

Did the Gifts Cease?

by Anton Bosch

The sermon argues that the gifts of the Holy Spirit continue until Jesus comes, based on a correct understanding of scripture and a rejection of cessationist arguments.

Duration: 55:22

Scripture: Acts 1:1

Topics: "Gifts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the fulfillment of the Great Commission and the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching the gospel. The speaker emphasizes the importance of believing and trusting in God's Word, regardless of historical or personal experiences. The speaker also highlights the connection between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the gospel, as seen in Acts chapter 2. Additionally, the speaker mentions the future millennial kingdom, which will be a new dispensation where Jesus physically rules and reigns using both Old Testament laws and New Testament principles.

Transcript

Are we all right? Okay. All right, so let's begin in the book of Acts. That's really where we wanna start, Acts chapter one, and I'm gonna read the first eight verses, I believe, in the reading of scripture, and so we're gonna begin by just reading eight verses this morning.

Acts chapter one, verses one through eight, and this is a scripture that I'm gonna come back to a number of times over this weekend. Also, just while you look it up, we did a talk, particularly Pastor Gary and I spoke about the subjects, and we know that there will be some overlap in what we're going to say, and we chose not to delete the overlap because we believe we need to hear that confirmation that comes by the Spirit. So whatever overlap there is is not because we agreed to say the same stuff, but we came together and said, what are you gonna say, what am I gonna say, and we found that there was some overlap, and we said, well, that's great, and so bear with us if you find that, but it has not been organized by collusion.

So let's go to Acts chapter one, verse one. The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. Until the day in which he was taken up after, he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen, to whom he also presented himself alive after his sufferings by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during 40 days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

And being assembled together with them, he commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which he said, you have heard from me. For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. Therefore, when they had come together, they asked him, saying, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel? And he said to them, it is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has put in his own authority, but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

Now, this morning I want to give you what I've entitled an apologetic for continuationism. Now, I'm not gonna explain the word apologetic, but I need to explain the word continuationism. I'm not sure if it's a good or a bad term, but it's the one I've chosen to use.

It's a term which cessationists have given to people like myself. And continuationism simply says that we believe that the gifts and the baptism and the anointing of the Holy Spirit continues until Jesus comes, basically. And we're gonna deal with the technical details about that as we go along.

The opposite of that is cessationism. And that really is based on 1 Corinthians 13, verse 10, where, and we'll examine that text, where they say that the gifts have ceased. And so ceased cessationism.

And so this morning I'm going to deal to some extent with the arguments of the cessationists and I'm gonna give you the arguments for continuationism. Now, before we launch into that, I wanna give you a little saying for those who are taking notes. And that is that cessationism cannot be caught.

It has to be taught. Cessationism cannot be caught. It has to be taught.

In other words, what I mean by that is that you cannot become a cessationist. You cannot believe in the ceasing of the work of the Holy Spirit by reading the scriptures. You can't catch it if you just read the scriptures.

Because it is clear and it is obvious that the gifts continue just by the plain reading of the New Testament. So if you want to have a different point of view, if you wanna say that the gifts cease or that the work of the Holy Spirit ceases, then you have to be taught how to manipulate some of those scriptures that are so clearly evident to come to a different conclusion. And that's really the problem.

No one becomes a cessationist just by reading the New Testament. And Pastor Gary made reference this morning to Sola Scriptura. And so we believe in Sola Scriptura, only scripture.

We have to base our theology on the scriptures, not on anything else. And if you build your theology on scripture, you can only come to one conclusion, and that is that the gifts continue. Now, your experience may be contrary to that.

And I'm gonna touch on experience a few times this morning. The problem with experience is that there is a lot of stuff out there which happens under the banner of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, which is pure rubbish, absolute nonsense. There are many Pentecostal traditions, and I am a fourth-generation Pentecostal.

My great-grandfather was kicked out of the Salvation Army because he practiced divine healing, prayed for people and for the Zulus. He was a missionary amongst the Zulu in South Africa, and many of them were powerfully healed by the power of God. And the Salvation Army said, we don't believe in this, you're

out.

And so this is something which I have inherited and I have had to examine. And I understand that there are many things that I inherited that are not genuine, that are not in line with the word of God. And you're gonna hear some of those things from me today.

