

# Stir Up the Gift of God

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**By Dr. Lee Roberson**

Open your Bibles, please, to II Timothy 1, beginning with verse 6. I will take a word out of a verse of Scripture and emphasize it in your thinking.

*"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."—Vss. 6–13.*

I emphasize verse 6:

*"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."*

Paul, writing to young Timothy, was saying, "Timothy, you have been saved. Timothy, you have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you. Timothy, God has called you into His service. Timothy, I place my hands upon you as a token of God's call. Now, Timothy, stir yourself up and do what God asks of you."

Here is a picture of a fundamentalist by the name of Paul writing to a young fundamentalist preacher by the name of Timothy. Both believed the Word of God, believed in God and Christ, and were saved and called of God. Paul was seeking to stir up this young man.

In I and II Timothy he kept on exhorting him: "Endure hardship as a good soldier.... Study to shew thyself approved."

What was he doing? The very thing we have to do. If we don't stir up people, move people, we have failed. If you can preach Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night, and no one is stirred to go out and do what God says, you haven't done much.

Paul was doing this at all times. He wrote to the Christians in the church at Rome, at Corinth, at Philippi, at Ephesus, in the same manner—to stir and move and shake them.

Folks don't want to be shaken. They would rather sit still. They want to come to church Sunday morning, listen to you for an hour, get up and walk out the door, go home and eat dinner, and forget about what you said. They want to come back Sunday night, maybe, and listen again, go out and forget what they heard. They don't want to be stirred. But to do what God asks, we must stir people.

Moses had that in his mind when he said, "...beware, lest thou forget the Lord" (Deut. 6:12). He was stirring them up, and we must do the same. Today fundamentalists need to be stirred.

I am not proud (neither are you) that some fundamental churches are failing. I am not proud that some of them are shifting away from their great stand for the Word of God. It is an evidence of the day in which we live. All around us are dead churches, lifeless, struggling churches that need to be awakened, moved and sent forward. It is up to us to stir them up.

All around us are powerless leaders, pastors, missionaries and teachers without Holy Spirit power. Many leaders are self-satisfied.

I can take you to a church this very morning with a magnificent building that seats around six hundred people. They have fifty in Sunday school, and the pastor is perfectly happy. He never makes a comment about the number. Fifty in Sunday school, about fifty in church as well, and that's the way it goes from week to week. He has a good salary. The bills are all paid. There is the building. In a populated area where they could have thousands coming if they really wanted to work at it, he is content. Powerless leaders!

Again, we must face the fact of a forgotten commission: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). We have not done it. We are not doing it.

Stir up your own thinking and ask, "O God, what am I doing? What can I do? What do You want me to do so I might be my best for my Saviour?"

Several thousand Southern Baptist churches last year did not have a single baptism in twelve months! That is authoritative from headquarters: no converts, no baptisms in twelve long months. Hundreds of others had only one or two, but so many of them had none at all.

There are things that ought to stir us. We ought to be stirred by sin. This is a wicked day, immoral day, loose day, dirty day. Radio, television, magazines, books—everything is turning people away from God. The sin of this day is deceptiveness. It is a day of shadows, and that should trouble us all.

Some people just don't seem to get bothered. They go on their way. "Well, so what?" The child of God should be stirred to a holy compassion, a condemnation of sin, an acknowledgment of what he believes in his own heart.

I picked up a paper the other day and read that America has had 47 million divorces in the last twenty-five years, 550,000 deaths from drunk driving, 23 million using illegal drugs, 18 million babies killed by abortion, 189 million serious crime reports, 366,000 murders, 9 1/2 million illegitimate births.

America spends \$10 billion annually on sex magazines and X-rated movies. In America we have an estimated 17 million practicing homosexuals—Sodom and Gomorrah right in our midst! In America there are 10 million alcoholics and 81,500 rapes each year. Abortion clinics in many cities—15 in Atlanta—are busy night and day.

Will the sin of this nation stir us? We are a part of this day and time. We have a job to do. We ought to be stirred in our souls against sin and condemn it in every sermon. In every way possible, let people know your attitude.

Then there is the indifference of this day toward lost souls. People do not care anymore. Oh, the indifference of this day! Oh, the carelessness! No one seems to be concerned over the lost. "No man cared for my soul," cried the Psalmist David (Ps. 142:4).

A man walked down Market Street in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and stepped off the sidewalk into a parking lot (about fifteen feet) to get in his car. Two men jumped him and beat him to the ground. They bloodied his face, put their feet on his hands and ground them into the gravel. They kicked his body and robbed him of every penny he had.

He cried for help, which was fifteen feet away on the sidewalk. Hundreds were walking up and down busy Market Street, but not a soul stopped to help him.

The two men who robbed him of his money (\$91) left him on the ground bleeding. A policeman saw him and called the ambulance from Erlanger Hospital.

I went to see him. As I stood by his bedside, I asked, "Sir, what in the world happened to you?" I never saw a fellow so bruised and torn. His hands were pitiful looking. His face was black and blue. His whole body was covered with bruises.

He said, "I had an awful time," and he told me what had happened. When he finished, he said, "Brother Roberson, what is wrong with the world?"

I know what's wrong with it, and you do too. Nobody cares. They let that dear man lie on the ground and scream for help, and they did nothing. Fifteen feet away people were walking on the sidewalk, but not a soul came to help him.

The indifference of this day should stir us.

Oh, the selfishness of this day. Paul said, "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:21). We are not concerned. It is every man for himself. We see selfishness on every hand.

People don't want to be stirred. They have gotten in a rut. A rut is a grave with both ends knocked out. They go on their way. They don't want to be stirred.

Do we pray, "O God, stir my heart! O God, move me! O God, let me be what You want me to be"?

I keep telling myself that I don't have to work. At my age, I could stay at home; but I am burdened. I look, and I cry. I see tragedy all around me.

I go in one church after another to preach—West Virginia, Virginia, and now I am with you. I will be in Orlando Saturday, and on to Maryland; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I see churches struggling. Preachers in many places are just wondering, "What can I do?"

Sometimes I am afraid that preachers are at fault. Everything rises upon leadership. That is why you have a meeting like this. There has to be a time when we stop and think and let God move our hearts.

Let's offer a threefold prayer.

## I. STIR US TO REPENTANCE

Let's pray, "O Father, stir us unto repentance." Here is the Word of God:

*"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing."—II Cor. 7:9.*

We need to repent of wrongdoing or of doing nothing. We put emphasis on things, but we are not putting emphasis on the things of God, on the salvation of souls and on winning people to the Lord. Instead, we have thought of money, possessions and buildings. Christians need to be stirred to repentance.

This means we have the mind of Christ. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). It means to see our personal failures and how sorely we have failed in living for Him. We have failed in soul winning.

Most Christians have never led a soul to Christ. Sometimes in churches where I hold meetings, I want to speak to someone; but instead of saying, "Go right ahead and witness to him," the pastor will say, "Well, maybe we'd better wait and save that for a later time."

It means that we confess our sins. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). Confess the coldness of our hearts; our critical spirits; our lazy, lukewarm attitudes. Confess the sins of commission and the sins of omission. That is what we must do.

Then we must pray, "O dear Father, help me to repent and turn away from sin and refuse the things that are contrary to the Word of God."

A lady came forward in our church one Sunday morning. I said, "Ma'am, why have you come?"

She said, "I just want to rededicate my life."

I said, "Good! Have a seat here." She sat down.

I said, "Now, ma'am, I want to have prayer with you. What's wrong?"

"Oh," she said, "nothing's wrong."

"Well, then, why do you want to rededicate your life?"

She replied, "I just want to make sure everything's all right."

I said, "Well, ma'am, sit there and think a moment, and if you discover something wrong, motion to me, and I will come back to you." Then I went on and talked to other folks who had come forward.

In a few moments I looked back, and she was motioning for me to come back. I walked over and said, "Did you find out something?"

"Oh yes. I haven't spoken to my next-door neighbor in six months. When I drive out of my driveway, she will be in her yard, but I don't speak to her. I'm a Christian, and she professes to be. I blamed her for something, then decided I would never speak to her again; and for six months, I haven't been able to pray."

I said, "Of course not!"

"My heart is troubled," she said.

I said, "Of course. Then get things right."

Being right with God and our fellowman (or neighbor) is most important.

Then we must pray, "O God, stir us unto repentance that we may see ourselves as we are!"

## **II. STIR US TO THE BASICS**

There is another prayer: "O Father, stir us to return to the basics." We use that word quite often. It is simple but meaningful.

