

“Neglect Not The Gift ...”

“... that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy progress may be manifest to all ...” (1 Tim. 4:14-15).

To neglect is to fail to give attention to; fail to address. Neglect always has attendant consequences; by neglect the roof sinks in; the field overgrows with briars and weeds; the cow breaks out of the pasture; the door is left unlocked, an invitation to the thief. By neglect of our spiritual state we bring upon ourselves the wrath of God. Timothy was urged not to neglect his gift.

Timothy was not to neglect the gift which was in him. The same command is found in the second letter Paul wrote him, worded in this way: *“I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands”* (2 Tim. 1:6).

Note the gift Timothy had had come by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, through the laying on of the hands of Paul. These statements tell us that:

Timothy’s gift was a spiritual gift. It came by prophecy. Neither who the prophet was nor what the exact nature of the gift he prophesied Timothy would receive is revealed. But that it was one of the nine gifts itemized in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 there is no doubt. We know that prophecy not only revealed God’s word to man; sometimes it concerned events which would befall a man at a later time. A falling away from the faith would occur (1 Tim. 4:1). A great dearth would come on the whole world (Acts 11:27f). Paul would be bound and delivered to Gentiles in Judaea (Acts 21:11); Timothy would receive a spiritual gift (1 Tim. 4:14). Such insight was given to men in centuries before Christ. Hezekiah would shortly die (2 Kings 20:1). An unbelieving Israelite would see an abundance of food, but not eat of it (2 Kings 7).

“Through the laying on of my hand.” Paul did not choose the gift Timothy received (the Holy Spirit did that, 1 Cor. 12:11), but Timothy’s gift came through the agency of Paul. He was not one of the twelve (who imparted spiritual gifts through laying on of their hands, Acts 8:17-18), but he was an apostle, inferior in no way to the original twelve, as capable of imparting spiritual gifts as any of them (Acts 19:6f).

Timothy’s gift came with the laying on of the hands of the *“presbytery.”* This is the only occurrence of this word in the scriptures. It literally means “an assembly of elders” corresponding to our word *“eldership,”* from

presbuterion. The kinship of this Greek word to *presbuteros* ("elder") is clearly seen. "*Presbytery*" is an obvious reference to the who were appointed in every church (Acts 14:23).

Do not misunderstand the phrase "*with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery*." The purpose the "*presbytery*" laid hands on Timothy is not stated, but very likely to set him apart for a special work much like certain brethren in Antioch laid hands on Barnabas and Saul to set them apart for the work the Holy Spirit called them to; just as very possibly the apostles laid hand on the seven in Jerusalem to "*set them apart*" to the task of seeing to the needs of the widows (Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3). Just as Paul and Barnabas had been set apart to a grave and important work, so Timothy was also set apart for a special work by a grave, sober act when the elders laid hands upon him; and at the same time, Paul laid hands on him to impart a spiritual to him, which gift he was not to neglect.

A gift, spiritual or natural, has to be cultivated and stirred. None of us have gifts like Timothy; all of us have gifts -- gifts we should stir up, not neglect. Gifts which are used have a way of multiplying (viz., five talents to ten; two talents to four, Mt. 25:20-23). Gifts neglected will ultimately be taken from us, as was the pound taken from him who did not use it (Luke 19:20-24). Like Timothy, we must not neglect our gifts but stir them up that we might glorify God!

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