

## When That Which Is Perfect Shall Come I Corinthians 13:8-13

### Introduction:

- I. I Corinthians 13 is best known for its thorough treatment of love.
  - a. However, there is another very important issue addressed in verses 8-13: the duration of miracles and the coming of “the perfect.”
  - b. Our study today will focus on the meaning of “the perfect” and what that implies about miracles, the coming of Jesus, the maturity of the church, and the Scriptures.
    - i. After today, we will have a better understanding of what Paul meant when he said, “When that which is perfect shall come, that which is in part shall be done away.”

### Discussion:

- I. What is “the Perfect?”
  - a. This could be the maturity of the church (Ephesians 4:13).
  - b. This could be the return of Jesus.
  - c. This could be the completion of the Bible (Romans 12:2; James 1:25).
    - i. Which is it?
      1. It cannot be the return of Jesus
        - a. Faith, hope, and love *remain*, and miracles cease when the perfect comes.
          - i. When Jesus comes, we will see him. Thus it cannot be faith (II Corinthians 9:7) or hope (Romans 8:24-25). Faith and hope will not remain after we see Christ.
            1. This is why love is the greatest of these; it will continue.
      2. Could it be maturity?
        - a. Biblical authors seemed to think the church was mature.
          - i. Philippians 3:15; Jude 3; Hebrews 5:11-14.
      3. Could it be the Bible?
        - a. Romans 12:2 – the perfect will of God.
        - b. James 1:25 – the perfect law of liberty.
    - ii. It seems that the Bible is our best option for now. Let us look at it a little deeper to find out the implications of each option.
- II. What are the implications of what “the perfect” is?
  - a. If it is the coming of Christ, miracles would still be in existence.
    - i. No one rises from the dead.
    - ii. There is no evidence of demon possession.
      1. Demon possession and mental illness were considered two different things in the Bible (Matthew 4:24).
    - iii. How were miracles passed on?
      1. Acts 8:5-13 – Philip preaches to Samaria, and several were baptized.
      2. Acts 8:14-19 – The apostles had to lay their hands on the people!
        - a. “When Simon saw that...”
          - i. Why would Simon want just the *ability* to do miracles? The apostles could lay their hands on him for that. Also, several Samaritan Christians could do the same things he would be able to do!
          - ii. Why couldn’t Philip pass on the gifts? He was a church official—a deacon (Acts 6:5).
    - b. Are any apostles alive today?
      - i. Acts 1:21-22 (Requirements to be an apostle).

- b. If it is maturity, how would we know?
    - i. I Corinthians 12-14 does discuss maturity, but not the maturity of the church as a whole.
      - 1. Maturity is an *individual* responsibility – Hebrews 5.
    - ii. Ephesians 4:12-15 – Apostles and prophets were given along with evangelists, pastors, and teachers to perfect the body and to equip the saints.
      - 1. As more people become Christians, there must be a renewal of maturity for the church. If this refers to maturity of the church as a whole, it will not be here until Christ returns!
        - a. So why do we have the evangelists, pastors (elders), and teachers, if apostles and prophets no longer are at work in the church?
          - i. They do!
            - 1. II Peter 1:16-21
              - a. He was an apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit.
              - b. He mentioned that prophecy is moved by the Spirit.
                - i. The Bible is the writing of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20) and the work of the Spirit (II Timothy 3:16).
                - ii. It does the job of the apostles and prophets!
- c. Then it must refer to the Scripture! Let's explain some of what is said in I Corinthians 13:8-13.
  - i. Why does Paul mention "in part?"
    - 1. We know in part – divine revelation
    - 2. We prophesy in part – divine guidance
      - a. No prophecy reveals everything one needs to know. We need something with complete revelation (II Timothy 3:17).
        - i. Complete=Perfect in Greek.
  - ii. What about maturity (v. 11)?
    - 1. This could likely be a rebuke (14:20).
    - 2. Even if not, this could be describing the maturity or completion of the revelation.
  - iii. What is meant by "the dark glass?"
    - 1. Numbers 12:8 – Moses was one to whom God spoke face to face.
      - a. With all of the other prophets he spoke in "dark speeches," but God revealed himself fully to Moses, and to us (through Scripture).
        - i. With prophecy alone, we would be groping for meaning in our faith. As it stands now, we have a simple system of faith contained in this complete word of God.

### **Conclusion:**

- I. Since the Bible had to have been written by apostles and prophets, it must have been completed in the first century. This was the time that the miracles began to phase out. Why is this important for the book of I Corinthians?
- II. The Corinthian church had put so much emphasis on the ability to use spiritual gifts, but Paul said that they would not last long, and so should not be their focus.
- III. Love will remain, and even when faith and hope become sight, love will continue.
- IV. Though we understand that we strive for perfection, we know that the church is never perfect until Christ comes.
- V. Love overlooks imperfection, and pushes toward perfection