

The Completion of Revelation

An Exegesis of 1Co. 13:8-13

BY

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Introduction

To open this work, I would like to tenderly offer my warm regards and heart of compassion for those dear lovers of Christ who find themselves effected by, as I see it, modern winds of doctrine. Beloved reader, the Holy Spirit of the Most High has a mission to exalt the Lord Jesus, convict the world of sin and restrain evil. I plead with those caught up in charismatic winds of doctrine to examine very closely and with great fear the things they attribute to the Holy Spirit. To ask these questions, “does this experience magnify Christ? Does it aid in bringing people under true conviction and repentance for sin? Does this experience increase my love for and relationship with the God who created me?

I have had the privilege of knowing and serving alongside many beloved lovers of Christ that hold to a view contrary to the one defended in this paper, and it is to them that I seek to be a peacemaker. Please beloved brother or sister in Christ, examine this work and see if it is true. If I have promoted a pet doctrine forced upon the scriptures please reject what you find and pray that God would have mercy on me, for I am aware that I am not above such a gross error. But please beloved, if I have been faithful, if the work is a true exposition of God's holy word, then seek His kindness to put away this error, which, I believe, attacks the very sufficiency of scripture.

The subject of this work finds its context in the later portion of Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth. The apostle Paul is careful to outline the second half of this letter in which he addresses both moral and spiritual concerns. This outline can be identified by the Apostle's use of the phrase “Περὶ δὲ” (peri de = now concerning). Paul uses this phrase to introduce each new point as he systematically works through each of his various concerns.

The topic of this work, 1Co 13:8-13, is found right in the middle of one of these outlined concerns. In 1Co 12:1-14:40, God reveals through Paul the purpose, function, rules for orderly practice and the future cessation of some of the spiritual ministries or spiritual gifts given by God to the church. Paul starts this section, “Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν” (*Now concerning spiritual ministries*), and he stays on this subject until 15:1. With a heart of fatherly correction he declares his desire for the church at Corinth to grow in their understanding of the miraculous spiritual ministries given to them. They were apparently using these giftings for personal gain and self edification rather than for the building up of the body (1Cor. 12:7). Paul teaches in this short section of scripture that the ministry giftings, given by the Holy Spirit, were to be used for the building up the whole church, and that the sole motivation behind the use of these ministry giftings ought to be love for Christ and one another (1Cor. 13:1-7). This motivation, being radically opposed to self love or selfishness, helps us identify the error of the Corinthian church (namely, that they were selfish in the exercise of the grace ministries of God) and sadly, I believe, this to be the error of many modern Charismatics as well.

As one reads through this section many other observations can be made that are helpful in the process of understanding the function and practice of these early church ministries. Not the least of which is the clear communication of the apostle that not all members of the body of Christ have the same ministry gifting, and further that no one spiritual ministry gifting was for all believers. Paul makes special emphasis of this with regard to the ministries of tongues and apostleship (1Cor. 12:29,30). We can also observe, that Paul thought it to be necessary to setup guidelines for the church in Corinth on how they might bring order to their church services with regard to the practice of their

spiritual ministries. Again special emphasis is placed upon the ministry of tongues. Here, Paul limits its usage to a maximum of three men in the service, with special instructions not to speak out of turn or without interpretation (1Cor. 14:27).

It is my intention now, to narrow our focus to Paul's declaration that some of these spiritual ministry giftings will cease to function within the body of Christ. Specifically, those of a revelatory nature as mentioned in 1Cor. 13:8-13. At this point I wish to acknowledge the scholarly work of men of far greater gifting and stature than myself. I understand that men like John Piper, Wayne Grudem, Gordon Fee, and C.J. Mahaney, take strong exception to the exegetical understanding arrived at in this work. With great fear, knowing that men clearly gifted and chosen by God have drawn different conclusions from these very same verses, I will attempt to carefully and respectfully work through the passage.

Commentary

The main point of this passage can be seen as Paul contrasts the never failing nature of love with the temporal nature of the revelatory ministries or gifts. Verses 8 and 9, State this contrast plainly while verses 10 through 12 illustrate it using analogous examples. Finally verse 13 explains love's superiority over faith and hope, two graces of God which will outlast the revelatory ministry giftings but not love which will never cease or fail.

