Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Permanence of Love, Part 1
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:8
Code: 1868

We're back to I Corinthians 13 this morning, and we have already discussed verses 1-7 of this wonderful book. We're going to continue to study beginning in verse 8 this morning.

I want to preface our study by saying several things that will impact the next few months. As we come to I Corinthians 13:8, we get into the subject of tongues and the cessation of tongues. As we proceed into chapter 14, we will get even more involved in this subject because it is the theme of that chapter. I am convinced that the Holy Spirit has brought us, even as He did Esther, to the Kingdom for just such a time as this. This is a vital area of information and study that we really need to get a grip on. I want to preface by saying that we're going to have to spend a great deal of time to understand the Word of God relative to this particular issue in the church today, the church in total, not just specifically here at Grace Church. I know some of you have many questions, and we'll be covering them as well.

In order to do that, we have to spend time and be careful about it. It's difficult to evaluate the breadth and the scope of the Charismatic movement any other way than to go carefully through the Word of God that speaks to that issue, and we are endeavoring to do that. Between chapters 13 and 14, and we'll end up in chapter 14 in a matter of a few Sundays, I'm going to give a special series on the problems in the Charismatic movement.

So we're going to try to cover it from a theological viewpoint, an historical viewpoint, as well as a verse-by-verse, biblical viewpoint, the composite of which will be, hopefully, a solid foundation for you to understand what's going on today. If I don't answer all your questions today, be patient. Sooner or later we will, and if we get to the end of the study and feel there are too many unanswered questions, we'll devote a time just to answering questions.

Let's look at I Corinthians 13:8-13. "Love never fails; but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then, face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

My, what a great word! We have loved it, rejoiced in it, reveled in it for many years, we who have known the Lord. It speaks very pointedly to us in the church today on a general scale, and I think that is Paul's major point here. Although we will develop it in relation to the tongues issue, what Paul is really saying here is that love is the only permanent thing.

In our study of chapter 14, we found there are four different features that he deals with in chapter 13. Number one is the prominence of love in verses 1-3. There, he discusses the fact that anything minus love is nothing; love is prominent in every gift and ministry. Secondly, the perfections of love, and in verses 4-7, he discussed all those qualities that make up the portrait of love. Now he comes thirdly, in verses 8-12, to the permanence of love. Chapter 13 then closes out with the preeminence of love.

We find ourselves discussing the permanence of love. Notice his statement that begins verse 8: love never fails. There is the statement that is, basically, the issue for the rest of the chapter. The rest of it comments, modifies and does an exposition on that statement. Love never fails. Love lasts. Did you know that hope will come to an end because hope will be realized? Then there will be no need for hope. Faith will come to an end because faith will be actualized and we'll have no need for faith, because we'll have sight. But love will never come to an end; it is the one thing that goes on forever. The Bible does not say God is hope, or God is faith, but it does say that God is love. Love is as eternal as is God. So love will go on forever.

This is what the Corinthians needed to hear, because they were so busy fracturing the fellowship over the temporary items and forgetting the one thing that was eternal. The Corinthian church existed in a city that was known as the vanity fair of the world, the city of Corinth. In that city, they had one calling by God to represent the Lord Jesus Christ and to be a demonstration of His incomparable character through the lives of that plurality of believers. It was a high calling; it was a calling that could only be fulfilled if they were submissive to His will. The city of Corinth was mastered by materialism, antagonism, competition, selfishness, hatred, and sexual immorality, etcetera. And they were to be salt and light, but they weren't.

As we have studied in the book of I Corinthians, the tragedy of the Corinthian church was that the city of Corinth had salted the church. The spirit of Corinth had permeated the church. It was evangelism in reverse. The Christians there had become carnal, worldly, indulgent, selfish, contentious, vengeful, proud, and compromising. Just about everything that was characteristic of their society had been picked up, even perverting their own spiritual behavior into a pagan kind of religion - twisting spiritual gifts away from the Spirit so that they could operate in the flesh and under the energy of Satan and his hosts.

