

ARE MIRACULOUS
GIFTS FOR TODAY?

Course Syllabus

BRYAN P. HELLER

© 2024 Bryan Heller and Gospel Life Church

All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



gospellifetchurch

1006 New Lenox Road

Joliet, IL 60433

815.727.3130

glcjoliet.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Pastoral Note | 5 |
| Introductory Material | 7 |
| Summary Statement | 7 |
| Class Objectives | 7 |
| Class Schedule | 7 |
| Class Outline | 9 |
| I. Preliminary Discussion | 9 |
| II. Basic Outline of the Three Positions | 11 |
| A. The Cessation Position | 11 |
| B. The Continuation Position | 13 |
| C. The Caution Position | 16 |
| III. Agreement by the Three Center Positions | 19 |
| A. Sufficiency of Scripture | 19 |
| B. Baptism of the Holy Spirit | 19 |
| C. Internal Christian Debate | 21 |
| D. Ambiguity of 1 Corinthians 13:8-12 | 21 |
| IV. Distinctions of the Three Center Positions on | 23 |
| A. The Spiritual Gift of Prophecy | 23 |
| 1. Prophecy According to Cessation | 23 |
| 2. Prophecy According to Continuation | 25 |
| 3. Prophecy According to Caution | 29 |
| B. The Spiritual Gift of Tongues | 30 |
| 1. Tongues According to Cessation | 30 |
| 2. Tongues According to Continuation | 32 |
| 3. Tongues According to Caution | 34 |
| C. The Spiritual Gift of Healing | 35 |
| 1. Healing According to Cessation | 35 |
| 2. Healing According to Continuation | 36 |
| 3. Healing According to Caution | 37 |
| V. Summary | 38 |
| A. What can we agree on? | 38 |
| B. How are we distinct? | 39 |
| C. Why should we encourage each other? | 39 |

PASTORAL NOTE

Dear Church,

This class presents three views on the extraordinarily miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. The goal is to show how Cessation, Continuation, and Caution each seeks to base their best arguments in Scripture. Each seek to be faithful to the Bible, take it seriously, and live it out. Each affirms to the sufficiency of Scripture and the sovereignty of God. Each believes God works today. Each agrees on the one, true Gospel. As Tevye would say, “On the other hand,” the three positions disagree in their views on the extraordinarily miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. There are real disagreements, that do make a difference. And again, “On the other hand,” the three positions stand against any combining of biblical teaching with Spiritualism, Spiritism, Prosperity Theology, Experiential Pragmatism, or anything else. It was so refreshing to put this class together and see the unity of the three position strongly affirming the sufficiency of Scripture. This strong affirmation allows God’s people to disagree without any lack of Christian charity or the temptation to demonize the other positions. Each position is able to appeal to Scripture and therefore model their commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture. I feel that I just cannot rightly express how amazing this unity of approach affects me ... and I believe that it can have the same affect on any who study this topic in this way.

May GLC exalt our Lord Jesus Christ in everything.

For God’s glory through His church,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bryan Heller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bryan Heller, M.Div.

Pastor

INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL

SUMMARY STATEMENT

This class seeks to push students to embrace a biblical perspective on the Miraculous Gifts of the Holy Spirit by presenting Three Center Positions. These Positions do differ from one another and come to differing conclusions, yet because of their agreement on the fundamentals of biblical theology and the Sufficiency of Scripture, the professors of this class affirm each view as a valid biblical position that can be held by a brother or sister in Christ seeking to be faithful to God and his Word.

CLASS OBJECTIVES

After completing the class, the student should be able to ...

1. define and identify the Three Center Positions regarding the Spiritual Gifts.
2. defend the assertion that a Christian can hold to any one of the Three Center Positions while seeking to be faithful to the Scriptures.
3. describe how the Three Center Positions differ on Prophecy, Tongues, and Healing.

CLASS SCHEDULE

- ___/___/_____ day one: I, II, III
- ___/___/_____ day two: IV A.
- ___/___/_____ day three: IV B.
- ___/___/_____ day four: IV C.
- ___/___/_____ day five: V and Q&A

CLASS OUTLINE

I. PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION

A. Spiritual Gifts: gifts of grace granted by the Holy Spirit which are designed for the edification of the church.

1. Spiritual Gifts include what is sometimes described as Miraculous and Non-Miraculous gifts from the Holy Spirit.
2. All of the spiritual gifts are supernatural gifts granted by the Holy Spirit, therefore the division of Miraculous and Non-Miraculous is a superficial division not found in Scripture.
3. Usage in Scripture:
 - a) Pneuma usage: various terms that stress the supernatural and spiritual nature of the gifts by emphasizing their coming from the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:1, 7; 14:1, 12, 32.
 - b) Charismata usage: terms used to emphasize that the gifts are given. 1 Corinthians 12:4, 31; Romans 12:6.
4. Scriptural List of Spiritual Gifts:
 - a) Word of Wisdom - 1 Corinthians 12:7-10
 - b) Word of Knowledge - 1 Corinthians 12:7-10
 - c) Faith - 1 Corinthians 12:7-10
 - d) Gifts of Healing - 1 Corinthians 12:7-10; 12:28
 - e) Working of Miracles - 1 Corinthians 12:7-10; 12:28
 - f) Prophecy - 1 Corinthians 12:7-10; Romans 12:6-8
 - g) Ability to Distinguish Between Spirits - 1 Corinthians 12:7-10
 - h) Various Kinds of Tongues - 1 Corinthians 12:7-10; 12:28
 - i) Interpretation of Tongues - 1 Corinthians 12:7-10
 - j) Helping - 1 Corinthians 12:28
 - k) Administration - 1 Corinthians 12:28
 - l) Service - Romans 12:6-8
 - m) Teaching - Romans 12:6-8
 - n) Exhortation - Romans 12:6-8
 - o) Giving - Romans 12:6-8
 - p) Leading - Romans 12:6-8
 - q) Showing Mercy - Romans 12:6-8
 - r) Some include the gifts of Specific Roles in the church as part of the Spiritual Gifts.
 - (1) Apostles - Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28
 - (2) Prophets - Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28
 - (3) Evangelists - Ephesians 4:11
 - (4) Pastors - Ephesians 4:11
 - (5) Teachers - Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28

B. Miraculous Gifts: the more overtly supernatural gifts, such as tongues, interpretation of tongues, healing, miracles, and prophecy, that are striking manifestations of God's presence in the church.

1. Miraculous gifts are merely a subsection of the Spiritual Gifts. Scripture does not separate them from the other Spiritual Gifts.
2. The difference between the three views presented in this class revolves around an understanding of these specifically striking Miraculous gifts in regards to both their availability (or lack of availability) to believers in the church age after the Apostolic era and the responsibility of believers to pursue such gifts if they are available.

C. Observations on Lists of Spiritual Gifts.

1. The lists of Spiritual Gifts in Scripture are likely not exhaustive, yet it is good to be hesitant to categorize anything else as a Spiritual Gift for certain.
2. Distinctions in the lists:
 - a) 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 lists almost exclusively Miraculous Gifts (faith possibility being an exception depending on its definition).
 - b) 1 Corinthians 12:28 mixes Special Roles with both Miraculous Gifts and Non-Miraculous Gifts.
 - c) Romans 12:6-8 lists almost exclusively Non-Miraculous Gifts (prophecy being the exception).
 - d) Ephesians 4:11 lists exclusively Special Roles.
3. Clearly Ephesians 4 departs from the rest because of the distinct purpose Paul had in listing Special Roles upon which the church was formed and equipped.
4. The distinction in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 at face value may seem to indicate a minimizing of the Miraculous Gifts since Romans was written after 1 Corinthians, but the time between the two is minimal. Paul likely wrote 1 Corinthians in approximately AD55 and Romans in approximately AD57. (Carson, Moo, and Morris, An Introduction to the New Testament, pgs. 241-242, 282-283)
5. 1 Corinthians 12:28 demonstrates Paul's understanding that both the Miraculous Gifts and the Non-Miraculous Gifts are categorized similarly as Spiritual Gifts.

D. Positions on the Spiritual Gifts:

Hard Cessation Cessation Caution Continuation Charismatic Pentecostal

1. Center Positions:

- a) Cessation: Miraculous Gifts have ceased to function in the church and should not be pursued while the Non-Miraculous Gifts continue to function in the church and should be pursued.
- b) Continuation: All of the Spiritual Gifts (Miraculous Gifts and Non-Miraculous Gifts) continue to function in the church and should be pursued.
- c) Caution: While all of the Spiritual Gifts (Miraculous Gifts and Non-Miraculous Gifts) continue to function in the church, Miraculous Gifts function less frequent

than others and their use should be viewed with caution and not necessarily pursued.

2. Extreme Positions:

- a) **Hard Cessation:** All of the Spiritual Gifts (Miraculous Gifts and Non-Miraculous Gifts) have ceased to function in the church.
- b) **Charismatic:** All the Spiritual Gifts (Miraculous Gifts and Non-Miraculous Gifts) continue to function in the church. Allows for the belief that the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs subsequent to conversion and that the gift of tongues is the sign.
- c) **Pentecostal:** All the Spiritual Gifts (Miraculous Gifts and Non-Miraculous Gifts) continue to function in the church. Believes that the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs subsequent to conversion and that the gift of tongues is the sign.

II. BASIC OUTLINE OF THE THREE POSITIONS

A. The Cessation Position

1. **Description:** The Holy Spirit has ceased in giving believers today the Miraculous Gifts—gifts like speaking in tongues, prophecy, and healing—but continues to give the Non-Miraculous Gifts.
2. **Supports:**
 - a) **The Role of Miracles.** God primarily worked through miracles during three unique periods.
 - (1) **First Period: Moses and Joshua.** They ministered from the Exodus circa 1445 BC until the end of Joshua’s leadership circa 1380 BC, approximately 65 years.
 - (2) **Second Period: Elijah and Elisha.** They ministered from circa 860 BC until 795 BC, approximately 65 years.
 - (3) **Third Period: Jesus Christ and the Apostles.** They ministered from circa 27-30 AD until circa 97-100 AD, approximately 70 years.

