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THE REVIEW

Escaping the Slippery Slope of Compromise

By Dr. Charles L. Dear, Moderator IBFNA

As we come to our 27th family Bible conference, we rejoice in all that the Lord has done for us, whereof we are glad. In every conference and in every publication, we have held high the banner of separation without apology and without fear. Indeed we are thankful to the Lord, because it is that distinctive that has helped us to stay true to Him and to His Word. This June we look forward to the faithful preaching and refreshing music that renews our spirits and strengthens our hands in the work of the Lord. We look forward to seeing you in Winston-Salem.

Reflecting upon our history, I recall when the Regular Baptists for Revival struggled to overcome compromise within an association. There were those who thought we should continue to seek recovery of separatist principles and reclaim the testimony of combating conventionism from within; but as that proved to be impossible back in 1932 and as separation from the American Baptist Convention became necessary then, so we too, in 1991, had to part ways from that new association to maintain our own doctrinal integrity and testimony, lest we be swayed by persistent denials of change or enticed by an appearance of success.

Too few ever realize that, once you begin to test the slippery slope of compromise, you are committed to a path that will continue to draw you further away from the principles you once professed to be vital doctrines you believed. Ask yourself how many people you know in ministry who, having compromised their message, having lowered their standards, and having accommodated worldliness, ever came back from the slippery slope of compromise, recognizing and admitting their failure to uphold biblical principles and to oppose error. You could probably count them on one hand.

There are some I have known that, even after they realize the tragic mistake they have made leading others astray, still persisted in their compromise because their pride and arrogance would not permit them to confess that they were wrong. In fact, most of those who have compromised fundamental principles would never admit to themselves that they were wrong!

Consider the warning from the apostle Paul in I Cor. 5:6, "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" He wrote that in the face of compromise in the church at Corinth, because they were not exercising church discipline over immorality within the congregation. The decline of church discipline is another telltale sign of lowered church standards.



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TONGUES—
PART THREE

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IBFNA
523 E. Godfrey
Avenue
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(215) 887-4844
www.ibfna.org

A recent Barna study concluded that among younger professing Christians, attitudes against abortion, divorce, fornication, and adultery have decreased significantly. We have seriously underestimated the impact of the unbelieving world and its flood of anti-Christian propaganda influencing professing Christians who are more comfortable with minimizing or erasing the lines between Biblical Christianity and the world. Perhaps that is why it is said that fellowships and associations of churches only last 40-60 years, because they change from within over that length of time.

Experience has shown that a major symptom of such change can be seen in the gathering of power from the many of the membership into the hands of the few in leadership positions. Such was the peril of conventionism since the beginning of the 20th century, and such is the risk today for churches moving from congregational government to elder rule. These changes were born out of desires for expediency and efficiency, but they came at the price of compromising biblical principles and of ignoring examples from the Book of Acts.

There are lessons to be learned by us, lest we find ourselves following the same path of compromise we have despised for so long. Some make a joke about which way our feet are pointing, but there is more truth to the fact than we may dare admit to ourselves. When we are looking with admiration at the apparent success of those already compromised, when we envy the crowd being drawn by a people-pleasing ministry, when the congregation would rather hear psychobabble and 12 steps to happiness than *thus saith the Lord*, and when we concede to the demand for a counseling ministry apart from the preaching ministry, we need to look carefully, be honest with ourselves, and admit before God which way our feet are pointing, what we are coveting, and whether we are seeking His will or our own.

Psalm 73 opens with the problem of envying the foolish and being jealous of the prosperity of the wicked. While the context describes the ungodly, I would assert that the path of compromise is a path of hypocrisy that denies the holiness of God and the authority of His Word. How else would we find the acceptance of alcohol use, listening to the world's rock music, dancing, theater attendance, and the infusion of reformed theology in the schools that were once approved over the

last 27 years? Why do we see more students in Bible colleges and seminaries pursuing careers in counseling than pastoral or missionary ministry?

None of these things happened overnight. They began when someone became disappointed with their ministry, looked with envy upon others already compromised, and then convinced themselves that changes to attract people are not really all that bad. The pressure to move towards things like Neo-Evangelicalism mounted; and as we lost spiritually weaker people to compromised ministries around us, we became pragmatic and convinced ourselves that the ends do justify the means.