What I'm gonna share with you, not just today but over the weekend, is the result of a personal journey of examining every detail of what we believe against the word of God and to find where those things are true and to hold on to those things and to reject those that are not. Now in that process, you will discover, certainly from me, that I don't give you the traditional Pentecostal line, because there are some aspects of Pentecostalism that I believe are incorrect. And so the point here is that irrespective of our experience, and having grown up in that, I've seen many, many things.

I lived right through the charismatic revival, being, when I left school, I went to a Bible school or a Bible college, which was half traditional Pentecostal and half charismatic. The charismatic movement had just begun in South Africa and was sweeping the nation. And so some of the lecturers were charismatics in the true sense of the word, Methodists and Anglicans, who'd been filled with the Spirit, pastors who'd been kicked out of those denominations and were now charismatic pastors.

And so those were some of my teachers. Half of the students in the school were charismatics. And so I saw all of that.

And in the process, I've had to reject a lot of stuff. But the nonsense that we see, and I think Brother Tom is gonna discuss some of those things, the nonsense that you see from people like Benny Hinn and the like, what you see on television and Brownsville and all of this stuff does not deny the Scriptures. It doesn't matter what you experience.

If your experience does not line up with the word of God, guess what's wrong? Your experience is wrong. The word of God cannot be wrong. All right, so now if we start then with the issue of cessationism, and I'm gonna just briefly deal with some of their arguments very, very quickly.

The first one, the first argument or the first basis of their doctrine is experiential theology, just what I've been talking about. Experiential theology has traditionally been applied to charismatics or Pentecostals. And so cessationists say that the continuationists apply experiential theology.

In other words, they experience certain phenomena in the spirit, and then they base their theology on those experiences. Now that's partially true. A lot of the nonsense that goes on that is not scriptural is justified by saying, well, that was my experience.

I barked like a dog and the Holy Spirit made me do it, therefore this must be scripturally correct. Now obviously that's a problem. We can't do that.

But the other side of the coin is also true. And that is that you cannot build your theology on negative experiences. And so because there is abuse of the gifts of the spirit does not disprove the genuine gifts of the spirit.

Because someone has a personal experience of not receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit or not being able to speak in tongues or not being able to do any of these things does not disprove them. You see, here's the problem. We have many things that we believe based on the word of God that we have not

experienced.

Have you experienced the resurrection in the physical sense? I see a lot of people shaking their heads. Well, I haven't experienced it. I haven't seen anyone raised from the dead.

And I've been in the faith for a long time. But does that disprove the resurrection of the dead? No, we believe in the resurrection of the dead based on the word of God, the infallible testimony of the word of God and of those who testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. That's the basis of our faith in the resurrection of the dead, not whether we've experienced it or not.

So you can't build your theology on your experience whether it's positive or negative. And so many of these people who preach against the baptism or the continuation of the gifts have had some negative experience when they were young. And I'm not gonna give you the examples of those testimonies because we really just don't have the time.

But when you dig deep down, you'll find that when they first became a Christian, they came across some experience, there was something within themselves in terms of their own personality that just didn't like this kind of thing. And they then formed their theology based on that. The second thing that they like to use is the use of caricatures and extremes.

And so, yes, crazy stuff happened at Brownsville and at Toronto and Holy Trinity Brompton in England and in South Africa and the list goes on and on and it still goes on. But those caricatures, those extremes do not disprove the genuine. You can't form your theology based on those kinds of extremes.

So as much as your experience does not prove anything, those extremes do not prove anything. Are there many cheats and crooks in American society? Of course there are. Of course there are people who are frauds and who are cheats.

Does that mean that all Americans are frauds and cheats? Of course not. You can't make that kind of deduction. It's just not good logic.

And yet this is exactly what these guys will do. They will take this experience, that so-called revival, that situation, and they'll say, that's what Pentecost is all about. It's not what it's about.

And so you can't look at those extremes and those caricatures. Caricatures exaggerate certain aspects. Then the other argument they like is what I call revisionist history.

And I'm sure you've come across that term before. History gets revived and all history is basically revisionist. I mean, let's just be honest about that.

Depending on your particular point of view. If you happen to be white, your view of American history looks one way. If you happen to be black, your view of history looks a different way.

And we all somehow in our mind revise the facts to suit our own particular agenda, our own particular philosophy. Now the problem is that you can't build your theology then on some kind of revisionist history. And this is one of the things they like to use.