“Miracles aren’t limited to such high points in redemptive history, as any careful reading of the Old Testament shows, but they are clustered at central eras in the Scriptures. Miracles are an anticipation of the new creation that is coming! God can and does heal when he wills, but the point is that miracles were especially prominent at key turning points in redemptive history. Now that the church has the authoritative guidance for faith and practice in the Scriptures, the gifts and miracles which were needed to build up the early church are no longer needed, and they are not common. This is not to say, however, that God never does miracles today.” Thomas Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts*, Kindle Loc. 1754.

- b) **The Primary Purpose of Miracles.** God’s primary purpose for miracles has always been to confirm the credentials of a divinely appointed messenger to establish the credibility of one who speaks for God. This messenger speaks the very words of God placed into his mouth by God.
 - (1) In the Old Testament, only prophets performed miracles because miracles were their credentials to speak for God.
 - (a) **Example of Moses:**
 - (i) **Moses (and by extension Aaron) as the mouthpiece of God:**
Exodus 6:28- ; 4:15-

- (ii) God's proof that Moses functioned as his mouthpiece: Exodus 4:
 - (b) Example of Elijah:
 - (i) Elijah as the mouthpiece of God: 1 Kings 17:1; 18:1
 - (ii) God's proof that Elijah functioned as his mouthpiece: 1 Kings 18:36, 45.
- (2) In the New Testament, only Jesus, the Apostles, and a few others connected with the Apostles performed miracles because miracles were their credentials to speak for God.
 - (a) Example of Jesus:
 - (i) Jesus as the mouthpiece of God: John 1:1
 - (ii) God's proof that Jesus functioned as his mouthpiece: John 5:13; 6:14; 10:24, 37; Acts 2:22
 - (b) Example of the Apostles:
 - (i) The Apostles as the mouthpiece of God: Acts 1:8, 22 (Luke 24:48; John 15:26-27)
 - (ii) God's proof that the Apostles functioned as his mouthpiece: Hebrews 2:3-4; 5:12, 16
 - (c) Proof of Peter: Acts 3:6-7; 9:34
 - (d) Proof of Paul: Acts 14:3; 28:8-9; Romans 15:18-19
 - (e) Example of others connected to the Apostles:
 - (f) Proof of Barnabas: Acts 14:3
 - (g) Proof of Stephen: 6:8
 - (h) Proof of Philip: Acts 8:5-7

“This deeper principle may be reached by us through the perception, more broadly, of the inseparable connection of miracles with revelation, as its mark and credential; or, more narrowly, of the summing up of all revelation, finally, in Jesus Christ. Miracles do not appear on the page of Scripture vagrantly, here, there, and elsewhere indifferently, without assignable reason. They belong to revelation periods, and appear only when God is speaking to His people through accredited messengers, declaring His gracious purposes. Their abundant display in the Apostolic Church is the mark of the richness of the Apostolic age in revelation; and when this revelation period closed, the period of miracle-working had passed by also, as a mere matter of course.” B.B. Warfield, Counterfeit Miracles, pg 21-22.

- c) The End of the Spiritual Gift of Apostleship.
 - (1) Apostleship is a spiritual gift.
 - (a) 1 Corinthians 12:28
 - (b) Ephesians 4:7, 11
 - (2) Apostleship is also an office of the church with qualifications.
 - (a) An Apostle had to be a witness of the resurrected Christ: Acts 1:22
 - (b) An Apostle had to be personally appointed by Christ: Acts 1:2, 24
 - (c) An Apostle had to be able to work miracles: Matthew 10:1; 2 Corinthians 12:12

- (3) The Foundational Nature of Apostles: Ephesians 2:20
 - (a) Apostolic authority is no longer necessary now that the foundation of the church has been laid.
 - (b) Apostolic authority is now preserved in the canon of Scripture.
 - (c) According to Ephesians 2:20: Prophecy is also foundational and therefore has ceased. The proper understanding of Prophecy is quite significant to this debate but will be covered later in greater detail.
- d) The Nature of the New Testament Miraculous Gifts.
 - (1) If the miraculous gifts were still in use today then they should be the same as the miraculous gifts of the New Testament.
 - (2) Yet, the miraculous gifts claimed today bear almost no resemblance to the miraculous gifts of the New Testament.
 - (3) Examples:
 - (a) Tongues: the Bible describes the gift of tongues as real languages (Acts 2:1-8) vs. the current description of the gift of tongues as ecstatic utterances.
 - (b) Prophecy: the Bible describes the gift of prophecy as infallible revelation (Deuteronomy 18:17-22) vs. the current description of the gift of prophecy as fallible revelation.
- 3. Conclusion: Miraculous Gifts have ceased to function in the church and should not be pursued while the Non-Miraculous Gifts continue to function in the church and should be pursued.

B. The Continuation Position

- 1. Definition: The Holy Spirit continues to give believers today all the Spiritual Gifts, both the Non-Miraculous Gifts and the Miraculous Gifts—gifts like speaking in tongues, prophecy, and healing—and that all the gifts should be pursued as a result.
- 2. Supports:
 - a) The Expectation of the New Testament for Ordinary Believers Regarding Miraculous Gifts.
 - (1) The record of Acts, while seemingly incomparable in scope, frequency, and drama regarding the miraculous gift, is not an anomaly.
 - (a) Acts is a selection of events deemed significant by Luke (and the Holy Spirit).
 - (b) Acts includes a lengthy list of supernatural events that might make first century Christianity full of the miraculous, yet it also includes many events without the miraculous, like long travels, deaths, and persecution.
 - (c) A proper view of Acts does affirm an intensity of the miraculous while still seeing a striking resemblance to Christian life in the Epistles.
 - (2) The Epistles demonstrate the widespread nature of the miraculous gifts:
 - (a) The believers in Rome are urged to use the gifts they have been given, including prophesying in proportion to their faith: Romans 12:6.
 - (b) The Corinthians experience the spiritual gifts, including the miraculous gifts: 1 Corinthians 1:7; 12-14.

- (c) The Galatians have such a clear experience of the Spirit working miracles among them, whatever those miracles were, that Paul can use it to ground his argument about faith and works of the Torah: Galatians 3:5.
 - (d) The Ephesians are commanded to be filled with the Spirit rather than getting drunk on wine, and to pray in the Spirit at all times: Ephesians 5:18; 6:18.
 - (e) The Thessalonians are told not to quench the Spirit or despise prophecies, but rather to test everything and hold fast to what is good: 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21.
 - (f) Timothy is encouraged to wage spiritual warfare according to prophecies made about him: 1 Timothy 1:18.
 - (g) Hebrews appeals to the evidence of signs, wonders, miracles, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, in order to warn a congregation on the verge of backsliding: Hebrews 2:3-4.
 - (h) James urges the sick to call the elders for anointing with oil and proclaims that the prayer of faith will heal them: James 5:14-15.
- b) Miraculous gifts and experiences are worked by the Apostles and by ordinary believers.
- (1) The Apostles worked miracles. Just like in the Old Testament and the Gospels often validated their God-given message and ministry, so it was with the Apostles.
 - (2) Non-Apostles who worked miracles: Stephen (Acts 6:8), Philip (Acts 8:5-7), Ananias (Acts 9:10-19), Agabus (Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11).
 - (3) Anonymous Miracles: most of the unnamed at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4 cf. 1:15), unnamed relatives of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48), unnamed disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-7), unnamed daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9), unnamed elders who prophesied over Timothy (1 Timothy 4:14).
- c) The Uniqueness of the Apostleship and Its Relationship to the Spiritual Gifts.
- (1) Apostleship is not listed by Paul as one of the spiritual gifts in Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.
 - (2) The use of Apostleship in 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 is illustrating the interdependence of the church body and not as an example of spiritual gifts.
 - (3) Ephesians 4:11 is not a list of spiritual gifts, but rather these gifts are individuals given to the church by Christ.
- d) The Hermeneutical Argument for Pursuing All the Spiritual Gifts: Presumption of Obedience
- (1) Explicit New Testament instructions to Christians should be followed, unless there is clear reason from the context why they should not be followed.

“We are under the same covenant as our first-century brothers and sisters, and as such, we should assume that what the apostles taught them, they would also teach us.” Andrew Wilson, *Spirit and Sacrament*, pg. 108.

- (2) The burden of proof is placed on those who would claim a New Testament instruction can be disregarded and not obeyed.

- (a) Examples where burden of proof is met:
 - (i) 1 Timothy 4:13
 - (ii) Matthew 10:5 and Matthew 28:19-20
- (b) Limited scope of the instruction is clearly indicated in the text.
- (3) Implications of the Presumption of Obedience to pursue the spiritual gifts.
 - (a) 1 Corinthians 14:1
 - (b) 1 Corinthians 12:31
 - (c) 1 Corinthians 14:39
 - (d) Romans 12:6
 - (e) 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21
- e) The Eschatological Argument for Pursuing All the Spiritual Gifts: The Apostles viewed all the spiritual gifts as active between Pentecost and Parousia.
 - (1) Acts 2:17-18 - Peter links the last days, the pouring out of the Spirit on all nations, and the gift of prophecy.
 - (2) 1 Corinthians 1:6-8 - Paul links the possession of the spiritual gifts with the time they are waiting for the future return of Jesus Christ.
 - (3) Paul's eschatological framework can be seen in Ephesians 4:13-14 or in 1:3 as believers are blessed in the present age with "every spiritual blessing" (cf. 1:13-14, 17-21) and in Romans 12-13 where believers are to use spiritual gifts within the church age (cf. 12:1-2 and 13:11-14 bookends with the church age in between).
- f) Pursuing All the Spiritual Gifts According to the Guidelines Laid Out in the New Testament.
 - (1) The Holy Spirit does not act in conflict with the Word of God, but only in harmony with the Word of God.
 - (2) This is a call for proactive biblical discernment rather than reactive hesitant caution, so that everything would be done in a fitting and orderly way (1 Corinthians 14:40).
 - (3) New Testament Guidelines Include:
 - (a) Prophecies should be weighed carefully against the testimony of Scripture and corrected if needed.
 - (b) Tongues should be interpreted or not brought before the congregation.
 - (c) All gifts should be used to benefit the church, not just the individual.
 - (d) All gifts should be exercised in such a manner that enquirers and unbelievers can understand.
 - (e) All gifts should be used to draw attention to the death and resurrection of Jesus, rather than any individual, ministry, or church.
 - (f) Giftedness should not circumvent character or recognized church government.
 - (g) Love for God and for your neighbor should be the true test of spirituality, not spiritual giftedness.
 - (h) Prosperity theology should be thoroughly debunked whenever it appears.