In the process, we became followers of men rather than followers of Jesus Christ. We engaged in some spiritual gymnastics to hide what is really happening by redefining terms, whereby essential doctrines became non-essential matters of personal preference and opinion. Many are influenced by the books they read from non-Baptist authors who deny local church autonomy. Sadly, even before we realize it, we find ourselves perched at the top of that slippery slope of compromise.

Coming back to Psalm 73, Asaph warns us that we will persist in such a pathetic state until and unless, as we read in verse 17, we come back to the sanctuary, back to the holiness of our God, back into His presence, and back to the authority of His Word. You cannot compromise and become a follower of men and still be a loyal follower of Jesus Christ. You cannot negotiate to find common ground between the Word of God and the world; because as hard as you may try, no common ground exists!

The Evangelicals have been trying to invent such common ground much to their dismal failure and blatant contempt for the authority of God's unchanging Word. Jesus said in John 15:19 that while we are in the world, we are not of the world. Such common ground is a mirage contrived by the wishful thinking of men, that you can have it both God's way and the world's way. It is a lie from Satan, which has already left a path of destruction seen in churches unworthy of the name and schools and institutions that hoped compromise would rescue them but then had to close.

The way to preserve our Fellowship is to continue to preach and write that which is consistent with the whole counsel of God’s Word, including the precious doctrine of separation. It has proven to be the guardian truth that will protect us from compromise and apostasy and that has withstood

the test of time. Sadly, many of us have lived to see what happens to a blessed association when separation is abandoned and exchanged for a path of expediency. May the Lord deliver us from such temptations, lest we too become a byword of Fundamentalism.

Has the Gift of Tongues Ceased? - Part 3

Pastor Kevin Hobi

This article is the third in a series that addresses whether or not we must conclude that the New Testament gift of tongues has ceased. With the first article, we answered that question in the affirmative because the purpose of the New Testament gift was transitory and exceptional, not normative for the church age as a whole [November, 2017]. The second article gave another reason to answer in the affirmative. The revelatory gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 have ceased because the phenomena we see today do not correspond to the true gracious gifts we find in the pages of the New Testament [February 2018].

In this third article, we will examine a final reason to conclude that New Testament tongues have ceased. They have ceased because the scriptural canon is complete. Paul anticipated this completion in his letter to the Corinthians, and today we are called to a ministry that rejects other forms of special revelation in favor of *sola scriptura*, the completed canon, our only rule of faith and practice.

All Manifestations of the Spirit

Here the focus becomes 1 Cor. 13:8-13. In this passage Paul makes his point about the importance of love in ministry by comparing its permanence with the transitory character of the manifestations of the Spirit, which the Corinthian church had found so captivating. Verse 8 begins,

8Love never fails; 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.

It is important to begin with the understanding that the full range of manifestations of the Spirit of 1 Corinthians 12 are in view as Paul begins his conclusion of chapter 13. It also informs our discussion to note that this contrast with love would not work in the same way with the Romans list of gracious gifts.

The exercise of the majority of the Romans gifts are in essence expressions of love.

The list discussed previously in 1 Cor. 12:7-10 contains two connecting words used to chain the list together: ἄλλος and ἕτερος. The first means *another of the same kind* and the second *another of a different kind*. Understood in the light of Paul’s alternating use of these words, the list clearly identifies three connected classes of manifestations of the Spirit [see the chart below]. A representative from each of the three classes receives mention in verse eight; therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the apostle has the entire 1 Corinthians 12 list in view as he speaks of cessation and termination.

Class I Word Signs	Class II Faith Signs	Class III Tongues Signs
word of wisdom ἄλλος	ἕτερος faith ἄλλος	ἕτερος kinds of tongues (see 13:8) ἄλλος
word of knowledge (see 13:8)	gifts of healing ἄλλος effecting miracles ἄλλος prophecy (see 13:8) ἄλλος distinguishing spirits	interpretation of tongues

The Partial and the Complete Whole

Verses 9 and 10 need to be taken together:

9For we know in part and we prophesy in part; 10but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

Following the conjunction *For*, these verses together explain in further detail the transitory nature of the manifestations of the Spirit. These activities are modified by the phrase *in part* (ἐκ μέρους), and contrasted to the phrase *that which is complete* (τὸ τέλειον).

