

A HARMONIOUS COORDINATION BETWEEN GENERATIONS TO ADVANCE GOD'S MOVE

Because the Lord is continually advancing to carry out His economy, His people must advance with Him. Individuals are finite in terms of their lifespan and what experiences they can acquire of the Lord during their life. The lessons learned through precious experiences of Christ, the cross, and the Body of Christ accumulated in one's lifetime must be passed on to others. As a father passes his experiences and lessons learned on to his children in the hope that they will surpass him, the older generation in the church life can impart what they have learned and experienced into the younger generation so that they can advance beyond the older generation. This is a definite principle shown in the Bible (Psa. 78:1-7; Deut. 4:9-10; 2 Tim. 2:1-2).

If the younger ones do not receive from the older ones, the experiences gained and lessons learned will need to be repeated, and the advance of God's move in His economy in and through His people will be seriously frustrated. Realizing this, Satan, the enemy of God and of God's people, sows distrust and enmity between the older ones and the younger ones with the goal of causing a generational rift in the church. We should discern and reject this insidious tactic, realizing that the advance of God's people requires a beautiful and harmonious coordination between the older saints and the younger saints.

The Old Testament provides an excellent example of this. Inheriting the promised land of Canaan required God's people to be formed into an army. It was not a simple thing for the children of Israel to become a fighting force capable of defeating the Canaanites, who were stronger and more numerous (Deut. 7:1). From the time they left Egypt in Exodus 12 to their entry into Canaan in Joshua 1, the Bible records numerous experiences, positive and negative, that the children of Israel had to pass through before they were finally ready to enter the land and possess it. By that time more than 40 years had passed, and almost the entire older generation had passed away as a result of their failures in murmuring against Jehovah (Num. 14:28-31). However, a second, younger generation had been prepared:

With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, those who were qualified and ready to take possession of the land were younger ones. They were of the second generation. The older ones, those of the first generation, had passed through many things and had learned many lessons. However, they were not qualified to enter into the land. The lessons learned by the first generation surely became part of the heritage passed on to the second generation. Their children certainly inherited from their parents all the lessons they learned during the forty years in the wilderness. By their birth the younger ones were put into a position to inherit the tradition of their family and all that their parents had experienced.

The second generation did not pass through as much as the first generation did, but they received the benefit of what the first generation experienced. I believe that the older generation told the younger generation about all they experienced, enjoyed, and suffered. This speaking was part of the raising up, or the building up, of the second generation. What the first generation experienced was not experienced in vain, for it was passed on to the second generation. What the older ones experienced actually was not effective for them, but it was very effective in building up the younger ones. Therefore, God was able to prepare from the second generation more than six hundred thousand men with a rich inheritance and strong background who were qualified to be formed into an army to fight with Him and for Him. (*Life-Study of Numbers*, 368-369)

Because the second generation learned the lessons from the trials and failures of their parents, they did not need to repeat those painful experiences. They also benefited from the leadership of Joshua and Caleb, the remnant of the older generation, who had the experience and wisdom necessary to lead them into battle (Deut. 34:9; Josh. 14:6-11). This harmonious coordination between the older and younger generations afforded God the way to make a great advance in His economy by enabling His people to inherit the good land.

To be formed into an army, the children of Israel needed to be numbered "by their families, by their father's households" (Num. 2:1 with footnote). From this, Witness Lee extrapolates a critical principle: "Who we are and

what we will be depend on our family. It matters a great deal through whom we were saved and received the Lord Jesus, for the Christian life with its activities depends on the source of life and the channel of life" (*Life-Study of Numbers*, 276). This principle is clearly demonstrated in the New Testament. For example, Paul and John both referred to the saints under their care as their children (Gal. 4:19; 1 Cor. 4:14-15; 1 Thes. 2:11; 1 John 2:1; 3 John 4). Paul's relationship with Onesimus and Timothy was that of a father and his children (Philem. 10; 1 Tim. 1:2). As Paul's spiritual child, Timothy received much perfecting and spiritual nourishment from Paul and was very useful in carrying out the work of God's New Testament economy by closely following the apostle's teaching and pattern (2 Tim. 3:10-11).

Today the Lord desires to raise up an army to fight as one man to fully enter into and possess Christ, the reality of the good land, so that the building up of the Body of Christ may be consummated. This requires that we overcome the present tide of the world, which is characterized by contentious divisions instigated by Satan according to race, ethnicity, economic and social status, education, politics, gender, and even age. It is common for older generations to look down upon and despise younger generations and for younger generations to disregard and mock older generations. As saints in the Lord's recovery, we must reject such attitudes if we are to be formed into an army, which requires a harmonious coordination among all ages.

In the decades since the recovery came to the United States, the saints in the recovery have experienced many breakthroughs but have also suffered setbacks, endured painful turmoils, and weathered intense outside opposition. Those who passed through these things gained precious lessons and valuable experiences of the Lord, often at great cost. These are now in the Body as part of the spiritual heritage of the younger generation for their learning, protection, encouragement, admonition, and training. Just as the more experienced saints must pass on what they have learned, the younger saints must be willing to receive from them, acknowledging those who, as channels of life, are their spiritual fathers and mothers (1 Cor. 4:15; 2 Tim. 3:14; Heb. 13:7). This equips them to be numbered and formed into an army to fight for God's interest on the earth.

The enemy does not want this transmission to occur, and he ever seeks to damage the coordination and even sever the relationship between the younger generation and the older generation by sowing seeds of suspicion and animosity. He is the source of the false accusation which contends that the older generation is hiding a "real history" of purported evils. In the 1980s Brother Lee addressed similar accusations by saying, "All problems can and should be solved through proper and adequate fellowship by praying together sincerely and thoroughly. Any question and any problem can be solved by fellowship" (*The Intrinsic View of the Body of Christ*, 98). Genuine concerns that may arise in those who hear such accusations can be addressed in proper fellowship. Those who are mature among us are ready and willing to pour out the riches of Christ they have gained through their experiences, including the failures and lessons they have learned from many years in the church life, into the younger saints for their growth and perfecting. If the younger saints receive help from the older saints, recognize the older saints' portion in the Lord, and realize that from among the older saints the Lord has prepared "Joshuas" and "Calebs" to take the lead as seasoned warriors, they will be able to learn warfare to advance the recovery, fighting back the enemy to gain deeper, higher, and richer experiences of Christ for the building up of the Body.

Paul's Epistles show that he was the target of evil accusations (2 Cor. 6:8; 2 Cor. 12:15-17). If Timothy had allowed those accusations to damage his relationship with Paul, thereby forfeiting the blessings he might otherwise have received from his spiritual father, not only he but the entire Body of Christ would have suffered a great loss (1 Cor. 4:17; 2 Tim. 2:2). Similarly, what a great tragedy it would be for the spiritual supply to the younger saints to be cut off. The experiences already in the Body are for the young saints' supply and perfecting so that, rather than repeating history, they can afford the Lord a way to advance among His people. May the Lord preserve a beautiful and harmonious coordination between the older and the younger saints so that the spiritual wealth of the older generation might be fully imparted into the younger generation for the formation of an army to defeat the enemy and gain Christ to the uttermost.