They'll say, look, the gifts stopped operating. They began to cease operating in about AD 50 towards the end of Paul's ministry when Paul finally goes to Rome as a prisoner. There are no more gifts after that.

There is no more outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And since then, there's been nothing. That's the story.

Now, later on in one of the later sessions, I'll read a quote for you that addresses that, the reason for that. Yes, there has been a decline since the early days, but the decline is not because God has ceased giving the gifts. And so you can go through the history.

If you wanna be honest about the history, you can go through the history and you will find evidence for the continuation of the gifts through the last 2000 years. But of course, you're not gonna find it in church history books because the church history books are the history of the apostate church, the history of the Roman church and the Eastern Orthodox church, which are apostate. And of course, you're not gonna see the miracles there.

And the miracles that they claim are false and we understand that. But that doesn't mean that the gifts did not continue. So revisionist history, saying that they're just not there.

It's then also based on the teachings of men. Calvin, Luther, Augustine, and the list goes on. And I think Brother Tom's gonna deal with some of those characters and I'm not gonna go there.

But again, you cannot build your doctrine just, here's just one of these fundamental principles that we've always believed. You cannot build your doctrine on the teachings of men. If you go away from this conference, you say, I believe X, Y, and Z because Brother Tom said so.

Or because Anton Bosch said so. Well, you've got it wrong. You cannot build your theology on me or on my teachings or on my doctrine.

You have to build it on the Word of God. And if my teaching deviates from the Word of God, you have to reject my teaching and hold to the Word of God. And so to use these men as a basis, and of course, we understand that particularly Augustine and just as much Calvin, I don't believe were real men of God.

I'm not questioning whether they were saved or not. That's an entire another question. But they did the church more of a disservice than they did of a service.

Now that opens another whole can of worms. But folks, let's just remember for a moment, let's just remember and try and fix one of these revisionist things about history. The history of the evangelical church, let alone the charismatic and Pentecostal church, the history of the evangelical church does not run through the Reformation.

We are not reformed. Our history bypasses the Reformation. It runs through the Anabaptists, those who have always held to the Word of God.

The Reformation was a great thing, but it did a half a job. And so that's another whole can of worms, but you cannot build your theology on Calvin or on Luther. Yes, they were great for what they did.

They were great for their time. And yes, they understood certain truths that were inalienable and very important and very true, only by faith, only the scriptures, and so on. But their theology was fundamentally flawed in many respects, and so you cannot build your theology on them.

Hyper-dispensationalism. Now there's another new term for you. What do we mean by dispensationalism? Well, dispensationalism basically teaches that God had different ways of working at different times.

And just simply, if you look at the Old Testament, I'm gonna come back to this idea in a moment, but you look at the Old Testament, you look at the New Testament, clearly it's not the same. The way God dealt with Israel in the Old Testament, the way God deals with us in the church is different. There's no question about that.

And then when Jesus comes again and he sets up his millennial kingdom, it's gonna be different again. That millennial kingdom is not gonna be like in the Old Testament, it's gonna be somewhat like the Old Testament, but it's not gonna be like the New Testament either, it's gonna be somewhat like the New Testament, but it's gonna be an entire dispensation of work of God in a different and a new way, in which when he physically then rules and reigns upon the face of the earth, using the laws of the Old Testament, but using the principles of the New. And so you can see that there are at least three dispensations.

And of course dispensationalists will argue about how many there are, whether there's five, six, seven or however many. But what I mean by hyper-dispensationalism is that you now divide the church age, because if you are, and I understand not everyone is a dispensationalist, but generally dispensationalists hold to a period called the church age, which begins at the book of Acts, the day of Pentecost essentially, and which continues to the rapture. And so during that time, God deals with the church in a particular way.

Now, what you then do is you divide that into two further periods, the first 50 years. In fact, not even the first 50 years, the first 20 years from 33 after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection and ascension until Paul was imprisoned or AD 50. So you have a 20 year period at the beginning when God dealt with the world and the church in a particular way.

And then he stopped dealing that way. Now we are in a different period, a different dispensation, and God is now dealing with us differently. You can't do that.

There is nothing in scripture. Clearly we can see from scripture, the Old Testament, New Testament, Millennium, that these are three different ways of God's dealings. But to divide the church age into two different periods, you can't do that because it just does not exist in scripture.

Now, all of this then leads to the idea of eisegesis. And I'm sure that you understand that term. We have the term exegesis, which means to read out of, X out of the scripture.

