

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 chapter 13 this morning. And we have already discussed the first seven verses in our previous study of this wonderful book of 1 Corinthians, and we're going to continue to study 1 Corinthians beginning in verse 8 this morning. Now, I want to preface our study by saying several things that are going to have impact on the next few months. As we come to 1 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.

And 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 because this is a vital area of information and study that we really need to get a grip on. And 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...in the church in total, I should say today, not just specifically here at Grace Church. But I know some of you have many questions. We'll be covering them as well.

In order to do that, we have to spend time to 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. So we are endeavoring to do that. Between the 13th and 14th chapter...and we'll end up in 13 in just 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, hopefully, will be a solid foundation for you to understand what's going on today. If I don't answer all your questions today, be patient because sooner or later we will. And if we get to the end of the study and we feel there are so many questions, we'll devote a time just to answering questions.

Now, let's go to the 13th chapter and look at verse 8. "Love never faileth; 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 abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

My, what a great word. And we have loved it and rejoiced in it and reveled in it for many years, we who have known the Lord. It speaks to us very pointedly 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 really is saying here is that love is the only permanent thing.

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

Now, we find ourselves, then, discussing the permanence of love. Notice his statement that begins verse 8. “Love never fails.” And there is the statement that is, basically, the issue for the rest of the chapter. And 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 will have sight. But love will never come to an end; it is the one thing that goes on forever. The Bible doesn't say God is hope and the Bible doesn't say God is faith. But the Bible says what? God is love, and love is as eternal as is God. So love will go on forever.

And 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, and that calling was to represent the Lord Jesus Christ, 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, et cetera. And they were to be salt and they were to be light. But they weren’t. And as we have studied in the book of I Corinthians, the tragedy 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, 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.

And so Paul's letter to them is a corrective. It's strong and it's 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, "And here is the brightest spot of all, love." That was the one great thing that is needed, the one great thing that is absent. There was no self-sacrificial giving or the washing of each other's feet in that place, not in that church.

Rather, the Christians there resented each other, they argued with each other, they and shut each other out from their private little groups. They sexually violated each other, they sued each other, they boasted against each other. They deprived each other in marriage, they divorced each other, they perverted the proper place of women within the church meeting. They withheld food from the poor at the love feast. They turned the Lord's Table into a drunken orgy, and they offended each other, and fought each other for prominence in the use of their spiritual gifts.

And all of those things were evidence of the absence of the one great thing so needed, love. And so Paul writes of love. And the great statement that he says here in verses 8 to 12 is that, "You'd better concentrate on what matters, what is eternal, and that is 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 and the chief recognition, be concerned about love. Rather than being bitter, antagonistic because your gift isn't what someone else has, and seek 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. Three words in English, three words in Greek. "Love never fails." Love we understand now, because we've defined it. And 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," to literally "fall to the ground." But its meaning has the finality of to fall into decay.

It is used to speak of a flower that decays and from which the petals drop to the ground. It could also be translated "be abolished." Love will never be abolished. Perhaps the simplest translation would be love never fails, love never falls, love never drops to the ground in decay. Love is a flower in which there is no decay. Love can never cease because it's synonymous with God, it can never cease. And in Him there is no such thing as decay.

The word "never" helps us, because in the Greek it's a time word and it has to do with time. And what it really says is "Love, at no time, will ever fail." Never. Someday, in fact...I think when we get to Heaven someday, 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 wisdom to be granted. We won't need any more knowledge to be 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. But 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. And so he says to the Corinthians, "You ought to get a grip on what is going to be around forever, and quit quibbling over the stuff that's temporary."

Some people have misunderstood the statement 'love never fails' and you hear it applied in wrong situations. For example, people think...some people think that it means love always succeeds, that if you just love, that will do it. Love 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, and got thrown out of almost every one of them. But I think maybe the best illustration is the Lord Jesus Christ who loved with an incomparable love, and had the world refuse His love, reject His love, spurn His love, walk out of His presence into the darkness of a loveless night. And 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. It must have been a great disappointment to Jesus. I imagine His greatest disappointment of all to Him was Judas, who basked in the sunlight of Christ's love for three years and then turned his back on it. And there's been many in the human realm. Many a husband who's loved his wife and his wife has turned her back on his love, and many a wife who has loved her husband and he had done the same. 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," and love, as a quality, will go on forever. And so we might as well realize that there is where we need to put our emphasis. That's a great word for the church, isn't it? It's a great word. You know, if we could simplify the whole idea of the church, it would be this.