Do you know what I keep telling people in meetings? I have had no one, including preachers, to disagree with me. Seventy-five percent of the people in our churches have never read through the Bible. They have read most of it, but not all of it. That includes our Sunday school teachers and workers.

I go into services in fundamental churches where the teacher stands before a class on Sunday morning with a paper in his hand and no Bible. I was in one the other day where I had the only Bible in the class, a men's class of a fundamental church!

How we need to return to the Word of God, reading and obeying it and following this divine Word!

We need a return to the altar of prayer. "Pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17). "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:14). More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of. So pray.

This is a Sword Conference. The man who began these meetings years ago, Dr. John R. Rice, wrote a beautiful book on prayer: PRAYER—Asking and Receiving. You ought to read it all the way through again and again. I have.

Dr. Rice was a great man who believed in prayer! I thought I had been around Dr. Rice enough. I had been having him regularly in our church for a long time. I thought I knew him so well and knew what he stood for. I thought I knew his heart. But I discovered something one morning in Monroe, Louisiana.

I had an early breakfast and went back to my motel room at 7:00 o'clock. There came a knock at the door. I went to the door, and there stood Dr. Rice. "Brother Roberson, could I come in and read the Bible and pray with you?" he asked.

I said, "Certainly, sir."

He came inside and sat down. I sat down. He began reading his Bible, and he read and read. Then he said, "Now we'll pray." And he knelt to pray.

He prayed, as you have heard Dr. Rice pray over and over again, in a quiet, even voice. He never got excited. But after a few moments of praying, I noticed something beginning to happen. He began calling people by name. I guess he named over two hundred people. I never heard such a list in my life! He prayed and asked for the salvation of many of them and that many of them would be returned to faithfulness in service. He prayed for everything you can imagine, and as he prayed, his voice got higher and higher.

Fifteen minutes went by—he was still praying. Twenty minutes—and his voice got higher and higher. I had never heard Dr. Rice pray like that before. He prayed on—twenty-five minutes.

I couldn't help it; I opened my eyes and looked at him. He was down on his knees looking toward Heaven and calling upon God. He had forgotten all about my presence. He was thinking only of talking to God, and he had just lost track altogether of the fact that I was there in that room.

He prayed for almost thirty minutes. Suddenly he stopped, turned to me and said, "Forgive me, Brother Roberson. You pray."

I said, "Forgive me, Dr. Rice. I don't feel like it." And I didn't pray. And you know why, don't you? You couldn't follow that. No sir!

A return to the altar of prayer! Praying!

Then a return to separated living. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (II Cor. 6:17). Don't shy away from that word separation. Don't be afraid of it. Some preachers are scared to death that somebody will get offended if they talk about separation.

I go to churches where the ladies don't dress properly. The pastor comes to me and says, "Brother Roberson, what can I do?"

I say, "Tell them what to do. Explain how it ought to be, and how ladies should dress. I think they will understand; but if not, you have to tell them."

There must be a return to separation.

Then there must be a return to the place of worship. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:25).

I love Ronald Reagan. I would call him a personal friend. I have been with him, talked with him, prayed with him. But Mr. Reagan did the nation a very great and grave injustice. For eight years in the White House, he never went to church. He went to Camp David but not to church. He did not belong to a church in Washington and didn't attend one for those eight years. That to me was wrong in the leader of a nation. That is one reason people have no feeling of conscience about taking the Lord's day for anything they want—football games, basketball games, baseball games, golf. Everything goes on on Sunday, the Lord's day. We have gotten away from worshipping God on His day.

I quizzed President Reagan over and over. He said, "I am saved. I know I've been born again."

I said, "Good. Now go to church and worship God. Be in the house of God."

But he said, "I can't do it. It would be too much confusion to those attending. It would cause a disruption in the service."

I said, "Disrupt all you want to. Go to church anyway."

I didn't achieve anything, but he could have put himself in the limelight for all the ages had he confessed to the world, "I made a mistake not going to the house of God."

Indeed, we need a return to the place of worship.

We also need a return to honesty in giving the tithe. Put the emphasis of the Word of God on tithing, and give it to our people.

Then, return to the main work, the winning of souls. That is what we are mindful of in this great conference. "And he [Andrew] brought him [Simon Peter] to Jesus." Our job is to bring people to the Lord Jesus.

Years ago I read about a speck of radium too small to be seen with the naked eye, having power to ring a bell for thirty thousand years. I put it away in my mind and didn't talk about it, but it shocked me, amazed me, that a speck of radium, too small to be seen with the naked eye, could do that.