- g) Five Characteristics about the Experience and Gifts of the Holy Spirit (in response to some Pentecostals and Charismatics):
- (1) All believers have already been baptized in one Spirit and into one body.
 - (2) All believers have been given one Spirit to drink.
 - (3) All believers have been given some gift of the Spirit.
 - (4) No believer has been given all the gifts, nor is any gift common to all believers.
 - (5) All believers are called to serve the members of the body with their gifts.
 - (6) Rejections:
 - (a) Rejects the view of two types of believers: one baptized in the Spirit, one not.
 - (b) Rejects any one gift as mark of those who are truly full of the Spirit.
 - (c) Rejects the view that healing is something all believers would be able to do on demand if they simply had enough faith.
 - (d) Rejects using any gift for greed, pride, or fame such as found in so much of “prosperity” Christianity.
3. Conclusion: All of the Spiritual Gifts (Miraculous Gifts and Non-Miraculous Gifts) continue to function in the church and should be pursued.

C. The Caution Position

1. Definition: The Holy Spirit continues to give believers today all the Spiritual Gifts, both the Non-Miraculous Gifts and the Miraculous Gifts—gifts like speaking in tongues, prophecy, and healing—but the Miraculous Gifts are given to a lesser degree today and therefore believers should be cautious about pursuing the Miraculous Gifts.
2. Supports:
 - a) The Uniqueness of the Apostolic Era.
 - (1) Apostleship was a Spiritual Gift, not just a Special Roles.
 - (a) Similar to Prophets who exercised the corresponding Spiritual Gift of prophecy and Teachers who exercised the corresponding Spiritual Gift of teaching, so Apostles exercised the corresponding Spiritual Gift of apostleship.
 - (b) The implication of Ephesians 4:7-11. The text does not use either word for Spiritual Gifts, but does describe the definition of charisma in verse 7, “But grace [charis] was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.” Even more, Paul used similar language in Romans 12:6 when introducing Spiritual Gifts, “Having gifts [charisma] that differ according to the grace [charis] given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith.”
 - (c) If the Spiritual Gift of Apostleship did not continue then not all of the Spiritual Gifts given to the New Testament church continued throughout church history until today. This makes it possible that other Spiritual Gift may also have ceased.
 - (d) This would include some aspect of signs and miracles as they were connected to Apostleship in 2 Corinthians 12:12.

“The record of Acts reveals miraculous phenomena that few would claim as normal for all ages. Along with the gift of tongues at Pentecost, there was the miraculous sound like rushing wind and the appearance of tongues of fire on each one gathered in the upper room (Acts 2:2-3). Ananias and Sapphira (apparently believers) were instantaneously killed for lying (5:1-11), and an obstructed of the gospel was blinded (13:6-12). Chains fell off and prison doors were miraculously opened (cf. 5:17-22; 12:1-11; 16:23-26). On several occasions all who came to be healed were in fact healed (cf. 5:16; 28:9). Even the ‘shadow’ of Peter was effective in healing (5:15), as were ‘handkerchiefs and aprons’ that had touched Paul (19:11-12).” Robert Saucy, *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today?*, edited by Wayne Grudem, pg. 102.

b) The Unevenness of Miracles in Biblical History.

(1) The biblical evidence of special periods of miracles.

- (a) Miraculous activity occurred through biblical history.
- (b) Miraculous activity had three particular concentrations in biblical history: Moses and the Exodus, Elijah and Elisha, and Christ and the Apostles.
- (c) This is the same argument given by the Cessation Position.

(2) The explanation for special periods of miracles.

- (a) “The key to understanding the purpose of miracles is seen in the term signs.” Robert Saucy, *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today?*, edited by Wayne Grudem, pg. 105.
 - (i) “Sign” designates the purpose of miracles as that which points to something else.
 - (ii) Therefore the crucial element of a sign is to give credibility to something else. Miraculous signs validated the messenger and the message.
 - (iii) Moses performed miracles as signs (Exodus 4:5, 31; 10:2; Deuteronomy 4:34-35).
 - (iv) Elijah performed miracles as signs (1 Kings 17:24; 18:36).
 - (v) Jesus performed miracles as signs (John 3:2; 20:30; Luke 7:22; Acts 2:22).
 - (vi) The Apostles performed miracles as signs (2 Corinthians 12:12).
- (b) The Bible specifically attributes “signs and wonders” as the accoutrements of those in a prophetic ministry during the crucial turning points in salvation history.
 - (i) Many Old Testament prophets are not credited with signs and wonders, whereas signs and wonders are linked to Moses, Elijah, and Elisha.
 - (ii) Similarly, many of the New Testament prophets mentioned in Acts are not credited with signs and wonders while others like the Apostles and those connected to them (like Stephen and Philip) and the initial with the spread of the gospel are linked to signs and wonders. Example: if healing were a regular ministry of the church, why were people bringing their sick to the Apostles to be healed? (Acts 5:12-16; 9:36-42).
- (c) Hebrews 2:3-4 affirms the purpose of signs and wonders as confirmation of the initial message of salvation. Galatians 3:5 is a

parallel to Hebrews 2:3-4 as the context is focused on the initial reception of the Holy Spirit being accompanied by miracles.

“The witness of Scripture thus leads to the following three conclusions: (i) miraculous activity was clustered around certain crucial points in the biblical record of salvation history; (ii) these clusters of miracles had the primary purpose of ‘signs’ authenticating God’s revelation and his prophetic spokespersons at crucial steps; and (iii) the era of Christ and the apostles was such an era of extraordinary miraculous signs.”
Robert Saucy, *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today?*, edited by Wayne Grudem, pg. 112.

c) The Possibility of the Continuation of Spiritual Gifts in the Church.

- (1) The Bible does not answer the questions of continuation or cessation regarding Spiritual Gifts, but does give some truth to help us avoid wrong conclusions.
- (2) Truth One: the Bible does not provide a description of the church after the cessation of the gift of Apostleship. Both 1 Corinthians 12-14 and Romans 12 are written during a time when the Apostles and Prophets were a part of the church. They are listed alongside the other gifts and roles in 1 Corinthians 12:27-29. What effect did these foundational roles have on the congregation experiencing Miraculous Gifts? And what effect did their end have? Our view should not be so simplistic to think that we can just remove the one gift of Apostleship and all the others just remain the same.
- (3) Truth Two: the Bible does not provide a description of how nonapostolic gifts functioned in the church. 1 Corinthians 14 describes ordinary believer speaking in tongues and prophesying, so these gifts were not just for Apostles. Nevertheless, the text does not affirm if these gifts continue after the Apostolic Age and what they would look like if they did. It makes sense as history indicates that they revelatory gifts would decrease in need as Scripture was canonized. Also, no Scripture indicates that an average Christian performed other miracles like healing, rather they brought the sick to the Apostles (Acts 5) or called the elders to pray over the sick (James 5).
- (4) Therefore, the New Testament just does not provide a picture of how the Spiritual Gifts were meant to normally function in the church after the cessation of the gift of Apostleship.

d) The Issue of Specific Teaching on the Cessation of Certain Spiritual Gifts.

- (1) While the previous point considers differences that exists between the church under the Apostles and the church after the Apostles ceased, it must be affirmed that the Scripture does not explicitly state that some Spiritual Gift would cease, even the gift of Apostleship. Rather the argument regarding Apostleship ceasing had came through connecting various biblical points as well as considering their function with a closed canon.
- (2) 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 does not affirm cessation of any Spiritual Gifts before the coming of Christ or the eternal state.

3. Conclusion: While the Bible does not explicitly teach that any of the Spiritual Gifts (Miraculous Gifts and Non-Miraculous Gifts) will cease to function in the church, the Bible also does not explicitly teach that all of the Spiritual Gifts (Miraculous Gifts and Non-Miraculous Gifts) will continue to function as a normal experience of the church throughout history. Therefore, Miraculous Gifts should be viewed with caution and not necessarily pursued by the church today. Nor should today’s church be surprised if they do not experience all the miraculous activities described in the New Testament church.

III. AGREEMENT BY THE THREE CENTER POSITIONS

A. Sufficiency of Scripture

1. Definition: “The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pg. 127
 - a) Salvation: 2 Timothy 3:15-16, 1 Peter 1:23.
 - b) Living the Christian Life: 2 Timothy 3:16, Psalms 119:2.
2. We can find all that God has said on particular topics and answers to our questions (see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pg. 128).
 - a) The sufficiency of Scripture enables us to focus our search for God’s words to us on the Bible alone. This is what the Reformers affirmed in the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, that the Scripture alone is the sufficient source of God’s words.
 - b) The sufficiency of Scripture does not deny God’s guidance today.
 - (1) All positions regarding the spiritual gifts affirm God uses subjective impressions of his will to guide Christians day by day: Rom. 8:9, 14, 16; Gal. 5:16-18, 25.
 - (a) Cessation: “God may impress something on a person’s heart and mind, and he may use such impressions to help others in their spiritual walk.” Thomas Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts*, Kindle Loc. 1245.
 - (b) Continuation: “God can and indeed does use subjective impressions of his will to remind and encourage us and often to prompt our thoughts in the right direction in many rapid decisions that we make throughout the day.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pg. 129.
 - (2) Subjective impressions are never equal in authority to Scripture. They must be tested by Scripture, by our current knowledge of the situation, and by counsel from wise friends.
 - (3) Subjective impressions may guide someone individually but should not be used to force that decision on other Christians in the church.
3. The sufficiency of Scripture means that God has not spoken to mankind any more words which he requires us to believe or obey other than those which we have now in the Bible. Nothing, where through impressions or church history of any other venue, can add to the teachings or commands of Scripture: Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5-6; Revelation 22:18-19.
4. The doctrine of sufficiency does not imply that God cannot add anymore words to those he has already spoken to his people. It rather implies that man cannot add on his own initiative any words to those that God has already spoken.
5. Conclusion: Scripture is the final authority and all experiences, including Spiritual Gifts (Miraculous or Non-Miraculous) must be subordinate to Scripture. Experiences are only to be accepted if they conform with Scripture. Elevating an experience over Scripture, or accepting an experience as self-authenticating part from Scripture, is to deny the teaching of Scripture.