That is the proper way to interpret scripture. So we read scripture and we say, what does the scripture say? Let me read out of that. Let me take out of the word what the word says.

That's the correct way to interpret scripture. But eisegesis means reading into scripture. So I come to scripture with a preconceived idea and I say, well, there is no resurrection.

And then I now begin to read scripture and I put that idea into the scriptures and I interpret scriptures based on my preconceived idea. That's eisegesis. Now this is exactly what these guys will do.

And so they have all of the things that we've spoken about now, negative experience, the teachings of men, revisionist history and all of those things. They come with this preconceived idea and then they open the word of God and they say, well, it can't mean this. It's got to, because all of my experience, the teachings of Calvin, the teachings of this, this experience, that, that situation, all of that is contrary to the word of God.

Therefore, the word of God cannot mean what it means. And that's exactly how the process happens. And so they then come to 1 Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 10.

And I'll come back to that verse. I'm just gonna quote it and not read it very, just to save a little bit of time. But 1 Corinthians 13, Paul speaks about the fact that love continues and that other things will come to an end and that tongues and prophecies and knowledge will come to an end, but love will continue.

Now that's true. And so Paul is not primarily teaching on tongues, prophecy and knowledge. He's primarily teaching on love, but he happens to mention these things.

So he says that they'll cease. Oh, okay, so the gifts are gonna cease. So now the question is, when will they cease? Well, they can't cease at the end of time because then they must still be operating today.

Now I don't like that idea because I don't believe the gifts continue because of my experience, because of, you know, all of the stuff we've just discussed. So I've gotta find another meaning. So 1 Corinthians 13, 10 says that they will cease when the perfect has come, when the perfect has come.

So now here's the question. What is the perfect? Well, anything else doesn't quite work for me because I don't believe they continued beyond AD 50. So how do I now deal with this? Let me just explain to you what I believe the perfect is.

Some people say the perfect is when Jesus comes again. Jesus is the perfect. Well, the scripture actually never speaks about Jesus as being the perfect.

Clearly in Paul's understanding, and when you read all of Paul's epistles, when Paul uses this term perfect or mature or complete, it's always in the context of the church. And so when the church is made perfect, when the church is mature or complete, now some of them will grab onto that and they'll say, well, the church was made mature and complete in AD 50 or in the first 100 years. Is that true? So were there no babes in Christ in AD 100? Were there no churches that were immature in AD 100? Was the church perfect? And what is God's definition of perfect? Be he perfect even as my father is imperfect.

He is predestined us to be conformed to the image of his son. That is the perfection that we need to achieve individually and corporately. So when did the church become like Jesus? I don't get any answers.

Well, it hasn't got there yet. We'll become perfect when Jesus comes again. Then the work will be completed.

We're progressively getting there individually, but when Jesus comes, we'll be changed and we'll be like him. So until Jesus comes, the gifts need to continue. So how do we deal with that? How do we change that then to mean within the first 100 years? Well, oh, the perfect is the word of God.

You see, we don't need the spirit anymore. And here's the sad thing. We don't need the spirit anymore because we have the Bible.

Now, folk, I believe in the scriptures. I love the word of God. I teach the word of God.

I uphold it incredibly highly. But at the same time, the word of God in itself, just the words on those pages are meaningless unless the spirit takes that word and writes it upon the fleshly tablets of my heart. And so what you now have, and I don't know who coined this phrase, but what you have now and what's been established in the last few years, really, this is an ongoing problem, but it's really been crystallized by John

MacArthur in the Strange Fire Conference, is that you have a new trinity.

You have the Father, the Son, and the Word. Not the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, but the Father, the Son, and the Word. So the Word is now the Bible then was complete.

The canon of scripture was complete. We no longer need the gifts of the Spirit. We no longer need the working of the Holy Spirit in that sense.

We just need the word of God. Now clearly you can see that that thinking is flawed, but that's basically how the argument goes. All right, let me move on to this idea.

And this is maybe new thinking for you, but I need you to think this through. The Holy Spirit, and I'm struggling to find the right term here because no one else has coined this idea. This is really just something that I've had to come up with to try and explain and deal with this issue.

But the Holy Spirit operates in different modes, M-O-D-E-S, different ways of operating. Now, what do I mean by that? You see, one of the misconceptions we have, even amongst Pentecostal and continuationist folk, is that there was no Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. Now, I know that sounds radical, and we say, well, we don't really believe that.

