

given and was exercising His divine prerogatives. Once the creditability of the witness of the apostles had been established, and the canon of the New Testament had been completed, there was not the same necessity for the exercise of the miraculous gifts which gradually became less prominent.

Billy Graham (pp. 135-136) states:

Paul says that the purpose of these spiritual gifts is, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). In other words, God has given each of us a task to do, and supernatural gifts to equip us for it. If we fail to perform this task we face censure at the "judgment seat of Christ." . . .

In 1 Corinthians 12:7, the apostle Paul says the gifts are given "for the common good" so we are not to use them selfishly. Instead, we are to use them to help each other. As Paul says in Philippians 2:3, 4, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

God has also designed the gifts to help "unite" the body of Christ. Just before listing the gifts in Ephesians 4:3-7, the apostle Paul urges us to be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace [a special gift] was given according to the measure of Christ's gift." Notice how Paul emphasizes unity by repeating the word "one".

Thus the gifts of the Spirit should never divide the body of Christ; they should unify it.

Charles V. Carter (pp. 283-285) states:

The purpose of the spiritual gifts in relation to the maturity of the church is treated in a twofold manner by Paul (vv. 12-16). The gifts are declared first as intended for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering, or service for Christ. In the second place, they are designed for the building up of the body of Christ. . . .

When the gifts of the ministry (v. 11) exist as ends in themselves they will defeat their own purpose and the purpose of Christ for them. When they exist for the perfecting of the saints that the church may become an equipped and active agency in the work of Christ they will serve their God-intended purpose.

The gifts of the Spirit extend beyond the professional ministry, such as preaching, praying, pastoral counseling, and teaching, important as these are. Paul indicates that every function of the church requires the gift of the Spirit for