

The Blessed Person and Work of God the Holy Spirit



Lesson 13--Temporary Spiritual Gifts in the Body of Christ

Are Some of the Gifts Temporary?

Are there some gifts that God no longer gives today? Here are two examples of temporary gifts:

1) The gift of APOSTLESHIP. There are no apostles in the church today, a fact that is acknowledged by most, even by many Pentecostal scholars. The Mormons believe there are still apostles today and so do other fringe groups, but most of these groups would acknowledge that the apostles were a very unique and special group of chosen and gifted men of the first century. In 1 Corinthians 9:1 there is an indication that a true apostle was a man who actually saw the risen Christ. This could not be true of believers today, because Jesus said, "I go to the _____ and ye see me _____ (John 16:10). And 1 Peter 1:8 says, "Whom, having not _____, ye love...."

2) The gift of PROPHECY. There are no God-gifted prophets in the church today, although there are many false prophets. Most Charismatic people believe that the gift of prophecy is still for today. We will discuss this later in this lesson.

What is a Prophet?

WRONG DEFINITIONS OF PROPHECY:

Prophecy is "the ability to understand and to engage in the exposition of the Word of God." [Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, page 139.]

"The gift of prophecy was actually the ability to proclaim God's Word...The gift (of prophecy), then, is the ability to speak before people, to proclaim God's Word, sometimes with a predictive element". [John MacArthur, Jr., *The Charismatics*, p.164.]

John MacArthur teaches that God gives some believers the gift of prophecy today but that there are no prophets today. He teaches that the office of the prophet (Eph. 4:11) is no longer to be found in the church today but the gift of prophecy is. See his commentaries on *1 Corinthians* (pages 322-324) and *Ephesians* (pages 141-142). Thus a person can have the gift of prophecy and can prophesy, but this person is not a prophet. This would be like saying that a person can have the gift of teaching but not be a teacher, or have the gift of pastoring but not be a pastor.

These definitions are inadequate and faulty. According to these definitions, any gifted Bible teacher, any gifted pastor would have the gift of prophecy. Every pastor should have the ability to proclaim God's Word and to engage in the exposition of the Word of God, but this does not make the pastor a prophet.

These definitions fail to make a proper distinction between the gift of prophecy and the gift of teaching. See 1 Corinthians 12:28-29 where a clear distinction is made between those gifted as teachers and those gifted as prophets.

God's Definition of Prophecy

And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his _____: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy _____ unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a _____, and thou shalt be to him instead of God (Exodus 4:15-16).

And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a God to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy P_____. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land (Exodus 7:1-2).

Aaron was to be the spokesman for Moses. As the PROPHET was to GOD, so Aaron was to Moses. What did this mean? Aaron spoke the words of Moses, even as the prophet speaks the words of God. Aaron was to be the MOUTH of Moses even as the prophet is to be the MOUTH (mouthpiece) of God. Aaron was Moses' SPOKESMAN,

even as the prophet is God's SPOKESMAN, serving as God's mouth, delivering God's message. ("Thus saith the LORD!") This is God's definition of a prophet. Thus prophecy is the God-given gift whereby the person is able to deliver God's message and speak forth God's Word. Every true prophecy would have this seal stamped upon it: "For the MOUTH of the LORD hath spoken it!"

There are New Testament passages which help us to understand the gift of prophecy: "For the P_____ came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were _____ by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). The prophets spoke (and wrote) as they were moved (carried along) by the Holy Spirit, so that what they spoke (and wrote) was exactly what God intended. It was God's message, God's Word. "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying..." (Matthew 1:22). God is the one who spoke it, but how did He speak it? He used the prophet's mouth (in this case, the prophet Isaiah). It was God's message and God's Word, but it was delivered by way of a human mouth.

A prophet had to be 100% accurate. If a prophet's prediction did not come true, what did this mean (see Deut. 18:21-22)?

God is 100% accurate and the true prophet is God's mouthpiece. It is God's message delivered through the prophet's mouth and it will be 100% accurate, if the message really comes from God. This illustrates the difference between a prophet and a teacher. The prophet, when speaking as a prophet, speaks forth the Word of God ("Thus saith the Lord!") and the message is infallible and 100% accurate. The teacher (or pastor/teacher) explains the Word of God which has already been given. Even the best Bible teacher is fallible and may err.

