

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 1 – “Of the Holy Scriptures”, Message # 9 –
“Cessationism – The Glory of the Scriptures”, Presented in the Adult Sunday
School Class, by Pastor Paul Rendall on August 18th, 2019.**

Paragraph 1 – The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience⁽¹⁾, although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary unto salvation⁽²⁾. Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself, and to declare that, His will, unto his church⁽³⁾; and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God’s revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.⁽⁴⁾

1) 2nd Timothy 3: 15-17; Isaiah 8: 20; Luke 16: 29 and 31; Ephesians 2 :20; 2) Romans 1: 19-21; 2: 14-15; Psalm 19: 1-3; 3) Hebrews 1: 1 4) Proverbs 22: 19-21; Romans 15: 4; 2nd Peter 1:1 9-20

This morning I would like to present to you some Biblical arguments for Cessationism, or the truth that the revelatory gifts have ceased. Our Confession states at the end of this 1st Paragraph that “those former ways of God’s revealing His will unto his people being now ceased.” Those former ways of God’s revealing Himself include the use of the revelatory gifts by the New Testament Church in all the days since the days of the apostles and on to the end of the age. This is what I would like to prove to you from the Scriptures themselves.

I want to give to you this proposition – It is because the revelatory gifts have ceased that the Glory of what God has given to us in the Scriptures is better realized. So, in order to attempt to prove this proposition to you, I would like to have you turn with me over to –

1st Corinthians chapter 13, verses 1-13.

(1) Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. (2) And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. (3) And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. (4) Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; (5) does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; (6) does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; (7) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (8) 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. (9) For we know in part and we prophesy in part. (10) But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. (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. (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. (13) And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Now, as we think about this chapter, we see the abiding role of love, not only at the foundation of the church, when the revelatory gifts and the offices of apostle and prophet in the Church were in place, but all through the Church age. Paul, speaking in the 1st person, personifies the person who has the greatest of gifts, and he is saying – If I have the gift of prophecy and understood all mysteries and all knowledge, and all faith even so that I can remove mountains, but I have not love, I am nothing. He then goes on to define what love is and does in verses 4-7, and concludes by saying in verse 8 that love never fails. He then tells all Christians what to expect for the rest of this Church age in terms of the revelatory gifts. He mentions 3 of them in particular in verse 8 – Prophecies, tongues, and knowledge. And what he plainly says of them is that there would come a time when they would fail, as in the case of prophecy, they would cease, as the case of tongues, and it would vanish away, as in the case of revelatory knowledge. When would this take place? Verse 9 tells us. “For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

When we know in part and prophesy in part, refers to that time period of the New Testament when apostles and prophets, who were using their revelatory gifts so that the Church’s spiritual foundation could be laid in truth, were still on the scene; the apostles still alive and living). And when that time was over, with the death of the apostle John, the last of the apostles, then “that which was done in part” was done away with. The “perfect”, that is the complete Bible which was perfect in every way, sufficient in every way for faith and practice, had now come. With the finishing of the book of Revelation, and there was no more need for these revelatory gifts to continue. And so, the Church having the Old and New Testament Scriptures, it would be enough for the church all the way down through history until Christ’s Second Coming and the commencement of eternity.

There would no longer be any need for the comparatively childish state of the Church as it was, to continue. But love, the more excellent way to see the truth go forward, in connection with the canonized Scriptures, would abide until the end of the age. Paul, again personifying the mature “man” of understanding that the Church would eventually become because of abiding in, and understanding the Scriptures, says in verse 11 – “When I was a child, (having these extraordinary gifts and the apostles to oversee their use, I understood as a child, but when I became a man (that is, after I received what was perfect in every way for my growth and establishment as a Christian) then I put away the childish things of thinking that I had to have these revelatory gifts continue to make me wise and holy. Once again, faith, hope, and love would be sufficient.

So what about verse 12 and 13? “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.” What time period does this refer to? Does it refer to the eternal state, as many people try to make it say? I think that we need to delve into these verses a little more in order that we might assure ourselves that the revelatory gifts of prophecy and tongues are no longer active in this New Testament Church age, and will they will not come into play any more in this age, even in the time of the Millennium.