B. Baptism of the Holy Spirit

1. Definition:

- a) Cessation: “At conversion, Jesus Christ plunged believers into the Holy Spirit, so that we are immersed with the Spirit when we are saved ... We are made to drink of the Spirit, and we live because we drink from the water of life ... When we are baptized or plunged into the Spirit and made to drink of the Spirit, we became part of Christ’s body, the church ... To say that some Christians do not share this experience is to ... say that some Christians are not part of the church ... if anyone is not part of the church of Jesus Christ, he or she is unsaved.” Thomas Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts*, Kindle Loc. 669.
 - b) Continuation: “This phrase is a metaphor that describes our experience of the Spirit at conversion: we are immersed and submerged in Him and forever enjoy His presence and power. All Christians are baptized in the Spirit at the moment of the new birth, not subsequent to it. Biblical usage demands that we apply the terminology of ‘Spirit-baptism’ to the conversion experience of all believers. However, this in no way restricts the activity of the Spirit to conversion.” Sam Storms “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” - Part 1”, samstorms.com.
 - c) Caution: “The coming of the Spirit of Pentecost was the gift of the Spirit in fulfillment of the new covenant salvation, not a second blessing that some believers never attain.” Robert Saucy, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, pg. 66.
2. Central Text: 1 Corinthians 12:13
- a) Two metaphors, baptism and drinking, to describe the same experience. They are parallel descriptors of one event.
 - b) The verses emphasize an experience had by all Christians. The word “all” is used twice and is clarified in Paul’s use of “Jews or Greeks, slaves or free”.
 - c) Fulfillment of Old Testament promises using Old Testament imagery: Isaiah 32:15; 44:3; Ezekiel 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29.
3. Related Texts:
- a) Prophecies about Jesus baptizing his followers with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5; 11:16) - fulfilled on the day of Pentecost and subsequently fulfilled in every Christian at conversion.
 - b) The experience of the Samaritans in Acts 8:4-24. This is not a normative pattern.
 - (1) The Samaritans believed the gospel preached by Philip the evangelist (not the Apostle), but they did not receive the Holy Spirit.
 - (2) The Samaritan experience is strange in light of Romans 8:9; Galatians 3:1-5; and Acts 15:7-11 which clearly teach that if someone has received the Holy Spirit that are clearly Christians, but if one does not have the Holy Spirit then one is not a Christian.
 - (3) Peter and John must come down from Jerusalem, lay their hands on the Samaritans for them to receive the Holy Spirit.
 - (4) This was done to overcome the division between Jews and Samaritans by having the Christian movement in Samaria come from the Apostles and the church in Jerusalem, placing them both under the same apostolic authority.
 - (5) This can be seen as the fulfillment of Ezekiel 37 and the reunion of the northern and southern kingdoms into one people of God.
 - c) The experience of the twelve disciples of Ephesus in Acts 19.
 - (1) This was a transitional period of redemptive history, so this experience should not be taken as normative.
 - (2) Immediately upon believing in Jesus they received the Holy Spirit.

4. Conclusion: The Bible clearly presents the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as an experience belonging to all Christians, to the church, to the body of Christ, and occurs at conversion. It is not a gift given subsequent to conversion.

C. Internal Christian Debate

1. Definition:
 - a) Cessation: “It is important to remember that spiritual gifts are not a first-order matter. Those who agree on first-order issues may differ on whether gifts like prophecy and tongues and healing exist today. Still, we agree on the most important questions, such as the authority of Scripture, the person of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, justification by faith alone, etc. As evangelicals, we need to continue to grow in our ability to have loving discussions on where we differ without demonizing one another and without suggesting that those who disagree are somehow less spiritually mature.” Thomas Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts*, Kindle Loc. 1782.
 - b) Continuation: “It’s always edifying to point out the areas where you agree with an interlocutor, as well as the areas where you disagree. To that end, I am encouraged by the many points of common ground between us. We agree on the final authority, inspiration, sufficiency, clarity and infallibility of the scriptures. We agree that the biblical canon is closed. We agree that Paul was the last eyewitness of the resurrection, and that there was a type of apostle in the New Testament period who does not continue. As such, we agree that one type of spiritual gift has ceased (the unique eyewitness apostles), but also that many spiritual gifts continue (teaching, leading, helping, administrating, giving, encouraging). We agree that a lot of what goes on in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements is deplorable. We agree that all spiritual gifts should be practiced in submission to the authority of God in Scripture. We agree that God can heal today. We agree that differing from one another on miraculous gifts does not mean we are saying those who disagree with us are not Christians. That is not an insignificant list!” Andrew Wilson, “Does Cessationism Still Stand? A Response to Tom Pennington”, thinktheology.com.uk.
 - c) Caution: “In writing regarding a discussion between individuals who represent various positions on Miraculous Gifts, “Our interaction renewed my realization that our disagreements are among ‘brothers and sisters in Christ’” Robert Saucy, *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today?*, edited by Wayne Grudem, pg. 333.
2. Conclusion: Each of the Three Center Positions are able to affirm that a Christian can hold to one of the other positions without raising questions of their Christianity. The disagreements by the Three Center Positions on this topic should be viewed as a debate within Orthodox Christianity.

D. Ambiguity of 1 Corinthians 13:8-12

1. The unconvincing argument that “the perfect” is the Bible.
 - a) Some Cessationist have interpreted “the perfect” to refer to the canon of Scripture and have argued that the closing and completion of the canon means all signs, wonders, and miraculous gifts that accompanied and attested to the truth of the gospel ceased as the last word of canonical Scripture was written. The need for such manifestations of divine power has ceased and the Bible itself has replaced miraculous phenomena in the life of the church.
 - b) There are several problems with this argument. “The arguments for cessationism from 1 Corinthians 13:8–10 aren’t exegetically convincing for a number of reasons.” Thomas Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts*, Kindle Loc. 1571.

- (1) The historical location of Paul.
 - (a) Paul knew his writings were authoritative and represented God’s Word to his readers.
 - (b) Yet, Paul seems to not be aware that his writings would be collected into the New Testament canon, rather he expected Jesus to return soon.
 - (c) It is highly unlikely that Paul would be referring to the New Testament canon. Schreiner writes, at such a conclusion is “almost impossible” for Paul.
- (2) The understanding of the Corinthians.
 - (a) If Paul were referring to the New Testament canon, how would the Corinthians have understood this?
 - (b) The Corinthians have no context from which to understand a completed canon.
- (3) No other biblical text brings clarity to this argument by making such a claim that written Scripture has replaced or in some sense supplanted the need for signs, wonders and the like.
- (4) “Which is which is greater: Jesus or the written word? Which is greater: the Son of God or the Bible? Jesus, of course! But if signs, wonders and miracles were essential in the physical presence of the Son of God, how much more so now in his absence! Surely we are not prepared to suggest that the Bible, for all its glory, is sufficient to do what Jesus couldn’t. Jesus thought it necessary to utilize the miraculous phenomena of the Holy Spirit to attest and confirm his ministry. If it was essential for him, how much more so for us. In other words, if the glorious presence of the Son of God himself did not preclude the need for miraculous phenomena, how dare we suggest that our possession of the Bible does?” Sam Storms, “Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? - Part II”, samstorms.com.

2. Other interpretations of “the perfect”:

a) The Second Coming:

- (1) Cessation: “The idiom ‘face to face’ in 1 Corinthians 13: 12 doesn’t suggest something abstract like the New Testament canon or spiritual maturity. Instead, it represents the language of encounter with God, and so naturally refers to the second coming, since we will see Jesus ‘face to face’ when ‘the perfect comes’ (1 Cor. 13: 10). ... Our knowledge continues to be imperfect. We know truly but not comprehensively and exhaustively. We will only know fully when Jesus returns, when we see him face to face.” Thomas Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts*, Kindle Loc. 1609-1622.
- (2) Continuation: “Paul believes in the cessation of the gifts. He believes there is a time when—unlike love, which never ends—they will have served their purpose and will pass away (13:8). ... Paul anticipates spiritual gifts remaining with the church until the coming of Christ—at which point they will no longer be needed.” Andrew Wilson, *Spirit and Sacrament*, pg. 115.
- (3) Caution: “Paul’s reference to the ceasing of tongues and doing away of knowledge and prophecy when ‘perfection’ comes also, in my opinion, does not expressly teach the cessation of these gifts during the church age. ... These statements refer to the coming of Christ, when the perfect arrives.” Robert Saucy, *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today?*, edited by Wayne Grudem, pg. 123.

b) The Eternal State:

- (1) Cessation: “For Christians the eternal state begins either at death, when they go to be with the Lord, or at the rapture, when the Lord takes His own to be with Himself.” John MacArthur, *First Corinthians*, pg. 366.
 - (2) Continuation: “The ‘perfect’ is that glorious state of final consummation when, as Paul says, we will see ‘face to face’ and ‘know fully’ (v. 12), as over against the limitations imposed by our life now where we see as ‘in a mirror dimly’ and know only ‘in part’ (v. 12).” Sam Storms, *Practicing the Power*, pg. 245.
3. Conclusion: The Three Center Positions affirm that a proper understanding of 1 Corinthians 13:8-12 excludes its used as a proof text for the cessation of Miraculous Gifts at the closing of the canon. Rather, the exegetical evidence points toward the eschaton. There is ambiguity as to what aspect of the eschaton the text is pointing to: the second coming or the eternal state.