I knew that radium was expensive—a high fiscal concentrate. Beyond that I knew nothing about it. But I thought about that fact—ringing a bell for thirty thousand years!

One day when I was walking down the hallway of the Baptist Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, I met a doctor whom I knew. He walked up to me and said, "Dr. Roberson, can you guess what I've got in my hand?"

I said, "No sir." His fist was closed.

He said, "What I have in my hand here is worth more than \$100,000."

I said, "Naw, that's impossible."

He said, "Take a look." He opened his hand. In it was a tiny vial—tiny, I said. He said, "This is radium. I am moving it from one location to another by order of the hospital; and what I have in my hand right here is worth more than \$100,000."

I went back to thinking about the statement I read about a speck of radium having the power to ring a bell for thirty thousand years. Then it came back to me like a flash: Ah, that's nothing. I can do something that will ring bells forever and ever. If I win a soul to Jesus Christ, the bells ring now, and they will ring forever and forever in this world and in the world to come!

Be a soul winner.

"O Father, stir us to repentance. O Father, stir us to return to the business of winning others and doing the basic things, doing what You say."

### **III. STIR US TO REVIVAL**

*"O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years."—Hab. 3:2.*

Revive the work. Stir us to revival.

Have you ever seen a church revival? Some of you have; some of you haven't. A revival begins in an individual's heart, then it goes out to others.

I have seen revivals in churches; I mean, sweeping revivals. Souls were saved, hearts were touched, altars were filled. I have seen the hand of God at work.

O God, revive Thy work! Revive us. Stir us to revival. Move on our hearts!

A young pastor, who had finished at our school, recently came to ask me about a revival for his church, for his city, and what he could do. He was quite sincere, I believe. He said, "If we could just have something to happen. I know it ought to happen with me, then it ought to go to my people."

I said, "Well, let me write down a few things. Number one, a revival unites." And it does. Differences are put away. Grudges are forgiven. People get right with God. Church people get right with one another. Pastor and people come together. The deacons unite. The choir unites. The Sunday school unites. There is a beauty in the power of unity.

"Number two, a revival excites." When you have a revival, it excites you, stirs you, moves your heart. You don't have to worry about advertising. When you have a revival, it will advertise itself. It will bring a new interest in the work of God.

"Number three, a revival ignites." I speak of the fire of the Holy Spirit. When you have a revival, the fire burns out the dross. The Holy Spirit is working, and the fire empowers the believer. The Holy Spirit works, and the altars are filled, people are made right with God, pettiness is cast away from us, and the Holy Spirit controls and ignites. Revival ignites.

"Number four, a revival generates." It generates a compassion for souls. When you have a revival, you want to see people saved, your first love for Christ returns, the love you had for Him the day you were born again.

Have you ever thought about it? The day you got saved, you would have done anything in the world for the Lord. There would have been no limit.

The question comes sometimes: "Who is the better soul winner—the man who got saved yesterday or the man who got saved twenty-five years ago?" Usually it is the man who got saved yesterday. His heart is still on fire. He wants to do something. He's ready and willing. He wants to move out.

A revival generates, stirs, and moves us to do what God wants done.

Do you remember Evangelist Mordecai Ham, famous in years gone by? Mordecai Ham was a great preacher! He held a meeting in Nashville, Tennessee. I think he was there for three months in one location. The first month he preached, he never gave a single invitation. Preachers came to him, people came to him and begged, "Please give an invitation."

After a great song service, he would preach his sermon and close the service; and he kept this up.

After four long weeks, he gave an invitation, and literally hundreds and thousands were saved. The whole city of Nashville was stirred by that revival meeting of Mordecai Ham years ago.

Why did he wait? I heard his explanation. He was waiting to give an invitation until he felt God had worked on the hearts of the people and they were ready to turn themselves over to Him and turn away from their sins and selfishness and let God into their lives.

I cannot say that that is the way that I would do it, nor would I recommend it to you. But, my dear friends, there needs to be something that stirs our hearts. We have to get to the place where we serve God without compulsion, without being driven by someone else.

I can get folks in the church to go visiting. Sometimes I have to beg them a long time. You can get folks to go soul winning, but you have to beg them, offer them several things to make them want to go out.