The phrase translated *in part* does not carry the normal Greek preposition for a phrase with this meaning (ἀπὸ μέρους; see 2 Cor. 1:14, 2:5). Instead, with ἐκ the phrase carries more the idea of a whole divided into individual pieces. In the New Testament, it is used only here and in 1 Cor. 12:27, where Paul speaks of the body of Christ and its members: “Now you are Christ’s body, and individually (ἐκ μέρους) members.”

Charles Hodge translates the verse: “That is, collectively ye are the body of Christ; individually or severally, ye are members.”¹³ The phrase ἐκ μέρους is the complement of “collectively.” It is the individual pieces that comprise the collective, and so it discloses a connection between the parts and the whole. Though obvious to his Greek readers, Paul’s point is often missed in English that the parts are in a sense individual components of the whole.

Consequently, this relationship between that which is in part and that which is complete or the whole helps us define the important latter phrase. Verse 8 names for us three of the individual pieces which may be described as ἐκ μέρους: the revelation from the Spirit that is the word of knowledge, the revelation from the Spirit that is prophecy, and the revelation from the Spirit that is kinds of tongues.

Understood in the broader context, each individual manifestation of the Spirit listed in 12:7-10 can be understood as ἐκ μέρους, individual components of a larger whole. What then is the composite whole (τὸ τέλειον)? It is clear first of all that the composite whole must include its individual pieces because of the relationship established between ἐκ μέρους and τὸ τέλειον. Because the ἐκ μέρους are the individual manifestations of (or revelatory work from) the Holy Spirit, τὸ τέλειον must be the complete, composite, or

collective manifestation of (or revelatory work from) the Holy Spirit.

Not Christ’s Return

Inserting the return of Christ is unnatural, because there is no apparent component/whole connection between the manifestations of the Spirit of 1 Corinthians 12 and the Second Coming or the Rapture. There is no sense in which the Rapture is the composite Holy Spirit work of revelation, of which the revelatory gifts are component parts.

Conversely, the complete canon of Scripture qualifies as the ultimate composite of individualized manifestations of (or revelations from) the Spirit. NT Scripture is the collective composition of the truth contained in individual NT revelations communicated and validated in the sign gifts. It is the completed work of the Spirit that was promised in Joel, begun at Pentecost, and finished on Patmos (Rev. 22:18-19).

A Promise Fulfilled

Jesus also had promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would teach them “all things” (John 14:26) and guide them into “all the truth” (John 16:13). This is the τέλειον, the complete manifestation or revelation of the Spirit. Jude called it “the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Once it was delivered, the partial manifestations of the Spirit passed away. Thus Paul affirms the ultimate authority of his own letter in the Corinthian passage as an inspired apostle of an inspired scriptural text (14:37-38).

Adulthood, Not Childhood

Moving on we come to a section of the passage, which normally does not factor largely into the interpretation of the whole or in answering the question at hand:

11When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.

There is here, however, an obvious connection between the concept of revelation and the illustration Paul is using. Paul does not refer to the “playing” or the “activities” of childhood which are put away, but rather he speaks of the child’s communication and comprehension, topics closely associated with two

aspects of the Holy Spirit's work of revelation. He revisits the metaphor as he argues for the preference of prophecy over tongues (14:20). Prophecy helps the understanding more than tongues; it better develops mature thinking. The completed canon of the New Testament, bringing the church into revelatory manhood, would produce even more mature thinking than this.¹⁴

The Mirror's Reflection

The next verse has presented the greatest challenge to proponents of the interpretation just delineated, and the greatest support to the view that the passage speaks of Christ's return.¹⁵

12For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

The spiritual power of some great hymns of the faith can be seen in the dominant interpretations of this verse.¹⁶ The typical interpretation follows the beginning of Paul's metaphor (the mirror) while interpreting the first phrase of the verse, but then loses the metaphor when interpreting the second phrase of the verse.¹⁷

This approach is incorrect. As Paul speaks of "dimly," he is talking about a mirror. So also, when he speaks of "face to face," he is still talking about a mirror. Although he uses vocabulary similar to Num. 12:8, which describes Moses as an especially privileged prophet (note that only he in his day was an author of Scripture), the mirror metaphor is at the center of Paul's point.