IV. DISTINCTIONS OF THE THREE CENTER POSITIONS ON

A. The Spiritual Gift of Prophecy

1. Prophecy According to Cessation

- a) Definition: “Prophecy is the reception of spontaneous revelations that are communicated to God’s people.” Thomas Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts*, Kindle Loc. 1068.
- b) Support:
 - (1) New Testament Prophecy Is Authoritative and Infallible.
 - (a) New Testament Prophecy should be expected to operate like Old Testament Prophecy unless there are decisive biblical reasons to view them differently.
 - (i) This continuity is the natural reading of Scripture.
 - (ii) This continuity is assumed in the prophecy of Joel 2:28.
 - (iii) This continuity is supported by the major issue of false prophets in both testaments
 - (a) Old Testament: Jeremiah 20:6; 23:16, 25-26, 32:27:10-15; 28:9; Lamentations 2:14; Ezekiel 13:9; 22:28.
 - (b) New Testament: 1 John 4:1; Matthew 7:15; 24:11; 24:24; Mark 13:22; Luke 6:22; Acts 13:6; 2 Peter 1:21; 2:1; Revelation 2:20; 16:13; 19:20; 20:10
 - (b) New Testament Prophets held a significant role of authority based upon the revelation given them by God (Authoritative).
 - (i) Ephesians 2:20 affirms that the New Testament Prophets, like the Apostles, served in a foundational and authoritative role in shaping the doctrines of the church based upon the revelation given them by God. The Apostles and Prophets are two distinct roles as affirmed in Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:28.
 - (ii) Ephesians 3:5 confirms the authority of the Apostles and the New Testament Prophets was based upon the revelation given them by God. If Paul intended to speak of the Old Testament Prophets and the Apostles (as in the full canon of Scripture) one

would expect the word order to be reverses: “prophets and apostles”.

- (iii) The New Testament Prophets are consistent with Old Testament Prophets in regards to being given authority based upon the revelation given them by God.
- (c) New Testament Prophets were to be evaluated and judged based upon the revelation given them by God (Infallible).
- (i) The genuineness of Old Testament Prophets was determined by the truthfulness of their prophecies: Deuteronomy 18:21-22.
 - (ii) The genuineness of New Testament Prophets are to be determined by the truthfulness of their prophecies: 1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21; 1 John 4:1.
 - (iii) The fact that these texts on evaluating prophecies lack an expanded explanation suggests that the readers knew from the Old Testament that false prophets are exposed by their errant prophecies.
- (2) New Testament Prophecy Is not Fallible.
- (a) 1 Corinthians 14:37-38 is not suggesting that prophecies are fallible, rather it states that someone claiming to be a prophet will not prophesy in contradiction to the revelation given by the apostolic authority of Paul. If someone claiming to be a prophet does prophesy in contradiction to the revelation given by the apostolic authority of Paul they are not a true prophet, but a false one. They will not be recognized by God nor should they be recognized by the church. “If any man think himself a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge, etc., nay, let him be tried by this very rule. If he will not own what I deliver on this head to be the will of Christ, he himself never had the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of Christ can never contradict itself; if it speak in me, and in them, it must speak the same things in both. If their revelations contradict mine, they do not come from the same Spirit; either I or they must be false prophets.” Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible, 1 Corinthians 14:36-40.
 - (b) Acts 21:11 is not an example of fallible prophecy. Paul himself affirmed the exact prophecy of Agabus when retelling his experiences in Acts 28:17. Agabus had infallibly prophesied about a famine in Acts 11:28 and Paul believed the prophecy Agabus gave regarding his arrest was true and fulfilled. This is not to say Agabus or Paul could have prophesied/spoken with more accuracy, but it is to say that Agabus and Paul were not inaccurate. “Modern Western conceptions of accuracy must not be applied to the Scriptures when we speak of accuracy. ...we can’t impose upon the Scriptures the kind of computer accuracy we have in our culture today.” Thomas Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts*, Kindle Loc. 1206. As stated in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, “We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of materials, variant selections of material in parallel accounts or the use of free citations.”

- (i) Agabus used prophetic symbolism similar to Old Testament Prophets with similar accuracy: Isaiah 20:1-6; Jeremiah 13:1-11; Ezekiel 4).
 - (ii) Agabus uses a formula (tade, “these things”) to introduce his prophecy similar to that used by Old Testament Prophets for authoritative words from the Lord. (Also see how Jesus introduced his authoritative words to the seven churches by using the same formula with tade in Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14).
 - (c) Acts 21:4, 12-13 is not a clear example of fallible prophecy. While prophets telling Paul “through the Spirit” not to go to Jerusalem since he would suffer is a possible interpretation which makes their prophecy a mixture of errors (Paul shouldn’t go to Jerusalem) and truth (Paul would suffer in Jerusalem), another interpretation would be to take the erroneous part not as part of the original prophecy but rather as an inference drawn from the prophecy. Because of the prophecy that Paul would suffer in Jerusalem, the people inferred that Paul should not go. In their minds the prophetic warning of suffering was meant to be applied by avoiding the suffering.
- (3) Not Biblical Prophecy, but Impressions.
- (a) Impressions are an act of God whereby he impresses something upon a person for his good or the good of another. This is when someone senses the leading by God to speak to another or make a specific statement about something.
 - (b) Impressions are a better descriptor because unlike prophecy they can be received with a mixture of truth and error. Because of the mixture they should not be the normative means of hearing God, not should they be relied on for guidance in anything significant.
 - (c) Impressions should not be relied on as one might confuse their own confidence or feelings for the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- (4) Conclusion: New Testament Prophecy is authoritative and infallible and therefore not mixed with any errors. The role of New Testament Prophet was vital to the early church which necessitated an authority based upon infallibility. That which is labeled prophecy by churches today should therefore be rejected as biblical prophecy, although some of it might be relabeled as an impression from God.

2. Prophecy According to Continuation

- a) Definition: “I define prophecy as the human report of a divine revelation. Prophecy is the speaking forth in merely human words of something God spontaneously brought to mind.” Sam Storms, *Practicing the Power*, pg.82.
- b) Support:
 - (1) The New Testament Spiritual Gift of Prophecy does not Result “Scripture-Quality” Revelatory Words.
 - (a) Thousands of prophetic words existed in the first century that are not a part of canonical Scripture and are not binding to Christians throughout history.
 - (i) In Acts 2, Peter considers prophecy a characteristic of the time of the New Covenant.

- (ii) In Acts 19, the prophecies of the disciples of John the Baptist are not preserved in Scripture.
 - (iii) In 1 Corinthians 14, prophecy is encouraged in the church, yet these prophecies are not preserved in Scripture. Corinth was one of many churches that experienced prophecies, churches in Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Caesarea, Rome, and Thessalonica. This would result in thousands of prophetic words not recorded in Scripture.
 - (iv) “We have no record ... anywhere in the New Testament of churches recording or preserving these prophecies as if they were ‘words of the Lord.’ Rather they preserve and obey the writings and teachings of the apostles, not of the prophets.” Wayne Grudem, Unpublished Paper, quoted by Sam Storms, “Why NT Prophecy Does Not Result in ‘Scripture-Quality’ Revelatory Words”, samstorms.com
- (b) Paul says prophecy was despised (1 Thess. 5:20) by the Thessalonians while they held the Word of God in high regard, “when you received the word which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers” (1 Thess. 2:13).
- (i) If Paul had taught the Thessalonians that prophetic words were equal to Scripture, then they would have also held them high regard rather than despise them.
 - (ii) If prophetic words were equal to Scripture, yet despised by the Thessalonians, then Paul would have no basis for his commendation on how they accepted the Word of God.
 - (iii) It is more likely that the Thessalonians recognized the difference between the Word of God and prophetic words. The first being infallible divine revelations infallibly preserved in the apostolic presentation and the later being infallible divine revelation not infallibly preserved, but presented with fallible human interpretation and application.
 - (iv) This is why Paul instructed them to “test everything” claiming to be a prophetic word and then “hold fast what is good” and “abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22), rather than saying, “Submit to them without hesitation”.
- (c) The Corinthians were commanded “weigh what is said” (1 Corinthians 14:29). This is similar to Paul’s command to the Thessalonians, to test prophecies identify what is of God and what is the human fallible interpretations and application. Paul wrote that the apostolic Word of God is infallible and authoritative, so it must be acknowledged (1 Corinthians 14:37), yet prophetic words must be assessed and are therefore not infallible “Scripture-quality” revelation from God, nor possess the same authority.

“According to Paul, the words of the prophets at Corinth were not and could not have been sufficiently authoritative to show Paul to be wrong.” Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, pg. 68).

- (i) Paul seems unconcerned that a prophetic word might be lost in his restrictions on prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:30-31). This approach by Paul to silence prophetic words affirms that they do not have the same authority as “Scripture-quality” revelation from God.
 - (ii) Clearly Paul viewed the spiritual gift of prophecy operated at a lower level of authority than the apostolic and infallible Word of God, nevertheless Paul also viewed the spiritual gift of prophecy as a good and helpful gift of God for the church and exhorted the Corinthians to “earnestly desire to prophesy” (1 Corinthians 14:39; cf. 12:31).
- (d) Acts 21 demonstrates how someone could prophesy by the Spirit and yet not do so infallibly or at a level equal to Scripture.
- (i) Based on revelation ("through the Spirit," 21:4) the disciples at Tyre prophesied that Paul “not to go on to Jerusalem”.
 - (ii) Paul directly disobeyed the prophetic words (21:13-15). Paul would not have directly disobeyed if prophetic words were always equal in infallible and authority with Scripture.
 - (iii) Rather, Paul had an authoritative and infallible apostolic Word of God (20:22-23) that caused him to reject the prophecy at Tyre and the prophecy of Agabus (21:10-11), along with the urging of everyone else (21:12).
- (e) The prophecy of Agabus is another demonstration of fallible prophetic words. The prophecy gets the persecution right, but get two points wrong.
- (i) The Romans were the ones who bound Paul, not the Jews (Acts 21:33; 22:29).
 - (ii) Paul was rescued by the Romans rather than being delivered to them by the Jews (Acts 21:31-36).
- (f) Not all of the “revelatory” activity of God comes to us as “Scripture-quality” divinely authoritative, canonical truth. There are different ways or senses in which God might “reveal” something. See Philippians 3:15; Ephesians 1:17; Matthew 11:27; Romans 1:18.

