

SECRETS OF SURVIVAL IN THE SERVING LIFE

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE TWELVE: HONORING THE PLACE AND LEARNING FROM THE PERSON

HAVING GOD'S DIVINE ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENT IN VIEW

In previous messages we have pointed out that the church as the Body of Christ includes all believers in time, whether past or future. Christ's Body is not merely made up of the believers who are alive today. As the Body of Christ is four-dimensional, we must learn how to care for what God's arrangement regarding the ongoing and upcoming administration in His Body, as well as honoring those who presently already function as the apostles, elders, and deacons. The labor of those presently in God's divine administration must have this arrangement for God's divine administration in view. Hence, the apostles labor to raise up the future apostles, the deacons are here to produce more deacons, and the elders must labor to produce future elders. If an elder does not raise up more elders, there is a lack in his labor. In fact, if there was no labor to raise up the apostles-to-be, elders-to-be, and deacons-to-be, God's administration would eventually have no way to be carried out!

Those serving the young people should also have the realization that they are serving those who will one day be the apostles, elders, and deacons. If those in God's government today serve without having this divine administrative arrangement of God in view, the divine administration in the Body will be frustrated.

The struggle of the apostles, elders and deacons should be to raise up the younger brothers and sisters to the measure arranged for them by God in His administrative arrangement. If the Lord

intends that a brother should be an elder someday, we should never be satisfied if he just remains a “good brother.” We should struggle that all the saints may grow unto their full measure.

Brother Lee surely has the future elders and apostles in view, as well as the development of every saint. I have heard him pray not only for God’s current divine administration, but also for God’s divine administrative arrangement. If we don’t have this view, brothers, all the saints who go through us will be spoiled. We must see them in God’s divine administrative arrangement.

WE SHOULD HONOR A PERSON’S PLACE AND WE SHOULD LEARN FROM HIS PERSON

As we are growing in the church life we should learn from the person of those in God’s administration while we honor their place. The usual practice, however, is to honor their person while learning their place. This is what often gets us into trouble.

When Brother Lee was working with the church in Los Angeles in the 1960’s, the church life was very prevailing. Most of the saints came early to the meetings, then at meeting time the leading brothers would walk into the meeting together. That was very impressive, particularly after all the saints had been singing and exercising. After the migrations some of the new leading ones practiced this in their localities. They had learned from the place of the Los Angeles elders. In other words they had learned to walk in later with their briefcase and to sit on the front row. The problem is you don’t know who you are yet, so when the saints don’t sing before the meeting you don’t know what to do. This is because you have only picked up a practice you identified with their position; you have not learned from their person as God intended.

Suppose you find out the elders come to the meeting early. Therefore you come early to the meeting also. Later, however, you find that one of the elders drives over the speed limit. You just cannot take this and you wonder how that person can be an elder. The problem is that you honored the person rather than his

place, and thus you are in danger of despising his place in God's government. Instead, you should learn from him what is profitable, recognizing that God has placed him in His administration for a reason.

If an elder is not perfect, that does not mean you can dismiss his eldership. Your problem is that in the past you overly presumed honor upon his person, while attempting to learn what his position entailed. This is a big mistake. You should instead learn what God has intended for you to learn from his person and always honor where God has placed him.

Some saints lose all their godliness and their zeal just because they find out that a brother they thought was perfect isn't. They may find out a certain elder may have a defect or limitation. If they know God's principle, they would never touch that elder's place. Whether he is right or wrong, proper or improper, it doesn't concern you. Aaron got into trouble just because of this. He should have learned from Moses' person and always honored Moses' place. Instead, he tried to learn Moses' place and honored Moses' person. Thus when Moses married an Ethiopian woman, which was against God's commandment at that time, Aaron was tempted to rebel. He thought, how can a spiritual man do this? This indicates an improper understanding. Moses still had much which Aaron could learn from, such as his love for the Israelites, his persistence in following the Lord, and so on. Instead, Aaron got into trouble with God's government.

Our feeling is that a spiritual man should be a perfect man. Furthermore, we feel position is a matter of attainment. Because of these two thoughts one may think that one who is in position has been placed there because he has attained it due to his being perfected. Such a person honors an elder because he thinks an elder is better, overall, than the other saints. To this way of thinking, an elder must have a morning watch daily, he must have a prayer life, he must be in the Word, and he must be preaching the gospel, and so on. When such a person finds out that this elder is not having morning watch, his dream is shattered. Our view, however, should be to find out what can be

learned from this brother whom the Lord has placed as an elder. He may not have morning watch (which does not mean you should discontinue your morning watch), he may not have a prayer life (but this doesn't excuse you from praying), and he may not read the Bible much (but you still should).

However, you find he does preach the gospel more than you do and therefore you should learn from him in this. You are not learning from a perfect man, you are learning from a brother in whom the Lord has gained something for you to learn. God has placed him thus in the church not because he is perfect, but because there is something to be learned from him.

Many saints become discouraged after some time in the Lord's recovery because of what they perceive to be failures by those the Lord has placed in His administration. They get themselves into trouble just because of their concept. As you go on in the church life those who used to be so far ahead of you become less distant. You become more familiar with them and find that they are not as you imagined or expected. As a young saint you thought that they could do no wrong, but as you grow older you may discover things about them which are not up to your standard for a spiritual man. Then there is the temptation to disregard or even disdain the office of that brother just because he doesn't measure up to your concept. Be careful. Always honor a brother's place, regardless of his seeming limitation, failure or weakness. Whether that brother is a good elder or a seemingly unworthy elder, he is still an elder. To touch God's government is a serious matter.

If a brother is one who is in God's divine administration, you should learn from him, even though he may not be up to your standard. There is one elder who may never give a message in a meeting, but he certainly has a valuable function. You may only see that he is unable to give a message and therefore miss what can be learned from him. This brother is faithful even while in pain to make the meetings and in the elders' meeting has the ability to restrain us in our fellowship when it is needed. Every group of elders needs someone with this ability. Can you learn

this from him? Or will you miss it because of his seeming limitation? There is something we should learn from every brother. Some brothers are so productive. Others are so caring. Can you learn from them? If you develop this ability, the entire church becomes your source of learning.

Whenever you evaluate others that shows that you are not learning. I have learned to appreciate whatever should be appreciated by those I have been placed under. Some elders may even seem like Eli, having little. But they have been in the church for forty or fifty years. Are you able to appreciate how they have survived? Do you know how many storms they have passed through? At least you can learn from them to have the perseverance to stick with the church life through every kind of environment.

As long as someone is in the recovery there is something for us to learn from them. We should have this kind of attitude. Further, we should learn to honor their position. Honor a deacon as a deacon. Honor an elder as an elder. Honor an apostle as an apostle. The Lord has qualified them. It is not your place to evaluate. If a brother is in the lead, there must be something for you to learn. Learn to appreciate what virtues they possess. We have to guard ourselves from the evil one. In all my years in the church life I have never questioned the Lord's government. Whenever you question the brothers ahead of you, you declare your death sentence. You have no way to grow. There will be no brother who will qualify for your submission.

Once, due to some problem in the church life, some elders sat in the back row of the meeting because a ministering brother from another place was encouraging the young people to take over the leadership. Some of the young brothers, however, carried the elders back to the front. I like this attitude. Learn to honor the Lord's government.

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