I would like to point you to a paper which I just came across this past week as I was preparing for this study. It is entitled – “How do I Know the Miraculous Gifts Aren’t for Today?” It is by a man name Jon Anderson who is one of the pastors of Grace Immanuel Bible Church in Jupiter, Florida. In his paper he says this –

“Why must the miraculous gifts end before Christ’s return?” The main point of 1st Corinthians 13: 8-13 is readily apparent to anyone who simply reads the paragraph straight through. What do you see surrounding this whole discussion like bookends? Notice that Paul is making this simple contrast—three things are terminating and three things are abiding. Verse 8b

says, “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.” This is surrounded by 8a and 13a: “Love never fails,” and “But now faith, hope, love, abide these three.” Prophecy will be shut down, or abolished, as will the word of knowledge. Tongues will cease and pass away. On the other hand faith, hope and love all abide and remain. When do faith and hope end? When faith becomes sight (2 Cor. 5:7) and when hope is realized (Rom. 8:24-25).

Here is the impossible question for the continuationist: “According to your view of the ‘perfect/mature,’ these gifts will end at the return of Christ or the death of the saint. If that is true, then how can the three things that are terminating end at the exact same time as faith and hope, which abide and continue?” This impossible question shows how the continuationist position destroys the entire point of the paragraph. You can’t have the miraculous gifts terminating at Christ’s return when they are contrasted with things abiding or continuing, that also happen to end at Christ’s return.

In all my reading, I’ve only encountered one bold scholar who dared to answer this question. His answer? There must be a sense where faith and hope continue on into eternity. I’ll let him explain this answer in his own words: “Presumably in one sense Paul expects hope to continue beyond this life in the continued enjoyment of that for which we hoped... Put psychologically, we may ask: Will we stop looking forward in anticipation to what is ahead once we begin to enjoy the new heaven and the new earth?” He fails to mention any passages that would teach this truth regarding faith. Regarding this aspect of hope, however, he believes that 1st Corinthians 15: 19 teaches that our “hope is not merely the anticipation of the blessings to come, an anticipation no longer needed once those blessings have arrived, but a firm anchor in Christ himself.”

“Although I agree this statement is true, it doesn’t explain the passage. I don’t see how the passage says that our hope in Christ Himself won’t be realized in heaven. Otherwise, what do we make of the constant contrast between faith and sight, or hope and things already realized? His dichotomy between hoping for blessings and hoping for Christ is foreign to the question whether hope in Christ is realized at the beginning of the eternal state. I think it will be helpful to put ourselves in the shoes of the charismatic interpreter. Let’s assume that verse 12 was talking about eternity. If Paul was looking forward to heaven, and realizing that there were no miraculous gifts being used in heaven, what is the point of the exhortation? “Corinthians, watch out! You are so passionate about using the miraculous gifts, but don’t you realize that we won’t be using them in heaven? All you’ll have in heaven is love!”

“Of course that’s true. But that’s also true of preaching, hospitality, administration, showing mercy, and leadership. The saints of heaven will be no more edified by healings in heaven than hospitality. No one would waste their time listening to a prophet or a preacher when the Lamb is standing as though slain in front of them. There is a reason why Paul selected these gifts: prophecy, tongues, and a word of knowledge. Yet continuationists have no explanation for the question “Why these three?” In their view, all the gifts end at Christ’s return.

The better explanation is found in the fact that this warning is full of the awareness that these gifts were passing away and were about to be abolished after the apostolic circle died and the canon is completed. In that not-too-distant future, picture the churches that were focused on gifts that were dead and gone. Imagine Corinth. Here they are neglecting apostolic revelation and the gift of teaching the truth (ranking #1 and #3 in the list of 1st Cor. 12: 28). The only other ranked gift, prophecy, is abolished to their surprise after John dies. This church will have no ability to equip itself for any good work! At this point, they should have been focusing on the things that will abide: faith, hope, and love. We know that these things only come from

the ministry of the word, but Corinth has neglected that long ago, to their demise. Without heeding this exhortation of Paul, the lampstand in Corinth may well be removed.”