So Paul's letter to them is a corrective. It's strong, firm, and straightforward. And in the middle of it, like some glorious sunset, the Apostle Paul climaxes his thoughts about their particular need by saying, "Here is the brightest spot of all - love." That was the one great thing that was needed and the one great thing that was absent. There was no self-sacrificial giving or the washing of each other's feet in that church. Rather, the Christians there resented each other, argued with each other, and shut each other out from their private little groups. They sexually violated each other, sued each other, boasted against each other, deprived each other in marriage, divorced each other, perverted the proper place of women within the church meeting, withheld food from the poor at the love feast, turned the Lord's Table into a drunken orgy, offended each other, and fought each other for prominence in the use of their spiritual gifts.

All of those things were evidence of the absence of the one great thing so needed, love. So Paul writes of love. The great statement that he says here in verses 8-12 is that, "You'd better concentrate on what matters, what is eternal, and that's love. Rather than being so involved with spiritual gifts, and so concerned that you get the prominence, and so concerned that you get the showy gifts, and so concerned that you get the chief place of recognition, be concerned about love. Rather than being bitter, antagonistic because your gift isn't what someone else has, and seeking to be vengeful in your jealousy, seek to love. Because love never fails."

Let's look at the terms at the beginning of verse 8, three words in English, three words in Greek. "Love never fails." Love we understand now, because we've defined it. I won't take the time to do that again, but if you need a good definition of love, read verses 4-7. It's right there.

Love never fails. The word 'fail' is an interesting word in the Greek. The common translation of the word is 'to fall.' Literally it means 'to fall to the ground' but its meaning has the finality of something falling into decay. It is used to speak of the petals of a flower that drop to the ground from decay. It could also be translated 'to be abolished.' Perhaps the simplest translation would be love never fails. It never falls, it never drops to the ground in decay. Love is a flower in which there is no decay. And because love is synonymous with God, it can never cease, and in Him there is no such thing as decay.

The word 'never' helps us, because it is a time word. In the Greek it has to do with time. What it really says is this, "Love, at no time, will ever fail." Never. I believe that someday, when we get to Heaven, love will be the only thing left. We won't need teaching anymore because we'll know everything. We won't need preaching anymore because we'll have already responded in obedience to everything. We won't need to have wisdom granted to us or knowledge imparted to us. We won't need anybody to hold us up, or help us, or rebuke us, or exhort us, or encourage us, or pray for us, or do anything for us, because we'll be just like Jesus Christ. The one thing that will remain will be love, and in a dimension we've never dreamed, we'll be totally involved in the character of God's love manifest to each another forever.

So, Paul says to the Corinthians, "You ought to get a grip on what is going to be around forever, and quit quibbling over that which is temporary."

Some people have misunderstood the statement 'love never fails' and you hear it applied in wrong situations. For example, some people think that it means love always succeeds; if you just love, that will do it. It always wins. Well, I don't think that's what Paul is saying. Paul went into a lot of towns and loved a lot of people, but he still got thrown out of almost every one of them. I think maybe the best illustration is the Lord Jesus Christ who loved with an incomparable love, and had the world refuse it, reject it, spurn it, and walk out of His presence into the darkness of a loveless night. That's always been the way it is.

The rich young ruler was granted an occasion to sense and feel and receive the love of Jesus Christ and turned away from it. That must have been a great disappointment to Jesus, but I imagine His greatest disappointment was Judas. He basked in the sunlight of Christ's love for three years and then turned his back on it. This is true in the human realm. Many a husband has turned his back on the love of his wife, and many a wife has turned her back on the love of her husband. Love doesn't always win, in that sense. Not always. But that is not what Paul is saying.

What Paul is saying is, "Love is eternal. Love, as a quality, will go on forever, so we might as well realize that that is where we need to put our emphasis." That's a great word for the church, isn't it? If we could simplify the whole idea of the church it would be this: get everybody to love everybody and you've got it. Because if everybody loves everybody, everybody will minister to everybody, and if everybody ministers to everybody in love, Christ will be visible in the world and we won't be able to stop the flood of unbelieving people coming to find out what's going on. In fact, we could fire all the staff if everyone loved everyone else. I'd be glad! So, Paul is simply saying, "Love is the bottom line in the life of the church."

As we talk about the Charismatic movement, I'm dealing with it from a theological and biblical perspective, not a personal one. Please understand that even though I might not agree with all of the things that are going on today, the emphasis of I Corinthians 13 has to come ringing into our hearts, doesn't it? Our attitude toward folks in the fellowship of Christ, and even to those outside of Christ, is to be one of love. Even though we want to clarify some issues and help them to see some that perhaps they haven't looked at carefully.

