



When The
Perfect Comes

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Part 1 - THE TEXTUAL CONTEXT

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

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THE TEXTUAL CONTEXT

THE WORD "CONTEXT"

Men frequently become accustomed to using the word "context" in a very limited sense. According to common grammar, this is the meaning of "context: "The general series or composition of a discourse; more particularly, the parts of a discourse which precede or follow the sentence quoted; the passages of scripture which are near the text, either before it or after it. The sense of a passage of scripture is often illustrated by the context" (Webster's). This kind of context – textual context – is the most popular use of the term. However, when it comes to Scripture, that kind of context is found within several greater contexts, all of which have a significant bearing on what is being taught. Not only must a view of any text of Scripture fit into what is being taught in the overall passage, there are other contexts at which it must not be at a variance. Consider some of these contexts

GOD HIMSELF. There is the context of God Himself. Ultimately, Scripture is an expression of God Himself, and is in perfect harmony with His nature. For example, the Ten Commandments are a detailed view of God Himself – what He is. No view of Scripture can contradict God's nature, or misrepresent Him.

GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE. Then, there is the context of His "eternal purpose," which directs and manages everything He says and does (Eph 3:11). No view of Scripture can contradict what God has determined for eternity. He is working all things together for the ultimate good of His people, who have been "called according to His purpose" (Rom 8:28). Our inheritance is according to His

purpose (Eph 1:11). Our calling was “according to His own purpose” (2 Tim 1:9). Any view of Scripture must reflect that purpose.

THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST JESUS. Christ Himself is a definite context. No view of Scripture can contradict what was accomplished in the atoning death of Jesus Christ. Any valid requirement for humankind must be harmonious with what was accomplished by Christ’s death (Phil 3:10; 1 Cor 1:18; Eph 2:16).

WHAT THE EXALTED CHRIST IS DOING NOW. Presently, Jesus is making intercession for the saints (Heb 7:25), mediating the New Covenant (Heb 12:24), shepherding His people (Heb 13:20), bringing many sons to glory (Heb 2:10), and teaching His people (Eph 4:20-21; 1 John 5:20). No view of Scripture can contradict what Jesus is now doing in heaven.

THE SALVATION OF GOD. Then, there is the context of salvation. God never states, or inspires a statement, that conflicts with the salvation He is affecting in Christ Jesus. This is preeminently “the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2), and God will never do anything that contradicts or diminishes that salvation.

THE DESTINY OF THE REDEEMED. There is an ultimate destiny that is being accomplished in salvation – and that salvation is calculated to contribute to the successful reaching of that destiny. For the church, that destiny is to be Christ’s wife (Rom 7:4; Eph 5:27; Rev 19:7), reign with Him (2 Tim 2:12), and be forever with Him (1 Thess 4:17).

Those who have a working knowledge of Scripture know this is the case, and read the Scriptures with these things in mind. The less people actually know about these pillar-type realities, the more they gravitate to textual context. I will be approaching the text of this series of lessons with this in mind.

THE TEXTUAL CONTEXT

The textual context for this series of lessons is as follows: “Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child;

when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:8-13, NASB). I am going to affirm that there is no clear Divine word of something associated with salvation in its beginning, that was intended to become obsolete before the heavens and earth pass away.

THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT. "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:8-10)

All of the conclusions based on those words must be in perfect harmony with the nature of God, the purpose of God, and the salvation of God. It must blend seamlessly with what Jesus is doing now, and our preparation for eternity.

Part 2 - INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

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INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS

The thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians is God's response, among other things, to institutionalized and lifeless religion. With clarity and firmness, it announces the futility of any and all religion that is not characterized by the Divine nature, with a particular emphasis on "charity," or God's kind of "love." All religion that is lacking in love, is impotent to affect the purpose of the Almighty. It is also one of the primary pathways to condemnation.

THE CORINTHIAN ASSEMBLY ITSELF

The Corinthian assembly would rank high in the Western religious world. Prominent people attended their gatherings, and many "feared sumptuously every day." They had an array of "spiritual gifts" that was unparalleled, including persuasive speakers, prophets, and those that could speak in diverse languages. Paul said of them, "ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:7). Note, NOT waiting for a fuller revelation, but "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The NIV reads, "Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed"

(1 Cor 1:7). If any church should have excelled, and been a solid example of the effectiveness of salvation, it should have been the church in Corinth. But they were not a notable assembly before God, They were marked more by the flesh than the Spirit, being “still fleshly . . . walking like mere men” (1 Cor 3:3, NASB). They had come out of Egypt, so to speak, but had not made much progress toward Canaan – they were “still fleshly,” worldly-minded, and morally inferior. They were very much ensconced in “this present evil world.” The missing element among them was something that cannot be absent – that is, if God’s approval is sought. The quality so sorely needed by the Corinthians was “love.” This is a Divine attribute possessed by men, not a manly characteristic imposed upon God. After all, “God IS love” – a most remarkable affirmation (1 John 4:8,16). That love – the God-kind of love – manifests itself in both manner and conduct, words and deeds, attitudes and feelings. There is no situation too challenging for love. It “NEVER fails.” It NEVER causes moral or spiritual deterioration, but always “edifies,” building up and strengthening (1 Cor 8:1). It is the stimulus for maturity, and the catalyst for spiritual growth. Without it, Satan is loosed and the Spirit is quenched and grieved. No person can please God or make progress to heaven without it! This has a great deal to do with our subject, “When The Perfect Comes.” In the midst of his dissertation on love, Paul refers to a time when the “perfect” will come and the “partial” will be done away. Love is clearly set forth as the means for preparing for the perfect, and profiting by its appearance. It will also survive the removal of the “partial.” Our churches need to hear about this! Today, the “successful,” or seemingly successful, congregations are known for their concerts, events, entertainment, praise bands, elaborate facilities, extensive church staffs, youth groups, singles groups, married groups, divorce recovery, and even weight- loss and exercise clubs. Institutionalized religion has entered the professional arena, offering musicians, writers, entertainers, athletes, etc., as proof of her influence. But she is NOT noted for her love or her spiritual maturity. For the most part, she is NOT ready for Jesus to come, or prepared to meet her God. She is so weak and insipid that a new army of worldly professionals have found in her a means of procuring wealth and fame. She has attracted financial planners, marriage consultants, church planters, worship leaders, youth leaders, recovery experts, consultants in all manners of behavior, seminar sages, and entertainers. The amount of money that is being poured into professional and organized religion is absolutely mind-boggling. In 2016, giving to Christian organizations is estimated to have exceeded \$390 BILLION. Between 1976 and 2016, the annual increase in Christian giving has been \$8.96 BILLION. (Charity Navigator). <https://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm/bay/content.view/cpid/42> All of this is alarming evidence of spiritual deterioration and corruption – something that had crept into the church at Corinth. Some of the indications of this corruption are mentioned in Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians.

1. Divisions (1 Cor 1:10).
2. Contentions (1 Cor 1:11).
3. Paul could not speak to them as spiritual people (1 Cor 3:1).
4. The presence of envying, strife, and divisions (1 Cor 3:3).
5. Some were puffed up (1 Cor 4:18).
5. Fornication was present in the church (1 Cor 5:1-5).
6. They were suing one another in the courts of law (1 Cor 6:1-9).
7. There was confusion about marriage (1 Cor 7).
8. There was an inconsideration for weaker brethren (1 Cor 8).
9. Some doubted Paul's apostleship (1 Cor 9).

This is the immediate context in which our text (1 Cor 13:10) is situated. It is a context that does NOT speak of limited revelation. Their condition was not the result of NOT being exposed to enough truth. There is no indication that Paul had presented an incomplete message. He gives no clear word of a time when a more thorough revelation would be made available to men. These are just the facts in the case.

Part 3 - THE SETTING

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

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THE SETTING

Why do we have the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians? Like much of Paul's writing, it was occasioned by the deficiency of professed believers. It was NOT written to provide the official doctrine of love – although that is involved. This is a chapter of reasoning – taking the realities of the Kingdom, and bringing them to bear upon the saints. Or, taking the facts of the Gospel, and presenting their implication, and how they are made known in the lives of those in Christ Jesus. This is an important distinction for those addicted to simply adopting a theological position on issues created by men.

The ceremonial Law – referred to as “ordinances” in apostolic doctrine (Eph 2:15, Col 2:14; Heb 9:1) – was actually A MANUAL OF PROCEDURES. It told the people what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. It covered every facet of life from offering sacrifices, and what to do on the Sabbath day, to what they ate, how they plowed and sowed their fields, and how they sewed their garments. They were told what feasts to observe, when they were to observe them, and how they were to observe them.

All of this was necessary because the Law wrought NO CHANGE in the people themselves. They experienced no new birth, no renewing of the mind, and were basically alienated from God. They were not reconciled to God, were not washed from the sins, did not have a purged conscience, and were not given the Holy

Spirit. Their thoughts and ways differed from that of God, being at a fundamental variance with God Almighty (Isa 55:8-9). They had no power, or will, to resist the devil – and knew very little about Satan himself. Their hearts were not circumcised, and the laws of God were not written upon their hearts, and they did not possess “the whole armor of God” (Eph 6:10-18). THAT IS WHY the Lord majored on HOW they were to do things – everything. It is outlined throughout much of Exodus, and Leviticus.

Under the Law, there was no such thing as building up the people, for there was no newness of life to build up or strengthen. The word “edify,” in all of its varied forms, does not occur a single time in Scripture until Romans 14:19 – AFTER the death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement of Jesus Christ. Now, teaching would NOT be after the Levitical manner.

All recovery ministries, professed Christian counseling, etc., emphasize procedures, and habits. Countless thousands of people are given nothing more than an outline of behavioral manners, and treated as though there really was no such thing as a new birth (1 Pet 1:23), regeneration (Tit 3:5), being justified (Rom 5:1), being “made free” (Gal 5:1), and being “made accepted in the Beloved” (Eph 1:6). Therefore, men are taught about living just like Israel was taught under the Law – as people that are fundamentally at a variance with God.

This, however, is emphatically not the way life is in Christ Jesus. There – in Christ Jesus – the entirety of life is addressed in the phrases, “live by faith” (Rom 1:7; Heb 10:38), and “walk in the Spirit” (Gal 5:16,26). Rather than providing the details, or the “how to,” aspect of life in Christ, believers are told they are “sanctified by faith” (Acts 26:18), “walk by faith” (2 Cor 5:7), “stand by faith” (2 Cor 1:24), overcome the world by faith (1 John 5:4-5), and “have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand” (Rom 5:2). The people can be told (without a list of details) “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him” (Col 3:17). In Christ, they have the wherewithal to carry that out satisfactorily.

In First Corinthians, through the Apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit has been unveiling the nature of spiritual abilities and ministries, i.e., – “spiritual gifts.” First, they are given by God, not developed by men (1 Cor 12:4-6). Second, they are given at the discretion of God, not the behest of mortals (1 Cor 12:18). Third, they are intended to assist God’s people, not give a sense of temporal satisfaction to those possessing them (1 Cor 12:7). Fourth, they are not an end of themselves, but a means to an end (1 Cor 12:11-12). Fifth, their power is in their harmony with each other, as well as their ability to edify (1 Cor 12:7-11).

Men speak of “the miraculous gifts” just as though that phrase was in the Scriptures – but it is not. In fact the word “miraculous” did not occur in any standard version of Scripture, until some of the earlier versions of the New International Version, where the expression “miraculous signs” was used sixty-one times. It was removed from the 2011 version, and replaced with the word

“signs.” Understand that men have caused division among professing Christians by using expressions that are not even found in Scripture – “miraculous gifts.” Viewed properly, ALL of the gifts of God are, in a sense miraculous. That is, none of them find their source in the human nature, or in the world. All of them are transcendent to any and every thing that is “natural.” They all require God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit to, in any sense, exist. If what is “miraculous” has been withdrawn, then how do we account for the new birth, reconciliation, Divine guidance, the whole armor of God, and the laws of God being written on our heart. Why pray for “spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9). I will address this series of lessons with these things in mind.

Part 4 - SEEK THE “BETTER GIFTS”

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

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SEEK THE “BETTER GIFTS”

"But covet earnestly THE BEST GIFTS: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way" (1 Cor 12:31).

Paul urges the Corinthians to “earnestly “covet,” or desire the BEST gifts,” i.e., the ones that give the most spiritual advantage to the people of God: “But earnestly desire and zealously cultivate the greatest and best gifts and graces (the higher gifts and the choicest graces” (Amplified). The proper classification of spiritual gifts is not “miraculous” and “non-miraculous.” That is a distinction that men have made. The true classifications are “the best,” and all of the rest. Paul specifies the gifts that are most profitable: "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel TO THE EDIFYING OF THE CHURCH" (1 Cor 14:12). The best gifts result in the most edification.

For example, The person who speaks in a language unknown to the people is not to cease speaking, but “pray that he may interpret” what he has said (1 Cor 14:13). This is not referring to a person speaking in some form of intellectual gibberish, but to a person whose native language differed from the language of the people to whom he is speaking. Today, it is a common practice for English-speaking people to have an interpreter when among people who do not discern English. There is certainly nothing wrong with that. However, Paul gives a solution that is better, and makes no provision for the incorrect interpretation by the translator – "Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue [language] pray that he may interpret" (1 Cor 14:13).

Of course, this all postulates an individual who has “wisdom and spiritual understanding,” is declaring a valid message, is really living by faith (Heb 10:38), and walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16). It presumes a spiritual environment in which the Holy Spirit can freely work. Of course, there is also the possibility that

someone who is present in such an assembly has been gifted by the Holy Spirit to interpret what has been said in a language foreign to the listeners.

