

Sunday, February 4, 2018—I Corinthians 13:8—Fail, Cease, and Vanish Away

Introduction

- All told I have taught 7 studies on the subject of “charity” in I Corinthians 13:1-8.
 - Charity or Love: Which Is It? (2 Parts)
 - No Charity Equals Nothing
 - Doth Thou Readeth An Archaic Bible?
 - Charity IS NOT/DOTH NOT
 - Charity IS/DOES (2 Parts)
- Throughout out these studies I tried to emphasis the following points:
 - I Corinthians 12:31—the Corinthians had become covetous and competitive with respect to the spiritual gifts. Therefore, Paul is going to show unto them a more excellent way than the gifts.
 - I Corinthians 13:1—Paul opens the chapter by stating that even if one can speak with the tongues of men and angles if they do not have “charity” they are all noise and no substance.
 - I Corinthians 13 is often referred to as the “Love Chapter.” It is important to remember, that the main context here is a discussion of spiritual gifts, within this context Paul expounds upon this issues of love and charity.
- This morning we are going to see Paul bring the discussion back around to the topic of spiritual gifts. The more excellent way of “charity” is going to be compared to the gifts program that was function in Corinth at the time Paul wrote this epistle.
- I Corinthians 12:28-31—when we last saw Paul addressing the topic of spiritual gifts directly we observed the following:
 - There is not one comprehensive/complete listing of all the gifts given to the body of Christ in Paul’s epistles. One must compare scripture with scripture to ascertain an understanding of this matter.
 - There appears to a hierarchy or orderly structure as to how “God hath set some in the church.

- Not everyone was given the same gift.
- The Corinthians had become covetous and competitive with respect to the spiritual gifts.
- Paul is going to show unto the Corinthians a more excellent way than the gifts.
- I Corinthians 13:1-8—set forth the more excellent way of Charity.

I Corinthians 13:8

- *Charity never faileth*—this is the 8th and final thing that Paul says “charity” IS/DOES in this chapter, it never fails. There are a lot of meanings ascribed to the English word fail. Please consider the following:
 - To become deficient; to be insufficient; to cease to be abundant for supply; or to be entirely wanting. We say, in a dry season, the springs and streams *fail* or are failing, before they are entirely exhausted. We say also, the springs failed, when they entirely ceased to flow. Crops *fail* wholly or partially.
 - To decay; to decline; to sink; to be diminished. We say of a sick person; his strength fails daily.
 - To decline; to decay; to sink; to become weaker; as, the patient fails every hour.
 - To be extinct; to cease; to be entirely wanting; to be no longer produced.
 - Psalm 12:1
 - To be entirely exhausted; to be wanting; to cease from supply.
 - Genesis 47:16
- I Corinthians 13:8—“charity” never does any of these things.
- *But*—it is imperative to note the contrast. Whatever Paul is going to say next is directly contrasted against the never-failing nature of “charity.”
 - Prophecies—“they shall fail”
 - Tongues—“they shall cease”
 - Knowledge—“it shall vanish away”

- First, prophecy, tongues, and knowledge are all spiritual gifts explicitly identified in Chapter 12 as being given by the Spirit of God to the Corinthians.
 - Prophecy (v. 10)— this gift is not related to an ability to “foretell” the future. Rather Paul is speaking about a forth-teller or one who was able to speak to the edification of the saints.
 - I Corinthians 14:3—in the absence of the completed canon of scripture the New Testament prophets spoke for God in addition to serving other functions.
 - Tongues (v. 10)—the supernatural ability to speak in discernable languages that one had not studied. The addition of the gift of “interpretation of tongues” highlights a change in how tongues worked at the time I Corinthians was written when compared with the original manifestation in Acts 2.
 - Acts 2:4-6—they heard them speaking their languages without the aid of an interpreter
 - I Corinthians 14:27-28—makes it clear that the unknown tongues is unknown form the standpoint that neither the speaker nor the audience knows the language that is being spoken. Therefore, if there was not an interpreter present Paul tells the Corinthians to not speak in tongues.
 - Knowledge (v. 8)— “The word of knowledge” imparted supernatural knowledge that could not be known without God the Holy Spirit revealing it to the person.
 - Matthew 16:16-17
- Second, two of the three gifts are mentioned again at the end of Chapter 12.
 - Prophecy—verse 28-29
 - Tongues—verse 30
- So, at the time of Paul’s writing are prophecy, tongues, and knowledge legitimate spiritual gifts that had been given to the body of Christ? Yes
- I Corinthians 13:8—all three of these gifts are tied to future indicative statements in verse 8. In other words, what is legitimately working and functioning now will at some point in the future cease/stop working and functioning.
 - “shall fail”—“prophecies” are one day going to “fail” i.e.,” to be extinct; to cease; to be entirely wanting; to be no longer produced; to be entirely exhausted; to be wanting; to cease from supply.”

- This in contrast with “charity” that never fails. Paul is not saying that saying that anything God prophesied will fail to be fulfilled. Rather he is saying that the gift of prophecy will fail to function at a point in time in the future from the Corinthians standpoint.
- “shall cease”—“tongues” are one day going to “cease” i.e., “fail; to be wanting; to stop; to be at an end.”
 - This does not mean that people will stop speaking in different languages. Rather it means from the Corinthians’ perspective that at a point in further time the gift of tongues will cease functioning.
- “vanish away”—“knowledge” is one day going to “vanish away” i.e., “to disappear; to pass from a visible to an invisible state; as, vapor vanishes from the sight by being dissipated.”
 - This does not mean that people will stop possessing knowledge and knowing things in the future (Col. 1:9). Rather it means that at a point in future time the gift of knowledge is going to “vanish away.”
- I Corinthians 12:31—what is the more excellent way? The way of “charity” that “never faileth” or the way of the gifts that shall “fail,” “cease,” and “vanish away?” The Corinthians were coveting after the wrong things.