Verse 8

Love never fails, but prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will be put away.

Several points of observation can be made at this point. First we find in the grammar a distinction between the putting away of tongues and the cessation of both prophecy and knowledge. εἴτε γλῶσσαι, παύσονται (if there are tongues, they will cease)

the word παύσονται which is translated "they will cease" is a future middle indicative third person plural verb, which indicates that they (the special ministry gifting of tongues) will cease on their own or on behalf of themselves in future time. Insight into the time of this cessation can be gleaned as one sees that this ministry gifting is called a "sign" (1Co 14:22). And if a sign, it seems reasonable to suppose that it served a function, that of pointing to something. It also seems reasonable to conclude that when the ministry gifting had served its intended purpose, then God would no longer have any reason to continue giving it to the church. Much like a sign that reads, "Bake Sale on Tuesday" is no longer useful or helpful on the Wednesday following the sale.

So we must ask at this point, if that is the case, what was or is the sign of tongues pointing to. In 1Co. 14:21-22 we read, "In the law it is written:

*'With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to **this people**; and yet, for all that, they will not hear me,' says the Lord. Therefore tongues are for a **sign**, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.'*

God through the prophet Isaiah identifies who this sign was intended for with the words, "this people" which is a reference to unbelieving, covenant breaking, Israel. Paul, sites Isaiah to teach that the use of tongues within predominately gentile churches was an evangelical outward call to his kinsmen according to the flesh. And not only was it an evangelical call but this gift was also a warning of soon coming destruction as seen in rest of Isaiah's prophecy Is. 28:9-15. It would seem then, that we are plainly told the purpose of the **sign** of 'tongues'. This ministry gifting, we can conclude, was a sign for rebellious, covenant breaking, Israel. Further, it would serve as a gracious warning and means of righteous judgment in a soon coming destruction of covenant breaking Israel. In 70 AD, just a few years after this letter was written, rebellious Israel was destroyed. In one

sweeping act of judgment God put an end to Judaism's temple, sacrificial system and vision & prophesy (Daniel 9:24), and thus fulfilled the prophecy found in Isaiah 28, to which the sign of tongues pointed. It then seems reasonable to conclude that tongues ceased to be given as a ministry gifting in 70 AD when God poured out His promised wrath on unbelieving, covenant breaking, Israel.

Does church history match the above drawn conclusion?

The first great expositional preacher, of the early church was a man named John Chrysostom. This man was a pastor in Constantinople¹. Long before Charles Haddon Spurgeon was ever known as the golden tongued preacher, John Chrysostom was known as the “golden mouthed” preacher.² His life and ministry were marked by exegetical faithfulness to scripture as Leid writes:

Opposed to the allegorical interpretations of Scripture made fashionable by the Alexandrian church, Chrysostom followed the Antiochene method of biblical exegesis. He sought the exact, literal meaning of each verse from a close grammatical examination of the Greek text—a method revived by the Protestant reformers, who regarded Chrysostom as a church father second only to Augustine.³

John Chrysostom, lived from 347 – 407 AD.⁴ In his sermon on 1 Corinthians chapter 12 we find this quote concerning the gifts mentioned in the chapter,

...but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place. And why do they not happen now? Why look now, the cause too of the obscurity has produced us again another question: namely, why did they then happen, and now do so no more?⁵

¹ Mark Galli and Ted Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 85.

² F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. rev. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 345.

³ K. Leid, "Chrysostom, John" In , in *Who's Who in Christian History*, ed. J.D. Douglas and Philip W. Comfort (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), 160.

⁴ John MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Dallas: Word Pub., 1997), 44.

⁵ Chrysostom, *Homilies on First Corinthians*, XXIX, 1.

The gift of tongues is virtually absent from Church history after 70 AD,⁶ with one notable exception. Tongues show up in the abhorrent theology of a false teacher named Montanus.⁷ While this does not prove that the ministry gifting of tongues has ceased, it does point to the fact that church history fits the exegetical conclusion earlier drawn from scripture. Those who contend for a continuation of tongues, have a burden to not only prove from scripture their conviction but also to explain the long absence in church history.

