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STIR UP THE GIFT OF GOD



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“Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”
(2 Timothy 1:6-7)

“God gives food to every bird, but doesn’t throw them in the nest.”

– Unknown author

Every one of us has a personal responsibility for their spiritual gifts received by God.

By this I don’t mean to touch on how to recognize which gifts we have from God, or the source of those gifts, rather I mean personal responsibility to those gifts,

Although these gifts are “free” and given by God for the building up of the church, from

what we know in 1st Corinthians, where Paul breaks down the spiritual gifts for us, we ought not to take them lightly and we carry a responsibility to stir them up so that they function and are effective in Christ’s body for building up the church so that God is glorified and His work extended.

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1. EACH ONE OF US HAS GOD'S GIFTS FOR WHICH WE ARE RESPONSIBLE.

"Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." (1 Timothy 1:6)

Paul was telling Timothy to stir up his own gift of God that he received as a result of the laying on of his [Paul's] hands on him. The gift here is not described, but without a doubt we can say that the gift came to Timothy as a result of his being sent forth into the ministry of evangelism. We know this from 1st Timothy, in which he also told Timothy to not neglect the gift that was in him: "Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership." (1 Timothy 4:14)

Therefore, God's gift was found in Timothy according to his personal responsibility. We see the magnitude of personal responsibility needed in the first and second letters to Timothy, especially in the second, which is actually his last letter written before his death. In his letters Paul wanted to pass on the torch to the next generation of leaders coming after him, as to all believers in general. Among other things, he emphasized personal responsibility to our spiritual gifts.

★ **Each one of us has one or more spiritual gifts for which we are personally responsible to God. They can be used for His glory and His kingdom.**

If we carefully examine this we will note that in the first letter to Timothy he says to not neglect the gift and in the second to stir up the gift. The word stir up literally means to blow upon or blow upon dying embers so the fire blazes once again.

Each one of us has one or more spiritual gifts for which we are personally responsible to God. They can be used for His glory and His kingdom.

Many times Jesus Christ spoke about personal responsibility for those things we have received, He spoke about this as our Christian duty. For this reason I would like to look at the parable in regards to personal responsibility for what we have received, which is found in Matthew 25. Jesus spoke about the talents entrusted to certain servants in order to show us our personal responsibility for them. "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey." (Matthew 25:15)

So the master (Jesus) divided the money (talents) among his servants (believers) according to their ability. No one received more or less than they were able to bear, so that if a servant did not manage his responsibility he could not blame it on the fact that he could not manage. Our personal failures have no connection with whether or not we have too much or too little, rather because we are simply too lazy or have animosity toward our Master.

The talents in this story represent every kind of resource, which we personally possess.

God has given us time, gifts, finances, and other resources according to our ability and He expects us to wisely invest them until His second coming. Therefore, we are responsible for that which God has entrusted us. It's not so much about how much we possess, rather whether or not we use wisely what we have.

The rest of the story is familiar to us; there are useful and ineffective servants, those who utilized and multiplied their gifts and received more, and those who were lazy and despised their master. Everything was taken from them and they were thrown into hell. "And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 25:30)

Although Paul encouraged Timothy and implored him to give his all for the Lord, Timothy also had to be responsible not to neglect his spiritual gift received by God and to stir it up. This was not an option; rather he was imperatively challenged to do so. Let us look at some of those imperative words Paul used in relation to his gift in both of the letters sent to Timothy: "Do not neglect; stir up the gift; this charge I commit to you; keep the faith; reject profane and old wives' tales; for we are laboring and fighting; be an example; give attention to reading, exhortation and doctrine; pursue righteousness, faith, love, perseverance, gentleness; fight the good fight of faith; I urge you... keep this commandment without spot, blameless; guard what is committed to your trust; be strong in the grace..."

I want to emphasize that we are all

personally responsible for the gifts and resources that we have received from God, which is why we cannot just passively expect a power from on high to touch and activate us. We simply must actively begin to stir up the gifts and not neglect that which we have received from the Lord. We ought not to allow ourselves to be lulled into religiosity and lethargy. In order to be fruitful we must act on our own because Jesus is coming soon and will seek from us an account of every gift, every resources, and all that we have received of Him; all that we have received and all that we have is not meant only for our own use, rather for His kingdom.

2. WE CAN STIR UP THE GIFTS WITHOUT FEAR OF THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."
(2 Timothy 1:7)

Paul further encourages Timothy to stir up the

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spiritual gift from God without fear and writes that God did not give him a spirit of fear.

