

“And He Gave ... For The Perfecting”

“For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministry, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12f). In past articles the gifts have been enumerated which Christ gave when He ascended on high, leading captivity captive. These gifts were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The purpose for those gifts is the subject of the present article. These five gifts were given *“For the perfecting of the saints.”* All the gifts of our Savior named in vs. 11 have the well-being of the saints in mind. Paul assured Timothy that *“every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete; furnished completely unto every good work”* (2 Tim. 3:16f). Peter agreed. *“Seeing his divine power hath granted unto us all things which pertain unto life and godliness ...”* (2 Pet. 1:3). We are made complete in Christ.

“Unto the work of ministering.” This is stated as the second purpose for which the Christ’s gifts were given. The work of ministering involves both physical and spiritual matters. One of the works of ministry would be benevolence: relieving the wants of needy saints. When Paul wrote the Romans, he regretted he could not fulfill his desire to come to them. He explained, *“But now, I say, I go to Jerusalem, ministering unto the saints”* (Rom. 15:25). Paul reminded the Corinthians (which were one of several churches who had aided in this work), *“For the ministration of this service not only filleth up the measure of the wants of the saints, but aboundeth also through much thanksgiving unto God; seeing that through the proof of you by this ministration they glorify God for the obedience of your confession unto the gospel of Christ ...”* (2 Cor. 7:12f). Still, ministry is not confined to the supply of the physical needs of brethren, it also includes the ministry of the gospel to the lost. In Paul’s final letter, Timothy was commanded *“Fulfill thy ministry”* (2 Tim. 4:5). The context indicates that Timothy’s *“ministry”* was his disseminating the word of Christ. Paul had urged him, *“Preach the word, be urgent in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching ... be thou sober in all things, suffer hardships, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill thy ministry”* (2 Tim. 4:2, 5). Surely it is apparent that Timothy’s *“ministry”* was the proclaiming of the gospel. The gifts, in the forms of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, were aimed at stirring saints in the work of ministering, which taught them what they were both to teach and do in whatever *“ministry”* they were active in. Elsewhere, Paul said, *“And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the propor-*

tion of our faith; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry" (Rom. 12:6f).

"Unto the building up of the body of Christ." This is the final object which Christ's gifts were designed to help. The building up of the body of Christ could refer, of course, to adding to the church through evangelism. It can also be used in the sense of edifying or strengthening the church. The word *"building up"* is the same word in the Greek language as that of Acts 20:32 where Paul said the word of Christ's grace was able to build them up. It is very likely that in this Ephesian passage, the latter thought is that which was in the apostle's mind, for later in the passage he uses the same word and says, *"maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love,"* an obvious reference to edification.

Jim McDonald