What about Prophecy & Knowledge?

Returning to our verse, another observation can be made. The nouns, προφητεῖαί (prophecy) γλῶσσαί (tongues) and γνῶσις (knowledge), in this context represent ministries or gifts of the Spirit. This point is important to understand as some have thought it proper to wrest these nouns from the context as proof that any view of cessation is absurd due to the fact that preaching the word, can be called prophesying and in varying degrees knowledge is available to men today.⁸ We err if we seek to understand any word apart from the context we find it in. For example, if one did a word by word lexical study of the phrase, “he ate a hot dog” one might come to the conclusion that “a male consumed a canine mammal before it got cold”. We must therefore seek to remain true to the historical and grammatical context. The nouns, προφητεῖαί (prophecy) γλῶσσαί (tongues) and γνῶσις (knowledge), from this context do not refer to prophesy, languages and knowledge in general, rather are clearly identified as ministries or gifts of the Spirit. In context one may read the passage with this understanding, Love never fails, but the ministries or gifts of special knowledge, tongues and prophecy will cease. This

⁶ , vol. 122, *Bibliotheca Sacra Volume 122*, 486 (Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1965), 143.

⁷ James P. Eckman, *Exploring Church History* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2002), 23.

observation of our text will become more important as we examine Paul's further usage of these words though out this context.

Verses 9 & 10 The Partial and the Whole

Paul uses this passage to declare a limit upon the revelatory nature of the ministries of knowledge and prophecy during his life time. There is no great mystery in the word (μέρους) translated “part” it simply means fragment or piece, in other words the ministries of knowledge and prophecy used in the early church only produced a fragment or fraction of the full revelation. *‘For we know in part and we prophesy in part.’*

When the complete thing has come, the thing in part will be put away.

Verse 10 starts with the two words ὅταν δε which is translated "but when", these words let us know that there is a link between the two verses, and that this link expresses a measure of time, (i.e., *now things are one way but in some future time things will be another way*).

The Perfect Thing

Our first grammatical observation, of verse 10 is the words τὸ τέλειόν translated, “the perfect or complete thing”. The word τὸ, is the definite article translated “the”, this small word lets us know that this is not just *a* perfect or complete thing it is *the* perfect or complete thing. The word, “τέλειόν” is a nominative neuter singular pronominal adjective *without* a noun matching in case gender and number, thus we must understand it as a noun (The complete thing). According to F. David Farnell, there are 5 main ways in which this word has been understood, (1) the death of a believer when ushered into

⁸ John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 364.

Christ's presence, (2) the eternal state, (3) the completed NT canon, (4) Christ's second advent, and (5) the maturing of Christ's body through the course of the church age.⁹

In defense of view 5, Dr. Robert L. Thomas points to 1 Corinthians 14:20 to help us understand Paul's use of this word; "Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature (τέλειοι)." In the very same context in which Paul tells us that when the "perfect thing" comes, the partial will be put away he tells us essentially that the opposite of being "perfect" is to be an infant or immature.¹⁰ I am grateful to Dr. Thomas for his work, but I do not agree that it is then logical to assume that "the perfect" must be referring to "the maturing of Christ's body through the course of the church age." The primary reason for this is because it removes the contextual relationship established by Paul's use of contrasting terms. Whatever the "perfect thing" is, it is so in relationship to that which has been identified as being, "partial". If Paul had said, we are in part, then it would follow contextually that our fullness or maturity was in question. However, Paul says that it is prophesy and knowledge which is in part and thus "the perfect" must be referring to the fullness or maturity of "prophesy" and "knowledge". Taking a quick survey of the rest of the list it seems that all but one violates this relationship established by Paul. In the first view, the death of a believer when ushered into Christ's presence, "the perfect" is again defined by "our" becoming "perfect" and not the partial "prophesy" and "knowledge" of verse 9 becoming "perfect". In the 2nd (the eternal state) and 4th (Christ's second advent) views, the relationship is also lost. In both of these options neither "we" nor the partial "prophesy" and "knowledge"

⁹ F. David Farnell, "When Will the Gift of Prophecy Cease?" *BSac* 150 (April-June 1993):191-93.