But really, in practice, we tend to feel, well, the Holy Spirit only came at the day of Pentecost. Now remember, the Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity. He is God.

And one of the attributes of God is that He is omnipresent. He is present everywhere at all times. The Holy Spirit can never not be present anywhere in the world.

So the Holy Spirit was present in the Old Testament. He was there in creation, Genesis chapter one. And so the Holy Spirit was present in the Old Testament.

He worked in the Old Testament. He anointed men in the Old Testament. People were saved in the Old Testament in the sense that they could be saved pending the crucifixion.

And so the Holy Spirit was at work in the world in the Old Testament. Sometimes we don't think about that, but He was. But then came the day of Pentecost.

That was clearly not the first time the Holy Spirit descended upon the world. But He came in a different way, in a different mode, for a different purpose. And the same way as God dealt with people in the Old Testament in one way, deals with us in the New Testament in a different way, the Holy Spirit operated in one way in the Old Testament, and He operates in a different way in the New Testament.

Now just think this through. When He is taken away, and I don't want to argue whether He that restrains is the Holy Spirit or the church because these two things are connected. And so when the church is taken, the Holy Spirit is taken at the same time.

That's at the rapture. Now you can differ with me on that, but that's the way I see that. Does that mean that the Holy Spirit has vacated the earth, that He is no longer on the earth? No, He's still gonna be on the earth during the seven years of great tribulation, and from that you gather that I'm a pre-tribulationist.

It's a terrible word these days, but that's what I am. And so is the Holy Spirit still gonna work on the face of the earth during the tribulation? Are people still gonna get saved? Of course they're gonna, at least

144,000 Jews are gonna be saved, and I believe that there'll be a multitude of others that'll get saved at that time. No reason to miss the rapture, by the way, but the Holy Spirit is still continuing to work.

But is He working in the same way as He did during the church age? No, I believe it's different. And in fact, it reverts somewhat to the way it was in the Old Testament. So you can see the Holy Spirit operates in different modes, in different ways.

Now, just very quickly, by extension, you need to apply that also to how we see the gifts of the Spirit, particularly prophets and prophecy. Many people's idea of what a New Testament prophet looks like is based on an Old Testament prophet. It's not the same.

Prophets operated differently in the Old Testament to the New Testament. Prophets in the Old Testament wrote scripture. No New Testament prophet wrote scripture.

Prophets in the Old Testament had to be infallible. New Testament prophets are not infallible because they are to be judged, according to 1 Corinthians chapter 14. So you can see that there are differences.

One of the other big differences that we forget, and the very important difference, is that when the Spirit came upon someone in the Old Testament, they became what we call ecstatic. In other words, they were in another state of consciousness. And so they did things that were beyond their control.

They said things that they could not control because they spoke directly. The Holy Spirit would take hold of them and they would speak. Even Saul, you remember, he goes to do this terrible deed and the Holy Spirit comes upon him.

He takes his clothes off and he begins to prophesy. You remember Balaam. And of course, these are not good examples in the sense that they were not good men, but Balaam goes and he opens his mouth to curse the people and the Spirit of God comes upon him and he pronounces blessing.

And so they had no control. The Spirit made me do it. You heard that before? Yeah, but that's Old Testament.

In the New Testament, the Spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. You can see a difference. In the Old Testament, the prophet is subject to the Spirit.

In the New Testament, the Spirit is subject to the prophet. So different modes, different ways of operating. Now, let's come to Jesus.

Did Jesus have the Holy Spirit as he grew up? Yes, of course. Luke says that he had the Spirit from his mother's womb. But then what happened when he was baptized by John? You remember the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove, not in the form of a dove, no doves coming down, but like a dove descends gently, the Holy Spirit comes down upon Jesus.

So what's the deal? But he had the Holy Spirit. Scripture says from his mother's womb. But then the Spirit descends upon him.

So the Bible's contradicting itself then, right? No. If you understand that there are different modes, different ways in which the Spirit operates, then that becomes easy. So the Holy Spirit was upon Jesus from his mother's womb right through his years of growing up until he's 30 years old.

But then the Holy Spirit comes upon him in a different way, for a different purpose, for his ministry at John's baptism. So turn with me very quickly then to Luke. Sorry, let me not go there.

Let me keep that for one of the next sessions. Jesus is trying to figure out what I need to cut out. All right, so different modes.