In order to make his point here about love being permanent, he contrasts love with three gifts. He makes a very clear contrast to show that the gifts are temporary and love is eternal. Gifts are partial and love is complete. Gifts are elementary and love is mature. Those are the three points. Keep them in mind; we'll cover them today and next time. Gifts are temporary, partial, and elementary. The contrasting thought is that love is eternal.

Let's look at that first thought, that gifts are temporary. This is as far as we'll get; one down, two to go next time. We'll just look at verse 8. "Love never fails; but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away."

Paul says here that three very important gifts are going to cease - prophecy, tongues, and knowledge. They are all for a limited time, in contrast to love. And though love is indispensable in the use of the gifts, it's going to outlast the gifts.

The reason he uses spiritual gifts to contrast love because gifts were the most highly prized thing in the Corinthian church. The Corinthians were proud, self-seeking, and self-centered. They desired prominence, they were spiritual show-offs, they desired to be in the eye of the people. So to them, the gifts were a big deal. They showed off their spirituality by demonstrating their gifts. Well, as it turned out, the gifts that they were demonstrating were, for the most part, fleshly or satanic counterfeits. Nonetheless, this is where they put the emphasis.

It's interesting to remember that in the entire letter of I Corinthians, in sixteen chapters, there is not a single mention of an elder or a leader of that church. Apparently, there wasn't anyone who was leading. They had come to the place where their whole view of church worship was, "We'll just come together and let the Holy Spirit do His thing and let it all happen." Finally, in 14:32, the Apostle Paul cries out, "Please let the spirits of the prophets be subject to the prophets. Let all things be done decently and in order." You can't operate like that; God never intended for the church to be a group of people who get together and do whatever they feel. There has to be structure and order, because God is a God of order.

The Corinthian church had no leadership or order. They had decided to come in and fight to see who could be the most prominent. So Paul says, "These gifts that you have exalted, these independent expressions of so-called spirituality are all just temporary,even the true ones, to say nothing of the false and the counterfeit. However, love will go on forever. Love is the more excellent way." That little phrase at the end of 12:31, "The more excellent way."

Notice the word 'prophecies' there. In the plural there, he's speaking about the result of the gift of prophecy, many prophecies. He says, "Where there are prophecies, they shall be done away." Basically, this was the ability to proclaim God's truth publicly. The gift of prophecy, prophemimeans 'to speak before.' It doesn't mean to speak before in terms of time, but to speak before an audience. The gift of pro phemi was was to speak before people, to proclaim. The purpose of the gift is indicated in I Corinthians 14:3, as we saw when we studied it some months ago. He that prophesies speaks unto men in three ways: edification, exhortation, and consolation. He speaks to build them up, to encourage them to good behavior, and to comfort them in trouble. That is the gift of prophecy.

The second gift that Paul mentions, it is a very important gift, is the gift of knowledge. It's called "the word of knowledge" because it also was a speaking gift, another one that the Corinthians would have celebrated as a public gift. The gift of knowledge was the ability to observe facts, to make observations, and to draw spiritual truth out of the Word of God; to understand. It is the scholar's or teacher's gift, and the Corinthians would use it for prominence and blessing, and had done so. Notice that he says that those two gifts will 'be done away.'

The third gift is the gift of tongues, or languages. We will use those words synonymously so that you will understand that even though tongues is the modern word that is being used, but that the literal meaning of the word is 'a language.' Tongues, we believe, as we tried to substantiate to you in pass studies, was always a known language. We'll cover it even further when we look at I Corinthians 14. So the gift of tongues, or languages, was the ability to speak a foreign language as a sign. God had intended this to be a sign gift with some very specific purposes, which we will discuss in chapter 14.

So Paul is saying that these three very prominent gifts - prophecy, knowledge, and tongues - are going to come to an end. That is clear from this verse. If we didn't know anything else about verse 8, we know this. All three of the gifts will end. That is clear. But the question is: when? That's the question. That's the question I am going to attempt to answer. I know when, I just have to get you all to agree with me. So I'm hopefully going to do that.