¹⁰ Robert L. Thomas, *1 Corinthians 13:11 Revisited*, *Master's Seminary Journal Volume 4*, issue 2 (Sun Valley, CA: The Master's Seminary, 1993), 191.

are given any attempt at harmony with “the perfect”. Instead it is asserted that nothing but either the eternal state or the return of Christ qualify as “perfect” therefore it must be one of the two. Both of these views seem to be sentimentally held by those who either do not want to deal with the grammatical relationship or those who are unable to deal with it. In the latter case appeal is often made to the use of the word “perfect” in modern English to mean “absolute flawless perfection”. However, even if this was the intended meaning of “τέλειοι”, which it is not, that would still not prove that the “absolute flawless perfection” can be understood apart from the clear relationship established by Paul in the context with the “partial”. Whatever the “perfect” is, it is so in relationship to that which has been identified as being, “partial”.

Only the 3rd view (the completed NT Cannon) maintains the relationship between that which is identified as “partial” and the “perfect”. With the meaning of the word “τέλειοι” being, “complete” “Whole” or “mature”, if we keep the grammatical relationship intact we can see that Paul is clearly attempting to communicate that just as a child lacks the full qualities of adulthood so the revelatory gifts of prophecy and knowledge lacked the full qualities of their *then* future or full expression, which I would contend can only be the finished NT Scriptures.

To Be Put Away

The word καταργηθήσεται is the same word translated in verse 8 "to be put away" or “cease” in reference to prophecy and knowledge. It is important to note that this word is a future, passive, indicative, 3rd, singular verb. To emphasize the passive sense I use the English word “put” in my translation of the passage. The word (καταργηθήσεται)

means to render inactive, to do away with or to abolish.¹¹ So a simple rendering of the verse might read; "When the complete prophesy and knowledge comes, the 'in part' or 'partial' prophesy and knowledge will be put away."

Verse 11

Some have written that in verse 11 Paul is equating the ministry of tongues with "baby talk". This is an interesting idea that seems to take the contrast found in chapter 14 between infancy and adulthood in an unnecessarily wooden way. Better reasoning would be to look at the analogy in terms of Paul's syllogism (Our special ministries of knowledge and prophecy are partial. When the complete thing comes, the partial things are put away.). Paul, through symbolism is restating his proposition as an analogy. This analogy helps the reader understand the sense in which the partial things are put away. The statement "When I was a child" is speaking of the nature of the things, which are partial; they are not yet full, complete, or mature. For added emphasis Paul declares the natural out flow of the child, he will speak, understand, and think as a child. Due to the context and Paul's use of the word (κατήργηκα) "to put away," it would seem as though the words think, understand and speak are a direct reference to the 3 mentioned gifts in their incomplete, unfinished, or immature state. The statement "When I became a man I put away childish things" is an analogous way of repeating the truth of verse 10. When the Complete thing has come, the partial things are put away. With disciplined focus on the context we understand that Paul's focus is the partial revelation given through gifts of the Spirit and a *then* future full revelation which would put away the partial. The analogy is not therefore intending to say that the ministries were childish or unsophisticated;

¹¹ Vine W.E. Vines Complete Expository Dictionary. (Nelson: 1968) NT 93

rather it is making a comparison between the incomplete understanding of a child and the clearer understanding of an adult.

Verse 12

This verse contains the words ἄρτι (now) and τότε (then) twice. These two time indicators reveal present and consecutive states. The present state was the very minute, hour, day, year, or generation to which Paul wrote. Paul's purpose was to show contrast between the present and the consecutive (that which was and that which was to come).

Dimly

The Greek αἰνίγματι which is translated dimly is the word from which we get our word enigma. An enigma is a mystery or hard to solve riddle, Paul is literally saying, "now we look into a mirror and what we see is not easy to understand."

Now ... Then ...

The first two clauses state "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face;"

In many of the commentaries, I have consulted; these two clauses have been interpreted in a way which determines the meaning of these word pictures based upon their normal lexical meanings. This is a good starting point but if we stop at lexical meanings in many cases we will miss the point of the context altogether. The next step in sound exegesis is to understand the words in context⁸ to determine if there is a more accurate interpretation.