Just 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 everybody loved everybody. I'd be glad. So, Paul is simply saying, "Love is the bottom line in the life of the church."

And you know, as we talk about the Charismatic movement, we're dealing with it from a theological and biblical perspective, not a personal one. And 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? That our attitude toward folks who are in the fellowship of Christ, and even folks who are 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.

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

Let's look at that first thought, that gifts are temporary. And this is all the further we're going to get. One down and two to go next time. We'll just look at verse 8. "Love never faileth; whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." Now, he says three very important things here 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.

Now, the reason he uses gifts for his contrast is because this is the most highly prized thing in the Corinthian church. The Corinthians were proud. They were self-seeking, self-centered. They desired prominence. They desired...they were spiritual show offs; they desired to be in the eye of the people. And so the gifts, to them, were the big deal. If you could just get up and show off your spirituality by demonstrating your gift. Well, as it turned out, the gifts that they were demonstrating were, for the most part, fleshly or satanic counterfeits. But, nonetheless, this is where they put the emphasis.

In fact, it's most interesting, I think, to remember that in the entire letter to I Corinthians, 16 chapters, there is not a single mention of an elder or a leader of that church. Apparently, there wasn't anybody who was leading. And 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."

And, finally, in the 14th chapter, the apostle Paul cries out and says, "Please let the spirits of the prophets be subject to the prophets. Let all things be done – " what? " – 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 everybody do whatever they felt. Should be structure and order. God is a God of order.

And so, in Corinth, there was no leadership; there was no order. And they had decided that you just come in and it's a fight to see who can be the most prominent. And 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. But love will go on forever. Love is the more excellent way." That little phrase at the end of chapter 12, verse 31, "The more excellent way."

Notice the word "prophecies" in the plural there. He's speaking about the result of the gift of prophecy, many prophecies. And he says, "Whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away." Now this

word is, basically, the ability to proclaim God's truth publicly. The gift of prophecy, *prophemi* means "to speak before." It doesn't mean to speak before in terms of time, but to speak before an audience. The gift of *prophemi* was to speak before people, to proclaim.

And the purpose of the gift is indicated in chapter 14, verse 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. Now, that is the gift of prophecy.

The second gift that he mentions, and a very important gift at the end of verse 8, is the gift of knowledge. It's called "the word of knowledge" because it also was a speaking gift, another one the Corinthians would have celebrated as a public gift. And the gift of knowledge was the ability to observe facts and make observations, to draw spiritual truth out of the Word of God, to understand. It would be the scholar's or teacher's gift, and they would use it for prominence and blessing, and had done so. Now, notice that he says that those two gifts will 'be done away.'

And then there's a third one, and that is the gift is the gift of tongues or languages. And we will use those words synonymously so that you will understand that tongues in the modern word that is being used, but that the real meaning of the word is "a language." And tongues, we believe, as we tried to substantiate to you in past studies, was always a known language. And we'll cover it even further in the 14th chapter. 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 the 14th chapter.

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

Now, our Pentecostal and Charismatic brothers and sisters tell us that gifts have never ceased yet, so the when is future, and they will cease in the future. And some of them say it will occur when "the perfect thing" comes that is mentioned in verse 10. And that's still in the future, they tell us. Others say, and I heard this this week. A very prominent pastor and Bible teacher said that "all the gifts have already ceased, all of them. There are no spiritual gifts today." That's the other extreme.

The Charismatics, they're all in; this particular person believes they're all out. And then there are some who say, "Some are in and some are out." Which is correct? Well, let's look at the Bible and find out because it has a way of revealing those kinds of things. Incidentally, I might add that Charismatic people who say they're all in often give this argument. They say, "There's not one verse

in the Bible that says tongues have ceased. And since there's not one verse in the Bible that says that tongues have ceased, that settles it for us. They haven't."

They're right about the fact that not one verse says that. That's true. But do you want to hear something interesting? There is not one verse in the Bible that says 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 things 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 percent God, 100 percent man at the same time in an indivisible oneness." But that is the essence of the God-Man, isn't it? But 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. So that's not a good argument to use. They should have some other argument if they want to defend that point and perhaps they do have other arguments. So we have on the one hand, "They're all in; they're all out; some in, some out."

Well, let's go into verse 8. We know they're all going to cease sometime; they're all going to be rendered inoperative. Now, I want to notice...have you notice one thing, right off the bat, that's very important. The apostle Paul and the Holy Spirit make an immediate distinction between tongues and prophecy and knowledge. And they indicate here, the words that are used, that tongues will cease at a different time than prophecy and knowledge, very important point. There is a clear indication at the very beginning, as you look at the verse, that they are going to cease, but not at the same time. And I'll show you why I say that.

Notice the phrase, "They shall be done away." With prophecies, it says "They shall be done away." Or "they shall be rendered inoperative," or "they shall be abolished," or whatever your version says. It's the first verb right after prophecies. Then, the last one in verse 8, "whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away." Vanished away, be rendered inoperative, be done away, be ended or whatever your Bible says. Those two, the one on prophecy and knowledge, are the same in the Greek. Now, don't get lost. You may not know much Greek, but hang in there and you'll understand the point I'm making.

The Greek verb, for you Greek students, is *katarge*. It is the first and the third verb. It is used with prophecy and knowledge; it is not the verb used with the word "tongues will cease." That's a totally different verb. Now, when we see that, we know immediately that there is a purpose in the mind of the Holy Spirit for making a distinction in those terms, and we want to understand what it is.

Katarge 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; they're 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's the word *pau*, P-A-U-O, if you wanted an English rendering. And that word means “to stop.” That's it, “to stop.”

So, the first distinction that is very interesting in the verse is the distinction between two kinds of Greek words, which 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. And I would just add this. The second thing is that they are different voices. Now, voice in the English...you have to reach way back now, some of you. You remember there's two kinds of voice. What are they? Active and passive, okay.

The first and the third verb, *katarge*, with prophecy and knowledge, are passive. They're passive verbs. Now, my English teacher told me that when a passive verb is in a subject, the subject...or in a sentence, the subject what? Receives the action. So something is acting upon the subject to stop it.

Now, notice again, and I'll clarify. It is a passive. “Where there be 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. Now, we even know what it is.

Look at verse 9. “We know in part,” that's the knowledge; “We prophesy in part,” that's prophecy. “But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” And there's the same word, *katarge*, again. What is it that's going to come and stop prophecy and stop knowledge? The perfect thing, right. It says it. “When that which is perfect comes, it will stop knowledge and prophecy.”

So we know what it is; it's the perfect thing. Now, 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, see.

All right, I Corinthians 13. Now, we know then that prophecy...and it's very interesting to notice that only prophecy and knowledge appear in verse 9 and tongues don't appear anymore, because only prophecy and knowledge are stopped by the perfect thing, see. But notice the word relative to tongues. Tongues shall cease. That is not a passive. In fact, the verb is an intransitive verb. It couldn't even be a passive. It couldn't...there's is no way. What you're talking about is tongues shall stop. And it isn't active either. It is, in the Greek, a middle voice, and the Greek middle is reflexive.

In English, we would say this. Active, "I hit the ball." Passive, "The ball hit me." If we had a middle voice it would be this. "I hit myself." It's reflexive. And 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 this verb, *pau* 15 times. And every time, it means to complete, to stop, to be finished, to be accomplished, to come to an end. It has a...it's a finality. It means that's it; it's over, it's ended, it's complete, it's accomplished, it's spent, it's done. And the middle gives it the reflexive all by itself. It ends. That's it.

So prophecy and knowledge are going to go on until the perfect thing comes and stops them, and tongues are going to stop by themselves. That's the word here when we look at the original. Now, it's important then that we go a step further. Tongues are going to stop by themselves. The next question is what? When? Believe me; I don't think that's hard to answer. And I wish I had the time to spend just an hour going over history and all kinds of...let me just briefly help you with that. When will they stop?

I believe, and I say this having spent about seven years studying this and still convinced, and having read all sides of the issue practically in print. And I'm not saying that to impress you. I'm saying it so you'll understand that I tried to cover the ground and be fair. I say this after spending many hours discussing it with people who are Charismatics and trying to evaluate it, and being in their presence and all the things that I could possibly do.

I am convinced, in my mind, beyond reasonable doubt, that tongues ceased in the Apostolic Age, that they have ceased 1,900 years ago. And according to the rendering of *pau* and its consistency in the New Testament and the Old Testament, it means that once they stopped, they stopped for good. Now I want to help to support that, because I can't just tell you that and pronounce the benediction. So I want to do what I can to support it.