All of this sounds foolish to an unspiritual people, whose minds are firmly nailed to the earth like Sisera's head (Judges 4:22). In a "church" environment where preachers and teachers are manufactured by a scholastic institution rather than the Lord, none of this makes sense. That is probably the biggest reason why such gifts have appeared to "cease." It is not because the need has ceased. It is not because the time ran out for "spiritual gifts." Is it remotely possible that men must be PLACED IN THE CHURCH BY GOD, who is then needed no longer? The matter of spiritual gifts is set within the context of Divine working. "But now hath GOD SET the members EVERY ONE OF THEM in the body, as it HATH PLEASED HIM. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body" (1 Cor 12:18-20). No one is in the "church" Jesus is building whom God has not put there – Himself adding them to the church (Acts 2:47). It is further declared, "And God hath SET some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (1 Cor 12:28). Is that only a first century provision? How would one go about establishing such a proposition? Is there anything associated with salvation that was needed at the first, but no longer after a little more than fifty years? The context of the teaching concerning spiritual gifts is not a period of time, but the existence and profit of the church.

The "best gifts" are the highest ranking ones – "FIRST apostles, SECONDARILY prophets, THIRDLY teachers. The "Apostles remain in place by means of their doctrine, which has been recorded. True "prophets" and "teachers" are given insight into their doctrine. ALL foundational doctrine was delivered to the Apostles, and to no one else. The Lord Jesus promised them that would be the case on the eve of His betrayal: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into ALL truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come" (John 16:13).

James, for example, was not an apostle, but was, indeed a teacher. He was given of God to comprehend the matter of the acceptance of the Gentiles without them having to be circumcised. He was able to see the meaning of prophecies that had been hidden to men: "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:14-18). That word was received by the apostles, including Paul.

Has the need for this type of insight ceased? If that same circumstance were to happen in our day, there would be several major denominations formed in the church – and it is clear that this has happened. However, the link of the professed church with heaven has been broken by its worldliness and carnality. That is the reason for the seeming lack of “spiritual gifts.” It is not because God no longer works in such a manner, it is because if He did, it would not be seen as something He accomplished. The whole reason for the establishment of higher Christian education – Bible Colleges and Seminaries – is the powerlessness and ignorance of the modern church. However, God has made no provision for a substitute for the church, which Jesus is building. God is the One who provides the church with what is required for it to advance to maturity and true productivity (Eph 4:11-15). “But covet earnestly THE BEST GIFTS.” That is good advice – but it is not the best advice! That is not the highest pursuit for believers! It is not the most advantageous way! With a power that shakes the citadel of human wisdom Paul affirms, “And now I will show you the most excellent way” (1 Cor 12:31b).

Part 5 - A MORE EXCELLENT WAY

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

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A MORE EXCELLENT WAY

What could be better than having a unique spiritual ability? Is there something that can bring a greater advantage than being able, for example, to “speak with the tongues of men and angels?” – a professed ability highly lauded in certain segments of the Christian community? Is there something greater than simply being able to “move mountains?” Is there something more excellent than having “the gift of prophecy, and understanding all mysteries, and all knowledge” (1 Cor 13:1-3). What if I “bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and . . . give my body to be burned.” Is there something greater than that (1 Cor 13:1-3)?

Indeed, there is a “more excellent way,” and we dare not miss it. First, the Spirit is NOT comparing “love” with spiritual gifts, but rather the comparison is with doing remarkable things that require spiritual giftedness WITHOUT CHARITY, OR SPIRITUAL LOVE! Paul is by no means showing the inferiority of the gifts themselves, but the fact that they must be exercised in love – with a desire to edify, fortify, strengthen, and encourage. All of the comparisons are with expressions by those who “have NOT charity.”

There is something that CANNOT be institutionalized! It is LOVE, spiritual love. The KJV uses the word “charity” rather than the conventional word “love.”

Rightly defined, there are advantages to using the word “charity.” It speaks of a special, or spiritual love – one that is first in the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22-23). It is a frame of mind that places God at the center, seeking fervently to advantage

the people of God. This love is not a goal, it is a reality to those who, by faith, live within the circumference of Divine power.

In this text, the Spirit delineates gifts such as "the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues" (1 Cor 12:10), and "first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." (1 Cor 12:28). God is the affirmed Source of all of these gifts.

There is nothing in this text, or any other text, that suggests there will come a time when these gifts can no longer be exercised with love. The thing that makes them effective is NOT a particular time period that is assigned to them. Rather, it is when they are ministered in charity that they are effective.

THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE

Paul will argue the supremacy of love in this chapter – i.e., its superior ability to edify and strengthen the people of God. He will also show its pervasive quality, i.e., it permeates all legitimate spiritual abilities, making them effective.

Additionally, he will confirm that it blends with eternity. In this world, other valid and effectual gifts are temporary by nature, and are therefore not to be the focus of our attention or emphasis. That is, they are designed for this world, not eternity. They are given for the church that is being built, not when it is complete and in glory. Love is superior because it will transfer into glory. Faith and hope will not, for they are adapted for this world, not the world to come.

Thus it is written, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor 13:13). However, that does not mean faith is not necessary, for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb 11:6). Faith is the means by which we are justified (Rom 5:1). There is no sense in which faith is considered inferior in this world. It is the lynchpin of everything we obtain from heaven. In this world, a lot of love does not suggest faith is no longer needed.

Neither, indeed, while we are in this world, does love do away with the need for hope. We are "saved by hope" (Rom 8:24), and it is the anchor that stabilizes the soul (Heb 6:19). In this world, a lot of love does not diminish one whit the need for hope. The greatness of love is seen in the fact that it is fully functional in this world AND the world to come.

This same kind of reasoning can apply to spiritual gifts. There is not a syllable in Scripture that suggests there will come a time in this world, when they will be unable to function with love. Also, it must be explained what else was found in the beginning of the body of Christ that was intended to be temporary in this world. Is there any suggestion that there will come a time before Jesus comes when apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers will not be needed? Will the apostles' doctrine ever become obsolete in this world? Will prophesying – speaking unto edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Cor 14:3), ever become outdated. Exactly how can "eternal salvation" (Heb 5:9) become more effective

and discernible in human experience by something that is temporary in this world? How can it be “worked out” (Phil 2:12) by what is transitory?

Part 6 - ACADEMIA VERSUS EDIFICATION

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

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ACADEMIA VERSUS EDIFICATION

Our explanations of Scripture must comport with the nature of God’s Kingdom. Logic is good, and sound principles of interpretation are not to be despised. However, they are by no means the apex of Kingdom qualities, nor are they the secrets to proper Kingdom “learning.” At no point does God allow His people to step outside of a need for His will and influence – especially in the exposition of Scripture. Because, at its core, the Word of God is a revelation of the Person and purpose of God, it can in no way be profitably comprehended apart from Divine tutelage and support. This is because the Scripture deals with matters that are outside the circumference of human experience and learning. A person can know the lexical meaning of a Scriptural word, and altogether miss its true meaning.

AN EXPLANATION OF ACADEMIA

When I use the word “academia” I do not intend to denigrate learning, study, or disciplined thinking. There is no room in God’s kingdom for a slothful heart or an undisciplined mind. Academia is a term of confinement that places an emphasis on erudition rather than salvation, and scholarship rather than faith. It is limited to this world, and does not require, nor is it driven by, hope. By its very nature, academia makes no room for faith, which is essential and integral to every facet of spiritual life. Academia deals, at best, with the surface of heavenly things rather than the heart of them – and nothing of lasting value can be maintained by an elementary view of “the things of the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2:14). Academia tends to elevate men too highly, and lower the significance of both God and Christ.

In academia, “believe” is very different from “the faith of God’s elect” (Tit 1:1). Intellectual assent, or heartless consent that an affirmation cannot be disproved, is enough in the academic world. But it is not enough for those who wish to “see Him as He is.” Those limiting themselves to, or overstating, the academic aspect of knowledge, will become like the Athenians and Stoics. They “delighted to hear some new thing,” reveling in the increase of their natural knowledge-base. However, they had no real appetite or love for the truth of God. When confronted with the resurrection of the dead, their academic excellence and penchant for knowledge withered and died (Acts 17:18-32). As a result, they dismissed that subject as though it was irrelevant.

Most division in conservative religious circles has been caused by a purely academic approach to Scripture. The derivation of words, technical meanings of expressions, and elaborate research into the comments of the religious community, are primary in an academic approach. They are secondary in the approach of faith. They are not to be despised, but neither are they to be extolled as though they were the KEY to spiritual understanding! They are not! As a matter of practical observation, when vaunted to a place of prominence, they have consistently occasioned division and carnality in the religious community. Purely academic pursuits only serve us when they are kept in a subordinate position.

When it comes to the things of God, it is possible to be "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim 3:7). The wisdom of this world in its most polished and cultured form is declared to be "foolishness" by God Himself: "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (1 Cor 3:19).

As concerning the subject of these devotions, the Scriptures are not intended to be profitable apart from an understanding of them – which understanding comes from God, not men (Eph 1:18; Col 1:19). "The full assurance of understanding" (Col 2:2) is not realized by a mere intellectual acquaintance with Scripture. The scribes and Pharisees had such an acquaintance, and it only served to condemn them. Understanding the Word of God involves more than acquaintance with its words – which acquaintance is absolutely essential. The things of God have a certain "breadth, and length, and depth, and height" that must be comprehended by the saints of God (Eph 3:18). The stimulus that causes such comprehension is spelled out for us: "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love," MAY BE ABLE to comprehend . . ." (Eph 3:17).

The supposition that such an arrangement was only necessary until the text of Scripture was completed reveals an abysmal ignorance of God, Christ Jesus, the Scriptures, and the nature of salvation and spiritual life. There is no such thing as a salvation that needs God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit to get started, but is carried to completion by men. Further, in His working, God uses means – but the means are not an end of themselves, and are not to be exalted as taking the place of the Living God Himself and the reigning Christ.

I will affirm that spiritual gifts have been placed in the church because of the inadequacy of human wisdom and mere academia to affect the purpose of God – to prepare a people for the world to come by enabling them to "grow up into Christ in all things" (Eph 4:15). I will affirm that "the perfect" has not come as long as there is a need for edification, spiritual growth, and maturity in Christ.

Part 7 - CONTROVERSY OVER THE TEXT

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

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CONTROVERSY OVER THE TEXT

A great amount of controversy has resulted from varied views of the text before us – particularly the expression, “which is in part shall be done away.” This has not occurred because of the Word, or because of any ambiguity in its message. Rather, it has been induced by men that have thought “more highly” of themselves than they “ought to think” (Rom 12:2). Varied views of the text have not been driven by an understanding of the text itself, but because, as it reads, it does not fit into their understanding of God and what God is doing. Many have also taken a particular view that is solely for the purpose of contradicting some other view of the text, which they do not hold.

Let it be clear in your mind that the purpose of Scripture is not to fortify one doctrine, while overthrowing another view. This is a Pharisaic view of Scripture that dares to use Scripture to justify a sectarian doctrine – which is a doctrine that has caused a sect to arise. The purpose of Scripture is clearly stated: ""And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee WISE UNTO SALVATION through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; "That the man of God MAY BE PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS" (2 Tim 3:17). It is also written, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort OF THE Scriptures MIGHT HAVE HOPE" (Rom 15:4).

Consider the scope of the purposes served by the Scriptures. It is important to know these things, for that understanding will impact on how we consider our text: "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor 13:10).

1. “Make one wise unto salvation.” Other versions read, “give you wisdom that leads to salvation” (NASB), and “the understanding for salvation which comes through faith in Christ Jesus [through the leaning of the entire human personality on God in Christ Jesus in absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness” (Amplified). This is not initial salvation, when we are baptized in Christ. This is speaking of the salvation that we are working out with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12). It is the salvation that concludes with being successfully brought to glory by Jesus Christ (Heb 2:10). This is the “salvation” that “is nearer than when we first believed” (Rom 13:11). It is the salvation that is put on as a helmet, which is “the hope of salvation” (Eph 6:17; 1 Thess 5:8). It is the salvation that shall yet be inherited (Heb 1:14). Whatever we think of our text, that thinking must include the full scope of salvation, not just a segment of it.

2. "That the man of God may be perfect." "Perfect," means mature, full grown, or complete. That perfection is taking place in the lives of those who are living by faith (Phil 3:12-13) – it is the state where we are "no more children, tossed to by every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:13-14). Our view of the text we are considering must contribute to this process.

3. "Thoroughly furnished unto every good work." Other versions read "thoroughly equipped" (NKJV), "may be proficient" (NRSV). This has to do with the resources that come from heaven, resources that enable us to do "every good work" for which we have been created in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:10). Our view of the text being considered must be shaped by what is said of the Scriptures themselves.

3. That we might "have hope." This is the "hope" by which we are saved (Rom 8:24), which hope is an anchor for the soul (Heb 6:19). Our view of the text must take this into consideration.

Our text does not have anything to do with the completion of Scripture – or that there was a period in the history of the church when "the Scriptures" did not do what they are declared to accomplish. **THE POINT IS NOT THE PERFECTION OF SCRIPTURE, BUT THE PERFECTION OF THE BELIEVERS.**

The wisdom of men is nowhere acclaimed in Scripture, nor is the ability to think and reason set forth as the ultimate means of appropriating the truth of God. In fact, it is quite to the contrary (1 Cor 1-2). Arguments affirming these things might have a sound of correctness to them, but it is only a delusion. The wisdom of man is not to be trusted because it is, and will always be, "foolishness" to God (1 Cor 3:19). Man's natural capacities are an asset, but they are also a liability. It is faith that saves, not reason (Eph 2:8-10! It is faith that brings persuasion, not reason Heb 11:1-3)! It is faith and patience that inherit the promises, not logic and thinking (Heb 6:12). The person who believes God is always superior to the person who does not!