With that said, let us attempt to dig deep into the context. First, we have the syntax of the immediate clause (βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι). It begins with the verb blepp-oh-men which means "to see, understand, or perceive", and it ends

with the noun en-ig-ma-ti from which we get our word enigma, the idea according to Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, and the Friburgs is that of a revelation obscurely expressed. We can read the clause like this “For now we “understand” or “see through a mirror” in “obscurely expressed revelation” or “dimly”. Some, have sentimentally stated that this “looking through a glass dimly” is a “physical inability to see Christ before the second coming”. The weight of this view is placed on the following clause which says, “but then we shall see face to face.” On the surface this seems like a possible understanding of text but it simply does not fit the larger context. It is clear that the context is fixed upon the partial nature of the *then* present revelation gifts. It is the partial or incomplete nature of these revelation ministries that make them unclear. At no point in the context has the second coming of the Lord Jesus been mentioned. So we must ask what does Paul mean when he says, “but then, we will see face to face”, if he is not leaving the context to talk about the second coming.

Face to Face

The next clause, (τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον) says literally, “but now face to face”. This phrase, ‘face to face’ taken in a wooden literal way has caused many to reason that the then future cessation must be when we see Jesus at His second coming. This understanding again violates the clear context of the passage namely the now partial reality of revelation gifts and the then future perfecting or completing of those gifts. The figure of speech “face to face” does not always mean to see a person in the flesh. In Numbers 12:8 for example the Hebrew equivalent (פָּה אֶל-פֶּה) “face to face” is used by God to explain to Aaron and Miriam that He (God) speaks to Moses *clearly*, and *not in riddles*”. Due to the context of our passage and the precedent established by God Himself

for using the figure of speech to express clear understanding rather flesh to flesh communication, our passage should be understood in this way “*For now we understand in obscurely expressed revelations, but then we will understand with great clarity.*”

Now ... then... 2

Verse 12 contains two additional clauses also containing the time indicators “now” and “then.” Here Paul repeats the phrase from verse 9 “we know in part” but this time he uses the first person singular “I” rather and the first person plural “we”, “now I know in part.” As discussed earlier the word “know” is not referring to knowledge in general but rather it is speaking of “a ministry of special knowledge.” So keeping this in mind we should read the clause in this way, “Now my (Paul's) ministry of special knowledge is in part then I shall understand clearly just as my ministry of special knowledge has been understood.” Contextually then Paul is describing a future time when he will be able to benefit from a clear complete revelation just as others were currently benefitting from his partial revelatory contribution. Paul is anticipating a day in his own life time possibly when he will be able to enjoy the Word of God as we do today. Today we can take the complete bible off the shelf any time we want and enjoy sweet communion with God’s holy word as we dive into the depth of the riches of His all sufficient word. In Paul’s day a house church like the one on Corinth maybe had a copy of the Old Testament a copy of one of the gospels and possibly a letter or two from an apostle. Can you imagine the joy that leapt in Paul’s heart as the Holy Spirit told him that a day was coming in which he might enjoy the complete word of God. It is no wonder that we struggle to identify with Paul and the early church, for we have never known a time in which the complete scripture was not readily accessible to every person.

Verse 13

Paul opens the verse with “νυνὶ δὲ μένει” meaning “but now remains.” The word “νυνὶ” meaning “now” reminds us of the now vs. then time aspects being contrasted in the passage while the word “δὲ” an adversative conjunction meaning “but” points out a contrast, and the word “μένει” meaning “to remain” is a present active indicative verb which expresses a continual remaining. The idea of the first clause is this, “but now faith, hope, and love remain and will keep on remaining past the coming of the complete thing of verse 10.

Paul views it as necessary to emphatically limit that which will remain by using the phrase, “τὰ τρία ταῦτα.” meaning “these three” or “just these three.” We have seen that Paul expected the partial prophesy and partial knowledge to cease in his own lifetime, in contrast we now see that the heart motivation by which these partial ministries were to be exercised, namely faith, hope and love, would continue even after the complete prophecy and knowledge had arrived.

