

# The Cessation and Disappearance of the Temporary Gifts

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God is no longer distributing some gifts to His Church today. The Bible teaches that there were nine temporary gifts that were only given during the days of early apostolic Christianity. They were used during the original birth and expansion of the church and before the canon of Scripture was formed and finalized. These same nine gifts are no longer operative in the Church today. The nine gifts were necessary to confirm the *messengers* giving out God's New Testament revelation and also confirm their *messages* that were being presented prior to the formation of the Bible (1 Cor. 13:10).

## 9 Temporary Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:8-10)

### BEFORE Scripture Complete

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1. **Word of wisdom** – how to understand & apply the word before the Bible was complete (speak with insight)
2. **Word of knowledge** – how to systemize & communicate the word before Bible was complete
3. **Faith** – the belief that God can do supernatural miracles prior to the canonization of Scripture (1 Cor. 13:2)
4. **Gifts of healing** – to prove the new word of revelation
5. **Working of miracles** – to authenticate the word
6. **Prophecy** – predicting the word (foretelling + forthtelling)
7. **Discerning of spirits** – knowing the truth of the word
8. **Divers kinds of tongues** – confirming the word (Mk. 16:20)
9. **Interpretation of tongues** – confirming the word

The temporary sign gifts confirmed the messengers who were receiving direct revelation from God and in a specific way confirmed early New Testament Christianity and the Bible as it was being delivered through piecemeal revelation (1 Cor. 13:9-12). All of these nine gifts were necessary when the Scriptures were being given out in piecemeal fashion, during the days of the early Church, as the Bible was slowly being formed. Once again, all of these nine gifts were in some way related to confirming the *messengers* of that day and their *messages* which they were sharing, since God had not yet given the Bible in a completed and confirmed format like we have today.

- **Word of wisdom**

This was a gift of special insight granted to the minds of certain individuals to understand and skillfully apply to life's situations the direct revelations that came from God BEFORE the finalization of the "word" or Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15; 1 Cor. 2:6-7, 13; Eph. 3:5). We should possess wisdom today in applying the Bible to our lives (Col. 1:9; Ps. 90:12), but it is not the gift called the "word of wisdom" which existed before the canonization of the Bible.

- **Word of knowledge**

This was a special ability to understand revelatory truth and then systemize and communicate the information BEFORE the "word" or Bible was canonized and completed. This is not a knowledge that a would-be faith healer has concerning someone in his TV audience who has a migraine headache! Of course, today we should be growing in our knowledge of the Scriptures and God (Col. 1:9-10), but this special gift labeled the "word of knowledge" was used prior to the formation of the Bible. God would supernaturally give people a "word of knowledge" about His will and purpose so they could communicate it to others. Once the Scriptures were completed, there would no more words of knowledge, but a book of knowledge (The Bible) that Christians could access and use for guidance.

- **Faith**

There was a special gift of faith given primarily to the apostles and some of their close associates so that they could perform supernatural miracles and miraculous healings (1 Cor. 13:2). These miracles would once again confirm themselves as God's messengers (apostles) and the messages they were giving regarding God's truth BEFORE the Bible was completed.

- **Gifts of healing**

These diversified gifts of healing were given to the apostles and their close associates of the early Church. It was the divinely given ability to restore the health of people who were suffering from many different types of diseases (Acts 3:6-8;

5:12-16; 8:6-7; 9:17-18; 33-35; 19:12; 20:9-10; 28:9). These specialized gifts of healing were given to confirm the apostles and their revelatory messages BEFORE the Bible was complete (Mark 16:20). These gifts of healing were not intended as a permanent way to keep the Christian community in perfect health as is verified by the decline and use of these gifts (2 Cor. 12:8-9; Phil. 2:25-27; 1 Tim. 5:23; 2 Tim. 4:20).

**Mark 16:17 (Early New Testament Christianity)**

“And these **signs (miraculous signs)** shall follow them that **believe (not be performed by everyone who believed)**;

In my name shall **they (the apostles and their close associates who possessed these gifts)** cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues.”

**Mark 16:20 (Early New Testament Christianity)**

And **they** (the apostles) went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with **signs** (miraculous signs) following. Amen.

**The miraculous signs gifts were used to authenticate early New Testament Christianity by confirming the word (the truth being spoken) and the person speaking the truth prior to the completion of the Bible.**

- **Working of miracles**

This was an early first century apostolic Church gift that covered a wider range of miracles other than physical healing. This gift extended to the raising of the dead [Acts 9:40; 20:9-12], inflicting blindness [Acts 13:8-11], and the ability to cast out demons through God’s supernatural intervention and power [Acts 9:36-41; 19:11-12]. These miracles and wonders were performed by the apostles to confirm themselves as God’s messengers (2 Cor. 12:12) and also validate the new revelatory messages of truth that they were sharing BEFORE the Bible was completed.