Corinth was known in the ancient world for the high quality of its mirrors.¹⁸ These mirrors, however, were not made out of glass as ours are today, but rather out of polished brass (Exod. 38:8).¹⁹ Brass reflects well when it is polished well, but if the surface is tarnished or uneven, the reflection can be distorted and out of focus.

This is the metaphor the apostle Paul is using to describe the transitory nature of the manifestations of the Spirit. With these transitory gifts, the content of God's revelation is only dimly seen and subject to the abuses known in the Corinthian church, but when the canon reached completion, the reflection of the face obtained a sharper focus. Revelatory content became clear.

The mirror metaphor occurs two other times in the New Testament, once repeated by Paul (2 Cor. 3:15-18), and once earlier by James (James 1:22-25). Both of these pictures refer to the written Word of God. The phrase "face to face," though often used in the Old Testament of person-to-person encounters, also can mean simply a reflection as in Prov. 27:19.²⁰

We Shall Know Fully

We must be equally careful with the final half of the verse. It is often concluded that only when we are resurrected with the Lord will we know Him as fully as He knows us. But this conclusion clearly assumes too much.²¹

Our knowledge of God is complete when He completes His self-revelation, not when we have obtained a complete understanding of Him. We fully know Him when we fully know the "all things" and "all the truth" He has chosen to reveal to us (John 14:26, 16:13). This happened at the close of the New Testament canon, and it was by then that tongues had ceased along with the other manifestations of the Spirit.

If our possession of revelatory manifestations of the Spirit is incomplete until the return of Christ, then the completed canon of Scripture belongs to the category of what Paul says shall cease rather than what shall abide.²² To the contrary, the Psalmist affirms, "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps. 119:89). When the perfect comes, what came before it ceases, so the completed canon cannot belong to this category of the partial, for with faith, hope, and love, it will abide forever. Verse 9, "Now we know in part and we prophesy in part," cannot refer to possessors of the scriptural canon because that canon shall never "be done away."

Paul concludes:

13And now abides faith, hope, love – these three; and the greatest of these is the love.

Here again we have a significant contrast as Paul concludes his call not to forget the importance of love in the exercise of any gracious gift or manifestation of the Spirit (1 Cor. 13:1-3). He contrasts what abides with what he has just said will cease. Faith, hope, and especially love will abide; things that are partial will not (13:8).

Conclusion

The transitory, non-normative nature of the manifestations of the Spirit shows that the New Testament gift of tongues has ceased. The phenomena of today may qualify as wonders of some kind, but not as the New Testament gift (Matt. 7:20-23). Finally, Paul makes decisively clear that the New Testament gift of tongues would cease with the close of the canon. The completed revelation has come, and its all-sufficient truth requires our fullest attention.

Today's evangelical compromise with charismatics is a failure traceable to the new evangelical repudiation of biblical separatism. The apostle Paul warned not only of a heterodox gospel and an aberrant Christology, but also of a different spirit (2 Cor. 11:1-4). The apostle John named this kind of spirit the spirit of antichrist (1 John 4:1-3). Its fruit was the many false prophets that had gone out into the world. He warns, "Believe not, but test."

The authority, inerrancy, and sufficiency of Scripture are rejected by charismaticism and compromised by continuationism (2 Tim. 3:14-17).²³ The Protestant reformers rejected any second stream of revelation in their day,²⁴ and so must we.

Endnotes

13 Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1&2 Corinthians* (1857; reprint, Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 260.

14 For other advocates of this interpretation, see Robert L. Reymond, *What About Continuing Revelations and Miracles in the Presbyterian Church Today? A Study of the Doctrine of the Sufficiency of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977), 32-34, and R. Bruce Compton, "1 Corinthians 13:10 and the Cessation of Miraculous Gifts," *The Mid-American Conference on Preaching: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 63. Cessationists John MacArthur, Jr. (*Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 389) and Richard Gaffin, Jr. ("A Cessationist View" in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 55) disagree, seeing that *which is perfect* as Christ's return. MacArthur's view depends upon tongues ceasing at a different time than what is described by *that which is in part shall be done away*. Gaffin tries to claim that cessation-timing is not in view.

