

In addressing issues raised by what is called the “Charismatic Movement” our desire is to foster unity, understanding, and love among all believers in our assembly. We recognize that within the charismatic movement are many precious members of the body of Christ. It is the desire of Jesus that believers come to the “unity of the faith,” which is a oneness on the beliefs foundational to the church. (Eph 4:13) It is God’s will that we be “of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in Spirit, intent on one purpose” (Phil. 2:2). There are two potential ways for us to arrive at this unity in the church. One way is to have no convictions about controversial matters, or at least to ignore or de-emphasize any convictions for the sake of unity. The other way (the one we believe is correct) is to clearly and lovingly teach the truth of Scripture to all believers. Because Jesus is full of both grace **and** truth, we believe He calls us also to be guided in the same manner. As to **grace**, we affirm our unity, love and commitment with all believers. As to **truth**, we are constrained to express concern, rather than keep silent, about the emphasis in charismatic circles on experience and what we perceive as a lack of spiritually based understanding of crucial issues such as the indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts and healing. We hope, in love, to stimulate careful Biblical analysis and constructive thought among all believers.

### The Baptism, Indwelling & Filling of the Holy Spirit

The Scriptures teach that every Christian is immersed into (baptized into) the body of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit; fully receiving the Holy Spirit at the moment he/she receives Christ by faith as personal Savior (1 Cor. 12:13, Gal 3:27; Titus 3:4-6). The Spirit indwells every believer at the point of conversion (1 Cor. 6:19 & Eph.1:13). There is no need for further receiving of the Holy Spirit. Every believer “has” received all things pertaining to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). Every believer has been “blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). The pressing need throughout Christianity is for individuals to trust and rely upon the indwelling Spirit. This is why Ephesians 5:17-18 declares that it is God’s will for every believer to be “filled with” the Holy Spirit, which is to allow ourselves to be controlled continually by the Holy Spirit in all that we say and do. To be filled with the Spirit is the polar opposite of depending on self. There is no Biblical basis for a *believer* to ask God for a special experience of “baptism of the Spirit:” Yet there are numerous Scriptural passages indicating that believers are

expected “to walk” (live life) according to the Spirit or serve in the newness of the Spirit (Gal 5:16-25; Rom 7:6, 8:4.)

## **Gifts of the Body for the Common Good**

God has sovereignly given spiritual gifts to the Body of Christ by placing at least one gift in each believer (1Cor. 12:11). These differ from natural talents in that they are the manifestation (something made visible, clear, observable) of the Spirit for the edification of the body of Christ as a whole (I Cor 12:7). No one gift is possessed by all believers (1Cor 12:29, 30). This is a Scriptural truth often overlooked in many “Charismatic” circles, especially concerning the spiritual gift of tongues. Spiritual gifts are not given for the enjoyment or exaltation of any individual, but are for the purpose of the building up and the protecting of the Body of Christ. Eyes of the human body function to allow the rest of the body to navigate, to drive a car, to avoid obstacles, or appreciate the physical world, yet they do not exist for their own sake. The eyes exist for the welfare of the entire human body. In the same way, the gifts of the Spirit do not exist for their own sake, or even for the sake of one individual, but are given “for the common good.” (I Cor. 12:7).

## **Tongues**

The word “tongue” is used in Scripture for either 1) the organ of speech, 2) as a description of a shape or fluid motion, or 3) for a spoken language. The gift of tongues was the Spirit-given and Spirit-directed ability to speak a message from God in a previously unlearned language. Such speaking was capable of being understood by a native speaker of the language. (Acts 2:11) While the content of such messages have not been recorded in Scripture, they are described in Acts 2:11 as descriptions of the “mighty works of God”.

1 Cor. 14:22 indicates that the gift of speaking in tongues was given to the early church as a sign or signal to unbelieving Jews. Because of its novelty and potential for abuse, strict guidelines for its use were established in Scripture. To assure that the gift of tongues would edify everyone present, Scripture required that there be an interpreter (translator) present to make clear what had been spoken and that one, two or at the most three individuals be allowed to speak (I Cor. 14:27, 28). Under no circumstances was more than one person to speak in tongues at the same time (I Cor 14:23,27,33) The apostle Paul, who also possessed this gift of tongues yet recognizing its potential for abuse, stated that within the assembly of believers it is better to speak five words with the mind for the instruction of others, than to speak ten thousand in a tongue.

Therefore, Paul warned against indiscriminate use of the gift of tongues in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:19).