Our Pentecostal and Charismatic brothers and sisters tell us that gifts have not yet ceased. So the when, for them, is future. They will cease in the future. Some of them say that these gifts will cease when "the perfect thing" of verse 10 comes, which is still in the future, they tell us. Others say, and I heard a very prominent pastor and Bible teacher say this week ,that all the gifts have already ceased; all of them. They believe that there are no spiritual gifts today; that's the other extreme. Charismatics believe they're all in, this particular person believes they're all out. There are some who say, "Some are in, some are out." Well, which is correct? Let's look at the Bible and find out. It has a way of revealing those kinds of things.

Incidentally, Charismatic people who say that all the gifts are still in effect today often give the following argument. They say, "There isn't one verse in the entire Bible that says tongues have ceased. Since there is no verse that says that tongues have ceased, that settles it for us. They haven't ceased."

Well, they're right about the fact that there isn't a single verse in the Bible that specifically states that tongues have ceased. But do you know what? There isn't a single verse in the Bible that specifically states that God is three in one. Is He? Yes. That's not a very good argument.

To argue that something is true because the Bible doesn't say it, is weak. And to argue that you need a statement in one verse to prove a point is weak, because there are many truths in the Bible that are indicated to us by the totality of Scripture rather than any one given statement. For example, you can't take one single, simple Bible verse and drop it in front of a Jehovah's Witness that says, "Jesus is 100% God and 100% man at the same time in an indivisible oneness." But that is the essence of the God-Man, isn't it? We've got to go all over the place, finding little bits and pieces of the theology of Christ to put together the total portrait. That's not a good argument to use; they should have some other argument if they want to defend that point. Perhaps they do have other arguments. So we have, "They're all in," and, "They're all out," or, "Some are in, some are out."

Let's go to verse 8. We know that all the gifts are going to cease sometime; they're all going to be rendered inoperative. Notice something, right off the bat, that's very important. The Apostle Paul and the Holy Spirit make an immediate distinction between tongues, prophecy, and knowledge. The different Greek words that are used indicate that tongues will cease at a different time than prophecy and knowledge. This is a very important point. There is an indication at the very beginning, as you look at the verse, that they are going to cease, but not at the same time. Let me show you why I say that.

Notice, at the beginning of verse 8, it says that prophecies "shall be done away." Other translations say "shall be rendered inoperative," or "abolished." It's the first verb right after prophecies. Then, at the end of verse 8 it says that knowledge "shall vanish away, be rendered inoperative, be done away, be ended." Those two phrases describing prophecy and knowledge are the same in the Greek. You may not know much Greek, but hang in there. You'll understand the point I'm making.

The Greek verb, for you Greek students, is katargeo. It is the first and the third verb; it is used with prophecy and knowledge, but it is not used with the phrase 'tongues will cease.' That is a totally different verb. When we see that, we know immediately there is a purpose in the mind of the Holy Spirit for making a distinction in those two terms, and we want to understand what it is. Katargeo means 'to be made inoperative.' It is a very, very important thing for us to understand. To be made inoperative. Prophecy will be done away, knowledge will be done away, and incidentally, they are translated differently in English, but they are the same in Greek. But the word used with tongues in the middle of the verse, "Tongues, they shall cease," is a totally different word. It is the word pauo. That word means 'to stop.' That's it.

So, the first interesting distinction that is made in verse 8 is the distinction between two kinds of Greek words. It gives us a little different feeling for what the Spirit of God is saying about prophecy and knowledge, and what He's saying about tongues. I would just add this.

The second thing is this: they are different voices. Some of you may have to reach way back for this, but you'll remember there are two kinds of voice: active and passive. The first and the third verb,

katargeo, with prophecy and knowledge, is the passive verb. My English teacher told me that when a passive verb is in a sentence, the subject receives the action. So something is acting upon the subject to stop it. I'll clarify; it is a passive. "Where there are prophecies, they shall be done away." In other words, something is going to come and stop prophecy. It's a passive verb. Prophecy will be acted upon by some other force to stop it. It's the same in knowledge. Knowledge shall be acted upon by some other force to stop it. We even know what it is.

Look at verse 9. "We know in part," that's the knowledge, "We prophesy in part," that's the prophecy, "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." There is the same word katargeoagain. What is it that's going to come and stop prophecy and knowledge? The perfect thing. It says it. "When that which is perfect comes, it will stop knowledge and prophecy." We know what it is; it's the perfect thing. What is the perfect thing? Some people say it's the Bible when it was finished. Some people say it's the maturing of the church, some say it's the rapture, some say it's the second coming, some say it's the end of the millennium. Next week, we're going to find out which because I can't get into that, I don't have time. I have to get this done before the rapture, because then you'll know everything and you won't need me!

Now then, I Corinthians 13. It's very interesting to notice that only prophecy and knowledge appear in verse 9, tongues don't appear any more, because only prophecy and knowledge are stopped by the perfect thing. Notice the word relative to tongues; tongues shall cease. That is not a passive. In fact, it the verb is an intransitive verb, it couldn't even be a passive, there is no way.

What we're talking about is tongues will stop, and it isn't active either. In the Greek, it is a middle voice, and the Greek middle is reflexive. In English, we would say this. For active, "I hit the ball," and for passive, "The ball hit me." If we had a middle voice, we would say, "I hit myself." It's reflexive. In the Greek, it gives an emphasis to the active; it really says this, "Tongues will stop by themselves." That's the meaning that the middle in Greek. Tongues will stop by themselves; intense action of the subject. In fact, the Greek Old Testament, which is known as the Septuagint, uses the middle form of pauo15 times, and every time, it means to complete, to stop, to be finished, to be accomplished, to come to an end. It has a finality to it. It means that's it; it's over, complete, accomplished, ended, spent, done. And the reflexive middle voice gives it the idea that it ends all by itself. That's it.

The gifts of prophecy and knowledge, then, are going to continue on until the perfect thing comes and stops them. The gift of tongues is going to stop all by itself. That's the word here when we look at the original Greek. But it's important that we go a step further.

If tongues are going to stop by themselves, the next question is when? Believe me, I don't think that's hard to answer. I wish I had the time to spend going over history. But let me just briefly help you with that. When will they stop? I believe, and I say this having spent seven years studying this question and reading practically all sides of the issue that are in print (I'm not saying that to impress you, I'm

saying it so you'll understand that I tried to be fair and cover all the ground). I say this after spending many hours discussing it with Charismatics and trying to evaluate it from their perspective, and I am convinced, beyond all reasonable doubt, that tongues ceased in the Apostolic Age, that they ceased 1,900 years ago. According to the rendering of pauoand its consistency in the Old and New Testaments, it means that once they stopped, they stopped for good. I want to help to support that, because I can't just tell you that and pronounce the benediction, so I'll do what I can to support it.

It's supportable many, many ways, but I'll just give you a few things that will help. Number one, I believe that tongues was a miracle gift and the miracle age has ended. Now, we have discussed this in the past, and if you're not clear about miracles, get the tapes on the gifts of miracles and healings. I'm not saying that God doesn't do wonderful things. I'm not saying that God doesn't heal. I'm not saying that God doesn't act providentially to put together things that would be humanly impossible. However, I am saying that there is a distinction in God's redemptive history, in periods of time that were miracles ages. During these times, miracles were for the specific purpose of confirming God's Word.

It is also interesting to me that in all of redemptive history, there are only three basic periods of miracles: the period of Moses to Joshua, the period of Elijah and Elisha, and the period of Christ and the Apostles. Each of those periods of miracles covered about 70 years periods, each of them. The periods in between are vast, vast eras, sometimes 500 to 1,000 years where miracles either did not happen at all or happened in such single infrequency that in no way could they be considered to be the norm. That has been, and continues to be, God's standard. It even says that the miracles that occurred in the time of Christ and the apostles were simply foretastes of "the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:5). The "age to come" refers to the Kingdom, not the Church Age.

So, at certain intervals in God's redemptive history, He sort of cut a little hole in the coming Kingdom and let some of its character leak out. There were little tastes of the Kingdom. But it was never God's intention to let miracles run riot throughout all of redemptive history, not at all.

You'll find, for example, the last recorded miracle in the New Testament occurred around 58 A.D., and after that, clear to 96 A.D., when John finished Revelation, there is no record of any single miracle ever happening. The miracle gifts, like tongues and healing, are mentioned only in the oldest book of I Corinthians. When you get into the gifts that are discussed in later books like Ephesians and Romans, there is absolutely no mention of these gifts.