The continuationists have no satisfactory explanation about why these three gifts receive instruction about their termination when, according to their view, all the gifts end at the same time. Verse 13 proves that Paul has good reason to warn them that the termination of these gifts precedes Christ’s return. This paragraph (1 Cor. 13:8-13) teaches that the miraculous gifts end before the return of Christ, when faith becomes sight and hope is realized.”

I have found that this paper really does answer the question which very naturally comes to our minds when we read verses 12 and 13. But what about the face-to-face phrase there in that verse? Doesn’t that mean eternity when we will see Christ face to face? Well, we will address that phrase in our next session.

Quote from Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and its Fruits*, Vol. 8, the Ethical Writings, Sermon 14, *Divine Love Alone Lasts Eternally* Pages 361-363 –

“When the Spirit of God is poured out for the producing and promoting divine love, he is poured out in a more excellent way than when he is poured out in miraculous gifts, as the Apostle expressly teaches in the latter part of the foregoing chapter. When enumerating many miraculous gifts, he advises to covet the best of them, but then adds, "yet I show you a more excellent way," viz. to seek the influence of the Spirit of God working charity or divine love in the heart. Surely, the Scripture speaking of the future glorious state of the church as such an excellent state gives no reason to conclude that the Spirit of God will then be poured out in any other way than in the most excellent way. Doubtless the most excellent way of giving the Spirit is for the most excellent state of the church.

That state of the church being so much more perfect than any which went before does not argue that then there shall be extraordinary gifts. But rather the contrary; for the Apostle himself in the text and context speaks of those extraordinary gifts failing, ceasing, and vanishing away to give place to a way of the influence of the Spirit which is more perfect. For, join the two following verses with the text: "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Here you see that is implied as

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a reason why prophecy, and tongues and faith fail, and charity remains; because that which is imperfect gives place to that which is more excellent, that more excellent way, of which the Apostle had before spoken, remains when all these cease. Prophecy and miracles argue the imperfection of the state of the church, rather than the perfection. For they are means proper and designed by God rather as a stay and support, or as leading strings, if I may so say, to the church in a state of infancy rather than as means adapted to its state in full growth. And the Apostle seems to speak of them as such. When the Christian church first began after Christ's ascension, that was the infancy of the church, and then it needed miracles and prophecies to establish it. But being once established, and the canon of Scripture completed, they ceased. Which by the Apostle's arguing shows the imperfection of them, and how much inferior they are to the influence of the Spirit of God in divine love. Why therefore should we expect that they should be restored again when the church is come, as it were, to the stature of a man? See what the Apostle says in the eleventh verse, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." The Apostle

seems to call these gifts of prophecy and working miracles childish things in comparison with that nobler fruit of the Spirit, divine love.

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The gloriousness of the future times of the church is certainly no argument that they will then have prophecy and miracles. For surely it will not be more glorious than the heavenly state. The heavenly state is the most perfect of all. But yet the Apostle teaches that in that state those gifts shall all be at an end, and the influence of the Spirit in divine love only remain, as is plain by the text with the following verses. It does not appear that there will be any need of miraculous gifts in order to bring about the glorious times of the church. God is able to do it without them. If the Spirit of God be poured out only in his gracious influences in converting souls, and infusing divine love into them in such a measure as he may, this will be enough without revelations or miracles to produce all the effects which need to be produced in order to bring about the glorious times, as we may be convinced by the little which we have seen in the late outpouring of the Spirit of God in this and the neighboring towns. (He's talking about the 1st Great Awakening) If we needed any new rule to guide us, if the canon of the Scripture were imperfect, there would indeed be some need of restoring miracles, and revelations, and prophecy. For it is impossible the canon of the Scripture should be added to, without revelation, which is a miraculous gift. And it is requisite that revelation should be confirmed by miracles. But we have no need of another Scripture, or that this Scripture should be added to. We have a perfect rule already by which to walk."