

Question:

Can you tell me more about the cessation?

I'd like to know more

Response:

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

1 Corinthians 13:8-10 (NKJV)

This passage states unequivocally that these gifts -- prophecies, tongues (literally, languages, and these languages are human languages supernaturally spoken by believers who never learned how to speak them, see Acts 2:4-11. The claim that some tongues are languages of angels based on 1Cor.13:1 is a demonstration of a poor understanding of that verse. We will get to the argument against groanings later), and supernatural knowledge, an incomplete list that is more to demonstrate a principle than to declare a complete list -- were partial, that is, "imperfect" provisions that would be replaced by the perfect provision. In other words, that they would cease, fail, or vanish away is not up for debate. The only question is what the perfect is and when it has come because when it comes or came, the imperfect gifts yielded to it.

That is where the controversy arises. Many people who argue about this do not understand or accept the premise that the purpose of spiritual gifts is to communicate the truth of the Word of God. That is, every single spiritual gift is given for building up the Church (numerically and qualitatively) in the truth. This is the Bible's position. It is, in fact, the point that Paul is making between 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. He was straightening out the Corinthian believers who were thinking of spiritual gifts as something to brag about or use to show off their spiritual superiority similar to how they were also competing among themselves about who was following the best teacher or apostle (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-8; 18-23) or how they were competing over the best meals for communion in 1 Corinthians 11:18-22. In short, the whole of the letter is to attack the self-centered attitude that the Corinthian believers were taking to even spiritual things like

spiritual gifts and the Apostles, prophets, and teachers that the Lord had graciously given to them. They were ridiculously competitive in extremely destructive and foolish ways.

The point of 1 Corinthians 12 was to tell them that every spiritual gift is important in order to build up the Church: They are outwardly focused. He even pointed out to them that the gifts most honored by the Lord are the scarcest ones so that their scarcity would not make believers take them for granted. This would be the three top gifts in the Church: the Apostle, the Prophet, and the Pastor-teacher. There are very few, comparatively speaking, of these gifts (that is, of the persons who do these jobs). Also, the language he used was to show them that the gifts were not merely the abilities but in fact the people who possessed them. So, we are not just talking about tongues but about those who speak in tongues or about prophecy but about those who prophesy. Each of these people is a necessary stone in the Temple that is the Church. But all gifts are not equal. Some stones are pillars, some are foundations. Still, all stones are needed. The house is incomplete when even one that seems insignificant is lacking. Pursuing gifts then in the hopes of being better than others is immensely foolish since you need those others still and since your gift makes you their servant in your own unique way.

Now, if we agree about what spiritual gifts are and about what they do, then the question is why some gifts were described as "in part" or incomplete. It is not about something wrong with the gift but rather about its function. The gift of the ability to speak foreign human languages supernaturally without ever learning to speak them was in order to signal to a certain type of unbelievers that the people demonstrating that gift were certified by God Himself and their message could be believed. See Acts 2:4-11 and 1 Corinthians 14:22. The unbelievers in question were largely unbelievers who had exposure to the Mosaic Law and would have had a natural resistance to new revelation as demonstrated by the Pharisees, for example. How could such people explain the ability of these "blasphemers" to speak so glowingly about the God they knew from Moses' law in languages that they had no way of being able to speak? This was just like Jesus's miracles that condemned those that rejected His call to repentance and faith in Him. Why would things like this be needed? Because they were bringing new information that was not covered in the Tanakh (that is, the Old Testament a.k.a the Law and the Prophets). People might understandably have a little difficulty believing them. God is extremely merciful and accommodating and very often provides much more help than is even needed for people to do the right thing. So, even though the Law and the Prophets were enough to tell these people that they could trust God's messengers, He still gave

them extra proof that they were indeed His messengers so that they could be encouraged to believe. This way too, their condemnation would be without question if they rejected God's call through them. This then was the function of gifts like speaking in tongues. Today, however, that the Bible is complete so that we have a complete and authoritative document on God's will, these measures are not only not necessary but we also have in it a superior way of telling that any purported messenger can be trusted to be from God: All anyone has to do to confirm the message of anyone claiming to speak for God is to consult the Bible.

As for prophecies and knowledge, these were stopgap gifts that allowed believers of the first century to access new truths of the New Covenant in Jesus's blood before the books of the New Testament were completed and universally distributed. That is, they were not full pictures of truth, just bits and pieces to cover parts that had not yet been covered by the writings available to the churches that had those gifts. Prophecy is literally the declaration of God's counsel or word whether or not it involves a foretelling of future events. Knowledge is, well, knowledge of the same. So, people of that time got supernaturally, whether by being told by someone with a gift of prophecy or by personal insight empowered by the Holy Spirit, knowledge of God's will before they gained access to the completed Bible.

The complete Bible, then, is the perfect. That is, it is the complete picture of God's will for our walk in this world as His children. Again, this is what spiritual gifts are about: the building up or edification of the Church in the knowledge of God's will.

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NKJV)

26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

1 Corinthians 14:26 (NKJV)

So, a complete Bible makes the gifts that provide incomplete information or that validate the authority of messengers providing that information unnecessary. Everyone must now turn to the Bible both for complete information about God's will and for confirmation of the claims of anyone who claims to be a messenger of God.

1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds...

Hebrews 1:1-2 (NKJV)

This last passage shows that God has moved His means of communicating His will from human intermediaries to His Son. Well, the Lord Jesus is not here in person today, so what does that mean for us? Just that the books and letters that He empowered His special messengers to write and compile are now His direct communication to us. The Bible is the written Word of the One who is Himself the Word of God. It is, if you will, the portrait of Jesus Himself to us in this world. God is done with human intermediaries. We get to deal with Him directly now through the Bible that He has given to us.

Finally, the Bible was not some evolution that God thought of eventually as history unfolded. It existed even before we humans had it written down. The angels themselves relied on it for their own operations in God's plan:

21 But I will tell you what is noted in the *_Scripture of Truth_* . (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince.

Daniel 10:21 (NKJV)

The phrase there is literally "writing of truth". That writing is the Bible. Daniel was being given his own part to write in it for us. Others would be later just like Moses was, but it wasn't something that came about over time. The Word of God was settled forever in Heaven before ever a single word of it was ever written down for us. The Lord just gave us per time what we could handle until the time for the

complete thing to be given to us came. This happened after Jesus made His supreme sacrifice for us and gained the right to give the Spirit of the Father to us to both provide the early saints the means to put it together for us and us who followed the ability to comprehend and use it fully. Only through that Sacrifice could the full mystery of God's will hidden even from the prophets of old be revealed. Now it has. So, there is an insanity in thinking so highly of half-measures as if they were anything in themselves.

An important caveat to include is that during the Tribulation, some of these gifts will become operational again, but the reason will be similar to why they were in the period that the New Testament was coming together: the focus of the expansion and completion of God's Kingdom here on earth will shift back to the Israelites to call them to repentance. Two of their premier prophets will be raised from the dead by the Lord to turn their hearts back to Him. In order to persuade them that the New Testament is indeed for them too, these prophets and their associates will be empowered by the Spirit to do things like these to arouse their hearts to repentance and acceptance of Jesus as their Savior too. In other words, the gifts that will become operational then too is to turn them toward the complete Bible, not to show off how great spiritually their bearers are.