What is prophecy? Prophecy is inspired speech! It is nothing less than the Word of God in spoken or written form. See Micaiah's definition of prophecy in 2 Chronicles 18:13--"even what my _____ saith, that will I _____."

What was a prophet? A prophet was God's mouthpiece through whom God spoke and gave His perfect, infallible revelation.

Are There True Prophets Today?

Many insist that the gift of prophecy is still being given today. Think of the implications of this. This would mean that God is still giving His Word today and that the canon of Scripture is not closed. The Bible we have would thus be incomplete. The 66 Books of the Bible are not enough if added revelation is still being given today by God through modern day prophets. The Bible would be missing vital information and crucial truths which these modern day prophets must supply. The Bible is not enough! We need the Bible plus the new prophecies!

This kind of teaching is a serious attack on the sufficiency of the Bible as our final and only authority for faith and practice. We need to live by every word that proceeds out of

the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4) and these words are found in the 66 books of the Bible.

No, the church doesn't need new revelation from heaven today! We already have a completed Bible and the Holy Spirit of God to interpret and apply it. What the church needs is a new confrontation with the whole counsel of God, proclaimed in the power of the Holy Spirit with authority and love, by men who know their God and who honor His only written revelation. Then, and then only, may we expect our deepest needs to be supplied, and God's purpose for His Church to be accomplished in our day. [Dr. John C. Whitcomb, *Does God Want Christians To Perform Miracles Today?* (BMH Books, 1973), pages 12-13.]

There are clear indications in the New Testament that the gift of prophecy was a temporary gift needed in the days of the early church, but no longer needed after the Bible had been completed.

In 1 Corinthians 13:8 we learn that prophecies would be done away, whereas faith, hope and love would remain. This prediction came to pass at the end of the first century. [See our study [First Corinthians 13 and Temporary Gifts.](#)]

In Ephesians 2:20 we learn that apostles and New Testament prophets were foundational men: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone." A foundation is laid only once at the beginning of the building project. One does not keep laying a foundation. These men were foundational because it was through them that we received the New Testament Scriptures. We do not need to lay the foundation again, but we need to build upon it. It is possible that God's building project has reached the "steeple stage," as it were, and soon the last "living stone" (1 Peter 2:5) will be laid in place and Christ will then come to receive the church unto Himself (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

In 2 Peter 2:1 there is the possible hint that the true gift of prophecy would be done away: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."

Notice carefully:

"there were false prophets"

"there shall be false teachers"

The devil counterfeits the true. When Peter wrote these words there were true prophets and the devil countered with false prophets. After the gift of prophecy was done away there were no longer any true prophets for the devil to counterfeit. There were, however, true teachers, and so the devil countered with false teachers.

Do We Need Added Revelation Today? Do we need Dreams, Visions, Prophecies, Special Revelation, etc.?

The Charismatic Answer:

Neo-Pentecostals maintain that biblical authority (the word written) must always be subservient to the authority of the living, "dynamic" word of God made known through the present activity of the Spirit himself...The subservience of Scripture—the word written—to the Holy Spirit's authority is also illustrated by the acceptance in Charismatic Renewal of the validity of the gift of prophecy in the life of the contemporary Church. For the Neo-Pentecostal (no less than his Classical counterpart), God speaks today just as authoritatively as he spoke to the biblical authors. This [is an] existential understanding of the Word of God (in which revelation did not cease with the closing of the canon). Catherine Marshall puts it another way: "Jesus' promise of 'further truth' gives us clear reason to believe that not all the truth and instruction Christ has to give us is contained in the canon of the Old and New Testaments." In Neo-Pentecostalism, then, spiritual authority rests ultimately in the present activity and teaching of the Holy Spirit at least as much as in the Bible itself...God does not restrict his revelation to the Bible (i.e., a closed canon). [Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics*, pages 110-113.]

According to this, Charismatics believe that the Biblical canon is not closed, and thus the written Word of God is not the final authority. They believe that God gives added revelation to the church today and that this new revelation is just as authoritative, or even more authoritative, than the Bible itself.

The key issue then is the **sufficiency** of the Word of God. Is the Bible really sufficient? Is it really all that we need, or do we need something additional? Is God's communication to man found in the Bible alone, or must we look somewhere else? Is the Bible complete, or does it lack vital information that believers need to know?