"Spiritual gifts" are numerous. Here are some of them: "apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues, the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, the gifts of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, the interpretation of tongues, ministry, exhortation, giving, ruling, showing mercy, speaking as the oracles of God, ministering, evangelists, pastor/teachers (1 Cor 12:8-120,28; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 4:10-11).

There are twenty-five revealed gifts. Which ones are miraculous? And how does one determine such a thing? I would rather put this question to you. Which ones are NOT miraculous? Which are the result of education, personal discipline, or anything else that is "natural?"

These are all given by God, and "Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being His counselor hath taught him?" (Isa 40:13). To say the least, it is not wise to take it upon oneself to determine when or where God intends to work.

Part 8 - THE MANDATE TO EDIFY

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

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THE MANDATE TO EDIFY

When it comes to addressing the people of God, there is no question about what is to be accomplished. They are to be "edified" – not entertained, but EDIFIED! Not instructed about a certain religious creed, but EDIFIED! Not left in a spiritually childish state, but EDIFIED!

The word "edify" means "(the act of) building, building up, equivalent to the act of one who promotes another's growth in Christian wisdom, piety, holiness, happiness" (Thayer). The field of knowledge is "the knowledge of God" (John 17:3; Col 1:10; 2 Pet 1:2). The area of growth is that of knowing the Lord – knowing His will, comprehending His purpose, and having sound spiritual judgment. Edification is the appointed means of overcoming spiritual novicehood and juvenileness. This is essential because an immature believer WILL be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph 4:14). The staggering number of this kind of people is conformed by the massive acceptance of erroneous teachings and misrepresentations of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, Divine purpose, and the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Consider what is said about edification.

1. "Charity EDIFIETH" (1 Cor 8:1).
2. "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel TO THE EDIFYING OF THE CHURCH (1 Cor 14:12).
3. "Let all things be done UNTO EDIFYING" (1 Cor 14:26).
4. ". . . we do all things, dearly beloved, FOR YOUR EDIFYING (2 Cor 12:19).
5. "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, FOR THE EDIFYING OF THE BODY OF CHRIST" (Eph 4:12).
6. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good TO THE USE OF EDIFYING, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph 4:29).
7. "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and EDIFY ONE ANOTHER, even as also ye do." (1 Thess 5:11).
8. "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than GODLY EDIFYING which is in faith: so do" (1 Tim 1:4).

WHAT DOES NOT EDIFY JEOPARDIZES

Any proclamation or teaching that does not produce edification in those receiving it, is deficient in the most serious sense of the word. What does not edify thrusts

into jeopardy, weakening spiritual virtues and forcing the hearers further from the grace they require.

The Apostles themselves were empowered primarily to edify. They were not chosen for greatness, but for Kingdom effectiveness. Paul voiced it well when he wrote, "For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us FOR EDIFICATION, and not for your destruction" (2 Cor 10:8).

The authority Paul received – and he is the appointed apostle for the Gentiles (2 Tim 1:11) – was not simply to set the record straight, or provide an authoritative message – although he did so. He was given authority to build up the saints. To put it another way, he was to “feed” the sheep! Paul is the one who taught the church extensively about “spiritual gifts” (1 Corinthians, chapters 12-14). His teaching was not at all like that of those who promote their own idea about “spiritual gifts.” Further, he is not explaining a period of time, or what is temporary, but the means that God is employing to prepare His people for eternity.

Part 9 - A VARIETY OF HUMAN INTERPRETATIONS

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

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A VARIETY OF HUMAN INTERPRETATIONS

Some have chosen to take a novel approach (as compared with one of faith) to the statement now considered; i.e. “But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (1 Cor 13:10).

Such have been motivated to adopt a view that guarantees spiritual gifts ceased at a specific time by Divine appointment. Others elect to adopt a view that guarantees spiritual gifts have not ceased, but are in full operation today according to Divine appointment. Neither of these doctrinal extremities edify the saints or build them up. They are intended to fortify a humanly-devised theological position by negating views that contradict that position. They really have little to do with strengthening the people of God, or grounding them in the faith.

Some examples of historical thinking on this matter may be profitable.

1. Chrysostom thought the coming of the “perfect” (that would remove the partial) was when the faith was “everywhere dispersed.” At that time, he believed, the “gifts would no longer be needed.” (The Greek New Testament, Volume 2, Page 588)
2. Others believe that when the “church was matured,” then the gifts passed away. This position is alluded to by B.W. Johnson representative of earlier adherents within the Restoration Movement. “When the perfect is come, then the

partial knowledge and prophecy will be done away. The imperfect will give way to the perfect; the perishable to the enduring. 'The perfect' was expected at the coming of Christ. Some think it came when the church was fully matured, since the special gifts then ceased. If there is a reference to this, the final and complete reference is to the glorified church." (The People's New Testament Notes, Volume 2, Page 1140).

3. "There can hardly be an allusion, as Theophyl., (Ec., Bengel, Olsh., al., think, to the three gifts, of tongues (elal), prophecy (ephon)., which suits but very lamely), and knowledge (elogs)." (Henry Alford, The Greek New Testament, Volume II, page 588).

4. "But when that which is perfect [The state of eternal blessedness]; then that which is in part--that which is imperfect, shall be done away; the imperfect as well as the probationary state shall cease forever." (Adam Clarke, Clarke's Commentary, Volume VI, page 270).

5. "Inspiration will be done away when God is in us, and we in Him, and our knowledge will be done away when we have come to the fulness of knowledge, and our present fragmentary and imperfect apprehension of the truth disappears in the light of perfected understanding of God and Divine things . . . Observe the Apostle's intimation, that all our knowledge, including his own, is partial and imperfect." (Lyman Abbott, The Abotts' Great Work, page 618).

6. "As the old slough falls off when the new skin comes on, As a man returns no more to the free-school that hath proceeded in the university." (John Trapp, Trapp's Commentary On The New Testament, page 545).

7. "When the end is once attained, the means will of course be abolished. There will be no need of tongues, and prophecy, and inspired knowledge, in the future life, because then the church will be in a state of perfection, complete both in knowledge and holiness. God will be known then clearly, and in a manner by intuition, and as perfectly as the capacity of glorified minds will allow; not by such transient glimpses, and little portions, as here." (Matthew Henry's Commentary, Volume 6, page 264).

It is not my manner to provide extensive views embraced by Biblical scholars. My position is simply that such views, whether my own or that of another man, cannot be a basis for our faith. Notwithstanding, because of the extensive confusion that has flooded many of our churches on this text, I think it wise to give a brief overview of the positions of the religious community on this subject. I have provided but a few quotations, representative of the dominating views of recognized theologians. These views carry no weight of themselves. They merely show the general direction of those whose lives were devoted to an in-depth perusal of the Word of God. The secret to understanding difficult texts is not to survey what men have said about them. The fact that such a variety of views exist proves that very point.

Part 10 - THE COMPLETION OF THE CANON?

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

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THE COMPLETION OF THE CANON?

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

A traditional view of this text, held by several, is that First Corinthians 13:10 is referring to the annulling of "miraculous gifts" (an unscriptural expression), upon the completion of the Scriptural canon – a matter that, in Scripture is nowhere clearly affirmed. That position is a human conclusion, not a basic postulate declared to all the churches. The concept of incompleteness is consistently applied to the saints themselves, NOT TO REVELATION intended for men living in the world (1 Cor 15:15:49; Eph 4:15; Phil 3:12; Col 3:4; 1 John 3:2).

This position considers the things delivered by "tongues," "prophecies," and "knowledge" as fragmentary parts of a whole. Thus, according to this postulate, when the Bible was completed the supposed "miraculous" fragments ("prophecies," "tongues," and "knowledge") would cease to be given, and no longer exist. If salvation required the completion of the Scriptural canon, then Jesus returned to heaven before His work was complete.

The question here is whether the words of inspired men were fragments of a whole (not yet completed) – or were they a limited perspective to a restricted constituency. To put it another way, did holy men of God deliver parts of a puzzle, or did they deliver the complete Word of God bearing upon the situations they addressed? Paul, for example, said that he declared "the WHOLE COUNSEL of God" (Acts 20:27) – not something that was partial. Was the restriction in their message, or in the condition of their hearers and the nature of life in this world? Did ANY of the Apostles preach a defective or incomplete Gospel? After Jesus returned to heaven, was there ever a prophesy, or message, delivered that was fragmentary, or partial. If so, how could it possibly "never pass away?"

This position, altogether too common among several students of Scripture, represents the "perfect" as the completion of the Scriptural canon, or the full Bible. This view clashes sharply with several statements of Scripture. As I have already stated, Paul declared "the whole counsel of God" to the people (Acts 20:27). He also "kept back nothing" that was "profitable" from them (Acts 20:21). Paul said he had been "entrusted with the Gospel," not a fragment of it (1 Thess 2:4). What Peter preached on Pentecost is nowhere represented as incomplete or fragmentary. Nor, indeed was Paul's synagogue proclamations deficient, requiring the perspective of Peter, or some other Apostle, to make them complete.

What is more, the "spiritual gifts" of prophecy and knowledge are not represented as declaring parts of a whole, to later be completed. They were a means of

building up the people of God, not merely informing them of truth available then, but not to be completed until later in history.

The fact that saints require edification, or building up, itself describes a temporal situation. This will not be their state in glory. This is because while we are “in the body,” there are vistas of eternal verity that are not adapted to people in a temporal body, and residing in a temporal world. There are, for example, things about Christ that will not be known until He appears in all of His own glory (Lk 9:26) – when we will “see Him as He is” (1 John 3:1-3). With remarkable consistency a “fuller revelation” is associated with the coming of the Lord, His manifested glory, and our gathering together unto Him. It is never clearly represented as a coming period of time when men in the flesh would be given additional information, enabling them to know more of God, Christ, and salvation. What Peter, Paul, and John preached is nowhere represented as “in part” at the time it was preached. For that matter, that would require “the apostles’ doctrine” to be partial until the time when the canon had been completed. If it was partial, then what they delivered would pass away when the canon of Scripture was complete.

Part 11 - THE BASIC ELEMENT

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

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THE BASIC ELEMENT

The basic element of revealed information in the New Covenant is the Gospel of Christ – the proclamation of what the Lord Jesus has accomplished, and of the effects of those accomplishments. The pivotal points of this message are the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:1-3). It is a message, not a directive; a proclamation, not an outline of behavior; an affirmation, not a hypothesis. The information itself is neither voluminous nor complicated. If it is not comprehended, it is not because too few pieces of the puzzle are in possession. We are plainly told if the Gospel “is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor 4:3-4, NASB). The failure of people in the first century to believe was not owing to a partial revelation.

There has never been an update to the Gospel – an addendum to it, or an enlargement of it. The Gospel of Christ was never delivered on a piecemeal basis – “here a little, and there a little.” It has been revealed that such an approach obscures the truth and causes the people to go backward and fall. "But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; THAT THEY MIGHT go,

and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken" (Isa 28:13). This exposes the falseness of the view that prophecy and other gifts continued only until "the completion of the canon." If that is the case, then God has contradicted Himself, and the whole matter of salvation falls to the ground.

What possible edification would occur by pointing the Corinthians to the completion of all sixty-six books of the Bible? What kind of hope could possibly be fostered by such a view? If you take the completion of the book of Revelation to be that point, they would have 40-50 years to wait for the canon. After that, gifts that God Himself had placed in the Church would cease – gifts the Spirit administers, and the exalted Christ manages (1 Cor 12:1-7). If the COMPILATION of Scripture is intended, that did not take place until shortly before 400 A.D. The very suggestion of piecemeal revelation would make provision for unbelief and doubt, not faith and confidence!

Further, if such a postulate is true, then God would have provided some signs or indications that would confirm when the canon was complete. That simply is how the Lord works: i.e., the beginning and ending of Babylonian captivity (Jer 10:4-5; 25:11-12), the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt 24:15-20; Lk 21:20-24, and the coming of the Lord (2 Pet 3:10-13). The proponents of this view must explain to us why this mythical postulate of the cessation of spiritual gifts was not expounded to ALL the churches – or was the church in Corinth responsible for circulating that knowledge among churches? Spiritual gifts were mentioned in the epistle to the Romans (Rom 12:2-8), the epistle to the Ephesians (Eph 2:10-16), and the epistle of "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Pet 1:1; 4:10-11). Why were these epistles totally lacking any teaching concerning the temporal nature of these gifts? Who is it that took upon himself to initiate such a view, and why did he do it? Was not that person attempting to be God's "counselor?" As it is written, "'Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being His counselor hath taught Him?" (Isa 40:13).

The reference to the cessation of "tongues," "prophecy," and "knowledge" was calculated to accentuate the foolishness of boasting in them. They were a means to an end, not an end of themselves.

Where is this phenomenon (the completion of the canon) ever clearly and meaningfully addressed in Scripture? I do not question the reality of such a thing – i.e., the completion of the Scriptural canon. That completion, however, is more owing to Divine providence than to the accumulation of segmented and partial prophecies. Our text affirms that when the perfect comes, at the time, "that which is in part shall be done away," we shall see "face to face," and "know even as we are known" (1 Cor 13:12). Today, with the Scriptural canon complete, no living person knows God to the extent that God knows that person. God knows all about every single person, but there is not a single individual who knows everything about God. Yet, when that which is perfect is come, WE SHALL KNOW EVEN AS WE ARE KNOWN. Who will dare to step forward and affirm that we now know

God just as He knows us? Who is willing to declare that we now know the Lord “face to face” – no longer looking at a reflection of God in the Gospel (2 Cor 3:18). Who is the person who presently sees the Lord “as He is” – something that is said to occur when Jesus comes again (1 John 3:2).