- **Prophecy**

This was an early Church gift given to the apostles and prophets so they could *predict* God’s mind and Word [1 Cor. 14:30, 36] BEFORE the Bible had been canonized or completed. It involved *foretelling* and then *forthtelling* the new revelation being given. This was a foundational gift that was necessary to build the

Scriptures and establish New Testament Christianity (Eph. 2:20). After the foundation was established for the Church, the gift of prophecy, along with the other eight gifts mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:8-10, which helped build this foundation, would no longer be necessary.

- **Discerning of spirits**

This was the special gift and ability given to certain people to discern true and false revelation BEFORE the Bible was completed (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:20-21). It's not the same type of discernment mentioned in 1 John 4:1 ("try the spirits whether they are of God") which is something that all of God's people should possess. This gift of discernment (determining true and false revelatory messages) was very important so that the infant Church could be directed in God's truth before the establishment of the Biblical canon.

- **Divers kinds of tongues**

This was the supernatural, linguistic ability to speak in different kinds of literal human languages in order to confirm new revelation and apostolic authority BEFORE the Scriptures were completed (Mark 16:20; 2 Cor. 12:12) and also to confirm coming judgment upon the Jewish people BEFORE it occurred in AD 70 (1 Cor. 14:21-22).

- **Interpretation of tongues**

This was the divinely given ability to translate what others said in different human languages and give the exact meaning to the Church, so the Church could be edified or built up in the truth. Again, all of this occurred BEFORE the final recording of truth was given to God's people (1 Cor. 14:5, 13-19, 27-28).

These gifts were given to the Church for only a short period of time (about 30 years) to help formulate and substantiate the Word before it was finalized and completed. Don't fool yourself. Don't try and self-generate or self-impose these gifts upon yourself. You don't have these gifts since they were used for only a brief period of time in church history to bring about the formation of the Bible which we have and

hold in our hands today. The second century Christians viewed these gifts as already having disappeared since the Bible was already confirmed during the 1<sup>st</sup> century since the Bible or “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

There was to be no adding to the Scripture (Rev. 22:18) simply because the Scriptures were finalized in official letters. As a result, the special miraculous gifts were no longer necessary to confirm God’s truth and messengers since the Bible was completed. Also, the messengers themselves (the apostles and prophets) began to die off and would no longer be giving out revelatory messages since the Bible was completed. We discover this from various texts of Scripture.

Hebrews 2:3-4 is looking back into past church history and informs us that the earthly ministry of Jesus along with His original band of apostles was temporary. Their miraculous ministry (using miracles) to authenticate who they were and the truths which they taught had already been something of the historic past by AD 66 or 67 when the epistle of Hebrews was written. The original readers of the epistle who lived during the days of the apostles (or a second generation of Christians – looking back) verified that the miraculous confirming signs of the apostles was something that occurred in the past. Here is what the writer of Hebrews seems to be teaching.

**Hebrews 2:3-4 (written in AD 66-67) looking back on the Cessation of Miraculous Gifts**

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation (**God’s Word on salvation**); which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and **was confirmed (PAST TENSE) unto us (the original Christians who lived with the apostles - prior to AD 66-67) by them that heard him (the apostles who lived during the days of Jesus Christ); God also bearing them witness (the original apostles- not us today!**), both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”

In other words, the Christians living during AD 66 or 67 no longer possessed the sign gifts that were originally given to the apostles and early church during its birth

phase and original expansion. By this time, the gifts and gifted men were seen to have passed off the church scene. They were already confirmed in the past during the days when the miraculous gifts were still being used. These temporary and transitory gifts of the apostles were already viewed as something of the historic past during the years of AD 66 or 67 (the time of the writing of the epistle of Hebrews). Apostolic messages and miracles were limited to the original generation of Christians who lived during the time of the apostles (2 Cor. 12:12). The Christians by AD 66-67 no longer witnessed the apostolic miraculous gifts, since the letters of the Bible were being completed and circulated among the churches. In short, no more revelation and authentication through miracles was necessary since the Bible was recorded down and being disseminated among the churches (1 Cor. 13:10).