In 1 Cor. 13:8, three gifts (word of knowledge, prophecy and tongues) are specifically mentioned as coming to an end. Logically, all of the gifts of the Spirit will come to an end with the advent of the return of Jesus Christ and the arrival of eternity future. At that point the church will exist in her glorified state, with no further need of the gifts of the Spirit. Yet these three gifts are singled out as being temporal in nature, coming to an end. If God's only point was that the church should not get too carried away with gifts in general because ultimately they would cease, the Lord could and would have simply reminded the church of the fact. Yet instead, He identifies three specific gifts all related to the communication of God's truth, two to believers (knowledge and prophecy) and one to unbelievers (tongues), as coming to an end.

With regard to the ceasing of tongues in 1 Cor. 13:8, the use of the middle voice ("tongues, they will cease") in the Greek indicates that the gift of speaking in tongues will, by its very nature, cease of its own accord. The use of the passive voice ("they will be done away") as to the other two gifts indicates that the word of knowledge and prophecy will be abolished by something other than themselves, rather than ceasing on their own. Scripture does not indicate **when** the gift of the tongues will cease; however, its particular purpose and relevance as a signal of impending judgment for the Jew ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and the great dispersion in AD 70.

## **Prophecy and Knowledge**

Prophecy was held up by the apostle Paul as the most important and desirable gift in the local assembly (1Cor. 14:1), second only to that of the Apostles (1Cor. 12:28) in overall importance. Prophecy was essential in the early days of the church because God was still in the process of revealing the foundational truth of the church (Eph 2:20; 3:5). The same was true of the gift of the word of knowledge, which like prophecy involved the revelation of something previously hidden or not understood (1Cor. 13:2; Eph 3:1-10) and was most likely the primary gift of a true Apostle (2 Cor. 11:6). Prophetic revelation, whether from the gift of prophecy or knowledge, came only as parts of a larger whole (1Cor. 13:9). When the totality of God's revelation to man for the ages was reached—the completion of Scripture – these gifts were abolished. The complete did away with the partial (1Cor. 13:8). In that sense, we "know fully or exactly" (Greek 'epignosis', 1Cor. 13:12), now that we have the completed communication from God. Indeed, the Book of Revelation (last book written – circa 96-97 AD) warns against adding prophecy to that which is already revealed in the Scriptures (Revelation 22:18,19).

Because of the importance of God's revelation it seems worthwhile to go into some detail as to the textual evidence in this regard. The Greek text (1 Cor. 13:8-12) indicates that the abolition of the spiritual gifts of knowledge and prophecy is tied to the arrival of that which is "completed" (Greek "teleos", which can be translated "perfect", "complete", "mature", or "fulfilled"). The Greek word carries the idea of a fully completed set, as opposed to a partial set. Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest, in his exhaustive study of the Greek word "teleos," states: "In I Cor. 13:10, the word means "complete," and is contrasted to that which is incomplete"<sup>1</sup>. "Teleos" is set in contrast to the phrase "in part" (Greek "meros", which means that which is partial, a piece, a part of set, or incomplete).

"For we know in part, and we prophecy in part; but when the completed (teleos) comes, the partial (meros) will be done away". (I Cor. 13:9,10)

Because of the contrast between the concepts of that which is partial revelation and that which is "teleos" (completed), it is logical to conclude that the word "teleos" in this verse refers to the completed set of God's revelation to this age, which became a reality at the end of the first century. Paul provides us two illustrations of this move from partial revelation to the completed revelation:

- Illustration 1: The transition from immaturity to maturity:

"When I was a child I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child: when I became a man I did away with childish things." (I Cor. 13:11)

"Childish things" are generally things that are more elemental and come in smaller pieces or units. The "childish things" will be set aside at the point of maturity or completeness. The word used for "man" is a word that speaks of maturity, and is set in contrast to the word meaning "child" as young or infantile. God, speaking through Paul, is referring here to a maturity or the completed stage of development of something. Upon the arrival of maturity, when the Word of God became complete, the Word of God could then be read and taught in it's fullness. The revelatory gifts, being elemental and being in smaller pieces, were then no longer necessary in the gatherings of the church.

- Illustration 2: The Mirror

"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known." (I Cor. 13:12)

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<sup>1</sup>. "The Meaning of 'perfect' in the New Testament," Wuest, Kenneth, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, Vol III, Treasures from the Greek New Testament, p. 115.