15 The importance of the phrase "face to face" to this position is illustrated by Wayne Grudem's conclusion: "This is what is explained by verse 12. Then, at the time the perfect comes, we shall see 'face to face' and know 'even as we are known.' This means that the time when 'the perfect' comes must be the time of Christ's return." *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, 232.

16 Fanny Crosby's "Saved by Grace," the profession of this blind saint who anticipated seeing the Lord "face to face," comes first to mind. Perhaps Carrie Breck's "Face to Face" has been equally influential.

17 Compton notes, "Virtually all recognize that the first part of Paul's analogy, seeing in a mirror dimly, functions metaphorically However, taking 'face to face' as a reference to the believer seeing Christ when He returns interprets the second part of Paul's analogy literally rather than metaphorically" (68).

18 Ibid.

19 See H. Porter's article in *ISBE*, s. v. "Glass."

20 Here water is the mirror. Charles Bridges explains the meaning of the verse: "As in the reflection of the water face answereth to face; so in another heart we see the reflection of our own. (Ps. xxxiii. 15) Human nature has suffered no change since the fall. The picture of man's corruption, drawn above four thousand years since, is man, as we see and know him now." *A Commentary on Proverbs* (1846; reprint, Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 517.

21 Francis A. Schaeffer makes the point when he says, "The communication which God has made to man is true, but that does not mean it is exhaustive, an important distinction which we must always bear in mind. To know anything exhaustively we should need to be infinite, as God. Even in heaven we shall not be this." *The God Who Is There: Speaking Historic Christianity into the Twentieth Century* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1968), 96.

22 John Calvin, although a firm cessationist (see the "Strange Fire" presentation of Steven Lawson titled, "Calvin's Critique of Charismatic Calvinists" (<https://www.gty.org/library/strangefire>)), struggled with the implications of this contrast [partial now vs. complete then] for the clarity and sufficiency of the completed canon, because he too interpreted the phrase *face to face* to be our encounter with Christ at His coming or our going to Him in

death. He wrote: "Hence we must understand it in this manner—that the knowledge of God, which we now have from his word, is indeed certain and true, and has nothing in it that is confused, or perplexed, or dark, but is spoken of as comparatively obscure, because it comes far short of that clear manifestation to which we look forward; for then we shall see face to face. Thus this passage is not at all at variance with other passages, which speak of the clearness, at one time, of the law, at another time, of the entire Scripture, but more especially of the gospel. For we have in the word (in so far as is expedient for us) a naked and open revelation of God, and it has nothing intricate in it, to hold us in suspense, as wicked persons imagine; but how small a proportion does this bear to that vision, which we have in our eye! Hence it is only in a comparative sense, that it is termed obscure." *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (1573; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), I.430-431. If Paul includes the canon of Scripture in the dim-mirror period of 1 Cor. 13:12, this is the only NT passage that speaks of this shortcoming of Scripture, even in a comparative sense. This comparison, found in the interpretation of Calvin and other good men, seems at odds with Peter's comparison of the face-to-face experience of the Mount of Transfiguration with the more sure word of Scripture's prophecy (2 Pet. 2:19-21). Peter saw the transfigured Christ face-to-face, yet he directs believers to the more-sure Scripture. In addition, Calvin's treatment fails to account for the sense in which God's Word abides into eternity, given

Paul's contrast between what ceases (the partial revelation that we have only prior to the coming of the perfect) and what abides (things like faith, hope, and love, which we have now and after the coming of the perfect).

23 John MacArthur lists eight dangers of the evangelical continuationist position, including, "5. By insisting that God is still giving new revelation to Christians today, the Continuationist Movement tacitly denies the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*. Here the whole movement is most concisely defined. At its core, it is a deviation away from the sole authority of Scripture." *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 242.

24 The Roman Catholic catechism, section 82, states: "As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence." Contrast the true Protestant doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith: "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men" (1.6).



June 19 – 21, 2018

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