If we choose to rule out the providence of God in the compilation of Scripture, our faith will be dashed upon the rocks of fickle human opinion! In other words, God determines when no further inspired writing takes place – and He has nowhere said that this is when all of the parts of Scripture have been assembled. In other words, nothing in the Kingdom is driven by an automatic process. Further, to base a doctrine upon such “canonicity” appears to me to be the height of human folly. It will take more than a simplistic statement to prove that when the Bible was complete men began to know as they were known, and see the Lord face to face – and that is the point Paul is making: knowing as we are known, and seeing face to face. Moses is one of the few men who saw God’s glory, but it was NOT “face to face” (Ex 33:19-23).

Jesus Himself is the “Beginning and the End,” the “First and the Last,” the “Alpha and Omega,” and the “Author and Finisher of our faith” (Rev 1:11; 21:6; Heb 12:2). We do well to associate these aspects of His remedial role with the inspiration and compilation of what is commonly called the “New Testament.” The existence of Scripture confirms this to be the case, for the world has often attempted to destroy it.

When the Scriptural canon was complete, the following blessing did not cease: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what [is] the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power" (Eph 1:19). Neither did He cease to grant “wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9-10).

Settle it in your mind, it will take more to “grow up into Christ in all things” than simply reading the Bible. To be sure, a working familiarity with the Scripture is imperative – and let no person doubt that. However, there is also a personal affiliation with God that continues to this day – being “added to the Lord” (Acts 5:14), joined unto the Lord” (1 Cor 6:17), being called into the fellowship of His Son (1 Cor 1:9); being “taught of God” (John 6:45; 1 Thess 4:9), taught by Christ (Eph 4:10-21; 1 John 5:20), being “in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor 1:30), and being taught by the Spirit, or Anointing (1 John 2:20,27. If anyone tells you there was a point in time when all of that ceased, do not believe them. They have not told you the truth.

Part 12 - WHAT WOULD THE CORINTHIANS HAVE GAINED?

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

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WHAT WOULD THE CORINTHIANS HAVE GAINED?

If “that which is perfect” is really the completed canon of Scripture, then there are some questions to be answered. What would the Corinthians have gained when the “canon” was completed that they did not have at the time of this epistle? Here is what has been revealed about what they had received.

1. They were “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor 1:1a).
2. They were “called to be saints” (1 Cor 1:b).
3. The “grace of God” was given to them “by Christ Jesus” (1 Cor 1:4).
4. "In every thing [they were] enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge" (1 Cor 1:5).
5. The “testimony of Christ” was confirmed in them (1 Cor 1:6).
6. They “came behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:7).
7. The faithful God Himself had called them “unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Cor 1:9)
8. God had put them “in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor 1:30).
9. Christ had been made to them “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30).
10. They were “the temple of God” (1 Cor 3:15).
11. All things were theirs, “Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours” (1 Cor 3:22).
12. They were “Christ’s,” belonging to Him (1 Cor 3:22).
13. They were “washed . . . sanctified . . . [and] justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor 6:11)
14. They had been “joined unto the Lord,” and were “one spirit” with Him (1 Cor 6:17).
15. They had been bought with a price, and could glorify God in their body and in their spirit (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23).
15. When tempted, they were provided a way of escape (1 Cor 10:13).
16. They experienced “the communion of the blood of Christ,” and the “communion, of the body of Christ” (1 Cor 10:16).
17. They could “eat,” “drink,” and “do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31).
18. God had placed each one of them in the body of Christ, as it pleased Him (1 Cor 12:18).
19. They were “the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor 12:27).
20. They had the ability to be “steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58).
21. They could be admonished. “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” (1 Cor 16:13).

I have only covered First Corinthians, but that will suffice for the point I am making. What was there about the Word of God which they received that was not adequate? Which of those twenty-one things were partial, or fragmentary? Were

the many sins that broke out in Corinth because they only had “parts” of what God gives in Christ Jesus? Did any of the gifts they had received (1 Cor 12:8-11, 28) provide something the apostles did not give them? Were they deficient because they had not received letters from Peter and John? When prophets spoke among them, were they delivering fragments that were missing in what Paul taught them? Were those “gifts” really given to tide them over until the completion of the canon? If there really is such a thing as “the miraculous gifts” that were intended to be done away, exactly how does a completed “canon” replace them, or render them obsolete?

Of course, all of this kind of reasoning appears foolish when you consider that God is the One who puts gifts in the church – and that is nowhere represented as a temporary provision. Further, they are gifts dispensed by the Holy Spirit, and administered by the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 12:4-6). Is there something else God, the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit did in the first century, and stopped doing when the Scriptural canon was complete?

Part 13 - THE COMPARISON IS WITH LOVE, NOT WORDS

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

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THE COMPARISON IS WITH LOVE, NOT WORDS

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and HAVE NOT CHARITY, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and HAVE NOT CHARITY, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and HAVE NOT CHARITY, it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor 13:1-3)

The comparison made in our text ["But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away"] is NOT that of an incomplete Bible, with only fragmented inspired words (a concept that seems very dangerous). The Spirit is comparing the means to completeness with completeness itself. “Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, THEY WILL CEASE; where there are tongues, THEY WILL BE STILLED; where there is knowledge, IT WILL PASS AWAY. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears” (1 Cor 13:8-10, NIV). It is NOT the existence of the gifts that is presented hypothetically, BUT THEIR PROFITABILITY. That profitability is not determined by whether the gifts are available or not, but whether or not they are employed with love, or “charity.”

Paul was “appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles” (2 Tim 1:11). He had continued in Corinth for “a year and six months, teaching the

word of God among them" (Acts 18:11). His teaching was NOT partial, or fragmentary. It was not "in part." Further, no one had to prophecy WITHOUT LOVE. No one had to have all knowledge WITHOUT LOVE. No one had to have all faith WITHOUT LOVE. No one had to bestow all their goods to feed the poor WITHOUT LOVE. No one had to become a martyr WITHOUT LOVE. That is what the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians is about. The principle being declared is that God has made no provision for any kind of ministry or legitimate activity that is not done with love.

Was Paul's ministry fragmentary, or "in part?" Precisely what would the Corinthians have when the Scriptural canon was complete that they did not have available to them at the time Paul wrote? Remember, this is the man who delivered "ALL the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), not a fragment of it.

"Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away" (NASB). Spiritual gifts can only go so far, because they are tailored for the body of Christ WHILE IT IS IN THE WORLD. The spiritual gifts are tailored for this world, not the world to come. However, the purpose of God for men extends beyond the duration of this world. Love, on the other hand, extends into the world to come, and will never complete its work.

The subject of completion is not revelation, but the believers themselves. The partiality being addressed is not what has been revealed, but the condition of the Corinthians. They had "divisions" among themselves (1 Cor 1 Cor 3:3). They were "carnal," or spiritually childish (1 Cor 3:3). Some had not "the knowledge of God" (1 Cor 15:34). They were drinking from "the cup of demons" (1 Cor 10:21), and eating from "the table of demons" (1 Cor 10:21). They were tolerating a fornicator in their midst (1 Cor 5:1-5). They were taking one another in courts of law (1 Cor 6:1). They were not being mindful of weaker, or untaught, brethren (1 Cor 8). Some of them did not believe there was a resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:12), etc. IT IS NOT THE SCRIPTURES THAT WERE INCOMPLETE, BUT THE PEOPLE IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH.

In this world, there was no additional revelation that could resolve those situations. The people are the ones who needed to be made "complete" – and being complete is a condition that does exist in Christ Jesus (Col 2:10). Love is what would resolve all of the problems in Corinth.

Paul then shows a hypothetical circumstance in which the spiritual gifts would not be beneficial. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and HAVE NOT CHARITY, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor 13:1). The Spirit does not postulate a time or era in this world, when such speaking will have passed away. He then brings up "the gift of prophecy" "all knowledge," and "all faith." "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and HAVE NOT CHARITY, I am nothing" (1 Cor 13:2).

It is not the cessation of the gifts that make them unprofitable, but the absence of love.

Then Paul mentions helping the poor, and martyrdom: "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and HAVE NOT CHARITY, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor 13:3). When the Scriptural canon was completed did it become wrong for one to bestow all their goods to feed the poor? Did that ministry cease? If not, why not? When the canon was completed, did martyrdom become obsolete? If not, why not?

In fact, the validity of Paul's teaching concerning love postulates THE PRESENCE of spiritual gifts, and acts of charity, NOT the absence of them. For those who imagine that our text is speaking of the obsolescence of spiritual gifts at the time of the finalization of the Bible, why did Paul speak of the employment of those gifts being useless if they were not exercised with love? Why did he speak of the effectiveness of love at the time of his writing, and not at the time of a completed Canon?

Prophecy, as represented in First Corinthians, is not addressed as though it were fragmented. Nor, indeed, is "knowledge" so viewed (whether conferred independently of learning or an aspect of discernment). The point is the inadequacy of these things [including charitable giving and martyrdom] to, of themselves, meet the ULTIMATE Divine objective. That objective is to bring the saints to a point where they will be duly suited for death, the resurrection, the judgment, and permanent residency in heaven. The failure to meet those objectives, no matter what is being done, is the absence of love. Further, when the present heavens and the earth pass away, there will be no further use of the spiritual gifts, which were designed for this world. However, love will continue on throughout the ages to come.

Part 14 - INAPPROPRIATE EMPHASIS REBUKED

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 14 of 30

INAPPROPRIATE EMPHASIS REBUKED

In our text, Paul is rebuking an undue EMPHASIS on certain spiritual "gifts" – an emphasis that had brought division and carnality into the Corinthian assembly. He is not focusing on the gifts themselves, but on the inappropriate emphasis of them. The STRESS or ACCENT had been placed on what MEN do, not what GOD does – not what the LORD JESUS does – and not what the HOLY SPIRIT does. To say the least, men should exercise godly caution in providing extensive explanations of something they allege God once gave, but gives no longer. By way of surface comparison, it is proper to say God once sent a global flood that destroyed the earth, but will never do so again. That is appropriate, because that

is what God said: "And I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall NO MORE become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Gen 9:15). It is also right to say God will never re-institute the First, or Old Covenant, for that is what He has clearly revealed. In his comparison of the Old and New Covenants Paul wrote, "For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that WHICH IS DONE AWAY was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." (2 Cor 3:9-11).

In his doctrine, Paul stressed to the Corinthians what GOD does. Here are a few examples.

1. "GOD IS FAITHFUL, BY WHOM ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor 1:9)
2. "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which GOD HATH prepared for them that love Him." (1 Cor 2:9)
3. "But GOD HATH revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Cor 2:10)
4. "And GOD HATH both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by His own power." (1 Cor 6:14)
5. "But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but GOD HATH called us to peace . . ." (1 Cor 7:15)
6. "But as GOD HATH distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches." (1 Cor 7:17)
7. "For our comely parts have no need: but GOD HATH tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked." (1 Cor 12:24)
8. "And GOD HATH set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." (1 Cor 12:28)
9. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as GOD HATH prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." (1 Cor 16:2)

Paul also accentuated the Lord Jesus Christ. Here are a few examples.

1. "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you BY Jesus Christ." (1 Cor 1:4)
2. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor 1:9)
3. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Cor 2:2)
4. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor 3:11)

5. "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him." (1 Cor 8:6)

6. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures." (1 Cor 15:3-4)

7. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor 15:57)

8. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." (1 Cor 16:22)

9. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." (1 Cor 16:23)

He also underscored the Holy Spirit. Here are a few examples.

1. "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Cor 2:10)

2. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." (1 Cor 2:12)

3. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor 2:14)

4. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor 3:16)

5. "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor 6:11)

6. "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." (1 Cor 12:7)

Because the Corinthians had vaunted gifts instead of the Giver, and personal advantage over ministry, they continued to conduct themselves as though they were still of the world – something wholly unacceptable in Christ Jesus. This is the matter that was being addressed in chapters twelve through fourteen of First Corinthians. That is the context within which our text was written: "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10).

Part 15 - A PRINCIPLE, NOT A PROPHECY

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 15 of 30

A PRINCIPLE, NOT A PROPHECY

Paul is citing a PRINCIPLE that pervades both nature and grace. His purpose is not to chronicle a specific fulfillment, or a particular period of time. He is not prophesying the completion of the Scriptural canon. Rather, He is proclaiming a kingdom PRINCIPLE. For example, spiritual maturity involves putting away “childish things” (1 Cor 13:11) – which are, by their very nature designed to be temporary. Putting away “childish things” does not mean the discarding of the alphabet and simple mathematics, or the ability to read and write. Those were all, in a sense, parts, but they did not go away when adulthood was reached. Rather, they were brought to maturity.

