

1 Cor. 13:8-13 “What Will Be Done Away”

For the Children: People often put too much emphasis on things that don't last long. A child gets some money, and instead of saving it for something more important, spends it all on lollies. A young person might prefer to buy brand-name clothes that everyone will notice, rather than something that is actually better-made and last longer. Some of the Corinthians gave too much attention to miraculous gifts, like prophecy and speaking-in-tongues – which were soon to be taken away from the church. They should have concentrated most on the things that last – especially, the love of God and of our neighbour. **Questions:** Should we expect any new messages from God in our times? What are “prophecy,” “speaking-in-tongues” and “knowledge” (v. 8) and why have they ended? In what way is love more important than these gifts?

Introduction:

First Point: What Will Be Done Away

- 1) Reigning in the Extraordinary: The apostle has been reigning in the over-emphasis on extraordinary gifts, such as speaking in tongues. He has pointed out that fruits of the Spirit are more important, especially love. Ch. 12 also seeks to put the brakes on the over-emphasis on tongues.
- 2) The End of New Revelation: Now he adds that gifts involving new revelation (prophecy, tongues and miraculous knowledge) are going to end anyway (v. 8) – while faith, hope and love remain (v. 13). Vss. 9-12 supply the reason. The gifts that will cease are all those that supply a miraculous knowledge of God's will in some way. We see the emphasis also on “knowing” and “seeing” God's will in vss. 9, 12 and 3.

Second Point: Why It Will Be Done Away

- 1) From Child to Adult: In v. 11 the apostle indicates that the gifts that delivered new revelation are for the “infancy” of the church. When the church became more mature, they would not be needed. This was due not to the personal maturing of the members, but what God was doing with His Word and Spirit.
- 2) From Partial to Full: Similarly, there is a contrast between a partial knowledge of God and a full knowledge. This is expressed in different ways. This was put in terms of seeing “dimly” (literally, as in a riddle) as with a reflection in the mirrors of that time; versus seeing “face-to-face” in the future. Prophecy in Paul's time was “in part”; but later it would be “perfect” = “complete.” Now they know in part, then fully. V. 12 is alluding to Num. 12:6-8, where Moses' closeness to God was contrasted with the revelation to the other prophets: a direct, clear and close communication versus something partial, indirect and puzzling..

Third Point: When It Will Be Done Away

- 1) Not about Heaven: Many think that this is contrasting the situation now with that in heaven – the time when the “perfect” comes, the partial is ended, when we see God “face-to-face” and will “know fully.” However, the main meaning of “perfect” is not so much moral perfection as completion or maturity. Moreover, Num. 12:5-8 is not about Moses' heavenly, face-to-face knowledge of God, but his more direct, clear and full communication with the Lord, on earth. In addition, v. 13 is not about things that abide in heaven – since there is no hope or faith in heaven, where we see God face-to-face a greater way – but about things that remain all through this present age.
- 2) The Completion of Scripture: The time, then, at which the extraordinary revelational gifts would cease is when Scripture is completed – which is also the end of the apostolic age. That is the end of the partial – prophecy in bits and pieces. That is what moves the church from infancy to maturity. This promise warns the charismatics of the time that they should not over-emphasize gifts that are about to cease, when Scripture is complete. If Paul meant to say that cessation would occur only in heaven, that would provide no warning against the Corinthian excess.
- 3) The Needed Emphasis: The application of this is 2-fold. First, the fixation the charismatics had with tongues etc. should be replaced with a zeal for studying God's Word – now that it is complete, that is how we can be “fully equipped” (2 Tim. 3:17). Second, we must desire the fruits of the Spirit – especially love (of God and neighbour) above the gifts. For love, in particular, lasts throughout this age and the next.

Conclusion:

