

## DO SPIRITUAL GIFTS CONTINUE TODAY?

by John Isaac Edwards

Paul wrote the church at Corinth, “Now concerning **spiritual gifts**, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (1 Cor. 12:1). There are nine (9) spiritual gifts “given by the Spirit” identified in 1 Corinthians 12: “the word of wisdom,” “the word of knowledge,” “faith,” “gifts of healing,” “working of miracles,” “prophecy,” “discerning of spirits,” “kinds of tongues,” and “the interpretation of tongues” (vv. 8-10). These gifts were supernatural in nature. “Knowledge,” for example, was knowledge that did not come by study, but without study. “Kinds of tongues” was the supernatural ability to speak languages other than your native tongue, without studying or being taught that language. Do these gifts continue today?

**1) SPIRITUAL GIFTS HAVE FAILED, CEASED, VANISHED AWAY, BEEN DONE AWAY AND PUT AWAY.** 1 Corinthians 13 tells the duration of spiritual gifts. “Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall **fail**; whether there be tongues, they shall **cease**; whether there be knowledge, it shall **vanish away**” (v. 8). These three (3) gifts are representative of all nine (9) spiritual gifts. The apostle said they would fail, cease, and vanish away. The question is

when would this happen? The answer: “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**” (vv. 9-10). Some think “that which is perfect” refers to Christ, and maintain that these gifts are operative today and will continue till He comes. However, “that which is perfect” does not refer to Christ. Christ is a He, not a that. Rather, that which is perfect is of the same nature as that which is in part — part knowledge and part prophecy. When divine revelation is complete, these gifts would fail, cease and vanish away. Also, observe Paul said, “...shall be **done away**” (v. 10). He illustrated the termination of the gifts in this manner: “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**” (v. 11). The “childish things” picture spiritual gifts, which existed during the infancy of the church. Those who argue spiritual gifts continue today have the church in its infancy, when the Bible confirms the church of Christ is in a state of maturity! Paul said, “For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (v. 12). Divine revelation is complete.

James spoke of “...the perfect law of liberty” (Jas. 1:25). Jude exhorted, “...earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Since that which is perfect has come, then spiritual gifts have failed, ceased, vanished away, been done away and put away!

**2) SPIRITUAL GIFTS HAVE SERVED THEIR PURPOSE.** What was the purpose of spiritual gifts? The Hebrew writer recorded, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was **confirmed** unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and **gifts of the Holy Ghost**, according to his own will?” (Heb. 2:3-4). Gifts of the Holy Ghost, along with signs and wonders, served to confirm the word. When Jesus sent forth the apostles to preach the gospel, “...they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and **confirming the word** with signs following” (Mk. 16:20). Once a thing is confirmed, it is confirmed for all time; it does not need to be confirmed again and again and again and again. Galatians 3:15 says, “Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be

*confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.*” Since the purpose of spiritual gifts has been served, the need for them no longer exists. They may be likened to the scaffolding that is erected when a building is being constructed. Once the building is complete, the scaffolding is taken away.

**3) WHEN GOD GETS THROUGH WITH A THING, HE DOES AWAY WITH IT.** This is seen with the serpent of brass during the wilderness-wandering period. When the children of Israel complained and fiery serpents were sent and bit the people, the Lord instructed Moses, *“Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live”* (Num. 21:8). This served a temporary purpose as God’s provision for the healing of snake bite and to foreshadow the day when folks would look to Christ to live (Jn. 3:14-15). The children of Israel held on to this wilderness relic and made an idol out of it. Many years down the road, during the days of the divided kingdom, when King Hezekiah of Judah comes on the scene, it is said: *“He removed the*

*high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan”* (2 Ki. 18:4). *“Nehushtan”* means a piece of brass. It had served its purpose and now was just a piece of brass to be broken in pieces. This is also true of the law of Moses. It was temporary — till Christ (Gal. 3:19, 16). When it served its purpose, it was *“done away”* (2 Cor. 3:7, 11). When spiritual gifts served their intended purpose, they were *“done away”* (1 Cor. 13:10). Remember, when God gets through with a thing, He does away with it!

**4) THE MEANS OF RECEIVING SPIRITUAL GIFTS HAS BEEN CUT OFF.** Spiritual gifts were given through laying on of the apostles’ hands. *“...Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given...”* (Acts 8:18). At the conversion of the Ephesians it is said, *“And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied”* (Acts 19:6). The gifts were non-transferrable. If the apostles laid

their hands on you and you received the Holy Spirit, you could not then lay your hands on someone and pass on the gift to another. The apostles laid hands on Philip (Acts 6:5-6) and thus he was able to work miracles (Acts 8:6-7), but he could not lay his hands on them for them to receive such. Since there are no living apostles on earth today (none meet the qualifications or able to perform the signs, Acts 1:21-22; 2 Cor 12:12), there is no one around to give them. Seeing there is no one to give them, no one has received them.

**5) IF SPIRITUAL GIFTS CONTINUE, WHY NOT OBSERVE THE RULES REGULATING THEM?** 1 Corinthians 14 regulates the use of prophecy and tongues (2 of the 9 spiritual gifts). The possessor of the gift was not controlled by the gift, but it was something he had the ability to restrain (v. 32). Read 1 Corinthians 14:27-31, 34, and 40. Why is it that those who would have us believe spiritual gifts continue today do not observe the rules regulating their use? Where is the teaching that spiritual gifts continue today, but the rules regulating their use do not continue?

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