Temporary provisions should be treated as though they ARE temporary, whether they are riches or spiritual gifts. In the case of riches, we are to be willing to let them go, but using them for God’s glory (1 Tim 6:17-19). For that matter, life in the flesh is itself temporary, and must be treated as such. With spiritual gifts, we are to press toward the mark, capitalizing on the advantages they bring to us. But, they are NOT to be our emphasis! Neither, indeed, are we to suppose they are no longer needed, or that God no longer gives them, or that the Holy Spirit no longer assigns them, or that Jesus no longer governs them – for all of the Godhead is involved in the matter of “spiritual gifts.” They also involve the saints, and contribute to their edification, or building up. That is how they are presented. When we speak of “spiritual gifts,” they stand together, and are nowhere clearly divided into groups like “miraculous” and “non-miraculous.” There are priorities within the gifts: "And God hath set some in the church, FIRST apostles, SECONDARILY prophets, THIRDLY teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (1 Cor 12:28). ALL of those gifts are supernatural. For example, God did not “set” prophets in the church, only to withdraw them when the canon of Scripture was completed. God has revealed what the prophets do: "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (1 Cor 14:3). Who can substantiate the postulate that such a gift was designed to pass away before the ending of this world? Or, that there came a time in history when they were no longer needed. It will take more than a hypothesis to substantiate that persuasion.

God is the One who sets the gifts in the churches (1 Cor 12:28). He does this through Jesus, who, after He had ascended into heaven, "GAVE some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph 4:11). Peter wrote, "As every man hath RECEIVED THE GIFT, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet 4:10). In Peter’s statement, the “gift” is associated with “the manifold grace of God” – not time. Were there some gifts that are presently not included in Peter’s admonition?

The thing I am establishing is that when we reason about “spiritual gifts” we are reasoning about something GOD DOES – not simply something that exists. Further. These gifts integrate with salvation itself, because they have to do with “edification” (1 Cor 14:5,12,26) – and edification results in spiritual maturity.

What God has given the church is "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12). In a rather clear statement about "gifts," Paul wrote, "How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done UNTO EDIFYING" (1 Cor 14:26) – and "edifying," as long as the world stands, is nowhere represented as becoming unnecessary.

It seems to me that at some point religious men must be willing to leave the whole matter of spiritual gifts in the hands of the Lord, for only He can give them, and only He can remove them. Nothing that God gives is removed by some automatic process. In a professed Christian environment, where the very concept of edification is unknown, and edifying is rarely practiced, "spiritual gifts" would be a profitless intrusion.

In this consideration, love is a pervasive quality that contributes to ultimate spiritual maturity. It is what make all valid "gifts" effectual for the building up of the saints. In fact, it will be a part of the maturity itself.

Part 16 - A GREATER GLORY

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 16 of 30

A GREATER GLORY

In the Kingdom of God, something is "done away" only by a GREATER GLORY. That which is of lesser glory, is "done away," fading in the light of greater glory, as the moon which becomes unseen when the sun rises to its zenith.

The Law, for example, had a certain glory, emitting characteristics of God Himself. That glory is described in the third chapter of Second Corinthians. Because the Law brought death, as compared to "life," it is called "the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones" (2 Cor 3:7). The Law defined sin, giving a knowledge of it: "for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20). Because the Law was not associated with being "born again" (John 3:6,8), being "made righteous" (Rom 5:19), or being "made acceptable in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6), it brought death to men. In a most vivid portrayal of this circumstance, Paul said of his former life, before he was justified, "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and BY IT slew me" (Rom 7:11). The Law was not, and was never intended to be, a means of becoming righteous – even though it did have a glory of its own.

How could the state of condemnation be successfully addressed? It could not be by the Law, which was glorious. The Law administered death, not life. It was "the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones," and "was glorious." (2 Cor 3:7). The Law as a means to righteousness was not designed to simply come to an

end at an appointed time – to “run out,” so to speak. In order that its ministration of death come to an end, something with a greater glory had to come – like the rising of the sun which causes the glory of the moon to become unseen.

The New Covenant is referred to as “the ministration of the Spirit,” which is “rather glorious,” or “MORE glorious” (2 Cor 3:8 [NKJV]). Comparing the Old Covenant with the New Covenant, the Spirit affirms, “For if THE MINISTRATION OF CONDEMNATION be glory, much more doth THE MINISTRATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS exceed in glory” (2 Cor 3:9). That is, under the Law men were condemned. In the New covenant there is a “ministration of righteousness,” or “the ministry that brings righteousness” (2 Cor 3:9, NIV). Once the greater glory of a Covenant in which men were actually made righteous appeared, the glory of the Old Covenant could no longer be seen. Therefore Paul writes, “For even that which was made glorious [the Law] had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth [the glory of the new covenant]” (2 Cor 3:10). The New Revised Standard version reads, “Indeed, what once had glory has lost its glory because of the greater glory” (2 Cor 3:10). Thus, according to Apostolic doctrine, the Law was ended AS A MEANS to righteousness. “For Christ is the end of the law FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS to every one that believeth” (Rom 10:4), and that happened with the induction of the greater glory of the new covenant (2 Cor 3). More specifically, it is written, “For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, much more does the ministry of justification abound in glory! Indeed, what once had glory has lost its glory because of the greater glory; for if what was set aside came through glory, much more has the permanent come in glory!” (2 Cor 3:9-11, NRSV).

A greater glory removes the former glory. It does NOT add to it. Further, as concerns the Law, its glory did not grow or expand with the additional instructions in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. More of the same does not equate to greater glory. Adding twenty more commandments to the Ten Commandments would not have given the Law greater glory. A greater glory is not produced by bringing together several parts of lesser glory. The greater glory is a superior, and different kind of glory.

Another example of a greater glory overshadowing the lesser glory is the Sabbath day. It was a day imposed upon people who would never have honored God if that commandment was not given. Even the people who kept it, we are told, never really entered into “rest.” In fact, God would not let them enter into His rest (Heb 3:10-11). Then, however, a greater Sabbath, or rest, was brought in by Jesus Christ. Those participating in it were told, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His” (Heb 4:9-10). The greater glory of that Sabbath, or rest, obviated the lesser glory of the seventh day Sabbath. Those who insist that we are to keep the seventh day Sabbath are simply wrong. The “rest” into which believers enter by faith is the real Sabbath (Heb 4:3). That is the point being made in Hebrews chapters three and four.

This principle of a greater glory involves more than the removal of the “need” for something. The thing that is “done away” CANNOT blend with what is new, because it is of a differing nature – like the Old Covenant compared with the New Covenant, or “the old man” as compared with “the new man” (Eph 4:22-24), or the glory of the moon with the glory of the sun.

If “that which is perfect” is the completed canon, it would obviate the partial revelations, overshadowing them with a greater glory. There is, indeed, something of a “greater glory.” It is “that which is perfect,” and, as we will establish, it is not yet here.

Part 17 - “DONE AWAY”

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 17 of 30

“DONE AWAY”

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be DONE AWAY." (1 Cor 13:10)

The words “done away” come from a single Greek word which has the following lexical meaning “to be (render) entirely idle (useless), literal or figurative: – abolish, cease, cumber, deliver, destroy, do away, become (make) of no (none, without) effect, fail, loose, bring (come) to nought, put away (down), vanish away, make void.” (Strong’s Dictionary). Note that what is partial will “vanish away,” be “done away,” or “destroyed. In no sense will it remain.

If the reference is to prophecies, knowledge, and other inspired utterances, we have a dilemma before us. Inspired utterances will thus be abolished, or made of none effect and brought to nought. That would suggest that all of the unfulfilled prophecies would pass away with the completion of the Scriptural canon. That would include, the promise of Christ’s return (Heb 9:28), the end of the world (2 Pet 3:10-13), the conversion of Israel (Rom 8:26-27), the day of judgement (Matt 12:36), receiving a crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8), etc. Those are matters that, at this time, are “partial,” or unfulfilled. There is no sense in which they have passed away, or been done away.

Exactly how does the gathering of all Scripture together cause the perceived partial utterances to pass away. And if the text is speaking about spiritual gifts passing away, why did God not say that only some of them would pass away. In fact he does not even mention the “gifts,” but the result, or outcome, of the gifts – “Charity never faileth: but whether there be PROPHECIES, they shall fail; whether there be TONGUES, they shall cease; whether there be KNOWLEDGE, it shall vanish away” (1 Cor 13:8). He does not mention “the working of miracles,” “the discerning of spirits,” “gifts of healings,” and “diversities of tongues” (1 Cor 12:10; 12:28). Now, at this point I am dealing only with the text.

What do all of these things, together with the other gifts that are mentioned, have in common? Is it that they are supernatural? ALL of the gifts placed within the church are “supernatural” – given and placed by God. None of them could possibly exist if God did not give them. There is no way men can cause them to come into being by education, training, etc.

The thing all of the gifts have in common is that THEY ARE ALL TAILORED FOR LIFE IN THIS WORLD , not the world to come. None of them will be in heaven, for there will be no need for them there. Further, anything and everything that is Divinely tailored for this world, IS PARTIAL. Salvation itself is not complete, for our bodies have not yet been redeemed (Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14). Like Paul, we have not yet “apprehended” that for which we have been “apprehended” (Phil 3:12-13). We presently have "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor 5:1), and as long as we are in the world, we have not yet occupied that “house.” We have not yet “finished the race” (Heb 12:1-3). We still have to contend with the devil (1 Pet 5:8-9). We still need an Intercessor (Rom 8:26-27,34; Heb 7:5). Whatever we have while we are in “this present evil world” is partial! We do not yet “reign” in the sense that we will (2 Tim 2:12). We do “reign in life” (Rom 5:17) – but it is partial. As long as we are in this world, there are countless things we cannot control or change. That is because there is an inhibiting factor with us – the body. It must be subdued and managed (1 Cor 9:27) – which is a temporary situation in a temporary realm. There is also the inhibiting factor of a world that is passing way. None of those, and other temporary things, passed away with the completion of the Canon.

Speaking within the context of our tenure in the world, something passing away is quite different than fulfilling. When Scripture is fulfilled, it does not pass away. It still retains edifying qualities. Examples are the records of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, the giving of the Law, and the fall of Nineveh. Those are all things that have been fulfilled, yet still have relevance, even though they were, in a sense, “in part.” Rather than passing away, these are still beneficial to those who are strangers and pilgrims in this world.

In the case of the “completed canon,” inspired utterances were preserved; they did not “pass away.” It is the utterances themselves that are referenced, not the ability to give them – “prophecies,” not “prophets.” Partial prophecy and partial knowledge will no longer exist when the perfect comes. It is because there will no longer be a temporal realm, for which all of the spiritual gifts were suited.

Part 18 - WHEN WILL THE PARTIAL PASS?

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be DONE WAY." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 18 of 30

WHEN WILL THE PARTIAL PASS?

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part SHALL BE DONE AWAY." (1 Cor 13:10)

When will the "partial" be "done away?" It can only be "done away" when the Divine objective for it is realized. Is that objective depicted anywhere as the "completed Scriptural canon?" Is this ever a clear point affirmed by holy men of God, speaking as they were moved by the Holy Spirit? While the Scriptures are indispensable, did the Prophets, Jesus, the Apostles, or any other inspired writer ever tell the people of God to look forward to the time of the completion of the Scriptures – which would necessarily imply the people were living at the time of their writing with a spiritual deficiency? Is the completion of the Scriptural canon ever set forth as an accomplishment for which the saints are to look? Indeed, it is not. Within the context of Divine purpose, the completed canon falls far short as a subject of prophecy.

Because God hinges spiritual life upon His Word, it is understood that He was integral in its revelation, compilation and preservation. Will Jesus' words pass away when that which is perfect is come? If the prophecies and knowledge of reference were given by God, will those words pass away? The text says that "prophecies" would "fail," not "prophets."

Paul alludes to a time of grandeur, not one of mere potential. "For NOW we see through a glass, darkly; but THEN face to face: NOW I know in part; but THEN shall I know even as also I am known" (v. 12). "NOW we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; THEN we shall see face to face. NOW I know in part; THEN I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (NIV). The "now" and the "then" all have to do with apprehension, not compilation. Does "now" mean, while we only have a partial Bible, and "then" mean when we have a complete Bible? Is that really what those words mean?

It seems absurd to suggest that Paul only knew a part of what was to be revealed about Christ and His great salvation, and that his knowledge would be made thorough upon the completion of the Scriptural canon. We know this is not the case, because earlier in his life, even the chiefest of the twelve Apostles could add nothing to Paul's understanding of kingdom matters (Gal 2:6). Is anyone on earth set to say that Paul saw through a glass darkly, concerning Christ and the salvation that is through Him? Is what he preached said to be a "fragment," or "in part."

Hear Paul testify about his message, and tell me if it sounds like a fragment.

"Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets" (Eph 3:2-5).

When it comes to redemptive revelation, this does not sound like deficiency on Paul's part. No inspired man indicated he preached a partial Gospel, or passed

along a fragmented revelation of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Further, even when Paul had effectively communicated this mystery, it is evident that the perfect had not come through him, for he prayed that those who accepted what he declared would be given "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph 1:17), and that his readers might be "filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col 1:9). The completion of the Scriptural canon did not obviate the need for such a prayer.

Part 19 - THE HUMAN CONDITION

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 19 of 30

THE HUMAN CONDITION

Fragmented knowledge is not the result of fragmented revelation. Rather, it is the necessary consequence of human infirmity, which is the result of the guilt of sin. The condition of all men outside of Christ is the result of the intrusion of sin, not the lack of revelation from God. Until we are "present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8), our knowledge is incomplete, only having a circumference as wide as the experience of the saved in "this present evil world." God has shared very little knowledge with us that does not pertain to our existence in this world.