It's supportable many, many ways. I'll just give you a few things that will help. Number one, the reason I believe this to be true is because tongues was a miracle gift and the miracle age has ended. 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 and so forth, you get the previous tapes, say on the gifts of miracles or healing or any of those things.

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...that humanly would be impossible. But I am saying that there is a distinction in God's redemptive history, in periods of time that were miracle ages, in which God, for a specific purpose, was confirming His Word.

It also was interesting to me to notice 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 Christ and the apostles. Each of those periods of miracles covered approximately 70-year periods, each of them. And the periods in between are vast, vast eras, sometimes 500 to 1,000 years where miracles just did not happen or happened in such single infrequency, one here and 300 years later one here, that no way could they be considered to be the norm. That has been, and continuing to be, God's standard.

And it even says that the miracles that occurred...listen to this...in the time of Christ and the apostles were simply tastes or foretastes of "the powers of the age to come," Hebrews 6:5. And the "age to come" was not church age. It was what? Well, it was the kingdom. And so, what happened was 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, and there were little tastes of the kingdom. But it was never God's intention to just run miracles riot through all of redemptive history, not at all.

And you'll find, for example, in the New Testament, that the last recorded miracle 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. And the miracle gifts, like tongues and healing and those things are mentioned only in the oldest book, I Corinthians. And when you get into Ephesians where the gifts that are discussed and Romans where the gifts are discussed, which were written later, they make absolutely no mention of these gifts.

So God, in His wonderful design, had a intention and a purpose for the miracles. And they were a part of a miracle age of confirming His Word, 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. And that's why, in Hebrews 6, He says, "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. You have tasted of the powers of the age to come and turned your back to those."

And once God had said, "You have turned your back," and God turned from Israel to the Gentiles, the purpose of those miracles as a sign to Israel had ended. And it's important that we understand some of these things. I would just encourage you to turn with me for a minute to Hebrews 2, and support something of that thought with a text that is very, very vital to our thinking. It says this, "How shall we escape?"

And the writer of Hebrews here is writing to people who are on the fence. They're Jewish people who have come to a head knowledge of Christ and are in deep considering as to whether or not they ought to come to Christ and they're riding the fence. And he says to them, "How will you escape," or we escape. And he collectively identifies himself with his Hebrew brothers in the "we." "If we neglect

so great salvation,” now notice, “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.” And who were they? They were the apostles who heard Christ, okay. So it was confirmed by the apostles. How? “God bearing witness with signs, wonders, diverse miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.” Now, notice the writer of Hebrews uses the past tense verb in verse 3, “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 and wonders and 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. Most interesting. This is as early as 67 or 68.

Even by this time, the writer of Hebrews looks at the miracles as something in the past. “Was confirmed, had already been.” Very important that even...that we see that even the New Testament writers who wrote later see this whole area of sign and miracle as something the past. Now, don’t say 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.

And I would add a second thought. Miracles, and particularly the miracle of tongues, was a judicial sign to Israel because of Israel’s unbelief. Look at I Corinthians 14, verse 21. In 1 Corinthians 14, verse 21, it says, “In the law.” And, of course, the law there has general reference to God’s Word and specific quotation out of Isaiah, “With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak to this people.”

Now, the prophecy was to Israel. And God was saying, “Israel, I have spoken to you in clear words, and you have never listened to My clear words. So, as a sign confirming your unbelief, I will begin to speak with you in a language you won’t be able to understand.” The gift of tongues, beloved, was part of God’s judicial act of saying to Israel, “I turn aside from you to the church.”

He had offered them the kingdom. They had refused the kingdom, they had refused the king, they had executed the Messiah. And as a judicial sign, He spoke to His people with other tongues and other lips, the sign of Israel’s violation of the covenant. And we’ll get into that in great detail in the 14th chapter.

Now, listen people. If that is true that tongues had a primary significance to Israel...and, incidentally, verse 22 says, “It is not a sign to them that believe, but to them that believe not.” It never was intended for Christians. It was intended as a judicial sign to Israel. And he’s saying, obviously, this. “If,

in fact, God's judgment had already fallen on Israel, then the gift of tongues has no significance at all." Because it was a warning of God's judicial act against them.

And that act came when? 70 AD when the temple was destroyed and Jerusalem was wiped out. One million one hundred thousand Jews were slain in a terrible, terrible tragic act by Titus Vespasian, the Roman conqueror who swept down and destroyed both city and destroyed the temple and smashed the walls. And Judaism, for all intents and purposes, came to an end. And the gift of tongues, which was as 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.

