

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 1 – “Of the Holy Scriptures”, Message # 10 –
“Cessationism – When the Perfect Comes”, Presented in the Adult Sunday
School Class, by Pastor Paul Rendall on August 25th, 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;

Psalms 19: 1-3; 3) Hebrews 1: 1 4) Proverbs 22: 19-21; Romans 15: 4; 2nd Peter 1:1 9-20

Today we want to continue to look at the subject of the cessation of the miraculous gifts. Last Sunday I began to present the evidence for Cessationism from 1st Corinthians 13: 1-13, to which I would direct your attention to once again. Let me read the passage once again and then I will present to you more of the evidence that these revelatory gifts have completely ceased, and will not need to come back, to be used by the saints, ever again.

1st Corinthians 13: 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.

1. Review –

Here in these verses we find the contrast between what is going to abide during the whole church age and what was temporary and confined to the time in which there were apostles on the scene, and which ended with the death of the apostle John. The revelatory gifts of prophecy, tongues, and revelatory knowledge, we are told in verse 8 will fail, will cease, and they will

vanish away but love never fails. So, we should understand from this that faith, hope, and love will abide during this whole church age, and then love will go on into eternity. Love is the greatest of these three for this very reason, that it will continue to be the fruit of the Spirit which will continue to be in use throughout eternity. Faith and hope will become fully realized when we see the Lord Jesus face to face and they will cease when Christ returns.

Now, the argument of Pastor Jon Anderson which I quoted to you last week was this – “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.” This, my brethren, I believe is an irrefragable argument. It cannot be refuted. Paul’s intention was to show us that there would come a time when these revelatory and miraculous gifts would cease, while faith, hope, and love will continue until Christ comes back and ushers in eternity.

2. The Perfect, and that which is done away with.

Now, at this time, I want to build on that argument and focus our attention on verses 9 and 10 for a few minutes; then after that on verses 11-13. Verse 9 says – “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.” What is usually thought of, by many continuationists and others, in terms of the wording of verse 9, is that during this whole church age we will only know in part and we will prophesy in part. But when the “perfect” comes, that is the time of Christ’s return and the introduction of the eternal state, the revelatory gifts will cease. But when we realize the strength of the argument, that in this passage, that which is to fail, cease, and vanish away is being contrasted with what is to never fail or to be done away with all during this Church age until Christ returns, it truly does appear that “the perfect” of verse 10 is referring, most certainly in the primary sense, to the Scriptures.

Because when we simply look at the context of these verses, Paul says – “For we know in part and prophesy in part”, we should be able to see that the terms, “know”, and “prophesy”, are referring to the saints receiving the New Testament truth of God’s word to them orally spoken to them, through the exercise of those revelatory gifts that he has just mentioned, by gifted saints in their own church. Paul is saying – We, of this apostolic time period in the early Church, we who have these gifts, know and prophesy only in part. It is not as though their prophecies were inherently flawed, it is just that they were not the complete and total revelation, each prophecy taken individually. Individually as apostles, and prophets, and tongues-speakers with interpreters – Paul is saying – We are giving to you the very word of God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But even we, who have received these great gifts, need to admit that we only know in part and prophesy in part, in comparison to what is coming, which will be perfect because the Scriptures will not need to be questioned, or affirmed by men to be true, or judged at all any longer by men, even gifted men, what the word of God is; what God’s revealed truth and will are, for Christ’s Church. Because God’s revealed will and word will all be written down, and thus it will be completely seen and understood, when the Scriptures are canonized; and as such, they will be the perfect expression and standard in every sense necessary, for the Church to be able to understand God’s thoughts and will on any subject, during the whole rest of the

Church age. Jude verse 3 confirms that these revelatory gifts were for this babyish state of the church. Jude says – “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” Jude is not speaking about their personal faith when he says that they, and we, ought to contend for the faith. He is saying that we should contend for the doctrinal and practical faith that was once delivered to the saints in the days of the apostles. He was writing to them the very word of God himself; that word which would exhort them to do that very thing; defining for them the kind of men they needed to confront and to address their errors.

Now, part of the proof of what I am saying to you now; that this is the correct interpretation of this passage in 1st Corinthians 13, is found in 1st Corinthians 14, verses 26-33 if you will turn with me there. Here we are being shown Paul’s instructions for the saints at Corinth during a typical worship service of that day, when they were being held, and were making use of, the revelatory gifts. He says – “How is it then, brethren?” “Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation.” “Let all things be done for edification.” “If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret.” “But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.” “Let two or three prophets speak, and the others judge.” “But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent.” “For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.” “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”

Now, I hope that you will agree with me, that in this New Dispensation of the Church, and in this New Testament church at Corinth, which had all of the revelatory gifts, this was not at all a perfect way of establishing the word of God. Gifted saints of God were using their gifts and if they followed Paul’s instructions they would be able to build each other up, and they could be established in the good word of God in this oral way of communicating to each other the word of God. Although it was sufficient for that time, in many ways it was difficult and sometimes there was confusion over what was really the word and will of God. These regulations were given to them by Paul for their good so that there would be edification, but there was the necessity of coming to terms with whether a certain prophet really was conveying to them the word of the Lord on a particular issue, or a particular doctrinal truth, or an explanation of God’s will in relation to His commands. Tongues-speakers needed an interpreter, and prophets would speak while the others judged. They were all learning together, and it was only by their being able to evaluate and judge when a prophet spoke, whether they were judging these things rightly.