So God, in His wonderful design, had a intention and a purpose for miracles. They were a part of a miracle age confirming His Word. They were of calling Israel and offering the Kingdom to Israel and giving them a taste of the elements of the Kingdom: the miracle of the powers of the age to come, and letting them sample the Kingdom. This is what the writer of Hebrews was talking about when he said, "When you have turned your back on the Kingdom which you have sampled, there isn't any

hope for you. It's impossible for you to be renewed again to repentance once you have tasted of the powers of the age to come and turned your back to those." Once God said, "You have turned your back," and God turned from Israel to the Gentiles, at that point, the purpose of those miracles as a sign to Israel had ended. That's important for us to understand.

Let me encourage you to turn to Hebrews 2 so we can support some of that thought with a text that is vital to our thinking. The writer of Hebrews was writing to Jewish people who were on the fence. They had come to a head knowledge of Christ and were deeply considering whether or not they would come to Christ. In other words, they were riding the fence. So he says to them, and identifies with them as brothers by using the word 'we', "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?"

Now the whole story of salvation was articulated first by Christ. "But it was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him [the Apostles confirmed it], God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit."

Notice that the writer of Hebrews uses the past tense verb in verse 3 when he says that the Gospel "was confirmed." The Gospel had already been confirmed; it had already been confirmed by signs, wonders, diverse miracles, and gifts of the Spirit. Notice, there were certain signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts that were strictly for the confirming of the Gospel, to prove it was divine, to attend it with miracles so they would know it was from God. So he says that 'was confirmed.'

It's interesting to me that he doesn't say the Gospel, or the doctrines of salvation, "Which are being confirmed to us by signs, wonders, and miracles." Even by the time of the writing of Hebrews, as early as 67 or 68 A.D., even by this time, the writer of Hebrews looks at these miracles as something in the past. "Was confirmed, had already been." It is very important that we see that even the New Testament writers who wrote later see this whole area of sign and miracle as something in the past.

Don't say that I don't believe that God is a God of miracles. I believe that God can do whatever He wants to do, and I'm excited to see Him do it! I'm just saying that when you hear the constant dialogue about one pile of miracles after another, it just doesn't fit the biblical pattern because we're not in the Kingdom.

I would add a second thought. Miracles, and particularly the miracle of tongues, was a judicial sign to Israel because of Israel's unbelief. In I Corinthians 14:21, it says, "In the law," and the law there has general reference to God's Word and a specific quotation out of Isaiah, "With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people." The prophecy was to Israel; God was saying, "Israel, I have spoken to you in clear words, but you haven't listened to My clear words. So, as a sign confirming your unbelief, I will begin to speak to you in a language you won't be able to understand." The gift of tongues was part of God's judicial act of saying to Israel that He was turning aside from

them to the church. He had offered them the Kingdom, but they had refused it. They had refused and Messiah. So, as a judicial sign of Israel's covenant violation, God spoke to His people with other tongues and other lips. We'll discuss this point in great detail when we look at I Corinthians 14.

Incidentally, it says in I Corinthians 14:22, Paul says, "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." The gift of tongues was never intended for Christians; it was intended as a judicial sign to Israel. He's saying this, "If in fact God's judgment had already fallen on Israel, the gift of tongues would have no significance at all." Because it was a warning of God's judicial act against them. That act against them came in A.D. 70 when Titus Vespasian, the Roman conqueror, swept down and destroyed both the city of Jerusalem and the temple and smashed the walls. At that point, Judaism, for all intents and purposes, came to an end. And the gift of tongues, which was a sign to unbelieving Israel of God's act against them in judgment on their unbelief, had come to an end. It was no longer needed.

Another reason I believe speaking in tongues has faded is because it was inferior to the gift of prophecy. Listen, tongues did have the ability to edify when they were interpreted. That's why, in I Corinthians 14:5, Paul said to always interpret, because when tongues were interpreted, they would have some edifying capacity. Uninterrupted, tongues were a sign against Israel; but in order to give it some meaning in the church, they had to be interpreted to give them some edifying quality. But that was not the main purpose; it's purpose was relative to Israel. Once Israel had been judged, the purpose of tongues as a judicial sign ceased. I've heard people say, "It still remains as an edifying thing." Well, that is absolutely unnecessary, because there is something that is far superior to tongues in edifying.

I Corinthians 14:1 says, "Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that you may prophesy." What is superior, then, to tongues, as an expression of edification? Prophecy.