“When Paul presupposes in 1 Corinthians 14:30 that the gift of prophecy depends on a revelation, we are not limited to a form of authoritative revelation that threatens the finality of the canon. To argue in such a way is to confuse the terminology of Protestant systematic theology with the terminology of the Scripture writers.” D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 163.

(2) The Benefits of Fallible New Testament Prophecy.

- (a) As defined by Continuationist, prophecy is the human report of a divine revelation.
 - (i) “Prophecy is not based on a hunch, a supposition, an inference, an educated guess, or even on sanctified wisdom. Prophecy is not based on personal insight, intuition, or illumination. Prophecy is the human report of a divine revelation. This is what distinguishes prophecy from teaching. Teaching is always based on a text of Scripture. Prophecy is always based on a

spontaneous revelation.” Sam Storms, “How Can NT Prophecy Be ‘Fallible’ (and of Benefit to the Church) if it is Based on an ‘Infallible’ Revelation from God?”, samstorms.com.

- (ii) Therefore, does God reveal something containing error or that is fallible? No. It is not in the divine revelation, but rather in the human report that error and fallibility is found. “The gift of prophecy does not guarantee the infallible transmission of that revelation.” Sam Storms, *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today?*, edited by Wayne Grudem, pg. 209.

(b) Three elements of Prophecy:

- (i) Revelation: “God is alone responsible for the revelation. Whatever he discloses to the human mind is wholly free from error. It is as infallible as God is. It is true in all its parts, completely devoid of falsehood. Indeed, the revelation, which is the root of every genuine prophetic utterance, is as inerrant and infallible as the written Word of God itself (the Bible).” Sam Storms, “How Can NT Prophecy Be ‘Fallible’ (and of Benefit to the Church) if it is Based on an ‘Infallible’ Revelation from God?”, samstorms.com.
- (ii) Interpretation: The attempt to ascertain the meaning of what has been disclosed. We are asking, “What is its meaning?” God may disclose the meaning, but the interpretation is often the result of the human agent seeking to understand and report the revelation from God.
- (iii) Application: The attempt to assign a response to what has been disclosed. We are asking, “How does this truth impact one’s life?” Again, God may disclose the appropriate response, but the application is often the result of the human agent seeking to connect a specific response to the revelation from God.

(c) Warnings regarding Interpretation and Application:

- (i) “We should always be open to the possibility that no matter how clearly we think we have heard from the Spirit—like Paul’s companions—we may be wrong. We must cultivate prophetic humility. Some are simply unwilling to entertain the possibility that they made a mistake in some aspect of the revelatory experience and arrogantly seek to impose their will on others in order to preserve their reputation as uniquely gifted and anointed. This sinful and self-serving attitude will only serve to undermine the otherwise powerful and Christ-exalting exercise of prophecy in the local church.” Sam Storms, *Practicing the Power*, pg. 119
- (ii) “We also need to be extremely careful before we move from a revelation to its interpretation and application. Don’t think that you have fallen short of your responsibility to God or to others or that your prophetic gift is inadequate or incomplete if you don’t get the interpretation or application. Simply because you have great clarity in the revelation does not mean God intends to enlighten you as to its application. This is one of the most important lessons to learn in the proper exercise of prophecy in the local church. For some reason, those who are the recipient of prophetic revelation struggle to stop once the word has been shared. They feel compelled to interpret and explain and

eventually apply the word either to an individual or to an entire group. I'm not suggesting that this should never happen. On occasion a person will receive both the revelation and the interpretation. But in the majority of instances, it will turn out that God has revealed something to a person but wishes that its interpretation and application be left to others." Sam Storms, *Practicing the Power*, pg. 120.

(iii) "While there may be some situations where interpretation and application are needed, in most cases a person should simply share what God has shown to them and leave it there. Leave the task of interpretation and application to others. This means that unless you have explicit biblical warrant, do not tell a person what God's will is for their life. For example, I do not need a prophetic revelation to know that it is God's will for Christians to abstain from fornication. All of us have already been told this in biblical texts such as 1 Thessalonians 4:3." Sam Storms, *Practicing the Power*, pg. 138.

(iv) Example: Someone has a vision that Pastor Heller is preaching in Africa to a group of African Pastors and Church Leaders. They interpret the vision as Pastor Heller functioning as a missionary in Africa. Therefore, they believe the appropriate response is for Pastor Heller to pursue being a missionary in Africa. Yet, what the vision showed was Pastor Heller participating in the current training class. The revelation was infallible, but the interpretation and application were both in error.

(d) Benefits of Prophecy seen in the Analogy of Teaching: "When people exercise the spiritual gift of teaching, their ministry is rooted in a divine revelation (the Bible) and is sustained by the Holy Spirit. All admit that such teaching edifies the church, even though what the teacher says is occasionally wrong or tainted with error. ... Teaching has no intrinsic divine authority; only the Bible does. As with the gift of prophecy, there is in all teaching the revelation (the biblical text), the interpretation, and the application. Only the revelation is infallible. The teacher may misinterpret or misapply the infallible and error-free Word of God. But we do not dismiss the spiritual gift of teaching simply because the teacher occasionally (or even frequently) communitaces error." Sam Storms, *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today?*, edited by Wayne Grudem, pg. 209.

c) Conclusion: The Bible supports a New Testament Prophecy that is infallible in its divine revelation, yet not on the same level as the Authoritative Scripture. This New Testament Prophecy is also open to fallibility, not through God's infallible revelation, but through the fallible human means of reporting the revelation.

3. Prophecy According to Caution

a) Definition: "Scholarly studies on this subject have traditionally viewed all biblical prophecy as 'inspired utterances' that came through direct revelation from God." Robert Saucy, *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today?*, edited by Wayne Grudem, pg. 127.

b) Support:

(1) Prophecy is promised in the future: revelation 11:3, 10.

(2) Prophecy occurring today is not explicitly denied by Scripture. Rather, Scripture gives certain criteria for prophecy:

- (a) “It must be totally harmonious with canonical revelation.
 - (b) It must be judged carefully by the community (1 Cor. 14:29). ... People could not simply claim to be giving a word of prophecy without being evaluated.
 - (c) The content of the prophecy should be edifying to the community (1 Cor. 14:3-4). It must not be something simply to demonstrate supernatural power or so trite or commonly known from Scripture that it adds essentially nothing to the community save for a purported display of a miraculous gift.
 - (d) Prophecy must also be done in an orderly manner in accord with the apostle’s instructions to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 14:19-33).” Robert Saucy, *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today?*, edited by Wayne Grudem, pg. 128
- (3) Prophecy meeting this criteria may occur but the need for such prophecy, the present experience, and the evidence of church history support a decrease in occurrences of genuine prophecy.
- (a) Other Spiritual Gifts accomplish the purpose of prophecy in the early church.
 - (b) Paul’s Pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus emphasize the roles of teaching and preaching the Scriptures, rather than emphasizing anything prophetic. The fact that these letters are the last to be written by Paul seems significant.
- c) Conclusion: While the Bible does not explicitly teach that the gift of prophecy will cease to function in the church, the Bible also does not explicitly teach that it will continue to function as a normal experience of the church throughout history. The evidence supports a decrease in prophetic gift and an increasing emphasis on the teaching and preaching of the Scriptures.

B. The Spiritual Gift of Tongues

1. Tongues According to Cessation

- a) Definition: “The gift of tongues is the gift of speaking in human languages. Therefore, tongue-speaking is not, as many today believe, speaking with ecstatic utterances, that is to say, speaking words with no discernible code or linguistic pattern.” Thomas Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts*, Kindle Loc. 1315.
- b) Support:
 - (1) The Function of the gift of Tongues.
 - (a) Acts 2
 - (i) The gift of tongues is clearly a gift of speaking in human languages.
 - (a) Human Languages: 2:6 “each one was hearing them speak in his own language”; 2:8 “we hear, each of us in his own native language”; 2:11 “we hear them telling in our own tongues”.
 - (b) These languages include those used by the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, the residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and Romans which included Jews, proselytes, Cretans, and Arabians.

- (ii) Speaking (not hearing): 2:4 “And they all were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance”.
- (b) Acts 10
 - (i) Cornelius and his friends receive the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues.
 - (ii) 10:46 (cf. 11:17 “the same gift”) confirms that it was the same gift as Acts 2, therefore Cornelius and his friends spoke in human languages that were unknown to them.
- (c) Acts 19:6
 - (i) The twelve disciples of John the Baptist receive the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues.
 - (ii) This should be interpreted in the same manner as Acts 10, since Luke has not given any indication that it should be interpreted differently.
- (d) 1 Corinthians 13:1
 - (i) The reference to “tongues ... of angels” is most likely a rhetorical flourish.
 - (ii) This is similar to the clear hyperbole of 13:2 in “all mysteries” and “all knowledge”. God alone know all the mysteries and knowledge.
- (e) 1 Corinthians 14
 - (i) While the situation was different from Acts 2, in that there were no people present who knew the languages being spoken with the gift of tongues, the gift of tongues does not need to be different.
 - (ii) While Paul contrasts the gift of prophecy from the gift of tongues, he does link the gift of tongues that has been interpreted to prophecy in 14:5 similar to the gift of tongues being linked to prophecy in Acts 2. This seems to indicate that there is little difference between the gift of tongues in Acts 2 and here in 1 Corinthians.
 - (iii) The judgment that Paul links to the gift of tongues in 14:20-23 is only for uninterpreted tongues, since if they were understood they would not lead to judgment. This does not prove that the gift of tongues were nonhuman languages, but rather simply that the people present did not understand the languages spoken by the gift of tongues. Again, this could simply be addressing a different situation from the ones in Acts where people present knew the languages spoken by the gift of tongues, rather than a different kind of gift if tongues.
- (2) The Function of the gift of the Interpretation of Tongues
 - (a) The gift of the Interpretation of Tongues functions the same as prophecy.
 - (i) 1 Corinthians 14:5 supports the equivalency of interpreted tongues and prophecy.
 - (ii) Acts 2:1-13 in light of Acts 2:17-18 supports interpreted tongues being defined as prophecy.