1) Christ promised the Apostles that the Spirit of truth would guide them into **all truth** (John 16:13). The Spirit did guide them into all truth and this truth was incorporated into the New Testament Scriptures. What more do we need?

2) Paul tells us that the God-breathed Scriptures are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17). What more do we need?

3) Peter says that we have a more sure word of prophecy than even the eyewitness account of an apostle, namely the Spirit-moved, infallible Word of God (2 Peter 1:15-21). What more do we need?

4) Jude tells us that we are to earnestly contend for "the faith" (the body of truth) which was once for all delivered to the saints. This body of truth was once for all delivered to the saints in the first century and is found in written form in our Bible today. What more do we need?

5) John puts the final "PERIOD" at the close of God's completed revelation, warning us not to add to or to subtract from this book (Revelation 22:18-19). When the final word was penned by John in the book of Revelation, this marked the time when the Bible (all 66 canonical books) were in completed form. What more do we need? The canon of Scripture is closed and what God hath closed, let no man open. If God says, "The Bible is enough!" let not man say, "We need more!"

That many should be claiming to have received visions and revelations from the Lord is not surprising in light of 1 John 4:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:13; 4:2-4; Matthew 7:15-24; 24:4-5. In these last days before the coming of the Lord Jesus for His church (1 Thess. 4:13-18), we can expect an increase in subjective, experiential religion: "It must be true because it happened to me!" What we need is revelational religion, based upon objective and absolute truth: "It must be true because God said so in His Word."

Today we need humble men who will tremble at the Word of God (Isaiah 66:1-2). We do not need new revelation today. We need to obey and walk worthy of the revelation that we already have! We do not need more light today. We will stand before Christ and give an account for the way we responded to the light that we had!

Spurgeon: No New Revelations from God Today!

I have heard many fanatical persons say the Holy Spirit revealed this and that to them. Now that is very generally revealed nonsense. The Holy Ghost does not reveal anything fresh now. He brings old things to our remembrance. 'He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have told you,' [John 14:26]. The canon of revelation is closed; there is no more to be added. God does not give a fresh revelation, but he rivets the old one. When it has been forgotten, and laid in the dusty chamber of our memory, he fetches it out and cleans the picture, but does not paint a new one. There are no new doctrines, but the old ones are often revived. It is not, I say, by any new revelation that the Spirit comforts. He does so by telling us old things over again; he brings a fresh lamp to manifest the treasures hidden in Scripture; he unlocks the strong chests in which the truth had long lain, and he points to secret chambers filled with untold riches; but he coins no more, for enough is done.

Believer! There is enough in the Bible for thee to live upon for ever. If thou shouldest outnumber the years of Methusaleh, there

would be no need for a fresh revelation; if thou shouldest live till Christ should come upon the earth, there would be no necessity for the addition of a single word; if thou shouldest go down as deep as Jonah, or even descend as David said he did, into the belly of hell, still there would be enough in the Bible to comfort thee without a supplementary sentence.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon
The New Park Street Pulpit
Vol. I (1855), p. 38

There is a sense in which the church is in desperate need of a vision today. We need a fresh vision of God. We need to see the Lord high and lifted up (Isaiah 6:1-9). We need a glimpse of all that **God is** (Isaiah 43:10-11). The more we see Christ as He really is, the more we will be like Him (1 John 3:2). As we fix our eyes upon Christ as He is seen in the written Word and as we look unto Jesus (Heb. 12:1-2) with a steady gaze, we will reflect the glory of the Lord as our lives are conformed to His image, from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

Examples of Charismatic Visions

Example #1--Oral Roberts

At one time Oral Roberts claimed he had a talk with a 900-foot-tall Jesus and the account of that "vision" generated millions in donations from the faithful so that he could open his 60-story diagnostic clinic and 30-story hospital. Later Roberts claimed to have received another message from God. This time God wanted people to give Oral Roberts \$4.5 million in "quick money" to finish an \$8 million fund drive. If he did not raise this money, God would call him home to heaven. Thanks to Florida race track money (an owner, Jerry Collins, coughed up the last \$1.3 million), the ransom money was all raised and Oral was given a new lease on life so that he could dream up new promotional schemes for the future.