The fact that the supernatural gifts of healing became nonexistence is evident. Epaphroditus was not healed by the apostle Paul (Phil. 2:25-30) and the apostle Paul himself was not healed of his own malady (2 Cor. 12:7-10) and suffered an illness in the will of God. In fact, the gifts of healing and miracles were not intended to keep everyone in a perfect bill of health. They were intended to confirm the Word of God and the messenger prior to the finalization of the canon. Therefore, the writer of Hebrews and the Christians living in the middle of the first century is already looking back to the cessation of the nine supernatural gifts, which were given to jumpstart the Church and authenticate God's messengers and the messages that they were giving out, prior to the completion of the canon of Scripture. As the Scriptures were completed the miraculous gifts also become obsolete and were no longer necessary for Church life and ministry.

With the passing away of the last apostles (eyewitness of Christ's resurrection – Acts 1:22) and the prophets, who laid the foundation of the church with their prophetic revelations (Eph. 2:20), the passing away of the miraculous gifts would naturally follow, which confirmed the prophetic revelations and teachings of the apostles and prophets (1 Cor. 13:10; Heb. 2:3). With no more apostles and prophets there would be no more ongoing revelation. If the men and their messages have ceased, then the miraculous gifts used to confirm the same men and messages, have also ceased.

The nine early gifts (1 Cor. 12:8-10) can be explained in two ways.

1. They were sign gifts that confirmed specific MEN (the apostles and prophets) as being genuinely from God (Mark 16:20; 2 Cor. 12:12).
2. They were sign gifts that confirmed specific MESSAGES these men shared before the Bible was completed (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

Once the Bible was complete, both the MEN and MESSAGES were no longer needed, along with these special miraculous gifts, which were given to help reveal and confirm these same MEN and MESSAGES that were establishing New Testament Christianity (Eph. 2:20).

Cleon Rogers, writing in Bibliotheca Sacra, wrote:

“After examining the testimony of the early Christian leaders whose ministry represents practically every area of the Roman Empire from approximately A.D. 100 to 400, it appears that the miraculous gifts of the first century died out and were no longer needed to establish Christianity.”

In 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, Paul lists three examples of the 9 temporary gifts (prophecies, tongues, knowledge) previously mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. He does this to prove that their purpose would no longer be necessary with the completion of the Bible. Since the Scriptures are now completed, each one of these 9 gifts would no longer be given to Christians for Church life and ministry in the future generations.

#### **1 Corinthians 13:8-10**

“Charity never faileth: but whether *there be prophecies*, they shall **fail (become entirely idle and useless)**; whether *there be tongues*, they shall **cease (stop in and of themselves)**; whether *there be knowledge*, it shall **vanish away (disappear)**. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part (**piecemeal revelation during Pauls’ day**). But when **that** which is perfect is come (**the completed Scriptures**), then **that** which is in part shall be **done away (prophecy and all the 9 sign gifts)**.”

Paul contrasts the partial revelation with the final or completed revelation of the Bible that God would one day dispense to the Church. The expression “that which is perfect is come” has sometimes been variously interpreted to mean the Rapture of the Church or the Eternal state so that Charismatic Christians can argue for the continuance (instead of the termination or cessation) of the supernatural gifts of early apostolic Christianity. However, such interpretations are amiss for they do not fit the wording and context of what Paul is teaching.

This verse is talking about a thing (“that”) – not a person (Jesus Christ) or an event (the Rapture). The word “perfect” (Greek – teleion) is never used of the Second Coming of Christ anywhere in the Bible. However, it is used to describe the Word of God (James 1:25). If the text was to teach the coming of Christ it would be masculine and thus read “When He which is perfect is come.” The phrase “when that which is perfect is come” is a proper translation. If Paul would have meant to describe the coming of Christ he would have been specific about this event, as he was in every other place in Scripture (II Thessalonians 2:1; I John 3:2; Philippians 3:20; 4:5; Titus 2:13).

The word “perfect” is elsewhere used as a descriptive reference of the Bible.

James 1:25

“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

“When the perfect comes” (literal reading of 1 Cor. 13:10) is set in contrast to what was “in part” in verse 9 (incomplete knowledge and prophecy or piecemeal revelation). The complete or “perfect thing” should logically be of the same kind as that which is partial. Contextually, this expression must therefore refer to the “perfect” or the completed knowledge and prophecy which would one day come, the canon of Scripture (2 Pet. 1:19), which here Paul identifies as the completed prophecy, which was officially closed in Revelation 22:19.

Paul is teaching that the nine temporary gifts (vv. 8-9), which were needed to reveal God’s truth and confirm the truth during the early apostolic days of the Church,



would no longer be necessary, when the “perfect thing,” the completed revelation of God’s Word, became fixed and final.

