

Some Thoughts from 2 Timothy (Part One)

This letter written over two thousand years ago by the apostle Paul is still relevant today. He wrote it just a few months before his death. It contains his advice for a young Christian called Timothy who had a Christian Mother and grandmother and who had learned the scriptures from his childhood on (1 Timothy 1:4).

In verse six of chapter one he challenges Timothy to "stir up the gift". As believers we are each given a gift or talent and can use the gift to bless others. It may lie dormant unless we stir it up. It may sleep. We may die with the music still in us unreleased to the world. We only know the music Beethoven was capable of because he wrote it down and released it. We only have the works of great artists because inspiration for a creative act was translated into action. No wonder the book of James tells us that faith without works is dead (2:17) and later in verse 20 that faith without works is useless. I am so glad that Paul used his time in prison wisely and used his gift to write good letters.

So, how about you my reader? Do you have a gift that would be profitable to use for the good of your fellow man or could help the cause of Christ in the world? If you are a Christian remember that Paul speaking to the believers at Corinth told them "There are variations of effects but it is the same god who is at work in everything in all persons. But to each one is given the open revelation, the open show of the Spirit of God for the common good."(1 Corinthians 12:6-7) He then goes on to say we all need each other just as the body needs its parts working together.

It is clear from verse six in Second Timothy, that Paul is talking about a gift imparted by the laying on of hands and that the gift is described as "The gift of God" He says it can be "kindled a fresh." This makes me think of a fire that has dwindled but can be refreshed and built up again to a healthy blaze. It is great to see a person re- lit whose fire had nearly gone out. It can be exhilarating to see yourself used by God to bless another person. God wants you hot, a smoking wick He will not quench.

He goes on to say that God has not given us a spirit of timidity (we can be brave and courageous with our gift from Him) and that God has also given us power and discipline. So we are gifted, empowered and given power to discipline ourselves. I have not always lived this out in active works, but in the few times I have tried it has worked. I have a gift to teach. Sometimes I have been fearful I will not be well received or that it might not work out ok. This can be from a desire to impress; fear that I will be unimpressive.

But it is not about what man or myself wants it is about what God wants in the situation. When I have taken myself in hand I make myself push past the fears and let the Word out to do its work sometimes the effect is not immediate and I can see nothing encouraging. But "We live by faith and not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7) and sometimes the seed is sown but lies alone in the ground before it sprouts and grows. This waiting period is necessary. I may never know the good it did, and God is not obligated to show me. At other times I am amazed at the good long termed result. He simply says "While we have the opportunity let us do good to all men" and we have His promise that His word will always accomplish the purpose for which He sent it (Isaiah 55:10-11).

You may be unimpressed with your talents because some work that is easy for you may be difficult for someone else to do who does not have that gift. For you it is easy. So let your gift get some exercise and feel the pleasure of God upon you as you do it. Go out into the world and serve and give with the aid of His gift within you.