

APPENDIX 2

1 CORINTHIANS 13:8 AND
TEMPORARY GIFTS

The spiritual gifts listed by Paul in 1 Corinthians
12:8-11 are grouped into three categories (see page 50):

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 completed New Testament (cf. 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!

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.