

## When the Perfect Comes

I Corinthians 13:8-10

In I Corinthians 12 Paul writes about “spiritual gifts.” These gifts are given to believers by the Holy Spirit for “the common good” (I Cor. 12:7). In our text Paul mentions three of these gifts (prophecy, tongues, knowledge) and says “*they will be done away*” when the perfect comes.

1. Spiritual gifts- like prophecy, tongues, and knowledge-are temporary, but love never ends.
2. Spiritual gifts come to an end “the perfect comes” (I Cor. 13:10). “What is the perfect and when does it come?” This question is answered by interpreting the text. We believe the Bible to be infallible, *but our interpretations can be in error*. We should teach with humility and grace.

### I. Baptists have historically taught spiritual gifts cease because “the perfect” has come.

*The perfect* is the completion of the N.T. (350 AD), *and so gifts ceased in the fourth century*.

This view is supported by three arguments Baptist make to say spiritual gifts have ceased.

#### A. The early churches had special needs.

1. They did not have our New Testament; they needed God to speak in fresh ways.
2. They needed authentication of these revelations by miracles and signs (Heb. 2:3-4).
3. The N.T. was completed and it became the “living and powerful” word of God.

#### B. The testimony of church history.

John Chrysostom (345-407 A.D.), the famous pastor from Antioch wrote on I Cor. 12: “*This whole passage is obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance and by the gifts **cessation**, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place.*”

#### C. The testimony of the Apostle Paul.

That which is “perfect” (I Cor. 13:10) is the New Testament canon; our sole guide.

The word “perfect” (teleios) is in other texts translated “complete” as where Jesus said, “*My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work*” (John 4:34).

Were I to hold to this position, it would be because “that which is complete” refers to the fulfillment (completion) of the Old Covenant which was “passing away (II Cor. 3:7).

### II. Many Christians believe, including some Baptists, believe “the perfect” is Christ.

So, spiritual gifts end when you “see Christ” face to face; either at your death or His coming. This view seems to be supported by the context of verse 12: “*For now we see in a mirror dimly, but **then** face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.*” When I see Christ, hear Christ, and know Christ, no gifts are needed.

#### A. Love is to be pre-eminent in my relationships with those who disagree with me.

In “correcting” those Christians who believe in the continuation of the gifts, my Baptist brothers will often violate the very command of Jesus to love one another (John 13:35).

#### B. We must not put God in our theology box, but allow Him to form our theology.

In focusing so much on the written Word of God, I think we sometimes lose sight that tens of thousands of language groups have no “written” word. Good news is spoken.

#### C. Finally, disagreements on this issue should be “no big deal.”

They are tertiary matters. Jesus Christ is our mutual Lord and Savior. We are family. When we reach our eternal home, the question asked will be, “Did you love others?”