There should be a drive in us to do the thing God wants done. Revival begins in the individual's heart. O Lord, revive us! Stir us to revival!

When a revival comes, dead churches are awakened, broken homes are restored, empty lives are filled, and condemned souls are saved.

*"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."—  
II Chron. 7:14.*

Then the promise of God is revival!

Revival begins in the individual's heart. Let it begin with you on your face alone before God. Turn from every sin that might hinder. Renew yourself to a new devotion to the Saviour. Ask Him to take you and use you and bless you and guide you.

My heart goes back to a revival I had in a church in North Carolina, the church where I first met Bob Gray.

Bob Gray came one night in his army uniform with a number of soldiers from a nearby camp. Since there was no place for them to sit, they were put in the choir loft. The building was packed and jammed.

Before I preached, I said, "I would like to have a testimony from one of these men on the platform," and I pointed to a man with a little mustache standing on the front row in uniform. I said, "You, sir." He stood up, scared to death.

I said, "Give your testimony. Are you saved?"

"Yes sir."

I said, "Give your testimony."

He said something—I didn't know what he said. That was Bob Gray. (Before that night he had never preached a sermon; he hadn't announced any call; he was in the service of the country.)



After Bob Gray gave his testimony that night, God called him to preach and sent him out into the service of Christ.

It was in that meeting, in that city, that we had such a great service on Sunday morning. We had gone through five nights in that revival with little happening. The crowds were fair, but we prayed much. We waited on God. We asked for His direction in our lives.

Sunday morning I said, "Pastor, would you mind bringing the whole Sunday school in the church auditorium—everyone except little babes in the nursery?"

He said, "No, I wouldn't mind. We'll bring them in."

They had 1,506 people in Sunday school. We brought them all into the auditorium, packed it, balcony and all.

I stood up and preached a very simple message that Sunday morning for about twenty-five minutes. I gave the Gospel. I talked of the death of Christ on the cross. I talked of salvation and how to be saved.

After the message, I gave the invitation. People started coming down the aisles. They filled up the choir loft in that Sunday morning hour, during the Sunday school time. The front benches were filled.

At 11:00 the invitation was still going. People were being saved and were being dealt with by the workers at the front. We were having a marvelous time. The pastor was so happy. We welcomed the new converts one by one as they came forward.

At 11:00 o'clock a man walked out the door to one side. He came across the front of the auditorium. He had on a black robe from his shoulders to the ground. He said to me, "I'm here to begin the service."

I said, "Sir, we've been going an hour already. These are converts here."

He said, "I care nothing for that. I'm the choirmaster. I play the organ. I'm here to begin the service now."

He started across the front. I couldn't help it; I just stepped in front of him. "Sir, you can't do that. We're having a revival meeting. People are getting saved, and we are going to stay in this until we finish up."

He headed toward the organ. I stepped in front of him again and said, "Sir, if you don't mind, go back in there and take off your nightgown and come out here and help us win souls."

When I said that, he went into a flame. He stepped back into the choir room. It was filled with choir members who hadn't been to the revival at all. He announced what had happened, tore his robe off and threw it on the floor. They tore their robes off and threw them on the floor in one pile right in the middle of the room, and all walked out.

Well, the whole thing came back to me in a few moments. I felt a little sorry. I said, "I've hurt the pastor." I felt it was a grievous thing I had done, and I would have to apologize to him. But we had a great hour.

That same morning 132 people got saved! It was a beautiful, wonderful hour. The pastor came up to me at the end of the service. I started to say, "Pastor, I want to apologize for what I did."

He said, "Hold everything. Say nothing. Let's stand here and sing the Doxology: 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow.' I've been trying to get rid of that man for three years! And you got rid of him in three minutes! Let's praise the Lord for His blessings on us."

A revival works. It works in two ways. It will stir the hearts of God's people and bring people to the Saviour. But it will also straighten out some problems and correct some things that you can't correct by yourself, but the Holy Spirit's power can do the job.

"O God, stir us to repent of things that are wrong; things that are doubtful; things that mean nothing in our lives."

Get rid of that which is going to hinder, and ask the Lord to make your heart right.

Let us return to the basic things of the Word of God and prayer and soul winning and revival. Let us pray, "O God, send a revival. Let it begin in me."

Keep your heart stirred up. Keep your emotions stirred. Hate sin. Love Christ. Love souls. Love the Word of God. Preach the Gospel, and seek the salvation of others.