In fact, the entire of chapter 14 is to prove the superiority of prophecy to tongues. Verses 1-12 say that the gift of tongues is an inferior means of communication. Verses 13-19 say that tongues is an inferior method of praise. Verses 20-25 say that tongues is an inferior method of evangelism. The entire chapter is to prove it is inferior in communicating, inferior in praise, inferior in evangelism. That's why he says, "I had rather speak five words with my understanding than ten thousand words in an unknown language." That's why he says, "Seek to prophesy." It is inferior and once its judicial purpose relative to Israel, and its sign element passed, there is no reason to exalt the gift because it has no continuing edifying purpose that can't be better done by prophecy or preaching. That's the point of chapter 14.

The fourth reason why I believe that the gift of tongues has ceased is that speaking in tongues is rendered useless when the New Testament was completed. Another characteristic of the gift of tongues was that when a person spoke in tongues and had it interpreted, it was a direct revelation

from God. Well, has direct revelation from God ceased? Yes, it has! Is there any more to the Scripture than what we now have? No! In fact, at the end of the last page of the last book of the Bible, the Apostle John wrote, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." So tongues, as a revelatory source, has ceased to have any meaning. Even prophecy and knowledge and wisdom, as revelatory gifts, in their revelatory sense, ceased, although they continue in another aspect, which we'll see next time. It was for the infancy of the church, when God was giving revelations before the revelation was complete.

Hebrews 1:1-2 says, "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." In these last days, we have been given the Word of the Son. That's it, folks. It doesn't say, "And shall in the future speak to us by the Charismatics, or through the church." No. In the last days, the Son's Word is the Gospel and it is the New Testament.

The fifth reason that I believe speaking in tongues has ceased is because it is mentioned only in the earliest books. It's so interesting to me that I Corinthians is the only epistle where the gift of tongues even appears, and there are many others. Paul wrote at least 12 other epistles and never even mentioned it. Peter never mentioned it; James never mentioned it; John never mentioned it; and Jude never mentioned it. The gift of tongues is gone, it's disappeared. Even though it has always been the mystical dream throughout history that God would give a private revelation of Himself to each individual, it hasn't happened. God gave His Word and then authenticated His Word. This is the faith, once for all delivered to the saints. The case, once decided, is never re-opened. Revelation has ended, beloved. Tongues as a revelatory, sign, edifying gift has ceased to have any function.

Sixth, and here I want to spend a few minutes, because this is vital. Now, this is important. The Bible says that tongues will cease, right? We know it says that, we can't even argue. When did it cease? We have looked at all those points I've given you, and I could have given that many more. But the next question is, "Has it ever ceased?" Because if it ever has ceased, that proves the case, right? Because the term pauohas a finality. Has it ever ceased? That's the sixth point. Speaking in tongues did cease historically.

Most interesting to me is that the first revival of tongues within the confines of the evangelical church of Jesus Christ since the apostolic age was in 1901. Where has it been for 1,800 years? It doesn't say in I Corinthians 13:8 that tongues will cease and then start up again. It says it will stop of itself, and it has a finality of accomplishment in that term. It is done. It's purpose is over with. It will stop. That's final. It ceases, and it has ceased.

In fact, if you study the history of the early church fathers, for example, the apostolic fathers were the church leaders who lived immediately after the apostolic age. Do you know what is so interesting about them? Cleon Rogers says, "It is significant that the gift of tongues is nowhere alluded to, hinted

at, or even found in any writings of the Post-Apostolic Fathers." It's the first generation after the early church and they don't mention it.

Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the Corinthians in 95 A.D. (and that's close to the New Testament age, because some believe that John wrote Revelation in 96 A.D.) He wrote, discussing all of their spiritual problems and he didn't even mention tongues, because apparently it had ceased. So when the true gift ceased, their abuse of it ceased. The gift of tongues, then, wasn't even an issue by A.D. 95.

Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165) was a great church father who traveled throughout the churches and wrote many things defending Christianity, but he never mentioned tongues. He even made lists of spiritual gifts that do not include the gift of tongues.

Origen (A.D. 185-253) was a widely-read scholar without equal in the minds of some. In all of the voluminous writings, which are available, there is no mention of tongues. And in his apologetic against Celsus, he explicitly argues that the signs of the Apostolic Age were temporary, and that no contemporary Christian exercises any of the ancient gifts.

Chrysostom (A.D. 347-407) was perhaps the greatest of all the ancient Christian writers. In his Homilies on I Corinthians, he makes the following comment on chapter 12: "This whole place is very obscure; but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur, but now no longer take place." Chrysostom says that these things don't even exist. "We can't define them; we don't understand what they are."

