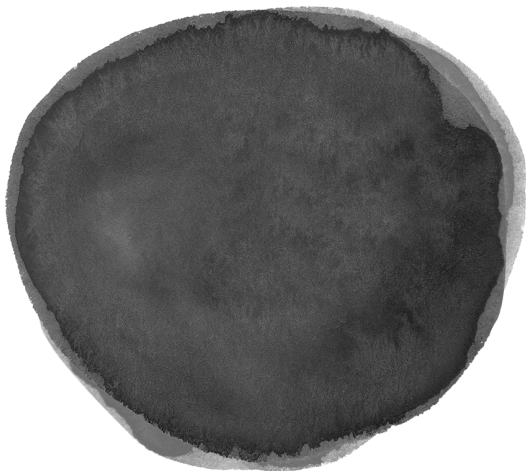




QUICK THEOLOGY

# Are Spiritual Gifts for Today?



PHYLICIA MASONHEIMER

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[phylicia@phyliciamasonheimer.com](mailto:phylicia@phyliciamasonheimer.com)*

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*Book design by Eric Novak*

*[phyliciamasonheimer.com](http://phyliciamasonheimer.com)*





## Introduction

In this book, we will look at 1 Corinthians 13 and the two major theological views that spring from this passage regarding whether or not spiritual gifts such as healing, prophecy, and tongues cease or continue today. In theological terms, these two views are called cessationism and continuationism.

We will start by looking at 1 Corinthians 13 in its entirety. If you have been to a wedding recently, you might have already heard it, as it is a popular love passage. But believe it or not, it talks a lot about spiritual gifts too.

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as

to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

If we were to continue into 1 Corinthians 14, we would see that Paul addresses tongues and how they are to be used in the church. He teaches about orderly worship and how speaking in tongues is for building up, not for distraction or for sensationalism. We can also look at other passages, such as Romans 12, which lists out different gifts and practices that we will see in the church. We also see these three gifts—tongues, prophecy, and healing—practiced publicly in the book of Acts, right around the launch of the early church and on.

The two theological views we will focus on in this book are cessationism and continuationism. Cessationism comes from the root word ‘to cease’, meaning it is the belief that the spiritual gifts have ceased or stopped, or that they are no longer gifts that we are to practice today. We see these gifts in the book of Acts, and there are some specific reasons why cessationist scholars and Christians believe those gifts were only to be used during that period of time. In contrast to this view, there are continuationists, who believe spiritual gifts continue from biblical times until today.

There can be some very heated arguments between cessationist and continuationist Christians because both of them hold Scripture in such high regard. The cessationist would say Scripture has such great value that

there should be no revelation added to it, and they think that spiritual gifts would add revelation to Scripture. Therefore, they say, we are not to pursue these gifts. In contrast, a continuationist would say Scripture is of such high value that we should honor what it says to do, which is to pursue these spiritual gifts and to not despise them and quench the Spirit. These two Christian groups are considering the exact same texts but are arriving at different conclusions.

Calvinism and Arminianism actually play a big role in understanding the controversy we see around spiritual gifts today (if you want to dive more into these topics, I would encourage you to listen to our Verity podcast episode on the topic, or check out the Quick Theology book we have on this topic in the Every Woman a Theologian store). Cessationism, while it can be found in Arminian traditions, such as independent fundamental Baptists and other Wesleyan or Methodist groups, is very universal in Calvinistic groups. There are exceptions to this, as John Piper, Matt Chandler, Sam Storms, and several of my close friends are continuationist Calvinists. But many Calvinists are cessationists, and history will show you why that is. Also, many Arminians or provisionists (non-Calvinists in their salvation theology) are continuationists. If you are not familiar