Finally Paul closes the verse with another adversative clause stating that in contrast ‘love’ is greater than faith and hope. The text does not explicitly declare in what way love is superior to faith and hope. But I believe we can deduce the meaning from the context. In the context the verb meaning “to remain” is key to understanding how love is superior to faith and hope. While it may be argued that love is superior in general to faith and hope the scope of the text limits love’s superiority to that of duration of remaining. Paul has just communicated that faith, hope, and love will remain beyond the time of the coming of the complete prophecy and knowledge, now he seeks to extend even further into the future. Love will remain past faith and hope. Scripture tells us that faith and hope are temporal and that they will cease when their object is revealed. The Object of our

faith (1 Corinthians 15:14; Galatians 2:16; 3:14; 5:5; Hebrews 11:1) and hope (Romans 8:24-25; 2 Corinthians 1:10) is Christ and His promise to resurrect His people. When Christ returns and the dead are raised those who are his will no longer need to hope for his coming, they will no longer have faith in His coming, it will be realized. Thus love is greater for it will remain forever, it will be necessary forever.

Conclusion

In conclusion and application I would like to encourage all Christians to adopt a biblical philosophy of ministry. A biblical philosophy of ministry begins with the idea that all Christians are called and gifted to do the work of the ministry to greater and lesser degrees (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). And that the exercise of these ministries must flow from love for God and love for one another (Matt. 22:35-39; 1 Cor. 13:1-7; John 13:35; 1Pe. 4:8).

At this point I would like to define Christian ministry, as “Seeking the glory of God through the advancement of His kingdom by means of the gospel of Jesus Christ”.

Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians the first chapter that God is concerned to take glory for Himself through a foolish message (the gospel), a foolish method (preaching) and foolish men.

The message of the gospel is not, for us who believe, foolish, rather, for us, it is the power of God by which we have learned the meaning of life and have been restored to our offended God through the atoning work of Jesus on the cross.

The method, for us who believe, is not foolish as it is the means by which God graciously brought to our hearing the gospel of life. It was the method that the Spirit of God blessed to affect the change of heart and new birth that made it possible for us, “God haters”, to repent and believe.

God chooses the weak things of this world to display His mighty power. While the world runs to autonomous man for speculation and philosophical ideas, God has given in clear terms all that man must know for life and godliness in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The world runs to greater and grander methods of communication and persuasion even manipulation, but God uses a single message heralded by preachers.

Sadly, this gospel focused philosophy of ministry which sees all aspects of ministry as gospel focused and gospel empowered will too many, in the modern church, seem less than ideal. In the modern North American Church an exclusively gospel focused ministry is considered insufficient to meet the felt needs of real people. I would suggest that this is not the fault of true gospel ministry, but rather the fault of unfaithful gospel ministry.

A herald is one that proclaims the edict of the king, his job is to communicate a message that is not his own. Sadly, many in the church today have changed or amended the message and by doing so they have done great damage to themselves and to their hearers. By changing the message, they have robbed it of its power to save, to meet the real needs of real people and made it as ineffective as all the vain ideologies and philosophies of men.

The purpose of gospel ministry is discipleship and evangelism. The goal of all gospel ministers should be to equip the saints so that they are enabled to engage in both discipleship and evangelism in all aspects of life as they learn to die to the stuff of this passing world and live for the King of heaven and the life to come.

Pastors, missionaries, youth pastors, and any other specialized ministers must have (gospel centered) evangelism and discipleship as their central focus or they are not

valid ministers of the church. The lack of this standard can sadly be seen most clearly in many churches today by the criteria they use to choose a youth pastor. Many churches want a young guy hopefully married who can identify with younger people and make church fun. Sadly most churches are looking for a man with a heart for youth rather than a man with a heart for the theology of the gospel. I don't care how much a young man desires to serve the youth, I care that he be equipped to lead them to Christ and from there disciple them to grow in the faith. I don't care how much a man feels called to serve the people of Africa, if he is not equipped to rightly divide the word of truth it is sin for us to send him out before he is equipped.

Ministry is "seeking the glory of God through the advancement of His kingdom by means of the gospel of Jesus Christ". Ministers are not philosophers or speculators, they are heralds of The King of the Universe and they proclaim a message that is not theirs to change or amend. The focus of all ministry is the gospel and the goal of all ministry is to reproduce ministry reproducing ministers through evangelism and discipleship.