The Greek word for “fear” that Paul uses here is *deilia*, which we translate: “cowardice, reticence, or fears”. Usually this word was used in a negative context when compared to the Greek word *phobos*, the word for fear which perhaps came from the word *peophoba*, indicating idea of fleeing from something.

In other words, Paul is telling Timothy that God did not give him a spirit of cowardice, reticence, and fear that causes us to flee and pull away from the Lord and those things that He has for us through gifts and talents with which He has entrusted us.

I am personally convinced that many Christians have ceased growing spiritually and are no longer spiritually productive, other than attending church, because of bad personal experiences in the past.

I believe that in the beginning of their conversion many were open and powerful in faith and in God’s gifts. They gave of their time and finances and were open to

spiritual things until a moment in their walk with Jesus when they had a bad experience while serving in their gifts; because of an offense they became skeptical, doubtful and fearful. Actually, in these moments of disappointment, if we are not careful, that spirit of fear can come on us, paralyze and terrify us so that we no longer advance in faith and optimism as before.

And what happens then? Because of the devilish opposition that we have faced in those moments of surrender to the Lord, because people have disappointed us, and we have experienced negative circumstances, we decide to pull into ourselves, lay aside the gifts we have received and, rather than being the productive, positive believer we once were, we become embittered, doubtful, cynical, selfish, and frightened; we are so introverted that we can no longer receive from the Lord that which He has for us, nor can we serve others. We no longer move forward toward the future because we live in fear of further failure and disappointment. So we choose to stop, which is not healthy for us or for Christ’s body.

Timothy also experienced great opposition, personally and as a leader. His youth, connection with Paul, and leadership went through fiery attack from believers and unbelievers alike. This is why Paul urged him to be brave. Had Timothy allowed people or the devil to frighten him, his effectiveness would have been neutralized; which is why the power of the Holy Spirit is needed so we can overcome the fear of man.

Maybe we are not like Paul, but the past can neutralize our effectiveness cause us to be

✦ **Jesus is coming soon and will seek from us an account of every gift, every resources, and all that we have received of Him; all that we have received and all that we have is not meant only for our own use, rather for His kingdom.**

led by fear. In this case our thoughts will be filled with questions such as “What do I do now? Where can I run? Where can I hide? How will I overcome?”

The spirit of fear can only be conquered by God’s Spirit, this is also how we stir up His resources in us. We cannot simply complain and wait for better days, thinking that with time things will right themselves. We must pull ourselves together and act, knowing what we have in God. This is why Paul continued on by saying that God did not give us a spirit of fear but of “power, love, and of a sound mind”. (2 Timothy 1:7b)

Let us quickly look at what kind of spirit God gave us. First of all, a spirit of power.

For the word power Paul used the Greek word *dunamis*, which literally means “might”. This word is especially used in the context of inverted power, for example in the case when Jesus felt the power go out of Him when the woman with the issue of blood for twelve years touched His garment. When she touched Him, the blood immediately stopped flowing and she was healed. “And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him.” (Mark 5:30a) We find this same word in Ephesians when Paul spoke about greatness of God’s power in us. “...and what [is] the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.” (Ephesians 1:19)

All the words derived from the root word *duna* have the basic meaning of “to have capability or to be able”. In other words, Paul says that God alone has enabled and equipped us to get

out of the pit of self-pity, the fear of man, the fear of repeated failure, and hurt and to stir up the gift that God has given us without fear of the past, present or future – because God has given us the spirit of power to overcome all things!

Second, Paul said that God has given us, in addition to the spirit of power, a spirit of love.

The word *agape* actually depicts the benevolence, charity, and compassion of God’s love. This love is not made up of what we want as objects of love, rather of that which the one who loves us believes is most needful. In other words, God didn’t give us what we wanted, rather what He thought we needed – His Son who brought us salvation from sin. This is God’s love (*agape*) for us, that which He thinks is best for us. His *agape* love is willfully directed toward each man, but in order for man to show his love for God he must first accept God’s *agape* love, because only God has this kind of unselfish love.

Therefore, Paul tells Timothy that God has give him His spirit of love that will willfully direct him to unselfishness and love, and that will, then, manifest in stirring up of

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his gifts and in bearing good fruit for His kingdom. By accepting this kind of love we become motivated and furthermore remain motivated in this unselfish kind of love that will not leave us barren and paralyzed in our selfish lives. This kind of love will not leave us bound in chains of the past, because it is an unselfish love that always gives of itself regardless of opposition, hurt, and rejection.

Let us remember Christ's unselfish love and prayer. Jesus, filled with this kind of love, despite hurts, rejection, and opposition from people, on the cross of Golgotha, was able to go on, forgive, and die for them. "Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.'" (Luke 23:34a)

This kind of spirit always gives us strength to once again stir up the gifts and all that God has entrusted to us, regardless of the past, present or future. We do not have to live in fear of hurt, disappointment, and hardship; hurt, disappointment and hardship will come to all of us, but with Christ we can overcome and go on.