According to the St. Petersburg Times, Oral Roberts does not lack when it comes to personal finances. The newspaper stated that Roberts has a \$285,000 home in Palm Springs, a \$2.4 million dollar home in Beverly Hills, his exclusive house in Tulsa, and a \$35,000 country club membership.

Example #2--Dr. Percy Collett

Dr. Collett, a medical doctor, worked almost 50 years with the people in the Amazon River Basin of South America. He claims to have been transported to heaven in 1982 for 5½ earth days. He talked with God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Elijah, Elisha, Abraham, Moses, Paul and others. He viewed the mansions of the saints and toured the buildings now under construction. He was taken to "his" mansion 700 miles

up from the city's foundation. He toured each level of heaven and viewed its different departments and activities. Jesus talked with him about events soon to occur on earth—the battle of Ezekiel 38, the rapture, and Armageddon. He was sent back to earth with instructions to take a leave of absence from the mission field and declare what he had seen and heard.

For a contribution of \$100.00 one can receive a video tape presentation of this trip to heaven. The promotional flier which promotes this video had this to say, "Dr. Collet was 'caught up in the third heaven' even as Paul was. The difference being, Paul was not allowed to utter the things he saw and heard, while Dr. Collett, almost 2000 years later, was commanded to do so." Contrast this with 2 Corinthians 12:1-10. Many others are claiming to have had trips to heaven or visions of heaven, including Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho, "pastor of the world's largest church" in Seoul, Korea, who claimed to have spent 3 hours in the third heaven.

1 Corinthians 13:8 and Temporary Sign Gifts

The spiritual gifts listed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 are grouped into the three categories.

Category 1

the word of wisdom
the word of knowledge

Category 2

Faith
gifts of healing
working of miracles
prophecy
discerning of spirits

Category 3

kinds of tongues
interpretation of tongues

In the very next chapter, three of these gifts are mentioned again as Paul discusses the permanence of love:

Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away (1 Corinthians 13:8, NASV).

From each category, Paul selected one gift. Is it possible that Paul intended the one gift to represent the entire category? Often in Scripture, the part is put for the whole, a figure of speech called "synecdoche." Instead of laboriously listing all the gifts, which he had just done in the previous chapter, Paul could have easily listed one representative gift to stand for each of the three categories.

If this interpretation is correct, then what Paul says about each gift would be true for all of the gifts in the category. For example, if tongues were to cease, then obviously the gift of interpretation would necessarily cease as well. Once tongues had ceased, there would no longer be a need for interpretation. Thus, according to 1 Corinthians 13:8, the gifts in categories 1 and 2 would be done away (rendered inoperative), and the gifts in category 3 would cease. All of the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11, therefore, should be considered as temporary gifts.

The gifts of knowledge and wisdom were special revelatory gifts which were needed in the days prior to the to the completed New Testament (compare 1 Corinthians 13:2). Imagine a local church today trying to survive without the New Testament Scriptures as a pattern and guide! Divine knowledge and wisdom were essential in the infancy period of the early Church. Today, "all truth" which is necessary for the godly walk of believers has been recorded on the pages of the completed Bible (cf. John 16:13).

The second category contains several individual gifts--faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, and discerning of spirits. Certainly, as prophecy was done away (1 Corinthians 13:8), there no longer would be a need for discerning of spirits. If there were no more true prophets, then it would not take much discernment to spot a false one! If there were no true prophets, then anyone claiming to be a prophet would be a false prophet.

The temporary character of the miraculous gifts (gifts of healing and miracles) is explained in Hebrews 2:3-4:

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him, God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

These sign-gifts were given to authenticate and confirm the word of the apostles (cf. Mark 16:17,20).

Most commentators agree that the gift of faith was a special "miracle-working" or "wonder-working" faith (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:2; Matthew 17:19-20; 21:21). The gift of faith, possessed by only some believers, should not be confused with faith as a Christian virtue (1 Corinthians 13:13) possessed by every believer. "Miracle-working" faith is best illustrated by the healing of the lame man in Acts 3:

And His name through faith in His name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by Him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all (Acts 3:16; cf. Acts 6:8).

Peter was given a special gift of faith in order to trust Christ for this remarkable miracle!