Larry Pettegrew is correct when he states:

“Interpreting ‘the completed’ as the New Testament is still the most natural and logical explanation of the passage – far better than trying to introduce the Rapture, Second Coming, death, or eternal state into the interpretation.”

In summary, “the perfect thing” (teleion) of verse ten is contrasted to incomplete prophecy (vs. 9). This means the completed prophecy would replace the partial prophecy and knowledge. Once the New Testament Scriptures are complete or finalized the incomplete revelations and prophecies would no longer be necessary.

Some people have argued that Paul could not mean this because his readers did not know there was going to be a New Testament and since the Holy Spirit would not have allowed Paul to write something totally incomprehensible to them. But how can anyone know for sure that the Corinthians did not know that there would one day be a new covenant document to complement the Old Testament?

In addition, how do we know that Paul is not telling them about the New Testament at this point? How else would the apostle explain that one day there would be a completed prophetic volume? Of course, the word “canon” would not to be used for the completed Scriptures for some 200 years later. The best way for Paul to explain the completion of the Bible was to relate it to a Book of completed prophecy. Partial revelation would be replaced by complete revelation (“the perfect thing”). The circulating letters of New Testament revelation would serve as a united witness of God’s final word (Jude 3) and eventually they would be brought together in the Bible that we know and love today.

The Bible teaches in unmistakable terms that the nine gifts given to apostolic Christianity served their purpose during the infant days of the Church and were temporary, transitory, and quickly terminated with the completion of Scripture.

Alva McClain wrote:

“When the church appears in the second century, the situation as regards the miraculous is so changed that we seem to be in another world.”

In his handbook of church history, Samuel Green wrote:

“When we emerge in the second century, we are, to a great extent in a changed world ...”

These historic observations are factually correct and remind us that signs and wonders faded out of the Church as the apostles passed away from the earthly scene, along with their revelatory messages. It’s very clear that throughout the history of the Church (from the second generation of Christians to the present – Hebrews 2:3) that untold millions of believers have NOT experienced the “sign gifts” knowing that they were temporary and had served their historic purpose during the early days of the Church.

When Christians seek to self-impose these gifts upon themselves, recreate, and revive these historic gifts, they will fall into the trap of mysticism and enter into esoteric and euphoric experiences outside the Bible (Col. 3:18, 23) as they seek to mimic the early sign gifts. Millions of believers have not embraced the errant “sign gift” theology of today knowing that the true sign gifts were given to authenticate the original band of apostles and prophets, as they transitioned from partial revelation to the completed revelation of the Bible (1 Cor. 13:10).

Most Christians rightfully acknowledge that these gifts were temporary and served their purpose in the historic past during the infant days of the Church. They also know that trying to reproduce these gifts today would be a fallacy and not benefit their spiritual growth in grace (2 Pet. 3:18-19) and finding their complete sufficiency in Christ (Phil.1:21; 3:10; 2 Cor. 3:5).

The burden of proof rests on the charismatic Church to prove that after 1900 years of absence within the Church that these miraculous gifts have once again suddenly and for no reason been reinstated. You cannot resurrect something which was foundational (Eph. 2:20), partial, and which would fail, cease, and vanish away (1

Cor. 13:8-10). Therefore, the sources behind the alleged revival of the sign-gifts, after 1900 years of cessation, would be as follows.

### **What is occurring with those who claim to possess the miraculous sign gifts?**

They are **spurious or sham gifts**; counterfeit experiences riddled with delusion, error, and lies (Col. 2:18; Jer. 23:25).

They are **self-produced and artificial recreations** of these gifts (psychological/psychosomatic experiences produced by one's own mind and emotions) which seem real but are not of God or after Christ (Col. 2:8).

They are **satanically manipulated**; Satan and demons interfering with one's emotions and producing counterfeit experiences in order to deceive people (2 Cor. 11:14; 1 John 4:1; Eph. 6:12; 1 Pet. 5:8).

tongues, grant healings to other people, and give out prophetic, extrabiblical revelations? In a word, they are fake reproductions of the miraculous gifts. The chart reveals viable sources related to the phenomenon occurring today among Charismatic Christians.

Don't be fooled. Don't be deceived. Believe what the Bible teaches regarding the cessation of the 9 sign gifts and don't place your experiences above the truth that is taught in the Bible regarding the cessation of these gifts. Truth must override our experiences even when our experiences might seem real and euphoric, causing us to feel excited and happy.