Jesus says in John chapter 14, you remember he will be in you who is with you. Different mode. He was with you, he's now gonna be in you.

Incidentally, that's one of the differences between Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the Spirit would come upon them. But in the New Testament, the Spirit operates from within.

An external anointing versus an internal. Now you can already begin to see some of the problems in our Pentecostal tradition because it's based on the Old Testament idea of the Spirit coming upon me, whereas in the New Testament, the Spirit comes within me and empowers me from within rather than anointing from without. All right, now Romans chapter eight.

Very important scripture, very quickly. Romans chapter eight, verse nine. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Back to verse nine. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his. What does that mean? If you don't have the Holy Spirit, you're not saved.

Simple as that. Now here's one of the arguments of the cessationist. You receive the Spirit when you get saved.

And that's true because of that verse and others. So you do receive the Holy Spirit when you get saved. But remember, the Spirit comes in different modes, in different ways.

The same way as Jesus had the Spirit from his mother's womb, then the Holy Spirit comes upon him to anoint him for his ministry. The same thing is true of the Christian. That the traditional Pentecostal view is no, you don't have the Holy Spirit.

And some try to get around that and say, well, you have the Spirit of Christ when you get saved. That's really splitting hairs. That's not a biblical idea.

So when I first get saved, the Holy Spirit comes and dwells within me because he's leading me into all truth. The idea that people who are not baptized are filled with the Spirit, that they cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit because they don't have the baptism, that's nonsense. There are many people who are not filled with the Spirit who live cleaner and better and more holy and righteous lives than Christians who are filled with the Spirit.

But that does not deny the baptism of the Spirit as a separate experience. You see, here's the thing, on the two sides of the camp, it's always been an all or nothing. Either you receive the Spirit when you're born again or you receive it when you're baptized in the Holy Spirit.

You can't have both. No, you do have both. Jesus had both.

The world had both. Jesus was in the world until the day of Pentecost. Then he comes in a special way at the day of Pentecost.

Now let's go to the book of Acts and I want for us to go through the five, the six actually experiences in the book of Acts and I'm gonna go through this very, very quickly because I do wanna leave you also with some solid other arguments for continuationism before we finish. Acts chapter two, the day of Pentecost. All right, I'm not gonna read through the scripture there for you.

Just by the way, the word Spirit appears 68 times in the book of Acts. Very, very important and I'm gonna come back to that statistic later on. First question.

When the disciples entered into the upper room on the day of Pentecost, that morning, they may have slept there, I'm not sure, but before the Spirit comes early that morning, were they saved? Of course they were. Now when they were saved, that's a very difficult question. At what point did Peter really come to salvation? Well, we can argue that.

But was he saved? Were all of the 120, 120 in the upper room, were they all born again in that upper room before the Spirit came? Yes, they were born again. Then the Spirit came and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Two clearly separate experiences.

They are not saved and not even cessationists will say that they were saved when the Spirit came upon them. So you can see that these two things are separate, being born again and being filled with the Spirit. Now if we go to Acts chapter four, and traditionally we say there are five times that people were filled with the Spirit in the book of Acts, but actually there's six, so here's the sixth one, Acts chapter four and verse 31.

And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together were shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God with boldness. Were they saved before the Spirit came upon them? Yes, they were. Had they been filled with the Holy Spirit before that? Yes, they were.

And yet they are filled with the Spirit again. So you can see that being filled with the Spirit is not unique to salvation. It is clearly something separate from salvation or to salvation.

Acts chapter eight and verse 14. And let me just give you the context very quickly. Samaria, Philip goes down there, he preaches, they get saved.

And then what? Peter comes and he prays for them, teaches them, prays for them, they're filled with the Holy Spirit. They get saved under Philip, they get filled with the Holy Spirit under Peter's ministry. It's two separate experiences.

Then if we go to Acts chapter nine, this is Paul. At what point is Paul saved? What was the moment of his salvation? Hmm? The road to Damascus. The exact point? Well, for me, it is when he says, Lord, what do you want me to do? That's the point of surrender.

That's the point when he is saved. Was he filled with the Spirit at that point? No. He's sent into the city, the Lord tells him, go into the city, wait there.

He waits there for three days. And Ananias comes and Ananias prays for him to receive the Holy Spirit. Two separate experiences.