- (b) If prophecy has ceased, then interpreted tongues has ceased, and if interpreted tongues has ceased then the gift of tongues itself would likely have also ceased.
- c) Conclusion: The Bible supports the gift of tongues as describing speaking in human languages previously unknown by the speaker. Most practices of the gift of tongues today do not fall into this description, confirming the gift has either ceased or is exceedingly rare. If the gift of the interpretation of tongues is to be viewed as equivalent to prophecy then this gift has most certainly ceased along with prophecy, and with it also the gift of tongues.

2. Tongues According to Continuation

- a) Definition: “First of all, speaking in tongues is a form of prayer. In 1 Corinthians 14:2 Paul says that speaking in tongues is speaking ‘to God’ (see also v. 28). Again, in verses 14-15 he explicitly refers to ‘praying’ in tongues or ‘praying’ with (by) his spirit. Therefore, speaking in tongues is a means of communicating with God in supplication, petition, and intercession. According to 1 Corinthians 14:16, praying in tongues is a perfectly legitimate way in which to express heartfelt gratitude to God. There is nothing in scripture to indicate in tongue’s lose self-control, become aware of their surroundings, or lapse into a frenzy condition in which self-consciousness in the power for rational thinking our eclipse. The person speaking in tongues can start and stop at will (1 Cor. 14:15-19, 27-28; cf. 14:31).” Sam Storms, *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today?*, edited by Wayne Grudem, pg. 215.
- b) Support:
 - (1) The gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and the gift of tongues in the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 12-14) are different.
 - (a) The Acts 2 gift of tongues were immediately understood by those who heard. The 1 Corinthians 12-14 gift of tongues required interpretation.
 - (b) The Acts 2 gift of tongues demonstrated blessing, as those who speak other languages understand, in reversal of the curse of Babel. The 1 Corinthians 12-14 gift of tongues demonstrated judgment, as those who speak other languages do not understand, in fulfilment of Isaiah (1 Cor 14:21).
 - (c) The Acts 2 gift of tongues is assumed to function like prophecy by Peter (Acts 2:16-18). The 1 Corinthians 12-14 gift of tongues is explicitly differentiated from prophecy by Paul (1 Cor 14:4).
 - (d) The Acts 2 gift of tongues had a declarative, even evangelistic, purpose, and is aimed at people: “we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” The 1 Corinthians 12-14 gift of tongues is described in terms of prayer, song and thanksgiving, and is aimed at God (1 Cor 14:13-19).
 - (e) The purpose of the Acts 2 gift of tongues is the edification of the hearer. The purpose of the 1 Corinthians 12-14 gift of tongues, if there is no interpreter, is the edification of the speaker.
 - (2) The eschatology of the New Testament suggests that both forms of the gift continue until the return of Christ.
 - (a) The continuation of Pentecost-style gift of tongues is strongly implied by Peter’s interpretation of it within its eschatological context (Acts 2:14-21); Peter sees the gift of tongues as an example of exactly what Joel said would characterise the “last days,” which have not finished.

- (b) The continuation of Corinth-style gift of tongues until the parousia is affirmed in 1 Corinthians 1:7; 13:8-10.
- (3) The gift of tongues should be pursued.
 - (a) All gifts of the Spirit, including the gift of tongues, should be earnestly desired (1 Corinthians 14:1).
 - (b) Paul says he wants all believers to speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:5); he says that whoever prays in a tongue builds themselves up (1 Corinthians 14:4); and he speaks in tongues more than anyone (1 Corinthians 14:18).
- (4) The use of the gift in a public meeting is only legitimate if its purpose is to build up the church. In the church, the gift is not for self-expression, or ecstatic encounters, or especially vivid prayers, let alone proof of spirituality; it should only be used out of a desire to love (1 Corinthians 13:1-13) and edify (1 Corinthians 14:6-12) other believers.
- (5) In the church, the gift of tongues should always be interpreted. If they aren't, they shouldn't be used in the first place (1 Corinthians 14:27-28).
 - (a) This is not just because we want to build up the church, but also because we don't want unbelievers who turn up in Christian meetings to think we have all lost our minds (1 Corinthians 14:23).
 - (b) Therefore, anyone who speaks with the gift of tongues in public should pray that they may interpret what they have said (1 Corinthians 14:13).
- (6) Not all believers will speak with the gift of tongues. This is true of all spiritual gifts, as is clear from Paul's string of rhetorical questions in 1 Corinthians 12:29-30.
 - (a) This is frequently denied when it comes to the gift of tongues, usually on the basis of the common connection between Spirit baptism and language-speaking in Acts.
 - (b) Yet not only are people filled with the Spirit without the gift of tongues being mentioned, even in Acts (4:8, 31; 8:14-17; 9:17-19), but Paul uses the fact that no gift is given to everyone as a basis to argue that the church is a body (1 Corinthians 12:17-20).
 - (c) Everybody has some gift(s); nobody has every gift; no gift is given to everybody; so we all need each other.
- (7) There is no scriptural precedent for teaching people to speak in the gift of tongues by imitating someone else's sounds.
 - (a) This sort of thing makes the entire gift look bogus to an awful lot of Christians, let alone unbelievers.
 - (b) This sort of thing detracts from the sudden, spontaneous phenomenon we read about in the book of Acts.
- (8) Banning speaking with the gift of tongues is manifestly unbiblical (1 Corinthians 14:39). Given such an explicit apostolic instruction, it is remarkable how many have done exactly this.
- c) Conclusion: The Bible affirms the gift of tongues as both speaking in a previously unknown language and in a prayer language directed to God. While not every Christian will speak in tongues, the gift should be appropriately encouraged and pursued today.

3. Tongues According to Caution

- a) Definition: “Whether tongues referred to in Scripture were the miraculous speaking of foreign languages unknown to the speaker or the language of glory (i.e., ‘tongues of angels.’ 1 Cor.13:1) or both, the important point is that they were all language, i.e., they conveyed conceptual thought. The gift of tongues could be interpreted with understanding.” Robert Saucy, *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today?*, edited by Wayne Grudem, pg. 131-132.
- b) Support:
 - (1) The gift of Tongues in Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 12-14 are distinct but both convey linguistic characteristics.
 - (a) Acts 2 describes a miraculous speaking in a foreign language that is unknown to the speaker.
 - (b) 1 Corinthians 12-14 describe a miraculous speaking in a non-human language that is unknown to everyone present.
 - (i) Many languages would have been present in the church at Corinth, yet Paul assumes no one will be able to understand the gift of tongues.
 - (ii) Paul uses the analogy of languages to explain the issue of an uninterpreted gift of tongues given within the congregation (1 Corinthians 14:10-13). If they are analogous, they are identical but similar.
 - (iii) The gift of Interpretation of Tongues clearly conveys the meaning of the gift of Tongues in a way parallel to the gift of Prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:5). This affirms that the gift of Tongues has linguistic characteristics able to convey conceptual thought. This stands in opposition to many contemporary views of the gift of Tongues where ecstatic utterances are affirmed as the gift without any form of linguistic characteristics.
 - (2) The Function of the gift of Tongues.
 - (a) The gift of Tongues were not for the proclamation of the gospel to foreigners. In Acts 2 the gift of Tongues brought the crowds, but it was the ordinary preaching of the gospel by Peter that proclaimed the gospel.
 - (b) The gift of Tongues is not the normal evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We looked at this on day one.
 - (c) The gift of Tongues has sign value to unbelievers. 1 Corinthians 14:22 is the only explicit purpose statement for the gift and it affirms, “thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers.”
 - (d) The gift of Tongues can be edifying to the church, but only if it is interpreted. Paul clearly declares that intelligibly communicated content is edifying and to be preferred.
 - (e) The gift of Tongues is restricted by Scripture for use in the church. Paul requires that the gift of Tongues be interpreted in order for it to be used in church and only two or three at the most, taking turns, so one at a time (1 Corinthians 14:27-28). Scripture does not provide any grounds of group praying or singing in the gift of Tongues.
 - (f) The gift of Tongues is described by Paul as a means of personal encouragement through private prayer (1 Corinthians 14:13-18). This is

by no means meant to indicate that this is the primary purpose of the gift of Tongues. Clearly all the Spiritual Gifts are given primarily for the edification of the church (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:3, 5-6, 12, 26). “To say the least, tongues are never seen in Scripture as a crucial factor in the spiritual life. In fact, nothing is said about the exercise of any spiritual gift in passages that deal with personal spiritual life. (For example, Romans 6-8; Ephesians 5-6; Colossians 3-4)” Robert Saucy, *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today?*, edited by Wayne Grudem, pg. 135.

- (3) Conclusion: Scripture does not state that the gift of Tongues has ceased, nor does it discourage its use today. Nevertheless, Scripture does place conditions on the use of the gift of Tongues both in its description (as containing linguistic characteristics) and in its function (as to its purpose and limitations).

