

Love Never Fails, Gifts Do End
1 Corinthians 13:8-10

INTRO:

The verses before us today in **1 Corinthians 13:8-10** are controversial. They are not controversial because of the reason Paul wrote them, but because we try to find our own views in these verses. Paul wants us to know, love never ever fails, charismata eventually ends.

Because of the controversy many do not see what Paul indeed is saying. Let us see what we can see as we look at these verses.

I. The Permanent and the Passing (v.8 -9)

II. The Perfect is Coming (v. 10-12)

III. The Conclusion (v. 13)

I. The Permanent and the Passing (v.8 -9)

A. *“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. For we know in part and we prophesy in part.” (vs.8–9)*

Paul’s thesis statement of this paragraph is verse 8. Love never [ever] fails but the big three charismata to the Corinthian Church will end. They will fail.

1. The details are important. The two showy gifts of prophecy and knowledge twice are said to end, both in verse 8 and repeated in verse 9. The Greek word here is the same verb used in **Romans 6:6**;

“Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him that the body of sin might be done away with, in order that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”

2. The verb and the voice of the middle statement is different. *“Whether there are tongues, they will cease.”* Some say this difference is stylistic. I would think that the mention of prophecy and knowledge and not tongues again in verse 9 indicates that God will handle tongues differently. However the verb is handled, it means that tongues also will end, and probably in a different way from prophecy and knowledge.

B. The second point Paul made was that both prophecy and knowledge were partial. God never gave completed revelation through prophecy or knowledge. He gave as much light as they needed at the moment and indeed He made His revelation progressively over many centuries. Notice, tongues, the star of the show for many, disappears from sight in verse 8 never to appear again in this chapter.

II. The Perfect is Coming (v. 10-12)

A. The partial will be rendered inoperative when the perfect is come. (v.10)

“But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.”

The big question is: what is ***“the perfect?”*** The word is neuter so it is a perfect thing not a person. The word means the completion or the end. It can also imply coming to full maturity. This is where the positions of the gifts come in to play. To some the perfect is when Christ will come. To others it is when the Word of God is completed. To illustrate this perfect Paul gives us two illustrations, two word paintings.

B. Picture One, maturity connected with ***“the perfect.”*** (v.11)

“When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

Those who do not like the idea of the maturity of the church and the revelation meaning the elimination of sign gifts try to say the point here is not maturity. To me this is being unwilling to see the obvious. One point about these gifts is that historically they were confined to the early life of the church. When the Apostles died off, the sign gifts did also. They were non-existent until the beginning of the twentieth-century.

C. Picture Two, knowing as we are known. (v.12)

“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.”

This speaks of our seeing what God is doing. Someday, we will see Him face to face. We are going to know even as we are known. No partial knowledge here. So, is the perfect, the culmination of the age?

III. The Conclusion (v. 13)

A. (v.13) ***“And now remain faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”***

After all is said and done, and the perfect has come, the charismata is gone, there remains faith, hope, and love.

B. Let us consider these words to see if they can shed any light on what the perfect is. We have explored what the love Paul wrote about in this chapter is. Therefore, let us look at “faith.” I think of the description of faith in **Hebrews 11:1**.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

While there is a spiritual sight connected with the idea of faith. There is a clear contrast between sight and faith. We will not need faith when Christ appears for we shall see Him as He is.

C. Hope means the certainty that God's promise will come to past. In **Romans 8:23-25** we read about our hope.

“Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.”

D. While the last picture might suggest the completion of the age and the coming of Christ, if it is, how can faith and hope remain with love when the sign gifts are gone? I think that whatever Paul intended by the perfect, he did not say that the sign gifts continue. **(v.13)**
“And now remain faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”