Twice Paul makes a comparison of “now” (that is, during the period of revelation “in part”), to “then” (the time of the arrival of the completed). The word translated “mirror,” (“esoptron”), clearly means mirror and does not mean “glass” as it is translated in the KJV. It is the same word used in James 1:23 to speak of a mirror (in referring to the Word of God, the “perfect law of liberty”).

The Greek word translated “dimly” or “darkly” is a combination of the two Greek words “en” and “ainigma.” “En” is a reference that means “in”, “among”, or “with”. “Ainigma” means riddle. The Greek word here should be understood as meaning “as in a riddle,” or “with a riddle”. Paul is saying he then saw” as in a riddle.” A riddle is a communication that is puzzling because only part of the facts is stated while other parts are omitted. An example is the riddle offered by Samson in Judges 14:5-18. The mirrors of Paul’s day were constructed of hammered pieces of metal prone to great distortion with only some parts reflecting accurately. Paul says, in effect, that “now” (at the time he wrote these words, when only partial revelation existed) it is like looking into one of these mirrors – as a riddle with only partial reflection. But he goes on to say that “then” (once revelation is completed) it will be like looking in a smooth mirror, able to see himself face to face. He states “now it is like looking in a mirror and only seeing part of my face, yet then I will be able to see my entire face just as others see it.” Paul says that he knows (“gnosis”) in part, but at some point (when the “completed” comes), he will know (“epignosis,” to know exactly or fully) just as he has been exactly or fully known (again, “epignosis”).

When Paul used the term “mirror” in his second letter to the Corinthians he uses it in reference to the Word of God as set forth in the Old Covenant (II Cor. 3:15-18). James also uses the illustration of a mirror in teaching the importance of doing the Word and not merely hearing it. (James 1:22-25) Like these other two passages, I Cor. 13:8 uses a mirror to illustrate the ability of God’s word to reveal the whole truth about mankind.

One of Paul’s major purposes in the letter was to reprove and correct the Corinthians for making too much of certain gifts by focusing on the gifts themselves rather than their purpose. Gifts are given for the edification of the body, not for self exaltation. Paul, in writing this letter, stressed that the gifts were to be exercised for the benefit of others, a concept not well understood or practiced by the church in Corinth. Faith, hope and love are greater than all the gifts, but the greatest of those three is love. Without the catalyst, love, the gifts amount to nothing.

Each believer should carefully study and consider these Scriptures concerning the present day existence of the particular gifts, which Paul specifically mentions as temporary. The revelation of God's truth is no insignificant matter. The act of professing to be speaking directly as a spokesperson of God is also not to be taken lightly. If we believed God were making a new revelation today through men, it would be incumbent on us to seek and to heed this revelation. But because we believe these revelatory gifts are no longer active today, and because the Scripture is complete, we seek to avoid being influenced by those who profess prophetic gifts and those who offer a "word of knowledge" to us. Rather, we seek to lovingly influence them to understand the truth that we have the Word of God – His completed, supernatural, and marvelous Word. We choose to contend for it and encourage you to do the same. (Jude 1:3) "Beloved...I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was **once for all** delivered (past tense – a completed act) to the saints."

### **Healings and Miracles**

God can and does heal. Some believers have faith that God can heal them and are not healed (II Cor. 12:7-10). Others show little evidence of faith but are healed anyway (Acts 3:3-7). The Scriptures teach that God's plan does not include perfect health for every Christian. Our "outer man" is decaying. (II Cor. 4:16). God, in fact uses disease (heart disease, cancer, stroke, etc.) to bring believers home to Him. If He healed everyone who earnestly sought healing, only the most stubborn believers would ever die by way of disease. The rest would have to perish in some sudden accident. When God does miraculously heal disease in this age, it may be simply an act of mercy in accordance with His sovereign will as in the healing of Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:27.

While we see no Biblical support for the concept of a service conducted by a "faith healer," it is absolutely Biblical and proper to gather for the purpose of prayer for the sick. Our God is a God of miracles. We have every right to pray that God would restore a person's health (James 5:14-15). But we must also recognize the solemn purpose of God in many cases to grant, instead of healing, the grace to live with illness (II Cor. 12:9,10).

## **Speaking in Love**

We have no disrespect for our brothers and sisters in Christ who have different views. We love them yet recognize that only in God's word can be found the final truth regarding these issues. In great contrast to the current post-modern beliefs of the world, we believe that there is one absolute truth about these issues, that it comes from God, and that we are to diligently apply ourselves to the discovery of that truth (2Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11). Therefore we seek to lovingly share our understanding of the truth along with the helpful comments of others, so that we may all come to the "unity of the faith".