Thirdly, another reason that I believe speaking in tongues has faded is because it was inferior to the gift of prophecy. Now, listen to me. Tongues did have the ability to edify when it was interpreted. That's why, in 14 it says, "Always interpret," because when tongues were interpreted, it would have some edifying capacity. Uninterpreted, it was a sign against Israel.

But in order to give it some meaning in the church, it would be interpreted and then it would have some edifying quality. But that was not the main purpose; its purpose was relative to Israel. Now, once Israel had been judged, the purpose of tongues as a judicial sign had ceased. But then folks will say, "But it still remains as an edifying thing." Well, that is unnecessary. That is absolutely unnecessary, because there is something that is far superior to tongues in edifying.

Chapter 14, verse 1. What does it say? "Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that you may – " what? " - prophesy." What is superior then, to tongues, as an expression of edification? Prophecy. And listen now, mark this little outline because we're going to go through this in the 14th chapter. The entire 14th chapter is to prove the superiority of prophecy to tongues.

First 12 verses. Listen to this, first 12 verses. Tongues is an inferior means of communication. Verses 13 to 19, tongues is an inferior method of praise. Verses 20 to 25, tongues is an inferior method of evangelism. The 14th chapter is to prove it is inferior in communicating, it is inferior in praise, it is inferior in evangelism.

And that's why he says, "I'd rather speak one word in language than," he goes, "all these words in an unknown language." And 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. And that's the point of chapter 14.

And that's the point of chapter 14. All right, number four reason that we believe tongues has ceased is that speaking in tongues is rendered useless when the New Testament was complete. It is rendered useless when the New Testament is complete. Another characteristic of the gift of tongues was that

when a person spoke in tongues, he was receiving revelation from God, was he not, receiving direct revelation. Speaking something, somebody interpreted it; it was direct revelation.

Well, let me ask you a question. Has direct revelation from God ceased? Yes. And what is? Is there any more to the Scripture than this? Is there any more to be added in this? In fact, in John, who wrote the last book, put on the last page of the last book of the Bible, "If any man adds anything to this book, it shall be added to him – " what? " – the plagues that are in it."

So, as a revelatory source, it 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, and we'll see this next time as we get into it a little more. But it was for the infancy of the church; God giving revelations before the revelation was complete.

Listen to this. "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 – " what? " – by His Son." In the last days, the word of the Son. And that's it, folks. And it doesn't say, "And shall in the future speak to us by the Charismatics, or through the church." No. The last days, the Son's word. The Son's word is the gospel, and the Son's word is the New Testament.

Number five, and I hinted at this earlier. 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; Jude never mentioned it. It's gone. It's disappeared.

And even though it has always been the mystical dream that God would give a private revelation of Himself to each individual through history, it just isn't so. God gave His Word and then authenticated His Word. And this is the faith, once for all delivered to the saints. The case, once decided, beloved, is never reopened. Revelation has ended. Tongues as a revelatory, tongues as a sign, tongues as an edifying gift has ceased to have any function.

Sixth, and here I want to spend a few minutes because this is vital. Don't worry about what time it is. We start late, we end late, hmm. Okay. All right, now listen. This is important. I asked myself this. The Bible says tongues will cease. Now, we know it says that. We can't...we don't even argue. When did it cease? Well, we looked at all those points I just gave you, and I could have given that many more again or twice that many more again.

But the next question is, "Has it ever ceased?" Because if it ever has ceased, that proves the case, right? Did it ever cease? Because the term *pau* has a finality. Has it ever ceased? That's the sixth point. Speaking in tongues did cease historically. Most interesting to me is the fact...now, listen to

this...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 it 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...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 apostolic fathers." The first generation after the early church and they don't mention it.

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

Justin Martyr, the great church father who lived from 100 to 165 A.D., traveled all through the church, wrote many things defending Christianity, and he never mentions tongues. He even made lists of spiritual gifts that do not include it. Origen, who lived from 185 to 253 A.D., was a widely read, a scholar without equal in the minds of some. In all of the voluminous writings, which are available, he has no mention of it. In his apology against Celsus, he explicitly argues that the signs of the Apostolic Age were temporary, and he says, "No contemporary Christian exercises any of the ancient gifts.

Chrysostom, perhaps the greatest of all the ancient Christian writers, who lived from 347 to 407 A.D., has a comment in his 1 Corinthians 12 section. This is what he says. "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 even define them; we don't even understand what they are."