And if anyone was gonna get it at the same time, Paul would be the guy. Now, Acts chapter 10, verse 44 is the experience of Peter in Cornelius' house. And this is the only one that is a little bit gray.

Because Peter goes and he preaches to Cornelius' household and as he preaches, the Holy Spirit falls upon them. And so that's the only one of the six that gives you any leverage to say that getting saved and filled with the Spirit happens simultaneously. But then you've got to remember, we cannot build our doctrine on one incident.

We have to take the balance of the teaching of Scripture. And so we have five other examples where people were saved separate from their baptism or filling with the Spirit. And therefore we have to build our doctrine on that, not on this one experience.

And so that's the odd one out. And then Acts chapter 19, very, very important because they like to home in on this one. Acts chapter 19, and I'm gonna go through this very, very quickly with you.

Verse two. Paul has come to Ephesus. He finds a number of disciples there.

I think there were about 12. Yes, verse seven says there were 12 of them. And verse two, he said to them, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they said, we've never even heard of the Holy Spirit.

Why would they not have heard of the Holy Spirit? Well, his next question is by what baptism were you baptized? Which by the way, this is an answer to the Jesus only teaching. If they were baptized in the name of Jesus only, they would not have heard of the Holy Spirit. But Paul's question is by what baptism were you baptized? Why? Because what is the baptismal formula? What does Jesus say in Matthew chapter 28? Baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

So if they were baptized correctly, they would have heard Holy Spirit. Even if they had no teaching on it, they would have heard. They said, we have not even heard of the Holy Spirit.

But his question is since you believed. Believed in what? Believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul has only one valid faith.

Paul is not interested if you believe the Old Testament. He's not interested in whether you believe in John's message. He's interested in whether you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the only question. To suggest that these people were not saved because they believed in the law or they believed in Judaism or they believed in John's message, that's absolute rubbish. Paul does not use that term believe in any other context than the Christian context.

And so have you believed? And he calls them disciples. They're not disciples of John. They are disciples of Jesus Christ.

And he says, have you received the Spirit? And he then prays and they filled with the Spirit. Again, you can see two clearly different experiences. All right, arguments for continuationism.

And there are many, many, many, and I'm just gonna give you a few. The first is, and of course, we cannot build our doctrine on silence. What I mean by that is that because the scripture doesn't say something, it doesn't mean that that nothing that it says is true.

But at the same time, we have to pay attention to the times when scripture is silent. And when scripture does not say that something will stop, well, we have to assume that it will continue. That's the logical way to deal with scripture.

And so there is no scripture. There is not a single verse in the entire Bible, except if you're gonna twist 1 Corinthians chapter 13, that says the gifts will cease before the return of the Lord. So you have no scripture.

That's the first problem. And so there is nothing that teaches cessationism. The book of Corinthians is interesting as Tom quite correctly says the letter to the Californians.

And I've always taught that and I've been teaching through Paul's letters for several years now, Paul's letters to the Corinthians for several years now. And every day I'm more and more convinced that Los Angeles is a replica of Corinth in every way. Morally, spiritually or immorally and spiritually in every other way.

Anyhow, 1 Corinthians 13 is the book that deals with the gifts of the spirit. There's all sorts of abuses going on in Corinth. They're doing all sorts of crazy stuff.

Now, how does Paul deal with this? Well, obviously what Paul should have done is said, look, you guys are crazy. There is no such thing as the speaking in tongues. Or at best it's a temporary thing and it's gonna end in the next few years.

So you guys better stop now because you're abusing this thing. This idea of prophecy, forget about it because it's temporary and you guys clearly can't manage this thing correctly. So let's just kill it right now.

Wouldn't that be the logical thing to do? Of course it would be. But what does Paul do? He regulates these things. He says, let the prophets speak two or three, let the others judge.

Don't all speak at the same time. Don't speak in tongues without interpretation. What is Paul saying? He's saying these things are good and legitimate but they must be managed correctly.

Everything must happen decently and in order. And so if there was any sense that these gifts were gonna cease, then Paul would have used this opportunity to say to these guys, just cut it out. But he doesn't do that.

Now remember that cessationists love these passages because basically what they say, MacArthur is one of them, that these guys were speaking by demonic spirits. Now then why does Paul not say to them, you are all filled with demons, you better get saved. No, he acknowledges what they're doing is of God but it's out of order.