Thirdly, Paul told us that God gave us a spirit of a sound mind.

Some translations use the word "wise

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discretion". The Greek word that Paul used for "sound mind" was *sophronismos*. This word comes from the word *sophronizo* that literally conveys the idea of "calling to soundness of mind". Figuratively it means to discipline or correct, to teach someone how to be sober, healthy, restrained of mind.

In other words, Paul says that it is possible to continue on because God has enabled us to have retrained, wise, and healthy thoughts that will help us in stirring up the gifts and resources God has given us.

I want to emphasize something else that is very important. Often in the Greek language when it speaks about a certain spirit the word indicates more of an attitude or an actual spirit.

Therefore, the encouragement Paul was giving Timothy, as well as all of us, was that we do not need to fear because we have a promise from God and God has given us a different spirit or an attitude different than that of this world. Paul told us to freely stir up the gift that is in us. This is the attitude that every new believer should have: courage, love, and a sound mind. An attitude that does not fear the past, present or future; it is a spirit that is productive, positive, and full of faith; a spirit that gives of itself regardless of a difficult past, momentary difficult circumstances, or perhaps a doubtful future.

3. THEREFORE, LET'S LEARN SOMETHING

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of

God.” (2 Timothy 1:8)

In that day of persecution and difficulties, Timothy was afraid to continue preaching the gospel. His fears were well founded. Believers around him were imprisoned and killed. Paul told Timothy to expect difficulty. Actually, Timothy, like Paul, was imprisoned for preaching the gospel. This is clearly seen in Hebrews when the writer in the end gave information about Timothy’s freedom saying, “Know that [our] brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.” (Hebrews 13:23) Nevertheless, Paul promised Timothy that God would give him strength and to be ready for when trouble came.

Even when there is no persecution it can be very difficult to share our faith in Christ. Yet, thank God, like Paul and Timothy, we can have God’s strength to stir up His gifts. This is why it is good for us to learn this now. If we wait for a spontaneous stirring up of the fire then it will simply burn out. As for fire, when we notice that it is starting to wane it is best to stir it up immediately.

God wants us to stir up His resources and gifts courageously in agape love and with a sound mind. But, how do we do this? Should we expect something mysterious or is it something we ought to do ourselves? We already know the answer – much of it depends on us, our actions, and our attitudes. Paul went on to give Timothy practical and helpful advise in “stirring up God’s gifts”. We see, for example, once again, Paul’s imperative and practical instructions to Timothy to stir up the gifts. He didn’t tell

him to pray, sit, and wait for a special day of revival, although this ought to be done every day by every believer. Rather, he clearly instructed him with several instructions for what he could immediately begin doing.

Let us look at some of the examples of these imperative statements. “Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner.” (2 Timothy 1:8a), “...share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God.” (2 Timothy 1:8b). “That good thing that was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us” (2 Timothy 1:14), “...be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus”, “commit these to faithful men”, “endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”, “Remember... Jesus Christ”, “Remind [them] of these things, charging [them] before the Lord”, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God”, “Flee also youthful lusts”, “But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes”. (2 Timothy 2:1c, 2a, 3, 8a, 14a, 15a, 22a, 23a)

These were specific things that Timothy needed to do in order to stir up the gift, or gifts, that he received from the Lord. What this means for us is dependent upon our situation. We have a personal responsibility. Perhaps in the beginning, for some of us, to

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stir up means to not neglect getting up in the morning for personal devotions. Maybe this means to knock on a neighbor's door, invite him to coffee, and share the gospel with him. Possibly it means to take up an instrument and play for the Lord, grab some tracts and share them on the street, begin to write a book, begin to preach, clean, strengthen your ministry, feed a hungry neighbor, turn off the television and computer and rest for a while, forgive those who have hurt you and do something nice for them. Maybe it means to change our bad attitude and become positive, or to return to a ministry in which you once served.

Perhaps for some this means to surrender your finances to the Lord, lend to those in need, or perhaps simply to give your full tithe to the church. There are many things that we can do without fear of the past, present and future, without fear of hurt, failure, or disappointment, because we must know that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind. With that spirit,

or with that attitude, our gifts will be stirred up and multiplied for Him in praise and glory. When Jesus comes, we will be able to say without fear, "Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them." And He will say to us, "Well [done], good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." (Matthew 25: 20b-21)

Therefore, let us stir up our resources and gifts; this is our responsibility.

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