

CESSATIONISM IS ANTI-KINGDOM by Maurice Perry
(An excerpt from [Restoring Sanity in the Western Church](#), Chapter 8, pg. 103-108)

One of the most visible signs of the kingdom being present is the demonstration of supernatural power through Holy Spirit. From the days of Jesus' ministry, to the early church, to today, and forever more, the gifts of the Spirit will validate and signify the kingdom has come. Jesus said that it was the casting out of devils which lets the people know that the kingdom was present:

Luke 11:20

But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

The people were absolutely astonished and drawn in by not only His words, but the power accompanying His words:

Luke 4:32, 36

32 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

36 And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.

To assume that the ascension gifts and gifts of the Spirit are no longer operational is the assertion that God no longer desires for His church to grow and prosper. The church did not cease to exist in the first century, or after the apostolic era. The church age, which is synonymous with the kingdom age, has no end:

Ephesians 3:21

21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

The cessationist finds himself at odds with Paul in regards to God not taking away gifts and callings for His people:

Romans 11:29

29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

James also addresses gifts, and how God doesn't change his mind when they are given:

James 1:17

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

One of the main 'crutches' that the cessationist uses is an interpretation that is terribly taken out of context. In regards to 1 Corinthians 13, the context is absolutely critical. The reader must first acknowledge what the 'book ends' of the chapter are:

1 Corinthians 13:1

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not **charity**, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*

1 Corinthians 13:13

*And now abide faith, hope, charity, these three; but **the greatest of these is charity.***

The context of the chapter is charity (love). 1 Corinthians 13 is what is commonly called "the love chapter". What Paul is doing throughout the verses sandwiched in between the first and last verse of the chapter is comparing "temporal things" to something that is eternal, and that is love. God is love and He is eternal.

Take a look at the last verse of 1 Corinthians 12:

1 Corinthians 12:31

*31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet **shew I unto you a more excellent way.***

What was 'the more excellent way'? It is love. Something that must also be considered is this - What logical reasoning would there be for Paul to say in 1 Corinthians 12:31, "covet earnestly the best gifts", and yet, in the following chapter, those gifts that he told the people to covet would cease at some point? Not only that, but take a look at the first verse of 1 Corinthians 14:

1 Corinthians 14:1

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

When considering 1 Corinthians 12:31 and 1 Corinthians 14:1, it is absolutely apparent that Paul is using 1 Corinthians 13 as an 'aside' so that his audience would not be caught up in the over-emphasis of gifts, but to identify the primary purpose of the church - to demonstrate love. It is from this purpose, a posture of love, that they, and we, then begin to move in the gifts of the Spirit.

"That which is perfect" (1 Corinthians 13:10) is in reference to love, not a literal, physical coming of the Lord. This is the major misunderstanding of not only most preterists, but cessationists in general. When 'perfect love' is demonstrated in the church and comes to a region / territory, there is harmony and unity, no strife, no division, and everyone is walking in the ways of the Lord. This is the case, whether in the body (alive) or absent from the body (in the literal presence of the Lord eternally after physical death).

We see Jesus praying for this state of being in John 17:

John 17:23

*I in them, and thou in me, **that they may be made perfect in one;** and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

John speaking of 'perfect love'-

1 John 2:5

*But whoso **keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected:** hereby know we that we are in him.*

1 John 4:12

*No man hath seen God at any time. **If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.***

1 John 4:18

*There is no fear in love; but **perfect love casteth out fear:** because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

Paul's farewell address in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians as a reminder-

2 Corinthians 13:11

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

To "be perfect" is to be mature in the things of God. The immaturity of the Corinthian church was absolutely evident at the beginning of Paul's first letter to the church.

1 Corinthians 1:10

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Issues of pride (1 Corinthians 4:18, 5:2, 6-7), fornication (1 Corinthians 5:1, 6:18), vain disputes in public (1 Corinthians 6:1-8), improper mindsets regarding marriage (1 Corinthians 7), and misconduct in the church (1 Corinthians 11:18-34) were all extremely valid motives for what Paul wrote in chapter 13. The Corinthian church was an absolute mess! Unfortunately, many of our churches today fit the same description! They lack maturity because they have shunned the very things that were set up for the church to facilitate maturity.

A mature church will be known in a region for the love within that church (member for member) and for the love it has for the surrounding community and humanity as a whole. We must always take on the mind of God - 'God so loved the world'. We demonstrate God's love through our love / charity, compassion, the giving of ourselves and our daily sacrifice for the things that move God's heart.

So, in essence, a church that is operating in the fulness of this thing called LOVE will be at a point where gifts are unnecessary. Will this ever happen? Strangely, the answer is "Yes and No." Yes, when we die and are in the literal presence of the Lord forever (face to face - 1 Corinthians 13:12). No, because the church is eternal (Ephesians. 3:21) and the gospel must be preached from generation to generation, world (age) without end. There will always be work to do, and new people to 'be perfected' (come into the knowledge of God and His kingdom). Remember, the ascension gifts (Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher) are for the PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS (Ephesians 4:11-12). There is NO END to the church age. The church has been firmly established in the earth forever to be the representation of God's love in the earth - which is the message of the gospel.

The focus of 1 Corinthians 13 should not be, and IS NOT, gifts ceasing. Love is the Source from which all gifts of God flow. Besides, as mentioned earlier, God does not take away gifts:

Romans 11:29 (AMP)

For God's gifts and His call are irrevocable. [He never withdraws them when once they are given, and He does not change His mind about those to whom He gives His grace or to whom He sends His call.]

So the question is how can the cessationist come to the conclusion that gifts are not active in the church today? This seems absolutely contradictory of scripture and inconsistent with a church and kingdom that is eternal. How is it possible to have an eternal kingdom that increases in size and influence infinitely when the gifts that were given to the church to assist in church / kingdom growth and influence are no longer operational? To me, this seems rather double-minded and is, in essence, an anti-kingdom mindset that absolutely needs to be destroyed.