

Gift Done-away and Cessation

1. ἀγάπη agapē never fails, but certain gifts and ministries will do so (from the Corinthians' perspective) and have done so (from Austin Bible Church's perspective).
 - a. ἀγάπη agape is the more excellent way by which gifts, ministries, and effects can be utilized by Members of the Church for the maximum glorification of Jesus Christ (1st Cor. 12:31).
 - b. ἀγάπη agapē is a permanent and eternal operational function, but certain gifts were not so designed (1st Cor. 13:8a,13).
 - c. Important note: it is not all χαρίσματα charismata (spiritual gifts) that are done away, but only certain gifts. Spiritual gifting itself continues throughout the Dispensation of the Church.
2. Verse 8 contains three more “ifs” (like and unlike the three “ifs” from vv.1-3).
 - a. εἴτε eite ^{#1535} conj. used 65x. “Whether . . . or”; “if . . . if” (Rom. 12:6,7_{x2},8; 1st Cor. 3:22_{x8}; 8:5_{x2}; 10:31_{x3}; 12:13_{x4},26_{x2}; 13:8_{x3}; 14:7_{x2},27 (cf. δὲ 14:29); 15:11_{x2}; 2nd Cor. 1:6_{x2}; 5:9_{x2},10_{x2},13_{x2}; 8:23_{x2}; 12:2_{x2},3_{x2}; Eph. 6:8_{x2}; Phil. 1:18_{x2},20_{x2},27_{x2}; Col. 1:16_{x4},20_{x2}; 1st Thess. 5:10_{x2}; 2nd Thess. 2:15_{x2}; 1st Pet. 2:13,14; LXX: Josh. 24:15).
 - b. The “whether, or, or” construction of this passage establishes that there were gifts present in certain Corinthian believers but not present in others because they have other gifts.
 - c. Prophecy and knowledge will be “done away” but tongues will “cease.”
 - 1) Done away. Future passive καταργέω katargeō ^{#2673}: to cause something to come to an end or to be no longer in existence, *abolish, wipe out, set aside* (Rom. 6:6; 1st Cor. 2:6; 6:13; 13:8,10,11; 15:24,26; 2nd Cor. 3:7,11,13,14; Gal. 5:11; 2nd Thess. 2:8; 2nd Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:14).
 - 2) Cease. Future middle παύω pauō ^{#3973}: (mid.) *to pause, stop, cease*.
It is important to note that it is a different verb for the ending of tongues than the verb used for the ending of prophecy and knowledge. The situational condition for the end of tongues is different than the situational condition for the end of the other temporary gifts.
3. Verses 9 & 10 describe the in-part & in-part (imperfect) nature of the apostolic age of the Church, followed by the perfect nature of the post-apostolic age of the Church.
 - a. ἐκ μέρους describes the “in-part” conditions present in the Dispensation of the Church: Age of the Apostles. μέρος meros ^{#3313}: *part* (previously used in 1st Cor. 12:27).
 - 1) Knowing is a partial feature supplemented by the partial feature of prophesying.
 - 2) A series of imperfect (in-part) messages is designed to give way to a perfect message (cf. Heb. 1:1-2).
 - 3) An obsolete feature of any age must be designed to disappear (cf. Heb. 8:13).
 - b. τὸ τέλειον to teleion describes the “perfect” or “complete” condition present in the Dispensation of the Church: Age of the Local Church. Neuter singular from τέλειος ^{#5046} *perfect, complete, mature, adult*.
 - 1) The neuter “perfect thing” will come at an unspecified time, but the Apostle Paul anticipated it in his lifetime.
 - 2) The neuter “perfect thing” is a benefit to the Church because it is superior to the “in-part” conditions that preceded it. Not every gift is made obsolete as a result, and the ongoing use of gifts in the ongoing Dispensation of the Church is expected.
 - c. The most common misinterpretation for “the perfect” is to apply it to Christ and specifically to His 2nd Advent.
 - 1) This leads to an awkward terminology for Jesus Christ in the neuter gender.
 - 2) This defies the promise of Joel 2:28 which states that the 2nd Advent of Jesus Christ will launch the beginning of prophecy.
 - a) The same event cannot mark both the end and the beginning of prophecy!
 - b) For a glimpse into the prophetic role of Israel to the Gentiles in the Millennium see also Num. 11:29; Zech. 8:20-23; Isa. 60:3; Zeph. 3:19 cf. 1st Cor. 14:25.
 - d. Another common misinterpretation for “the perfect” is to apply it to eternity in heaven.
 - 1) This equates the “face to face” illustration (1st Cor. 13:12) with the “face to face” reality of heaven (2nd Cor. 5:6,8).
 - 2) This fails to retain the context for the illustration (1st Cor. 13:12) as the same context for that which is being illustrated (1st Cor. 13:10).

- e. A verbose over-translation for this passage actually helps to keep the context fixed:
- 1) 1 Cor. 13:8 In explaining the hyper-ballistic nature of agape love as an operational function throughout the entirety of the Dispensation of the Church it is helpful to draw a direct contrast with certain spiritual gifts which will not continue to be manifested throughout the entirety of the Dispensation of the Church; namely the spiritual gifts of Prophecy, Tongues, and Knowledge.
 - 2) 1 Cor. 13:9 The explanation for the spiritual gifts of Prophecy and Knowledge being abolished rests in the nature of those in-part gifts and the way in which they combine and coordinate for the resultant edification of Church Members in the only way possible prior to the revelation and provision of mystery doctrine in the written New Testament Scriptures.
 - 3) 1 Cor. 13:10 In contrast to this, a perfect situation is coming in which the combination and coordination of those in-part revelatory gifts will no longer be needed or even appropriate as the edification of Church Members will from that time forward be accomplished by faithfully teaching the once and for all delivered mystery doctrine and associated written New Testament Scriptures.
4. The transition from the Church's imperfect age (in-part) to the Church's perfect age is one of maturity (1st Cor. 13:11).
- a. This verse (v.11) is an illustration for the contrast of in-part (v.9) versus complete (v.10). Paul presents a 1st person singular illustration from temporal life to teach these concepts.
 - b. Speaking, thinking, and reasoning "like a child" demonstrates that the in-part conditions of the Church's edification through revelatory gifts is foundational & preparational, but not complete.
 - c. Becoming an adult demonstrates the perfect condition of the Church's edification through a complete written revelation.
5. The transition from the Church's imperfect age to the Church's perfect age is one of clarity (1st Cor. 13:12).
- a. This verse (v.12) is an illustration for the contrast of in-part (v.9) versus complete (v.10). Paul presents a 1st person plural metaphor to teach these concepts.
 - b. "Up until this very time" (ἄρτι) we are seeing through a mirror (ἔσοπτρον) in a riddle (ἀνίγμα). Note the metaphoric nature of this illustration!
 - c. The perfect nature of written revelation for the Church allows us to see "face to face" (πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον). This is not a literal condition of being in heaven but continues to metaphor in describing the clarity of our spiritual vision.
 - d. "Face to face" with God in both literal and metaphoric usage is an expression for direct dealings with God here in an earthly setting and never for a heavenly setting in glory (Gen. 32:30; Ex. 33:11; Deut. 5:4; 34:10; Jdg. 6:22; Ezek. 20:35).