When the gifts of healing and miracles were terminated, there was no longer a need for the special gift of "miracle-working" faith. Thus, all gifts in category 2 were most likely done away before the end of the first century.

As this study has suggested, the gifts of knowledge, tongues, and prophecy (1 Corinthians 13:8) are representative of all three categories of gifts. If this is true, then it follows that all nine of the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 were temporary gifts and ceased or were done away in the apostolic period.

1 Corinthians 13 and Temporary Gifts

Paul's basic argument in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 is as follows:

THERE ARE THREE THINGS THAT WILL **FAIL** (verse 8).

These are the less important things.

THERE ARE THREE THINGS THAT WILL **REMAIN** (verse 13).

These are the more important things.

THERE IS ONE THING THAT WILL **NEVER FAIL** (verse 8).
IT WILL REMAIN FOREVER (verse 13).

This is the most important thing (verse 13)
and therefore this is what we are to
follow after (1 Corinthians 14:1).

Note: “Knowledge” (verse 8) should not be confused with knowledge in general. This verse refers to the special gift of knowledge (see 1 Corinthians 12:8 and 13:2). The gifts of knowledge and wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8) were special revelatory gifts which were needed in the days prior to the completed New Testament. Imagine a local church today trying to survive without the New Testament Scriptures as a pattern and guide! Divine knowledge and wisdom were essential during the infancy period of the early church. Today “all truth” which is necessary for the godly walk of believers has been recorded on the pages of the completed Bible (compare John 16:13).

Note: In 1 Corinthians 13:10 we have the expression “that which is perfect.” To understand this word we need to see how it is used in the New Testament.

It is used in the following passages: Matthew 5:48 (twice); 19:21; Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 2:6; 13:10; 14:20 (“men”); Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 3:15; Colossians 1:28; 4:12; Hebrews 5:14 (“full age”), 9:11; James 1:4 (twice); 1:17,25; 3:2; 1 John 4:8.

In light of this usage, the word seems to carry two basic ideas:

1) the idea of **MATURITY** (see especially 1 Corinthians 2:6; 14:20; Ephesians 4:13; Colossians 1:28; 4:12; Hebrews 5:14; James 3:2). Often this idea is in contrast with the idea of the immaturity of children (see 1 Corinthians 13:11; 14:20; Ephesians 4:13-14; Hebrews 5:13-14).

2) the idea of **COMPLETENESS** (see Colossians 4:12; James 1:4).

We should also note that this word is used to describe the Bible in James 1:25--“the perfect law of liberty.”

The chart on the reverse side of this sheet may help in understanding Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13.

The early Church of the first century	The Church during the ensuing centuries of church history	The Church in heaven (the eternal state)
The Church's infancy and childhood.	The Church growing and developing and maturing.	The Church reaching absolute maturity or perfection.
The Church receives revelation in a partial, "piecemeal" fashion (God's truth coming "bit by bit" in a fragmentary manner)--see verse 9.	The Church possesses God's full revelation--the completed Bible (all 66 Books).	The Church at home with the Lord, face to face with Christ our Saviour, enjoying His Person and Presence.
<p style="text-align: center;">↓ ↓ ↓</p> The gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge are in force. These are revelatory gifts.	<p style="text-align: center;">↓ ↓ ↓</p> The gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge have <i>failed, ceased</i> and <i>vanished away</i> (verse 8). These are the "childish things" which the childish Corinthians were making such a big fuss over.	<p style="text-align: center;">↓ ↓ ↓</p> There is no need for the gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge in the eternal state.
The virtues of faith, hope and love are needed.	The virtues of faith, hope and love <u>remain</u> (verse 13).	Faith and hope do not remain in the eternal state. They are replaced by sight (see 2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:1; Rom. 8:24-25).