The will of God and explanations of what was doctrinally true and right were set forth by these prophets, but still they needed to carefully listen to what was being said, and judge each other according to the gift given to them, whether what was being said, was the very word of God, or not. This, as I have said, was sufficient and adequate for that time, but certainly it was not perfect. The perfect, that is the Scriptures, were needed to bring final certainty to all the doctrinal and practical truth set forth by the apostles and prophets, so that there would be no question about what God was expecting of all of His saints. When the perfect came, then that which was in part would be done away; that is, these revelatory gifts. In the progression of the passage, this does make perfect sense.

3. The Childish things of the Revelatory Gifts put away, the Church pursues Maturity, all together, in love, through obedience to the Scriptures.

So, when we get to verse 11 of 1st Corinthians 13, the illustration used there also perfectly makes sense and fits in. “When I was a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” We see here that Paul is not only speaking individually for himself, here, but he is speaking on behalf of the whole church growing up in Christ. For the whole Church to grow up into Christ, to the full stature of a man, the childish things of the revelatory gifts needed to be set aside. This verse seems in my mind to have a necessary connection to –

Ephesians chapter 4, verses 11-16 – “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ – from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

Now, it is very important that we realize that the revelatory gifts were essentially connected with the office of apostles, prophets, and evangelists of that day. They not only held offices in the Church; they were gifts given to the Church by the risen Christ Himself. He Himself gave these gifts and these offices to the early Church. That is why the gifts did not continue on, because when those offices ceased, the revelatory gifts also ceased with them. The miracles done by the apostles and others of the saints were given to verify the truth of the gospel and Christ’s resurrection from the dead, and the truth of the inspired spoken word of God. But the office of pastor-teacher which also existed back then, and does not appear to have had revelatory gifts associated with it, is the only one of these teaching offices which the Lord still gifts His Church with, in the days since the early Church.

Notice that the same concepts and ideas are brought forward here as you saw in 1st Corinthians 13. The work of the ministry of the word is for the equipping of the saints for their work of further ministry in the church and outside of it in evangelism and good works to people both in and outside of the church. Its purpose over the entire Church age is bring the saints to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of Christ, to a perfect man (notice the word – perfect) (the preaching of a perfect completed canonized word will bring the whole Church Universal here upon the earth will bring the Church to this) to a better and better knowledge of the Son of God, all together; the whole Church over her many generations being pictured as needing to come to this greater maturity in understanding, from an implied more child-like state in the early times of the Church when the apostles and prophets and evangelists were on the scene.

The purpose of the gift of the pastor-teacher therefore, is to preach the written word, to further this glorious growth unto maturity in discernment of sound doctrine and God-glorifying practice, so that we will no longer be tossed around to and fro, and be carried away with various winds of doctrine. Rather we will be speaking the truth in love; speaking the truth of the Scriptures in love (that which is to abide forever) so that we will grow up in all things into Christ who is our Head. Every part of the body can learn to do its part when each member knows and obeys the truth of the Scriptures.

4. When the Perfect comes (the Scriptures), then the Church sees face to face.

Verse 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.” Now, this verse seems to be very conclusively, to many Cessationists and Continuationists alike, to refer primarily to Christ’s Second Coming when we shall meet our Lord face to face, and be made like Him, for we shall see Him as He is, it says in 1st John 3: 2. But hold on a second; first of all, there is no reference to Christ’s Second Coming mentioned in this passage. It is inferred from the word perfect in verse 10, and the words, “face to face” here in verse 12. But is it not good exegesis, my brethren, to look at the other parts of the Bible and to compare Scripture with Scripture, as to where this term is used and how it is used in those contexts? If we do this, I believe that we will come to conclusion which is in line with the interpretation that I have given to you of these verses thus far.

Genesis 32: 29 and 30 – “Then Jacob asked, saying, tell me Your name, I pray.” “And He said, ‘Why is it that you ask about My name?’” “And He blessed him there.” “So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: ‘For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.’”

These verses are set in the context of Jacob’s wrestling with a Theophany, a physical manifestation of the Pre-Incarnate Christ. Notice that Jacob actually did wrestle with “a Man” as He is called in verse 24, and this “Man” actually dislocated Jacob’s thigh during the wrestling match. But I want you to notice that this revelation of God to Jacob is a much greater revelation to him than he ever had before, even greater than his seeing the vision of the ladder when he was converted at Bethel. It was a face to face encounter.

Judges 13: 17- 23 – “Then Manoah said to the Angel of the Lord, ‘What is Your name, that when Your words come to pass we may honor You?’” ‘and the Angel of the Lord said to him, ‘Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful” “So Manoah took the young goat with the gran offering, and offered it upon the rock to the Lord.” “And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on – It happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar – the Angel of the lord ascended in the flame of the altar!” “When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground.” “When the Angel of the Lord appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the Lord.” “And Manoah said to his wife, ‘We shall surely die, because we have seen God!’” “But his wife said to him, ‘If the Lord had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have old us such things as these at this time.’”

Another face to face encounter, and this one predictive of Samson’s birth and the greater revelation of his being a Nazarite to God from the womb, the one whom God was going to raise up to be a mighty judge in Israel; typical of our Lord Jesus Christ. Both of these face to face encounters that we just read about have been written down or preserved for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. These things are a part of the Holy Scriptures and would not be known to us, and we could not learn from them at all, unless God had wisely determined that it would be for our good that we know about these things. They were written down for the upbuilding of the Church in these latter times of the Church age. This is how we see God face to face, in our times. We see Him portrayed perfectly for us, in the Scriptures.

Deuteronomy chapter 5: 1-7 – “And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: ‘Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The

LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive. The LORD talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire.” “I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up the mountain.” “He said: ‘I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.’ “You shall have no other gods before Me.”