C. The Spiritual Gift of Healing

1. Healing According to Cessation

- a) Definition: “If a person has a gift of healing, it seems there would be a pattern of healing. And the healings should be on the same level that we see in the New Testament: healing of the blind, of those who are unable to walk, of those who are deaf, and of those who are near death.” Thomas Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts*, Kindle Loc. 1719.
- b) Support:
- (1) The New Testament presents a pattern for those with the gift of healing.
 - (a) Jesus: Matthew 4:23; 8:13, 16; 9:35; 12:15, 22; 14:14, 35-36; 15:28-30; 19:22; 21:14; Mark 1:34; 3:10; 5:28-29, 39-42; 6:5, 55-56; Luke 4:40; 5:15; 6:18-19; 8:22, 47; 9:11; 14:42; 17:15; 22:51
 - (b) Apostles: Matthew 10:1; Mark 6:13; Luke 9:2, 6; Acts 3:1-10; 4:14; 5:16; 8:7; 9:33-34, 37-41; 14:9-10; 20:9-12; 28:8
 - (c) Therefore, if someone has the gift of healing they should be able to heal regularly.
 - (2) The New Testament presents objective healings, not just subjective healings (like colds, the flu, stomach and back ailments, sports injuries, etc.)
 - (a) Blindness: Matthew 9, 11, 12, 15, 20, 21; Mark 8, 10; Luke 4, 7, 14, 18; John 5, 9
 - (b) Deafness: Matthew 11; Mark 7; Luke 7
 - (c) Paralysis/Lameness: Matthew 4, 8, 9, 11, 15, 21; Mark 2; Luke 5, 7, 14; John 5; Acts 3, 8, 9, 14
 - (d) Resurrection: Matthew 9, 10, 11; Mark 5; Luke 7, 8; John 11; Acts 9, 20
 - (e) Therefore, if the gift of healing is functional today we should see clear and objective healings.
 - (3) God still heals and does so miraculously, just not through the gift of healing.
 - (a) God can miraculously heal or providentially heal.
 - (b) God sometimes heals in response to prayer.
 - (c) God does not always heal, nor does he regularly heal in miraculous ways. Healing is not the rule, but the exception. We must be careful not to place false assumptions or even demands on God.

- c) Conclusion: God still heals today and he heals miraculously today, just not always, or even regularly, and not through the gift of healing. The lack of both the New Testament patterns of healing and of objective healing indicates that the gift of healing has ceased to function today.

2. Healing According to Continuation

- a) Definition: “Gifts of Healings ... reflects the fact that both words are plural and lack the definite article in Greek (charismata iamaton). Evidently Paul did not envision that a person would be endowed with one healing gift operative at all times for all diseases. His language suggests either many different gifts or powers of healing, each appropriate to and effective for its related illness, or each occurrence of healing constituting a distinct gift in its own right.” Sam Storms, *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today?*, edited by Wayne Grudem, pg. 212.
- b) Support:
 - (1) Rejection of the erroneous principle that if one could ever heal, one could always heal.
 - (a) Healing did not occur:
 - (i) Philippians 2:25-30 - Epaphroditus
 - (ii) 1 Timothy 5:23 - Timothy
 - (iii) 2 Timothy 4:20 - Trophimus
 - (iv) 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Galatians 4:13 - Paul
 - (b) A person may be given the gift of healing by God for many people, but not for all people. Or God might give a person the gift of healing for one person in one place with one particular illness.
 - (c) We must affirm that all healing, or lack of healing, is governed by God’s sovereign will and purposes. God works for his glory and the good of his people both in healing and in the withholding of healing. We are meant to trust him as he uses even suffering and sickness to draw us closer to himself and increases our obedience and sanctification.
 - (2) The role of prayer in connection with the gifts of healings.
 - (a) Prayer is often the means God has chosen to use to give to us what he already knows we need. (Isaiah 30:18-19)
 - (b) James 5:13-18 connects prayer to healing.
 - (c) Be wary of confusing expectant prayer with presumptuous prayer. “Prayer is presumptuous when the person claims healing without revelatory warrant or on the unbiblical assumption that God always wills to heal then and there. They then feel required to account for the absence of healing by appealing either to moral failure or deficiency of faith (usually in the one for whom prayer is offered). Sometimes they shift the blame for the lack of healing to a demon. ... I want nothing to do with the name-it-and-claim-it approach, which insists that you must believe in advance that what you ask will always be yours. Having said that, there is a place for believing that God will move powerfully and having hope that what we are asking is according to his will and something he is pleased to perform. But that happens on rare occasions and is itself a manifestation of the spiritual gift of faith.” Sam Storms, *Practicing the Power*, pg. 49-50.

- (i) Does this mean that gifts of healings are always accompanied by the revelation from God that healing will occur? No.
 - (ii) We must take care to affirm God's sovereignty at all times. If one believes God is revealing his will to heal, one must affirm, as with prophecy, that while God's revelation is perfect and infallible, our interpretation and application is not without the possibility of error. The error is always with man and never with God.
- (3) Other New Testament methods in connection with the gifts of healings.
- (a) Laying on of Hands: Jesus could have spoken healing, yet Luke 4:40 says, "he laid hands on every one of them and healed them." Along with Matthew 8:3, Mark 1:41; 6:5; 8:23-25, and Luke 5:13; 13:13. It is requested of Jesus in Matthew 9:18 and in Mark 5:23; 7:32. Paul also practiced the laying on of hands in Acts 28:8.
 - (b) Anointing with Oil: The disciples did this in Mark 6:13. It is also an action carried out by the elders in James 5:14.
 - (c) Conclusion: The gifts of healings are functional for today as a variety of giftings given to the church by which God provides healing. No one person has the ability to heal everyone or even heal on demand, rather the gifts of healings are utilized in dependence on God's will and purposes and are most often connected to prayer.

3. Healing According to Caution

- a) Definition: "The close association of the spiritual gift of healing with other supernatural manifestations of the Spirit suggests that this gift also refers to that which was clearly miraculous. The reports of such healings in Scripture reveal that they were instantaneous. Whether we understand that certain people were permanently endowed with the gift or that the Spirit manifested his power of healing through different people at different times (1 Cor 12:9, 30), the healing was associated with an individual and was not simply the result of the prayers of the church or a group of believers." Robert Saucy, *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today?*, edited by Wayne Grudem, pg. 129.
- b) Support:
 - (1) The gift of healing in Scripture miraculously heals genuine organic diseases.
 - (a) A distinction should be made between miraculous gift of healing and natural physical healing God can bring through conversion or repentance of sin to areas affected by psychological trauma or where the disruption of the spirit has occurred as a result of sin.
 - (b) A distinction should also be made between miraculous gift of healing and natural physical healing God can bring through physicians, medication, and the body's own healing systems.
 - (c) A distinction should be made between the miraculous gift of healing and God miraculously healing through the prayer of the elders, the church, or his own initiative. The gift of healing is given to an individual and worked out by God through that individual.
 - (d) All of these are healing from God, but not all are to be considered miraculous healing associated with the gift of healing.
 - (2) The gift of healing in Scripture does not play a predominant role in the church after the Apostles.
 - (a) The gift of healing is only mentioned in one passage: 1 Corinthians 12:9, 30.

- (b) The church is not said to minister to one another through the gift of healing anywhere else in Scripture. James 5 does not mention the gift of healing, and is rather speaking of healing as a result of the elder's prayers. It does not appear at all to be James' intention to ascribe the gift of healing to all the elders, rather the emphasis is on God's ability to heal through the means of prayer.
 - (c) Placing an emphasis in the church on pursuing miraculous healing through the gift of healing is not well grounded in the Scripture.
 - (i) This should be balanced with pursuing healing God does provide though all the other means, especially through prayer.
 - (ii) All pursuit of healing by God should also be balanced with the understanding the God sovereignty determines when healing is appropriate and when it is not. God often brings about great benefit to an individual through their endurance of physical suffering. So whether through endurance or relief God has a good purpose for his people.
- (3) The gift of healing in Scripture is neither forbidden, discouraged, or said to have ceased.
- (a) God may still chose to grant physical healing through the miraculous gift of healing.
 - (b) God may use the gift of healing as a sign for the spread of the gospel. For this to occur, an individual given the gift of healing must miraculously healing a genuine organic disease.
- c) Conclusion: While the miraculous gift of healing is not meant to be a major emphasis for the church today, it is still possible for God to use this gift of healing to bring healing and further the gospel. Nevertheless, this gift of healing is likely to be exceedingly rare. Scripture rather emphasizes other means of God healing in the church, especially through prayer.

V. SUMMARY

A. What can we agree on?

1. The Sufficiency of Scripture: Scripture is the final authority and all experiences, including Spiritual Gifts (Miraculous or Non-Miraculous) must be subordinate to Scripture. Experiences are only to be accepted if they conform with Scripture. Elevating an experience over Scripture, or accepting an experience as self-authenticating part from Scripture, is to deny the teaching of Scripture.
2. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit: The Bible clearly presents the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as an experience belonging to all Christians, to the church, to the body of Christ, and occurs at conversion. It is not a gift given subsequent to conversion.
3. Internal Christian Debate: Each of the Three Center Positions are able to affirm that a Christian can hold to one of the other positions without raising questions of their Christianity. The disagreements by the Three Center Positions on this topic should be viewed as a debate within Orthodox Christianity.
4. Ambiguity of 1 Corinthians 13:8-12: The Three Center Positions affirm that a proper understanding of 1 Corinthians 13:8-12 excludes its used as a proof text for the cessation of Miraculous Gifts at the closing of the cannon. Rather, the exegetical evidence points toward the eschaton. There is ambiguity as to what aspect of the eschaton the text is pointing to: the second coming or the eternal state.

B. How are we distinct?

1. Cessation: The Miraculous Gifts have ceased to function today, but the Non-Miraculous Gifts continue to function. Therefore, the Cessationist pursues the use of the Non-Miraculous Gifts and rejects the use of the Miraculous Gifts in the church.
2. Continuation: The Miraculous Gifts and the Non-Miraculous Gifts continue to function today. Therefore, the Continuationist pursues the use of the Miraculous Gifts and the Non-Miraculous Gifts in the church.
3. Caution: The Miraculous Gifts and the Non-Miraculous Gifts continue to function today, but the Miraculous Gifts are not normative. Therefore, the Cautionist pursues the use of the Non-Miraculous Gifts and allows for the rare possibility of the Miraculous Gifts in the church.

C. Why should we encourage each other?

1. Our areas of agreement are more fundamental truths than our areas of disagreement.
2. We are all desiring to see God work powerfully and supernaturally.
3. We are all committed to submitting ourselves to God's Word as authoritative.
4. We are all depending on God's sovereignty.