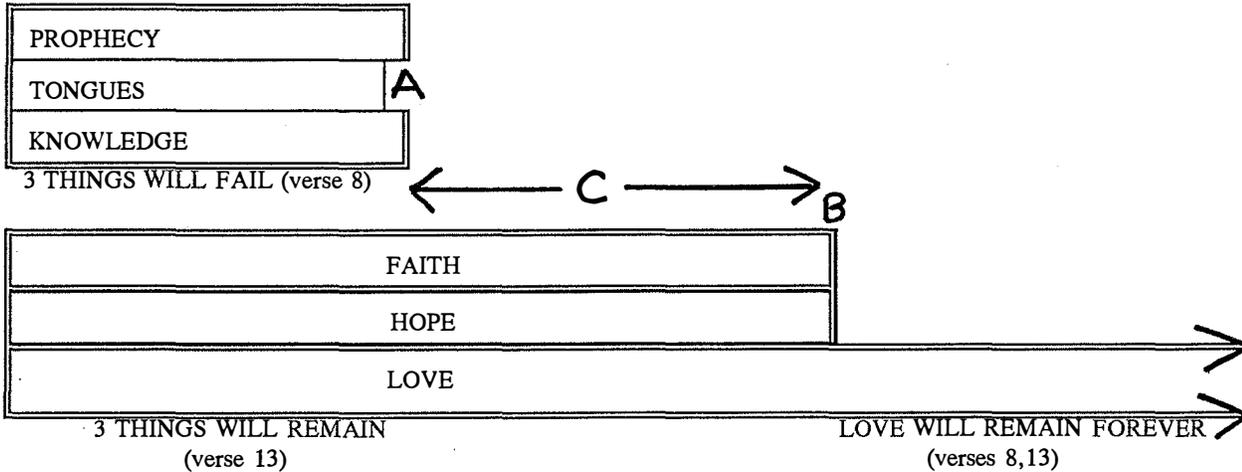
**"Love Never Fails"
(verse 8)**

Love REMAINS throughout eternity and is therefore the "GREATEST" of the virtues (verse 13).

Compare These Two Models

Which Model Best Explains the Biblical and Historical Facts?

The Fundamentalist Position
(The Three Gifts Are Temporary)

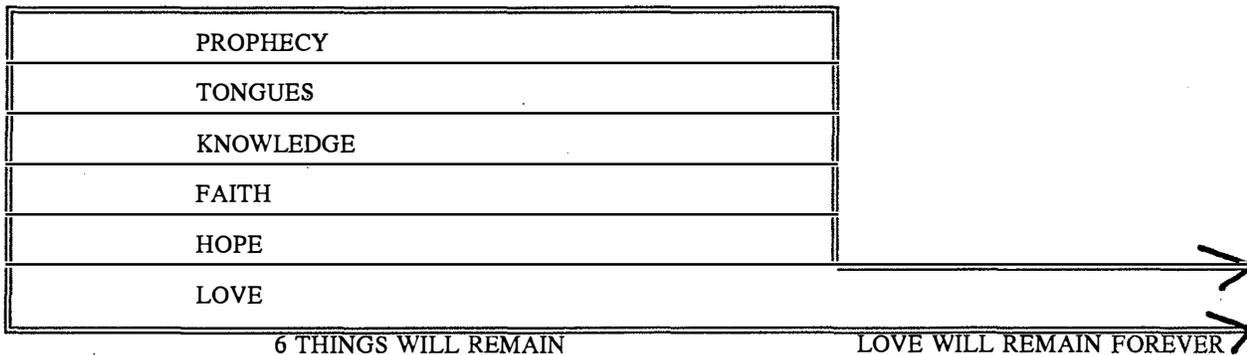


- A = termination of the gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge
- B = termination of faith and hope (as the believer is with the Lord)
- C = a period of time during which there will be no prophecy/tongues/knowledge but there will be faith/hope/love

Identification of the periods:

- 1) THE APOSTOLIC AGE (1st Century) - the period when there will be prophecy/tongues/knowledge
- 2) THE PRESENT AGE (from the end of the first century to the rapture of the church), see "C" above
- 3) THE FUTURE AGE when believers are with the Lord (and there will be no need for faith and hope then).

The Charismatic Position
(The Three Gifts Are Permanent)



Identification of two discernable periods:

- 1) **THE PRESENT AGE** (from Pentecost to the Lord's coming). Throughout this present age we are to expect the gifts of prophecy, tongues and knowledge to be in effect as well as the virtues of faith, hope and love.
- 2) **THE FUTURE AGE** when believers are with the Lord. There will be no need for prophecy, tongues, knowledge, faith and hope then.

Which of these two views (the FUNDAMENTALIST POSITION or the CHARISMATIC POSITION) better explains the statements of 1 Corinthians 13:8-13?