It is true that God has given a few glimpses into the heavenly realm. Jacob saw a ladder that reached into heaven, with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it, and God standing at the top (Gen 28:12). Ezekiel had "visions of God" (Ezek 1:1; 8:3; 40:2), but they were not descriptions of things taking place in heaven. They rather concerned what was happening on the earth. Daniel had a vision of the throne of God, the reception of the risen Christ in heaven, and the fact that all authority was given to Him (Dan 7:13-14). All of that, however, pertained to what was to be done on earth as a result of Christ's exaltation. Men have never been told about things in heaven that did not have to do with life on this earth. However, when the saints are glorified, they will be directly exposed to those things, and come to learn of them in detail. Until then, in this world, no matter who the saints are, they "know in part." The apostles, when they were in the world, knew "in part." All of them accumulated, with their knowledge compressed into a single syllabus, had only partial knowledge – because it pertained to life in this world.

Our condition "in the body" makes partial knowledge and utterances inevitable. There are "things that are secret," that still "belong unto God" (Deut 29:29).

Michael, for example, is a "chief angel" in heaven (Dan 10:13), but we know very little about his heavenly activity, or the things that pertain to it. We are told that there "there was war in heaven" (Rev 12:7), but the details of it are very sparse – only the outcome is known (Rev 12:7).

Only the things “that are revealed” belong to us now. It ought to be apparent that God has not divulged everything about Himself and His purpose to humanity. God has told us about some things that are going to “come to pass” – but not all of them. If He had divulged all of what is going to come to pass, we could pass that knowledge along. That situation makes all present spiritual knowledge partial. All honest persons can, and should, say, “we know in part” (1 Cor 13:9). With Paul every single person can say in truth, “now I know in part” (1 Cor 13:12). Any individual who claims that saying does not belong to him is fundamentally dishonest.

But things are not determined to remain this way – i.e., “we know in part.” There is a time when the “perfect” will come, and the “partial” will be “done away.” At this present time, knowledge is not the only thing that is “in part.” Our salvation is “in part,” for our bodies are not yet redeemed (Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14; 4:30). We have not yet seen the Lord “as He is,” and are not yet “like Him” in the fullest sense (1 John 3:1-3). The fact that we are living “by hope” testifies to our incompleteness, and the incompleteness of our participation in the reign of Christ. The Lord is coming in all of His glory, that of the Father, and that of the holy angels (Matt 16:27; 25:31). That condition spells the end of the era of partiality. Then, and only then, will the “perfect” be revealed.

It has been revealed that, while we are in this world, here is a sense in which we are “complete” – “And ye ARE COMPLETE in Him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Col 2:10). That completeness, however, has to do with what is required for us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12) – what is necessary for us to “grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ” (Eph 4:15). Every believer possesses in Christ everything that is required to fulfill this admonition: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1). In Christ you have what will enable you to “run with patience the race that is set before you” (Heb 12:1-2), and to “present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God” (Rom 12:1-2). The completeness you possess is in what has been supplied for you, NOT what you have experienced. So far as you are concerned, you can confess with Paul, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14). That is an inspired description of “in part.”

Part 20 - THROUGH A GLASS VERSUS FACE TO FACE

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 20 of 30

"For now WE see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Cor 13:12)

THROUGH A GLASS VERSUS FACE TO FACE

"Now," Paul says, "we see through a glass darkly." Other versions read, "in a mirror, dimly" (NKJV), "a poor reflection in a mirror" (NIV), "imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror (NLT). That is, we are seeing a REFLECTED glory, as through a mirror – not an incomplete Scriptural canon. Paul refers to the same experience in Second Corinthians: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18). The reflected glory changes us, like the after effects of God's glory changed Moses' face (2 Cor 3:7). While we are in the body, we are not subjected to the full glory of God. Who does not know this? While we are in the body, we would be consumed by it! In this context, what would lead a person to believe "the perfect" was the completed Biblical canon? Note that the reflected glory – i.e., the glory made known in the Gospel – changes us in a continuing manner – "from glory to glory." Further, the big change is yet to come, when we see Jesus as He is, and we "put on immortality" (1 Cor 15:53). "Then," is when our knowledge shall be gloriously expanded in a manner not possible in this world.

I KNOW IN PART

To confirm that the experience of which Paul speaks is not confined to the Corinthians, he who was caught up into the third heaven, subjected to and hearing things that could not be contained in human language (2 Cor 12:2), states this of himself, acknowledging that he is in the same limited condition as they.

"Now I KNOW in part; but then shall I KNOW even as also I AM known." That is the person who spent considerable time, possibly as much as three years, being personally taught by the glorified Christ (1 Cor 11:23; Gal 1:17-18).

Other versions read, "now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known" (NASB); "Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood" (RSV); "Now I know partially, but then I will know completely in the same way that I have been completely known" (CEB), "Now my knowledge is incomplete. Then I will have complete knowledge as God has complete knowledge of me" (GWN); "What I know now is not complete. But someday I will know completely, just as God knows me completely" (NIRV); "All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely" (NLT); Now I know in part (imperfectly), but then I shall know and understand fully and clearly, even in the same manner as I have been fully and clearly known and understood [by God]." (Amplified). That certainly is plain enough. The comparison is between what we know, and what God knows.

The evidence of completion is when we SEE "FACE TO FACE," and "know as we are known." That is subjective, not objective. It deals with our experience, not with resources made available to us. When "perfection comes," WE will be

discerning. It is not that we will have no more to discern: and there is a difference. Scripture is not a series of incomplete fragments to be assembled by mortals. What kingdom essentiality, for instance, is written by Peter or John that is not also covered by Paul. That simply means that no Scripture is to be regarded as a fragment – and it is never clearly so described.

The time referred to as “THEN” is elsewhere the subject of apostolic exposition. “Beloved, NOW are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, WHEN HE SHALL APPEAR, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). The change that will be affected will be in us. Then, we will see Him as He now sees us – face to face. In Scripture “NOW” is sometimes called “this present time,” and “THEN” as when “the glory . . . shall be revealed in us” (Rom 8:18). “NOW” is when we gird up the loins of our minds, and “THEN” is when full grace will be “brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:13).

The word “NOW” is used 188 times from Romans thru Jude. I do not believe there is a person in the world that can substantiate that in any of those times “NOW” refers to a period of time when the Bible is not complete.

Part 21 - THE COMPARISON IS WITH LOVE, NOT SCRIPTURAL TEXT

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 21 of 30

THE COMPARISON IS WITH LOVE, NOT SCRIPTURAL TEXT

Prophecies, tongues, and knowledge are more related to things God has done, or is doing, or will do, IN THE WORLD. “Prophecies,” as used here, is “speaking unto edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Cor 14:3) – all of which postulate a need for growth and empowerment, with the presence of an adversary, and our unredeemed bodies. By affirming “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part” (1 Cor 13:9), the Spirit is underscoring that the “part” presently dealt with is the “part” pertaining to spiritual life IN THIS WORLD. It all postulates the need for faith and hope, and the presence of a fierce and unrelenting adversary. When “the perfect” comes, such communications will no longer be required, for the present heavens and earth shall have been removed, and our adversaries shall all have been cast into the lake of fire. What we presently have is “part” of something that is eternal: “an ETERNAL weight of glory” (2 Cor 4:17); “an house not made with hands, ETERNAL in the heavens” (2 Cor 5:1); “ETERNAL glory” (2 Tim 2:10); “ETERNAL salvation” (Heb 5:9; “ETERNAL redemption” (Heb 9:12); “ETERNAL inheritance” (Heb 9:15); “EVERLASTING habitations” (Lk 16:9); “EVERLASTING consolation” (2 Thess 2:16), etc. When “that which is perfect is come,” ETERNAL things are the ONLY things that will remain!

Until the finality of all temporal things comes, “perfect” is assigned to a condition in the saints – spiritual maturity – NOT the completion of the Biblical text. “Be PERFECT” (2 Cor 3:11); “That the man of God may be PERFECT, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:17). “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you PERFECT, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pet 5:10). That, however, is not the way the word “perfect” is used in our text.

While the world remains, spiritual gifts (the ones God has given) are to be driven by “love,” not pride. Love is what sanctifies the gift, and makes it effectual. Love does not remove the gifts, but makes them profitable.

God, for example “is love” (1 John 4:8,16). That is His nature, and pervades all that He does – i.e., all that is RELATED TO HIS “ETERNAL PURPOSE” (Eph 3:11). Love is NOT mingled with His judgment upon Satan, his angels, or the principalities and powers that he governs. It is NOT God’s love that will cast the UNRIGHTEOUS into the lake of fire, together with Satan and those aligned with Him (Rev 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). God’s love is not what brought the flood (Gen 6:7), or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain (Gen 19; Lk 17:20). Those actions are also driven by what God IS – “RIGHTEOUS.” Too often, men refer to the saying, “God is love,” as though that is all He was. But this is emphatically not the case, and is nowhere stated as though it was. “God is” also “a Consuming Fire” (Deut 4:24; Heb 12:29), “a Jealous God” (Deut 6:15; Nah 1:2), “Gracious and Merciful” (2 Chron 30:9), “Mighty” (Job 36:5), “Great” (Job 36:26); “our Refuge” (Psa 46:1), “the King of all the earth” (Psa 47:7), “a Sun and a Shield” (Psa 84:11), “Holy” (Psa 99:9), “True” (John 3:33), “a Spirit” (John 4:24), “Faithful” (1 Cor 1:9), and “Light” (1 John 1:5).

THE SUPERIORITY OF GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS

Allow me to take a moment to expound “the righteousness of God,” which is clearly set forth as His preeminent characteristic. The phrase “God is love” is found two times in all of Scripture (1 John 4:8,16). Then, because First Corinthians 13:13 states, “The greatest of these (faith, hope, and charity) is “charity,” or “love,” men have assumed “love” is the predominate Divine trait. But that is not at all the point of the text. Rather, it is that “faith” and “hope” pertain only to life in this world, while “love” will also be in glory.

The phrase “the Lord is RIGHTEOUS” is found six times in Scripture (Ex 9:27; 2 Chron 12:6; Psa 129:4; 145:17; Lam 1:18). Daniel confessed, “God is RIGHTEOUS in all His works which He doeth” (Dan 9:14). The Scriptures speak of “the RIGHTEOUS acts of the Lord” (Judges 5:11). Ezra confessed, “O LORD God of Israel, Thou art RIGHTEOUS” (Ezra 9:15). Nehemiah confessed to God, “Thou art RIGHTEOUS” (Neh 9:8). David spoke of “the RIGHTEOUS God” (Psa 7:9), and “the RIGHTEOUS Lord” (Psa 11:7). Jesus admonished men to “seek first” the Kingdom of God, and His “RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Matt 6:33). In prayer, Jesus addressed God as “RIGHTEOUS Father” (John 17:25). The Gospel reveals “the RIGHTEOUSNESS of God” (Rom 1:17). In the Gospel, “the RIGHTEOUSNESS of

God without the law is manifested" (Rom 3:21-22). The remission of sins is traced back to God's "RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Rom 3:25-26). A state of alienation is described as "being ignorant of God's RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Rom 10:3). When men are regenerated, they are said to be "made the RIGHTEOUSNESS of God" (2 Cor 5:21). Ministering over the Kingdom of God, Christ has "a scepter of RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Heb 1:8). Believers have "obtained like precious faith with us through the RIGHTEOUSNESS of God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 1:1). Christ Himself is referred to as "Christ the RIGHTEOUS" (1 John 2:1). Holy angels confess, "Thou art RIGHTEOUS, O Lord" (Rev 16:5).

The love of God, for a season, deferred to the righteousness of God. Men could not be saved – loved or not – until it was righteous for God to do so. Therefore, we read this exposition of salvation: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS: that He might be Just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom 3:24-26). That is, God did not give men eternal life until it was righteous for Him to do so. That describes a "perfect" salvation. The phrase "when that which is perfect is come" describes a circumstance in which salvation will not be needed.

David depicted the resolution of the dilemma of righteousness and love having to be joined, in these words: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psa 85:10). That is the result of the atoning death, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement of King Jesus!

Part 22 - WE SEE THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 22 of 30

WE SEE THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

"For now WE SEE THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Cor 13:12)

Other versions read, "we see in a mirror, dimly" (NKJV), "we see a poor reflection in a mirror" (NIV), "we see indistinctly" (CSB), "we see a blurred image in a mirror" (GWN), "now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror" (NLT).

The "glass" of the KJV means a "looking glass," or mirror. In the revelation given to us in Scripture, we are seeing a REFLECTION of spiritual realities, and NOT the realities themselves. The realities are referred to "things above" (Col 3:2), "things which are not seen" (2 Cor 4:18), and "heavenly things" (Heb 8:5; 9:23). We cannot see them, so God has told us of them. But the vastness of those

“things” cannot be encapsulated in words – which are the only means we have of knowing about them at all.

Faith, not the human intellect, takes hold of the Word of God. Assured of the realities of which Scripture speaks, faith acknowledges that what is grasped goes beyond the perimeter of human knowledge, yet the benefits of that truth can be enjoyed in measure. We see “in a mirror dimly” (NASB), having but a “poor reflection” (NIV). This poorness is not owing to the poverty of the message, but to the poverty of words adapted to human understanding, as compared to the fulness of the matters of which they speak.

THOROUGHNESS IN UNDERSTANDING

Words dimly reflect the glory to which we have been called. This in no way suggests the inadequacy of Scripture – not at all! Our text, however, is not speaking of adequacy, but of the present precision of our understanding. The chief difficulty with theories focusing on the completeness of the revelation (and it is complete) is that it betrays a general lack of familiarity with the “things that are not seen” (2 Cor 4:17-18). The reason men are so divided over the meaning of Scripture is that it is not as precise as the realities of which it speaks. Something is lost in the adaption of truth to human understanding. That is why faith is an absolute requirement. Faith can readily receive what is not thoroughly understood. This is briefly expounded in the examples of Abraham and Sarah. They received what God had promised, even though it extended beyond the perimeter of human aptitude and understanding. However, the revelation was not beyond the reach of faith! Further, in the glory, there will be no need for faith.