Augustine, St. Augustine, 354 to 430 A.D., in his comment on Acts 2:4, which discusses Pentecost and the Holy Spirit and tongues. He says, "In the earliest times, The Holy Ghost fell on them that believed, and they spoke with tongues. These were signs adapted to that 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 it a remote practice, and by the fourth or fifth century they didn't even understand what it was anymore. Now, during all that period, there were only two people who spoke in tongues that we know about within the church. One was Montanus, and Montanus announced to everyone that he was the Holy Spirit. He was a pagan priest

who had been converted to Christianity; he was accompanied, all over the place, by two female priestesses, who also spoke in ecstatic speech. And he was thrown out of the church as a heretic.

He also believed that Christ was coming soon, and he tried to propagate the idea that the reason tongues were in again was because this was the end of the age; same thing we hear today. Exactly. And Montanus was branded a heretic. He believed that Christ was soon going to come to Phrygia, where he lived, and set up the kingdom with the headquarters in his hometown. The only other occasion of tongues was a man named Tertullian, and Tertullian was a disciple of Montanus.

Now, 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 other witch doctors and what are called seers. But none at all, period, in Christianity. The next time you see anything about it after Montanus...and he was in the second century...are the...what called the Cevenol priests around 1685. They believed that they had the gift of ecstatic utterance. And they were a weird group in France.

They believed their little children got the French dialect in ecstatic speech. And they pulled night raids and military invasions and so forth. They were thrown out of...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, held night meetings at their leader's tomb, and, supposedly, ecstatic languages occurred. I wouldn't doubt it. Then there were the Shakers. The Shakers were the product of Mother Ann Lee. Mother Ann Lee lived in 1736 to 1784, and she regarded herself as the female equivalent of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was God in the male body and she was God in a female body. And she founded the Shaker community in Troy, New York, and she received a revelation from God that said sexual intercourse was corrupt, even inside of marriage. And she also advocated that 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 deaths...that's not such a healing I guess...rumors of immorality and so forth. And then, all of that was outside the church, offbeat.

The first time it ever became mainline was in 1901 at Bethel Bible College, Topeka, Kansas. Agnes Ozman received what the baptism and speaks in tongues. It's within the Holiness Movement of the church in America. It hits Azusa Street, Los Angeles, California, in 1906. And out of that grew mainline Pentecostal denominations that many of our brothers and sisters in Christ are a part of. And

they do believe the Word of God and preach the Word of God, and for that we praise Him. But that movement began there. And then, in 1960, in Van Nuys, California, the modern Charismatic movement, which is tongues outside mainline Pentecostal denominations, began.

Now, I point all that out just to let you realize that this is not something that has gone on throughout history. And Paul said it would cease, the Holy Spirit said it would cease. It did cease, and there's no reason to believe it has come back again. And people always say to me, "John, if it hasn't come back again, what is it that we're seeing? How do you explain it?" Well, we'll do that. Next time.

But, let me say this in closing, and thank you for being patient. But it's important that we covered the ground on this this morning. Let me say this in closing. I have some dear friends who speak in tongues, and they will continue to be my friends. And I will always love them and probably have less trouble with their speaking in tongues than I do with some folks gossiping that goes on in the language that everybody understands.

But I just feel, in my heart, that God has called me to teach His Word, and when I come to his Word I have to teach it. I have to teach it the way it is, and I just want them and you and all of us to understand. I hear the rest of the 13th chapter. And it's telling me to love, and I want to love. But I have to love within the confines of the truth, and so do you. Let's pray.

Our Father, we do thank You for our brothers and sisters in the...who are loving You and who are reaching out and winning many to you. And we just praise You for them. And 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'll be very grateful, because this is Your Word and we need to understand it for Your glory. Thank You for our fellowship this morning, Father.

While your heads are bowed just a minute as we close, let's refresh our commitment to the Lord to love one another. Esther sang so beautifully about it this morning and the chapter talks about it. Maybe, also, in some of your hearts, there's a real need for a commitment of your life to Christ, a real need to settle some spiritual issues, to gain some spiritual victory. Don't go away until everything is really settled between you and the Lord this morning.

Father, thank you for our fellowship. We look forward even to tonight because this has been so good. Use us this day, and bring us together tonight with great reports of blessing in anticipation of what you will do even yet again tonight. Thank You for every life here. We pray that we'll preach the truth in love, and we'll give you the praise for what it does. In Christ's name, Amen. God bless you.

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