

GROWN OR GROWN UP?

Today's Text: 1 Kings, Chaps. 1-2

Extract:

“Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: *be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man*” [1 Kgs 2: 1-2]

It is now almost two weeks since the power outage which has been regarded as the worst in the history of North America. Billions of dollars were lost by public and private agencies, and individuals. Yet, to date, the cause of the outage has not been discovered. What we hear is blame shifting. The United States has blamed Canada which in turn threw the allegation back! Ohio State was fingered by New York which in turn asked the latter to think again. In Europe, an unexpected heat wave has claimed the lives of over 10,000 elderly persons in France alone. Yet, the government is still trying to fight off any blame!

At the level of individuals, it is the same story. Young people now see sex or marriage more for recreation than for procreation. Meanwhile, most countries, especially the advanced ones are faced with an ageing population. A recent report says that a local government is offering allowances to young couples in a European country to make babies because seventy-five per cent of the local population are now at least 65 years old! In our churches, many of us behave as if our pastors owe us our salvation. We participate or sit on the fence, depending on our perception of how our pastor treats us! At home, some parents do not know what their children are doing and they do not care! Most of the children know their rights so well but are hardly interested in their responsibilities.

When shall we all grow up? If everybody were to refuse or shirk his or her responsibilities, what would happen to our cherished values? Where were the believers when the gay people took over the pulpits? Who voted for the politicians now misapplying public funds for their personal gains? On his death bed, David told Solomon, his successor, “shew thyself a man.” Can I ask of you the same thing today? That is the subject of today's lesson.

1. Background story: Solomon grows up

David was on his death bed. He needed to appoint a successor who would take over from him as the next king of Israel. In management, succession planning is a strategic question. In other words, a wrong choice can also mean a wrong direction for the future of the business or organization or country. A number of criteria are examined, such as the person's leadership qualities, integrity and ability to work with others. Sometimes, those qualities are set aside where the rule of succession is based on *primogenitor*, that is, birth order with the first choice going to the firstborn.

If any of those criteria had been followed in David's case, Solomon would have been out of the question for the following reasons:

- With the death of Absalom [2 Sam. 18: 1-33], Adonijah his younger brother assumed that the throne would be his. In fact, without waiting to be invited, he obtained the consent of Joab, David's war commander, and Abiathar the priest to be anointed David's successor. He neither invited to the ceremony Solomon nor those he considered would be loyal to him, such as Nathan the prophet and Zadok the priest [1 Kgs 1: 5-10].
- Solomon's mother was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. David's famous adultery with this woman followed by the murder of her husband could not easily have been forgotten by the people or David's older sons. In fact, high on Adonijah's programme for the first day of his reign was the death of Solomon and Bathsheba whom he was to treat as criminals [v. 21].

Solomon's choice was out of David's control because God had already chosen him even before he was born. God specifically told David, "Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: *for his name shall be Solomon*, ... He shall build an house for My name; and he shall be My son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever" [1 Chron. 22: 9-10].

That raises an interesting issue. Ordinarily, Solomon would have had a low self-esteem. But God who chose him before he was born *knew who he would become!* See what David did to raise Solomon's self-esteem after he had anointed him his successor:

- As Solomon sat on the throne, David "bowed himself upon the bed; and also said the king [i.e., David], Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which hath given one to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it" [1 Kgs 1: 47-48]. If mighty David could so exalt him before the people, why should not Solomon see himself in bigger light?
- In his final charge to Solomon, David encouraged him to "be strong and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed," and prayed "only the Lord give thee wisdom and understanding; and give thee charge concerning

Israel, *that thou mayest keep the law of the Lord thy God*' [1 Chron. 22: 12, 13].

Soon after, David died and Solomon assumed full responsibility immediately! Here is how the Bible puts it: "Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; *and his kingdom was established greatly*" [1 Kgs 2: 12]. The young man had grown up!

Succession is taking place everyday in the family, place of work or worship, or in public life. Some successions are peaceful and fruitful. Some are painful and fruitless. In many other cases, there was no succession at all because those who ought to accept responsibility have refused. Populations are ageing because child-bearing is being delayed or refused by the younger generations. Churches are getting thinner because the younger generations worship pop instead of God. If we refuse responsibility