ABRAHAM: "Who against hope BELIEVED in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being NOT WEAK IN FAITH, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He STAGGERED NOT at the promise of God through unbelief; but was STRONG IN FAITH, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Rom 4:21). HE SAW THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: ACCOUNTING that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb 11:19). HE SAW THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY – and He was hearing directly from God, as compared with the reading of Scripture (Gen 22:1-13).

SARAH: "THROUGH FAITH also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised" (Heb 11:11). SHE SAW THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY, even though she also had heard a word directly from the Lord (Gen 18:11-14).

Thus it is written, “For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power” (1 Cor 4:20, NASB). The Spirit does not here exclude words, for He uses them to convey the thoughts of God (1 Cor 2:13). The effectiveness of the words, however, is owing to Divine power, which is transcendent to the words themselves. This circumstance exists because of THE INFIRMITY OF HUMAN CAPACITIES in this world. While in the flesh, we are shut up to partiality, and cannot escape from it! This is why there are so many divisions and sects within the professed church – it is because of the limitation of human understanding. THE DIVISIONS OCCUR BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF FAITH, for faith unites believers – they have “the unity of the faith” (Eph 4:13). All divisions within the professed church are owing to HUMAN EXPLANATIONS. Rather than defaulting to faith, which is the proper spiritual posture, men attempt to explain Scriptures in a way that comports with their limited understanding. Like all mortals, they see a relatively rough image in a looking glass, and like a blind man groping about on something he cannot see, they attempt to explain what they think is meant by the Word of God. God’s Word is to be believed. Only then can we respond properly.

When transported into the “third heaven ,” Paul heard words that were “unlawful” for him to utter. The NASB says he “heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak” (2 Cor 12:4). Paul does not mean it would be a transgression of God’s law or will to share the words he heard. He means the laws that undergird human communication (words, speech, insight, etc.), were not adequate for the conveyance of those things. They were simply transcendent to human abilities. Sin has so blighted our race that we are not able to bear the full force of spiritual reality. No matter how far we advance spiritually in this world, we will always be able to say, “I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead” (Phil 3:13, NASB).

The regenerate life itself is the “firstfruits” of what is to come (Rom 8:23) – not the final fruits. Salvation is, in a very real sense, “ready to be revealed” (1 Pet 1:5). While we are “in the body” (Heb 13:3), we only have the introduction to the glorious salvation that awaits us. This should not take us by surprise. Our “inheritance” is reserved for us in heaven (1 Pet 1:4). That condition, coupled with us inhabiting a frail “tent” (2 Cor 5:1-5) has produced the condition of seeing “in a glass darkly.” It is not what we are beholding that is deficient, but our vision itself. Having a “treasure” in an “earthen vessel” not only impacts upon what we can do, but what we are capable of beholding. All revelation is adapted to that situation. The whole has not yet been revealed, and thus we speak and know “in part.” This situation is succinctly stated in First John 3:2. “Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what WE SHALL BE. But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

In the meantime, faith can take hold of what God says, and act upon it in a manner that pleases God – even though the fulness of it can neither be seen nor comprehended while we remain in this world.

Part 23 - SPIRITUAL GIFTS

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 23 of 30

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Spiritual gifts are a Divine adaption to our present state of spiritual imperfection. In this world there is nothing from God that we possess at an optimum level. Everything we receive from the Lord Jesus must be maintained and augmented regularly. The salvation of God – which is what Jesus and eternal life are all about – has not yet been completed.

1. WE HAVE NOT YET ATTAINED TO PERFECTION: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:12).

2. WE HAVE NOT YET ENTERED INTO OUR INHERITANCE. We have not yet entered into our inheritance: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet 1:3-4).

3. WE DWELL IN BODIES THAT ARE VILE AND RIVETED TO THE EARTH: "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil 3:21). "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom 8:23). "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Eph 1:14).

4. OUR MINDS NEED TO BE REGULARLY RENEWED: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom 12:2).

5. WE HAVE A FIERCE AND RELENTLESS ADVERSARY THAT IS TO BE RESISTED: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Pet 5:8-9).

6. WE WRESTLE AGAINST PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS IN HEAVENLY PLACES: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities,

against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph 6:12).

7. WE REQUIRE MORE GRACE: "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:5-6). "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16).

8. WE REQUIRE SUPERIOR TEACHING THAT DOES NOT COME FROM MEN: "But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus" (Eph 4:20-21). "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20)

9. WE REQUIRE HELP IN THE TIME OF NEED: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16).

10. OUR WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING MUST BE INCREASED: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what [is] the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph 1:17-18). "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col 1:9).

11. WE MUST FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Tim 6:12).

12. IT IS NECESSARY FOR US TO STAND AGAINST THE WILES OF THE DEVIL: "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph 6:11).

13. OUR CHANGE INTO THE LIKENESS OF CHRIST IS ONGOING: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18).

14. WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF RUNNING A RACE THAT REQUIRES COMPLETION: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb 12:1).

15. WITHIN THE SAINTS IS A "CONTRARY LAW" THAT CONFLICTS WITH THE NEW CREATION: "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:23).

16. THERE IS AN "OLD MAN" TO BE "PUT OFF," AND A NEW MAN TO BE PUT ON: "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which

is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph 4:24).

Spiritual gifts all have to do with the kind of condition described above. Those needs cannot be met with a Scriptural canon, any more than Israel's evil propensities could be solved by Moses and the Prophets. It may handily into a theological position to say that God no longer places "miraculous gifts" (an unscriptural expression) in the church. But it clouds the understanding concerning God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the grace of God, and the church. Such a statement is a human analysis of a Divine statement, and, as such, is worthless. It is absurd to know that we have supernatural enemies, and yet we do combat against them, and make advance in the spiritual realm without the miraculous. In glory the spiritual gifts placed in the church will have no place, for there will be no use for them then. Until then, what God gives is needed – that is why He gives! There is no clear word in Scripture that states the cessation of anything God gives while this world remains. Such a position may be necessary for the maintenance of sectarianism, but it has absolutely no relevance in "things pertaining to life and godliness." The fact that these gifts will not transfer into the world to come does not mean we despise them. It DOES mean we will not allow them to be our focus!

Spiritual gifts are set in the context of the body of Christ, not the text of Scripture. The best of the gifts, like us, are comparatively narrow and temporary. As such, they are unsuitable as a point of emphasis. Those who focus on these abilities, given and taken ONLY at the discretion of God Himself, do the people of God a great disservice. They have underscored a preliminary aspect of the firstfruits, instead of accentuating the harvest. They have majored in the introduction rather than the fulness.

Even the Scriptures themselves are an introduction to what the saints will enjoy when they are with the Lord, clothed with immortality, and totally without any adversarial influences.

THE ENTIRE GOD HEAD RELATES TO SPIRITUAL GIFTS. "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant . . . Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same SPIRIT. And there are differences of administrations, but the same LORD. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same GOD which worketh all in all" (1 Cor 12:3-6). It will take more than a theological position to confirm that kind of activity will cease before the end of the world.

Part 24 - ALL SPIRITUAL GIFTS WILL PASS

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 24 of 30

ALL SPIRITUAL GIFTS WILL PASS

Universally, believers acknowledge that “spiritual gifts” are targeted for eventual extinction. The only question is WHEN. The Spirit categorically states, “But WHERE THERE ARE prophecies, they will cease; WHERE THERE ARE tongues, they will be stilled; WHERE THERE IS knowledge, it will pass away” (1 Cor 13:8, NASB). There really is no room for varying opinions on this.

Now note the consistent qualifiers, “where there are” and “where there is.” Too often this text is presented where the gifts are NOT being manifested. The point Paul is making, is that these gifts are NOT to be the cause of boasting, because they only pertain to spiritual life in THIS world.

As a matter of observation, supernatural phenomenon began to noticeably wane in the historical record of the book of Acts. Further, the epistles do not contain lengthy doctrinal statements about supernatural gifts (as though any other kind were placed within the body). They were never set forth to the churches as a sign of advanced attainment. They were presented as a Divine provision. In Romans, Paul associated them with “faith” (Rom 12:3-8). Peter associated them with grace (1 Pet 4:10-11). To the Corinthians, Paul associated them with the entire Godhead (1 Cor 12:1-6).

Wherever spiritual gifts occurred, DIVINE PURPOSE DICTATED THEIR PRESENCE, not “times.” They were never proclaimed to be integral to the faith-life itself. Not even Apostles could work miracles at will (2 Tim 4:20; 1 Tim 5:23; Phil 2:27). The beating, imprisonment, and general oppression of Paul confirm this to be the case (2 Cor 11:23-28).

The point is that these things began to wane long before the completion of the Scriptural canon. What was matured caused them to diminish – and that was believers themselves. Of course, there could be other reasons. First, that the spiritual quality of the church began to deteriorate, which would limit what was received from God. Second, that the people themselves were brought to believe the matter of salvation and its implications were solely in the hands of men. As we grow up into Christ, life is lived on a higher plane, where less external confirmation is experienced. Thus, at the beginning of Peter and John’s ministry, there was an abundance of protection, while the latter was attended by persecution and confinement. The same was experienced by the Apostle Paul. Extraordinary overt phenomenon has generally been associated with the beginning of new eras. Such things, as a rule, began to fade with the passing of time.

However, the need for edification never will cease as long as the world stands – and spiritual gifts are associated with edification, not mere physical sight and experience. “How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done UNTO EDIFYING” (1 Cor 14:26). As long as believers are in this world, edification is mandatory (Eph 4:11-16).

Still, that is not the thrust of our text. I only state this to underscore that all believers are to know that spiritual gifts are, by their very nature, temporary. No one is to treat them as though they are eternal. None of them will transfer into the "the world to come." The "Gospel" is eternal (Rev 14:6). Our "life" in Christ is eternal (John 17:2). The "Word" of God itself is eternal (Matt 24:35). For the believer, glory is "eternal" (2 Tim 2:10). The "things" upon which faith focuses are also "eternal" (2 Cor 4:17-18). The bodies we will possess in the resurrection are also "eternal" (2 Cor 5:1). The "purpose" of God is "eternal" (Eph 3:11), as well as the "King" who is implementing it, even our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim 1:17). Do not miss the importance of things eternal! Among further things so classed are "salvation" (Heb 5:9), "redemption" (Heb 9:12), the "Spirit" (Heb 9:14), our "inheritance" (Heb 9:15), "consolation" (2 Thess 2:16), the new "covenant" (Heb 13:20), and the "kingdom" we have received (2 Pet 1:11). IT IS IN THE CONTEXT OF ETERNITY that all spiritual gifts will "cease."

Once again, the purpose of this series of lessons is NOT to establish or repudiate an official position concerning "spiritual gifts." Men have not been Divinely assigned such a task. Rather, it is to expound the text itself, and why it was delivered.

Part 25 - "THAT WHICH IS PERFECT"

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 25 of 30

"THAT WHICH IS PERFECT"

There are eternal verities that are presently experienced IN MEASURE, or "IN PART" – "LIFE eternal" (Gal 6:8); "everlasting CONSOLATION" (2 Thess 2:16); "POWER everlasting" (1 Tim 6:16); "eternal GLORY" (2 Tim 2:10); "eternal SALVATION" (Heb 5:9); "eternal REDEMPTION" (Heb 9:12); "eternal INHERITANCE" (Heb 9:15). The part of us that does not presently experience a single one of these things is OUR "BODY." It has been purchased (1 Cor 6:19-20), but has not yet been redeemed. As it is written, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY" (Rom 8:23). And again, "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory" (Eph 1:14). To put it another way, what we presently have in Christ Jesus is referred to as "the FIRSTFRUITS of the Spirit" (Rom 8:23); "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of FIRSTFRUITS of His creatures" (James 1:18). Stated another way, "Who hath also sealed us, and given the EARNEST of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor 1:22; 2 Cor 5:5); "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the Word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in

whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the EARNEST of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory" (Eph 1:13-14). An "earnest" is a pledge, or down payment. It is a sampling of what we will ultimately receive – when "the perfect comes." The fact that we have only received an earnest, is the reason for the necessity of spiritual growth (Eph 4:15). It is why we require "more grace" (James 4:6), an increase in faith (2 Thess 1:3), and a greater measure of wisdom and spiritual understanding (Eph 1:18; Col 1:9). It is why we "run the race that is set before us" (Heb 12:1-2) – because our race has not yet been completed. The "perfect" will come when "eternal" realities are realized, or experienced, in their fulness. The Scriptural canon is a means to preparing for that eventuality, but it is certainly not the eventuality itself. To refer to the compilation of Scripture as "when the perfect is come," falls far short of expressing the intent of this text.

One of the earliest attempts to canonize Scripture was made by second century reformer Marcion. He cast the die for the Muratorian Canon of 170 A.D. Was that when "the perfect" came? That canon contained the essential New Testament as we know it. These books were actually composed over a mere half century – yet it took nearly a century to compile them. What is more arresting, Marcion's "canon" lacked "perfection," not including Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, and 3 John.

To be more precise about "when that which is perfect is come," one only has to examine their own progress in the faith. When you see and confess that you are not yet perfect (Phil 3:12), then you are ready to acknowledge, that which is perfect has not yet come. Further, until you comprehend this, you will NOT "go on to perfection," as you are required to do (Heb 6:1).