2 Peter 1:19 declares:

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy (the truth of Scripture); whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

Peter was comparing truth with the experiences that people pass through in life, even as he passed through his experience upon the Mount of Transfiguration. However, he declares that the truth of God's Word outweighs all experiences and

This is a helpful summary chart that determines the source and nature of the miraculous gifts which are allegedly being resurrected and reproduced in the lives of God's people today. This is especially true in the Charismatic and Pentecostal based churches. If the Bible emphatically declares that certain gifts have ceased, then what is occurring in the lives of people today who claim to speak in

should always be trusted above any experience that a person might pass through. The point is this, we must judge our experiences on the basis of the absolute standard of God's Word. We are to stick with the "more sure" Word. This means we should not waiver from the truth about the cessation of the 9 sign gifts. Believing what the Bible actually teaches on this subject will keep us from being led astray into error, falsehood, and deception that comes through placing unsound and erroneous experiences above the standard of God's enduring Word.

Larry Pettegrew once said:

"We must not make the tragic spiritual and doctrinal mistake of teaching the experience of the apostles instead of experiencing the teaching of the apostles."

We need to study the word that the apostles already gave us instead of trying to experience the miraculous things that the apostles did and resurrect the apostolic sign gifts that served their original purpose for early New Testament Christianity. Christians should not seek those gifts which were never promised to remain in ongoing church life and ministry. If one seeks a gift that is no longer available, then they will end up counterfeiting the gift and not possess the true gift.

John R. Stott wrote:

"What is described in Scripture as having happened to others is not necessarily intended for us, whereas what is promised to us we are to appropriate, and what is commanded us we are to obey."

We must determine what is normative or normal for today. We must be careful to not generalize for today everything that happened in Bible times. Because God has done something in the past for an individual or individuals, such as giving the apostles and some of their associates miraculous sign gifts (Mark 16:20), or granting some Christians temporary gifts to supply the needs of the infant church prior to the canonization of the Bible (1 Cor. 12:8-10), does not mean we should expect Him to do the same for us. Just because some Christians were given these supernatural gifts does not warrant the conclusion and belief that all Christians would receive them in the same continuing fashion throughout the history of the church.

McQuilkin has written:

“That an event was reported to have truly happened does not necessarily make it a revelation of God’s universal will.”

Be discerning and don’t be fooled by seeking spiritual gifts and experiences which are not promised for Christian living today. Remain committed to truth, follow what is the normal pattern for New Testament Christian living, and walk in the filling and fruit of the Holy Spirit as outlined in the epistles (Gal. 5:18, 25).

- On the following pages are various charts. The first chart illustrates the cessation or disappearance of the supernatural gifts of early New Testament Christianity. One can see how they were phased out over time.
- The second chart gives a list of the nine permanent gifts that were designed to remain in the church.
- For those who make the false charge that cessationists do not believe in the healing power of God, a final chart reveals that God still does heal through prayer and in fulfillment of His perfect will.

### **The Disappearance of the Supernatural Gifts**

I Corinthians 12:8-10	I Corinthians 12-28-30	Romans 12:3-8	Ephesians 4:7-11
Wisdom	Apostles	Prophecy	Apostles
Knowledge	Prophets	Ministry	Prophets
Faith	Teachers	Teachers	Evangelists
Healings	Miracles	Exhortation	Pastor-
Miracles	Healings	Giving	Teachers
Prophecy	Helps	Ruling	
Discerning of spirits	Governments	Mercy	
Tongues	Tongues		
Interpretation of tongues	Interpretation of tongues	***	***

No wisdom, knowledge, faith, healings, miracles, discerning of spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues are found in the \*\*\* columns which represent later epistles written to the local churches. This demonstrates that the miraculous gifts would no longer be necessary as the canon of Scripture was finalized.

The Bible does not teach *continuationism* in the present age regarding the supernatural gifts but *cessationism* or the disappearance of these 9 gifts of early apostolic Christianity. Here is a listing of the permanent gifts that have remained in the church since the revelation of the Bible was completed (1 Cor. 13:10).

## 9 Permanent Gifts AFTER Scripture was Completed

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- **Ministry** (Rom. 12:7)
- **Exhortation** (Rom. 12:8)
- **Giving** (Rom. 12:8)
- **Mercy** (Rom. 12:8)
- **Helps** (1 Cor. 12:28)
- **Governments/Ruling** (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:8)
- **Teaching** (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11)
- **Pastoring** (Rom. 12:8; Eph. 4:11)
- **Evangelism** (Eph. 4:11; Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5)

## God's Healing Program for Today is Prayer – Not Miraculous Gifts

**James 5:14-15** - "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him ... And the **prayer of faith** shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up..."

**1 John 5:14-15** – "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, **if we ask any thing according to his will**, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

**Supernatural Gifts are not Necessary for Healing!**