

# Continuationism

Holy Spirit empowered gifts continue today

# Some thoughts

- Continuationists and Cessationists who follow Jesus are both taking their positions from Scripture as the sufficient and infallible word of God.
- Neutrality doesn't seem to be an option in this argument (as we'll discuss at the end), but humility is absolutely necessary.

# Time of the gifts

Peter recognizes the coming of the Holy Spirit as the fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel about the last days, which is now. Acts 2:14-21

Paul connects possession of spiritual gifts with waiting on the return of Christ. Suggesting the gifts are given to the church between [Christ's] ascension and return 1 Corinthians 1:7 (1 Cor. 13:8-10)

The purpose of the gifts also gives insight into when people possess the gifts...

# Purpose of the gifts

- Preach the Gospel Acts 1:8
- Build up the Church 1 Cor. 14:12
- Equip the Saints Ephesians 4:12
- For the common good 1 Cor. 12:7
- “For one another” (1 Peter 4:10)

# Varied Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:11; Romans 12:6-8;

1 Corinthians 12: 8-10; 1 Corinthians 7:7

No list is complete. No list categorizes the gifts in the same way (there are no separations in the gifts such as spiritual/natural... they are just gifts). They are varied so that we need to depend on one another (1 Cor. 12:14-20).

# Thoughts on “apostle” in the lists of gifts

- Could mean:
  - Big “A” Apostle: the 12 + Paul + James? + Jude? + author of Hebrews?
  - A sent one
  - Someone who plants churches
- Why would Paul encourage believers in Corinth to pursue the gift of apostle if the meaning was Big “A” Apostle? (1 Corinthians 12:31)

# Gifts May Vary in Strength

- “Proportion to our faith” Rom 12:6 (prophecy)
- A Gift can weaken or be strengthened 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Timothy 4:14
- Apollos was “mighty in the Scriptures” (Acts 18:24)
- Paul said, “I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all” (1 Cor. 14:18)

The same is said of the gift of teaching or evangelism, the more it is used the stronger/more effective it becomes. Also, the Holy Spirit “apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1 Cor. 12:11).

# Temporary or Permanent?

- Temporary if:
  - By its nature it is temporary: marriage/celibacy
  - Unique event: Stephen's vision. "full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55)
  - If it is neglected? 1 Timothy 4:14?
  - The Lord returns 1 Cor. 13:8-13



- Otherwise permanent:
  - Description of parts of the body in 1 Cor. 12
  - Title of people “prophet”
  - Tongues requires an interpreter, so the church will or should know who these people are. 1 Cor. 14:28
  - “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us” (Rom. 12:6)

## Not a sign of maturity nor even of faith

1 Cor. 3:1 “But I brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ.”

Matthew 7:22-23: “‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ and then will I [Jesus] declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

# Prophecy equal to Scripture?

Bible believing Continuationists don't think so.

Abuse of a gift does not make the gift void. Otherwise we would have to throw out Bible teaching due to heretics.

We are instructed to “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1) presumably by the teachings of Scripture.

# Only Apostles?

Grudem says of 2 Cor. 12:12 “a close examination...shows it to be very doubtful that the phrase ‘signs of an apostle’ in this passage means miraculous signs. In this very verse, Paul distinguishes the ‘signs of a true apostle’ from miracles, which he calls signs and wonders and mighty works,’ noting that the miracles were done along with the signs of an apostle.”

Grudem goes on to explain what these “signs of an apostle” are.

Also as we have seen, *ordinary* Christians are told, by an apostle, to seek the gifts.

# Final Thoughts

- If we are to know what our Spiritual Gifts are, why don't so many Christians know what their gifts are? Are we not "pursuing" them? Have we, as Matt Chandler says, "Constructed Christian lives that don't need the power of God?" (paraphrase)
- If Cessationism is true, then Continuationists are ascribing actions done of themselves (or demons?) to God.
- If Continuationism is true, then Cessationists are ascribing actions done by God to people (or demons?).
- There is abuse, but does abuse negate the use of the gifts of the Spirit?
- (This one may upset or confuse you) We are a practicing cessationist church.
- What do you think?
- Discuss particular gifts?