St. Augustine (A.D. 354-430) made the following comment on Acts 2:4, which discusses Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, and tongues: "In the earliest times, 'The Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spake with tongues.' These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit, that thing was done for a betokening, and it passed away."

So, the greatest theologians of the ancient church considered the gift of tongues a remote practice. By the fourth century they didn't even understand what it was anymore.

During all that period of the early church, there were only two people who spoke in tongues, that we know about, in the church. One was Montanus, and he announced to everyone that he was the Holy Spirit. He was a pagan priest who had been converted to Christianity; he was accompanied by two female priestesses, who also spoke in ecstatic speech. He was thrown out of the church as a heretic. He tried to propagate tongues by saying that this was the end of the age; it's exactly the same thing we hear today. Montanus was branded a heretic, believed that Christ was soon going to come to Phrygia set up the Kingdom with headquarters in his home town. The only other occasion of tongues was a man named Tertullian, and he was a disciple of Montanus.

I will add that there were other occasions of tongues during those periods, and they are with the priestesses at Delphi in pagan religions, and with other witch doctors, and what are called seers. But there were none at all in Christianity. The next time you see anything about it after Montanus, who was in the second century, are the Cevenol priests around 1685. They believed that they had the gift of ecstatic utterance. They were a weird group in France, and believed their little children got the French dialect in ecstatic speech. They pulled night raids and military invasions and so forth. They were thrown out of any Christian consideration because all their prophecies went unfulfilled and they were so militant. They were not mainline in the church.

Then there were the Jansenists, a group of Roman Catholic reformers, who were anti-Reformation. About 1731, they held night meetings at their leader's tomb, during which they supposedly spoke in ecstatic languages. I wouldn't doubt it.

Then there were the Shakers. The Shakers were the followers of Mother Ann Lee, who lived from 1736-1784. She regarded herself as the female equivalent of Jesus Christ. Jesus was God in the male body, she was God in a female body. She founded the Shaker community in Troy, New York, and claimed that she had received a revelation from God that sexual intercourse was corrupt, even inside of marriage. To mortify the flesh and to resist temptation along this line, she instituted the practice of men and women dancing together naked while they spoke in tongues.

The next group was Irvingites. About 1830, Edward Irving started a little group in London. Their revelations contradicted Scripture, their prophecies went unfulfilled, their supposed healings were followed by death, and there were rumors of immorality.

Now, all of these were outside the church, offbeat. The first time it ever became mainline was in 1901 at Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas. Agnes Ozman received what she called "the baptism of the Holy Spirit" accompanied by speaking in tongues. The practice became part of the Holiness Movement of the church in America. In 1906, speaking in tongues came to Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California.

Out of that grew the mainline Pentecostal denominations that many of our brothers and sisters in Christ are a part of today. They do believe the Word of God and preach the Word of God, and for that we praise Him. But this movement within mainline Christianity didn't begin until the start of this century. In 1960, in Van Nuys, California, the modern Charismatic movement (which is tongues outside of mainline Pentecostal denominations) began.

Now, I pointed all of this out to show you that this is not something that has gone on throughout history. The Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 13:8, said that the gift of tongues would cease. Well, it did cease! And there's no reason to believe that it has come back again.

People always say to me, "John, if the gift of tongues hasn't come back again, what is it that we're seeing today? How do you explain it?" Well, I'll answer that question in our next lesson.

Let me say this in closing. I have some dear friends who speak in tongues, and they will continue to be my friends. I will always love them. In fact, I have less of a problem with them speaking in tongues than I do with gossiping that goes on in a language that everybody understands. But God has called me to teach His Word, and I have to teach it the way it is. I want them and you and all of us to understand that I hear the rest of I Corinthians 13 telling me to love, but love must be exercised within the confines of the truth, and so do you. Let's pray.

Our Father, we do thank You for our brothers and sisters who are loving You, and who are reaching out and winning many to you. We just praise You for them. If we can be a little bit of a help to clear the air and clarify some issues in the Word on this subject, we will be very grateful, because this is Your Word and we need to understand it for Your glory. Thank You for our fellowship this morning. Use us this day. Thank You for every life here. We pray that we will preach the truth in love, and we'll praise You for what it does. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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