1 Corinthians chapter 13, let's go to that verse now. And you've heard about this verse many times but maybe you've never thought that this verse actually teaches the converse of what they say it does. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be taken away.

The perfect clearly cannot be the forming of the canon of scripture. I can spend another 45 minutes on that subject alone. There's no way it is that.

The perfect clearly is not the church having come to any kind of maturity. And in fact, we've just spoken about Corinth. You think these people were mature? In fact, what does Paul say about them? He says, you're babes.

He says, I couldn't speak to you, I couldn't give you meat because you're babes, you're immature. To the Ephesians, the most spiritual of all the churches, he writes in Ephesians chapter four and verse 12, he says he gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints until we come to the maturity and the fullness which is in Christ. So even the Ephesians, he says, are not there yet.

And then you just need to turn to Revelation and read the letters to the seven churches, Revelation chapter two and three, and you'll see a pretty imperfect bunch of churches. So the idea that the church is perfect is absolute nonsense. The idea that it is scripture is absolute nonsense.

And so the perfect can only be, as I've said earlier, the maturity, the perfection of the church. And so this verse does not teach the ceasing of the gifts until Jesus comes again. And in fact, it teaches the opposite.

It says that these gifts will continue until Jesus comes again. The problem is we get so brainwashed by the negative that we forget to see the positive. And so that obviously all hinges on the perfect, but you need to sort that out in your own mind.

Let's go back to 1 Corinthians chapter four. 1 Corinthians chapter four, sorry, chapter one. 1 Corinthians one.

You need to read the whole context, but I'm just going to give you verse seven because I don't want to steal too much of Tom's time. Verse seven, so that you come short in no gift. What gifts is he speaking about there? Clearly the gifts of the Spirit.

Context of 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Corinthians is the gifts of the Spirit. So he's saying, I don't want you to come short of the gifts, of any gift. I want you to have all the gifts.

That's what he's saying. And then he says, eagerly waiting for what? Jesus to come again. The revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So what is Paul saying? I want you to have the gifts as while you wait for Jesus to come. So you can see the connection between the giving of the gifts and the return of the Lord Jesus. I want you to not come short in the gifts as you wait, eagerly waiting for the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so the gifts continue until Jesus comes again. Let's go to Acts chapter two. And I'm gonna finish with this one.

I have many more. Acts chapter two. Because this is a definitive passage Peter's preaching.

He's quoting from the book of Joel. We know the prophecy very well. We normally just quote the first parts of that prophecy.

Acts chapter two, verse 17. And it shall come to pass in the last day, says God, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Sorry, this is not my last time.

I need to give you one more before I close. I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men shall see visions.

Verse 21, and it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. What did Joel say? And Peter quotes him correctly. When will the spirit be poured out? In the last days.

So then when are the last days? They began at Pentecost. And they continue till when? Till the end. Now we can argue whether it's a rapture or whether it's a millennial or whatever, but until the end.

Let's just keep it there. Those are the last days. The last days are 2,000 years approximately.

Now what did Joel say? I'm going to pour out my spirit in the last days. Not on the day of Pentecost. Over the entire period.

Now remember where we started this morning. You cannot believe in cessationism by reading the scripture. Because the scripture tells us the spirit is to be poured out in the last days.

Now that's a simple question. Are we in the last days? Of course we are. So is the spirit being poured out today? Yes.

Simple. Easy. Right, final one, Acts chapter one, verse eight, where we began.

You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you. For what purpose? You shall be witnesses to me, and I'm going to spend an entire session on this, but I want to bring this little emphasis by way of closing this morning. You will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the utmost parts of the earth.

For what purpose will you receive the Holy Spirit and power? To be witnesses. To preach the gospel. You see the same thing in Acts chapter two.

That's why I jumped to the end of Peter's quote from Joel's prophecy in verse 21 in Acts two, and it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. There's this intimate connection between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the gospel. Now have we fulfilled the great commission? So why would the Lord take away the tool that he gave us to do what he told us to do? Father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you, Lord, that it is simple, and yet, Lord, we make it difficult, and we confuse it by our own thoughts and our own ideas. Help us to believe your word and to trust your word, whether it agrees with history, whether it agrees with our own experience, whether it agrees with the teachings of other men. Lord, help us just to believe you, because your word is true.

Let God be true, and every man a liar. Thank you for your word, Lord. Bless us as we have a break now, and bless us as we come back together again for the next session.

We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

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