

Lesson #23

Running the Race

The Tortoise and the Hare

In the lesson, *Acceleration Through Generational Momentum*, we saw the diligence and determination of Elisha as he clung to Elijah and received a double portion of the mantle that was on Elijah. Diligence and determination is a lesson also seen in Aesop's Fable called *The Tortoise and the Hare*.

In this story, a swift hare was pitted in a race against a slow tortoise. The hare, thinking his speed guaranteed him the win, decided to take a nap during the race. But while the hare slept, the tortoise slowly and deliberately took one step after another toward the finish line. When the hare awoke, he ran to the finish line, only to find the tortoise crossing the line before him. There is a biblical parallel to this story found 1 Corinthians Chapter 13.

¹Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ²And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

— 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NKJV)

One might speak in tongues, prophesy, have revelation knowledge, and possess mountain-moving faith, but it matters little if we do not have love (agape). These things are like gift of speed possessed by the hare. Yet, his speed did not profit him because he did not remain diligently focused on the most fundamental element of running a race - keep on running.

Understanding the Parallel

The key to understanding this parallel is in the definition of love (agape). Agape has often been defined as: “unconditional love.” But the problem with this, and many other definitions, is their ambiguity. Definitions often need defining.

Though *agape* love may have feelings attached to it, it is unconditional in that it does not depend on an emotional element to be able to function. The Geek word *phileo*, which is also translated as love in English, is the word used to describe the friendly or affectionate kind of love. *Agape* is unconditional, because it expects nothing in return. It is simply doing the right thing, whether we feel like it or not.

The 1 Corinthians 13 context defines *agape* love as **never** failing. The Greek word for “fails” in verse 8 is *ekpipto*. The Strong's Greek Dictionary defines it this way: *to drop away; ...to be driven out of one's course; ... to lose, become inefficient*. Therefore, *agape* love is the opposite of *ekpipto*. *Agape* is that kind of love that *IS* efficient and *DOES NOT* fade out or go off course, but stays focused. Because

agape love does not quit or fade out, it does not lose — it wins. In the English language, we might better understand *agape* if we simply translated it as *commitment*.

The Art of Passing the Baton

As the fable above illustrates, it takes more than being a fast runner to win, especially when we are talking about a relay race, which is the kind of race we are in. Runners in a relay race must be team players. All the speed training in the world won't help if the baton is dropped in the passing lane. This is why relay runners devote part of their training to the art of passing the baton. The runner carrying the baton must not break stride or look away from the race. The new runner must get up to speed and be riveted on the runner in front before reaching for the baton. Then, when the frontrunner senses that the new runner is up to speed, the baton is extended and the new runner takes the baton. It is a picture of unity and common vision. If this is done properly, the passing of the baton is relatively easy.

There are many fast spiritual runners in the world but there are more important questions. Are they focused on and committed to the cause? Are they willing to follow their mentors until it is time to lead? Are they patient, and aware of the need for proper timing and balanced teaching? Are they in the passing lane with their spiritual teachers, matching them stride for stride, ready to take the baton and become spiritual teachers themselves? If not, the baton can be easily dropped and time is lost.

So it is in this great race to the coming kingdom. *We must be disciples before we can make disciples.* To accomplish God's purpose, we must become proficient at passing the baton. We must grasp the vision and the purpose of God, and then pass it on to the next generation or faithfully carry it to completion.

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

-1 Pet 4:10 (NKJV).

Running In Vain

Having learned to run with God, Paul knew the liberty of the New Covenant. He also knew the risk involved in passing this revelation of spiritual truth to others. He did so very carefully lest, in his words, "...I might run, or had run in vain" (Gal 2:2). The Galatians, who had started out running in the liberty of the Spirit-led life, began slipping back into the bondage of religious legalism (see Gal. 3:1-3). Apparently, they had stopped seeking and hearing God's voice, faith was absent and they had reverted to the dead works of the law. They had dropped the baton of *Repentance from Dead Works and Faith Toward God*.

Paul was concerned lest they fail to finish the course and lose the faith. They had dropped the baton, and Paul was trying to get it back into their hands. He asked them, "Have you suffered so many things in vain; if indeed it was in vain" (Gal. 3:4)? He referred to them as, "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19).

The Relay Race

The relay race is the perfect analogy for impartation and passing the kingdom vision to the next generation. Hebrews Chapters 11 presents a story of faith being passed from generation to generation. It starts with faith and tells how He framed the worlds with His words. Then it continues, telling how men and women of faith carried the vision of redemption through history, passing it from generation to generation, right up to Jesus. Then Chapter 12 describes those who have finished their leg of the race as a cloud of witnesses who are watching us.

¹ Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

— Hebrews 12:1

The cloud of witness do not receive their prize unless those after them finish the race. What a sense of purpose that gives us! Also seen in the passage below, the early runners were blessed but the latter runners get the added blessing of running under a better covenant.

³⁹ And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,

⁴⁰ God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

— Heb 11:39-40

Fighting for the Finish

This race of which we speak is also a fight. In Paul's last letter to Timothy, he said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). There are many analogies and metaphors used to explain the Kingdom of God and its functions. But the warfare associated with the Kingdom is not simply an analogy or a metaphor. The spiritual warfare precipitated by Kingdom preparation is an absolute reality. It is a fight!

The baton we are running with is the baton of kingdom preparation. It is a strategic vision which has been dropped by many through history. It has been dropped, not simply because of human error or clumsiness, but because of intense spiritual warfare designed to shake it loose from our grip.

Jesus said of John the Baptist: "...from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." (see Matt 11:14). Why? Because he was called to prepare the way of the Lord and his ministry marked the beginning of the period of Kingdom preparation which continues with us until the Kingdom appears. Before John was born, it was said of him:

¹⁷ "He [John the Baptist] will also go before Him [Jesus] in the spirit and power of Elijah, *'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,'* and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

— Luke 1:17 (NKJV - emphasis added)

Establishing the foundational principles and building generational momentum by passing the baton is absolutely hated by Satan. Satan hated John the Baptist because John was building generational momentum by turning the hearts of the children to the fathers and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. We are continuing that ministry and Satan continues to hate it. He hates it because he knows that this is what leads to a mature Church, the return of Jesus Christ and his complete destruction. This is why there is an intense warfare against each of the five principles that we are reestablishing through Destiny 101.

In the next lesson, we will look at some of the enemies that aligned against the work of preparation and identify a specific enemy that fights against each of the five foundational principles.