Him, Why do John's disciples fast often and make prayers, and also the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink?

Understand that you will need to get used to a different way of being carried. Everything about the manifestation phase differs from the preparatory phase, even as a foundation differs from the building which rises upon it. John's phase was out in the wilderness away from the synagogue and the religious routine. People had to go out to where he was to hear the voice. Jesus was in the midst of the people, teaching both in the synagogue and out in the open country. John did no miracles and Jesus did many miracles. Everything about what Jesus did was different to John's style. Yet Jesus was the

perfect and complete manifestation of the Word made flesh.

It is so important to see what this means in our lives. Everything John said about Jesus was true. Everything the voice declared about what was to come was true. Everything God's promise has spoken to you is true. Yet it is also true that the performance of your promise will be very different from the sound of the promise.

Sound waves are invisible. Matter is the visible representation of creative spoken Word. In order to move from being a disciple of John to being a disciple of the Living Word, we have to bid farewell to the prophetic which has become such a familiar friend and has faithfully carried us this far. Until we do so, we are unable to fully embrace the Word made flesh. We have to let go of the familiar in order to embrace the relatively unknown. We must surrender to the change that God is deliberately bringing about in our lives. Even though we are experiencing so much tension within as the two different seasons meet, we must remain in a place of rest and surrender to the transition process, knowing that God will bring to pass His purposes for us and surely complete them!

The danger of being so used to living in the prophetic realm is that we are always looking for something that is still coming in the future. Perhaps what we have been waiting for is already here and at this very moment laying hold of us with the intention of carrying us successfully to the finish line. If we are experiencing tension spiritually, then it is almost certainly so! The word of prophesy was like a lamp in a dark place. It carried us through the dark night of preparation and refining - but the time of the morning watch is upon us! The rays of sunlight are shining on a different day from the one that has just passed. A whole new day is beginning to unfold!

(Part two to follow)