However, if you actually think "that which is perfect" HAS come – well, examine those who imagine this is true, and you will see what I mean. The matter of being made perfect always applies to the people of God, not God's Word.

Part 26 - THAT WHICH IS IN PART DONE AWAY

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is coming, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 26 of 30

THAT WHICH IS IN PART DONE AWAY

When the "perfect" comes, that which is "in part" will be "done away." What is "done away?" For one segment of Christendom, it is the gift of prophecy, the ability to speak in divers languages, and knowing apart from natural processes. It is true that these abilities are, by their very nature, to be terminated. If Paul is speaking about the segments of Divine revelation that were uttered and written prior to the compilation of the Scriptural canon, they were not "done away," but

remained. Understanding that God ordinarily speaks to men through men, nothing that God or Christ has ever said will be “done away.” It is written, “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever” (Isa 40:8). Jesus said of His words, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away” (Matt 24:35).

Our text states two things that are presently partial: “For we know IN PART, and we prophesy IN PART” (1 Cor 13:9). Now that the Scriptural canon is in our hands, who is it that no longer “knows in part?” Who is the person who has prophesied fully, and not partially? Actually all that can be known in this world are the things that have been “revealed” – and if everything has been “revealed,” then there are no such things as “secret things” that “belong to the Lord” (Deut 29:29). Now that we have the completed Scriptural canon, has God ceased to reveal, or make known, things to men? Are the following texts now obsolete?

1. “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will REVEAL him.” (Mat 11:27)
2. “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall REVEAL even this unto you.” (Phil 3:15)
3. “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and REVELATION in the knowledge of Him” (Eph 1:17).
4. “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be REVEALED in the last time.” (1 Pet 1:5).

Is it now improper to pray “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what [is] the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power” (Eph 1:17-19)?

Now that the revelation is complete, it is improper to say, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5). Is there no longer “a wisdom that is from above” (James 3:17)? Does God no longer give to certain members of the body of Christ “the word of wisdom” (1 Cor 12:8)? Does Jesus no longer teach His people: “But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus” (Eph 4:20-21)? Has He ceased to come and give “us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true” (1 John 5:20). Or, are all these matters non-miraculous, which would account for their continual presence? If they are, why is it that men of themselves cannot to do them?

Whatever God has promised that has not yet been realized, cannot possibly have passed away. Everything we have received from God, whether in Word or in experience, is partial – only adapted for those who remain in “this present evil world – which itself is a temporal matter? As long as there is anything that is not

finalized, “the perfect” has not come. That ought to be apparent enough to be readily received by anyone with faith.

Part 27 - WHEN THE PERFECT COMES -- MATURITY

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 27 of 30

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES -- MATURITY

When it comes to maturity, or perfection, HUMANITY is the point, not the revelation, or Scripture. This does not permit the Word of God to be open-ended, so to speak, allowing for further foundational revelation. We have already been given “ALL THINGS that pertain unto life and godliness.” I say “foundational revelation” because there is still a form of revelation that is taking place (Matt 11:27; Eph 1:17; Phil 3:15). That revelation, however, has to do with INSIGHT into the Scriptures, and not any addition to the Scriptures themselves.

The appropriation of proper understanding of the Scripture requires our subjection to the Word. Scripture cannot be comprehended academically, because it deals with matters outside the scope of human knowledge and natural experience. “Spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9) is appropriated “through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence” (2 Pet 1:3, NASB). Jesus indicted the rulers of the Jews for thinking they had life “in the Scriptures” (John 5:39). True advantage does not come by merely possessing the written Word of God – which MUST be possessed. Rather, it comes from appropriating, by faith, the Christ of Whom they witness.

Referring to maturity, Paul stated the Divine objective will not be met “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:13, NASB). In this case, it is the church, the bride of Christ, that is being matured.

The word translated “perfect,” means “complete (in various applications of labor, growth, mental and moral character, etc.); completeness: –of full age, perfect.” Robertson says of this word, “That which is perfect. The perfect, the full-grown, the mature.”

I do not believe Scripture is ever referred to in such a manner, i.e., being made “complete.” In Apostolic writings the word “complete” is found two times (Col 2:10; 4:12). In our text, as well as First Corinthians 2:6), the word translated “perfect” (telios), has the following lexical meaning: “brought to its end, finished; lacking nothing necessary to completeness . . . full-grown, adult; of full age, mature (Thayer), “used of spiritually mature persons” (Friberg), “pertaining to being perfect in the sense of not lacking any moral quality - perfect,” (LOUW-NIDA), “of persons, absolute, complete, accomplished, perfect in his or its kind”

(LIDDELL-SCOTT). This word is used two times in Apostolic writings (1 Cor 2:6; 13:10). It refers to people, not Scripture.

Doctrinally speaking, completeness, perfection, or maturity, ALWAYS APPLIES TO PEOPLE – never to revelation received in this world. There are two revealed views of men being matured, and perfected.

FIRST: One is that of growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15). The means by which this is accomplished is stated in the words, "And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power" (Col 2:10).

SECOND: Realizing the appointed conformity to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29), when finally, "we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

THIS IS THE SENSE IN WHICH THIS WORD IS USED IN FIRST CORINTHIANS 13:11.

The additional words "then that which is in part shall be done away" will be fulfilled when our present bodies will, in every sense, be "done away," together with the present heavens and earth. This is because while we are in this world, our bodies are not yet redeemed or saved. They are mortal, but what we have in Christ is eternal. They must be controlled because of their propensity to earth. They can be sanctified because they have been purchased – but they have not yet been redeemed (Rom 8:23; Eph1:14). When Jesus comes, and not before He comes, Jesus "shall change our vile body, that it may BE FASHIONED LIKE UNTO HIS GLORIOUS BODY according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil 3:21). The coming of Christ will also bring to an end all of the things intended to be worked in the earth, and therefore "the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Pet 3:10). That which is "perfect" will then come, and the partial – including the present heavens and earth – will pass away.

Part 28 - FACE TO FACE

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is coming, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 28 of 30

FACE TO FACE

Paul argues his point with great power. "For NOW we see in a mirror dimly, but THEN face to face; NOW I know in part, but THEN I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known" (1 Cor 13:12). The thought that "THEN" refers to the completion of the Scriptural canon betrays a level of ignorance that is wholly unjustified. This kind of wisdom did not come down from above (James 3:15,17). The thought that a completed canon equates to seeing "face to face" taxes the patience of the youngest believer among us! Some, being unable to see any

reasonableness in this postulate, simply accept it upon the basis of, they imagine, the superior wisdom of others. No believer should embrace a thought or position that originated with men. All truth must be seen in the light of the Persons of both God the Father and Christ – and neither of Them speak vaguely.

This (“face to face”) is a common phrase in Scripture denoting an IMMEDIATE confrontation with God. Jacob named the place where he wrestled with an angel “Penial,” because, he said, “I have seen God FACE TO FACE, yet my life has been preserved” (Gen 32:30). The closeness of the Lord to Moses is described in these words, “Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses FACE TO FACE, just as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex 33:11). Moses reminded Israel of their closeness to the proximity of Deity at Sinai; “The LORD spoke to you FACE TO FACE at the mountain from the midst of the fire” (Deut 5:4). Moses is described as a prophet “whom the LORD knew FACE TO FACE” (Deut 34:10). Gideon described his confrontation of a holy angel as seeing “the angel of the LORD FACE TO FACE” (Judges 6:22). In a remarkable word to wayward Israel, God spoke of them ultimately confronting Him. “And I shall bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; and I shall bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I shall enter into judgment with you FACE TO FACE” (Ezek 20:34-35).

This language is rich with heritage – “FACE TO FACE.” We do not need a religious philosopher to unlock its meaning for us. Nor, indeed, can the linguist provide us with the splendiddness of its meaning by dipping into the well of human language.

The Scriptures themselves unfold the meaning. “FACE TO FACE” speaks of the time when we shall “see Him as He is” (1 John 3:1-3). Although it is a time when “every eye shall see Him” (Rev 1:7), believers shall behold the fulness of what they experienced in this world by faith. There will be no buffer zone between us and our Lord; no flesh to obscure, and no weakened natural abilities!

Forever put from your mind that “FACE TO FACE” means you are looking at sixty-six books of the Bible instead of thirty-nine, or forty-five, or fifty-two! He is not talking about a completed Bible, but a completed YOU! A completed SALVATION! An accomplished DIVINE OBJECTIVE!

“FACE TO FACE” is the ultimate confrontation of God, Christ, and the glories of the world to come. It will occur when the veil of flesh is removed. That, and that alone, is what inhibits the child of God, causing eternal verities to sometimes be obscure. The experience of seeing our Lord and our inheritance without any OBSTRUCTION is marvelous to ponder. Then, no more filtered communication, only DIRECT communication! We will drink DIRECTLY from the fountain of the water of life – “And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely” (Rev 21:6).

Until then, as long as we are in this world, we are shut up to partiality! God's purpose, work, and intention will not be complete, finished, or perfected, until the heavens and earth are removed, and He who presently is the Only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, appears.

Part 29 - KNOW AS WE ARE KNOWN

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 29 of 30

KNOW AS WE ARE KNOWN

". . . now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Cor 13:12)

When the perfect comes, we will know as we are known. Paul spoke for redeemed humanity when he said, "NOW I know in part; THEN I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Cor 13:12, NIV). Those who imagine that "when that which is perfect is come" refers to the completion of the Scriptural canon, need to step forward and display in their words and actions that they now "know fully," even as they are "fully known." Who is there that knows as much about themselves as God knows about them? Precisely where is there such a person?

When the "perfect" comes, it will be the completion of the transformation experience now occurring in the people of God. Then, there will be nothing more to transform, to change – nothing more about us that is NOT like our God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Never again will transformation be needed, or even exist. The reason it exists now is because there is a part of us that will not be transformed until the resurrection of the dead, at which time our bodies will be "redeemed" (Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14), and be like His "glorious body" (Phil 3:20). The existence of that untransformed body is what impedes our progress, and makes us accessible to the devil.

Now, while we remain in this world, there will never be a point in time in which this process will become obsolete: "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18, NASB). Who does not know this?

What a grand and glorious experience for the "elect," when the "perfect" comes! Then their appointed conformation to Christ's "Image" will be complete (Rom 8:29-30). Then, the inheritance for which they are being prepared will be possessed (Col 3:24; 1 Pet 1:4). Then, the richness of Divine fellowship into which we have been called will come to its culmination (1 Thess 4:17; Rev 3:4). Then we will obtain the "glory" for which we are now being prepared (2 Thess 2:14). The frustration associated with knowing in part will forever be removed for the

faithful. A sense of longing, produced by partiality, will pale in the glory of being “like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:1-3).

We have the completion of God’s testimony for men in the body--but there is more to come. Sin has taken more from our race than men dare to imagine. It has dulled our capacities and limited our abilities. Even “inspired utterances” are often “hard to be understood” because of human infirmity (2 Pet 3:16).

But it will not be so in the world to come! There, we will “know fully as we are known.” Christ has apprehended us for something – and it is not realized while we remain in this world. Paul expressed it this way, “Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:12, NASB). When the “perfect” comes, we will lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold of us! Hallelujah! Until then, partiality is with us! It is part of the “wretched” condition brought on by the entrance of sin into the world (Rom 7:23-25).

Deliverance is on the way, but until it comes, we cannot advance beyond “partial” in appropriating the things of God. That condition is why we receive only the “firstfruits” of God’s “great salvation.”

Vigorously shun any teaching that affirms the “perfect” has come, and still you are “imperfect.” You remain in a state of imperfection precisely because “the perfect” has NOT yet come! Those who teach the “perfect” has already come distort this text – and that is more serious than any person dares to imagine!

Part 30 - CONCLUSION

WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor 13:10)

Lesson 30 of 30

CONCLUSION

The Lord never departs from His agenda, i.e., His “eternal purpose.” That objective is “to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” – “Having made known unto us the mystery of HIS will, according to HIS good pleasure which HE hath purposed in HIMSELF: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times HE might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in HIM” (Eph 1:9-10). Nothing is “perfect” or complete until that purpose is realized! To put it another way, and within the context of that revealed purpose, the “perfect” will not arrive until that determined unity has been accomplished.

Apostolic doctrine ALWAYS points in the direction of God’s objective. Every aspect of it is associated with the culmination of all things in Christ Jesus.

Declaring the Word of God is because of that revealed purpose. Chastening is in view of it. Correction is in view of it. To adopt a view of God’s Word that falls short of this objective is to “wrest” the Scriptures. Often this is done to support

avored dogmas, or even to expose corrupt ones – but it is never acceptable! It is never right to use what God has revealed for an objective unrelated to His “eternal purpose.”

Until the Lord comes, and everything is united in Him, we are shut up to partiality. We will not reach a point in this world where we “apprehend that for which we have been apprehended.” Notwithstanding that condition, faith constrains us to “press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:14).

The “saved of the Lord” cannot be fully satisfied with “partial” things. Tasting of the Lord creates an insatiable appetite for personal perfection – and a willingness to wait for the time when the saints will be like their Savior, for they shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:1-3). This will be revealed ONLY when God’s “eternal purpose” is fully realized in the unity of everything in heaven and earth in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:10).

We fervently desire to be part of the whole family in heaven and earth that will be gloriously united in Christ, world without end. WE are the ones targeted for perfection, or maturity. When it comes to what the Lord has done in Christ Jesus, “the works were finished from the foundation of the world” (Heb 4:3). It only remains for the “perfect” to come. Then, and only then, will we be fully exposed to the things that presently are beyond our grasp – things that relate to being eternally with the Lord.

Given Blakely