Bible Controversies — Spiritual Gifts

The controversy surrounding what the Bible teaches about spiritual gifts

Part 3 of 3 — Lessons 18–31 | A Radio Series by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Series

These are Lessons 18–31 of Bible Controversies, on the controversy surrounding what the Bible teaches about spiritual gifts and spiritual phenomena like signs, wonders and miracles. Keith says confusion about spiritual gifts is really quite understandable, but there is danger in being ignorant about them. Spiritual phenomena are a natural part of Israel's program: God made a covenant with Israel to do marvels among them, and when the climactic stage in that program arrived, Israel began to have a profuse outpouring of spiritual phenomena. Signs, wonders, miracles and spiritual gifts operated at the beginning of this dispensation of grace for a very particular reason and for a very limited time; in Paul's lifetime God did away with the spiritual gifts and replaced them with something far better — the completed written Word of God. Today the only one in the sign, wonder and miracle business is the adversary, counterfeiting the power of God; the excellency of God's power operates through His word effectually working within you.

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Lesson Summaries

L18

Confusion About Spiritual Gifts: Quite Understandable

II Timothy 2:15; Exodus 34:10; Judges 6; Psalm 74; Acts 2, 4 and 11; Romans 15; I Corinthians 12:1

Rightly Dividing God's Two Programs

- The main reason most Bible controversies exist is that Christians fail to rightly divide the word of truth, as God tells us to do in II Timothy 2:15
- To rightly divide means to divide the Bible into its two distinct portions in accordance with God's two different programs — His program for Israel and His program for the Church, the Body of Christ, in this present dispensation of His grace
- Paul's epistles, Romans through Philemon, describe what God is doing in this dispensation; the rest of the Bible pertains to God's program with Israel — what has taken place (Genesis through the opening of Acts) and what is yet to come (Hebrews through Revelation)
- All too often Christians fail to rightly divide the word of truth; when we do this, we actually disobey God, and doctrinal confusion and controversy is exactly

what we can expect

No Real Consensus

- Keith asks about spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues, working miracles and doing healings, and whether the spiritual phenomenon on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 is the norm for us today; there is no real consensus — it is another Bible controversy

Times with No Signs in Israel's Program

- In Exodus 34:10 God covenanted with Israel to do marvels among them, so they could see the work of the Lord; we would therefore expect signs, wonders and miracles consistently in His dealings with Israel
- Yet there are a great number of times when none were being done at all; Gideon (Judges 6:13) and later the psalmist Asaph (Psalm 74:9) express their confusion over it — so it is natural if we get confused also
- In the gospel accounts marvels are done on a regular basis by the Lord, and yet He is preceded by John the Baptist, who did no miracle

Drastic Changes in Acts

- In Acts 2 and 4 the believers are being miraculously provided for and signs and wonders are done by the apostles; by the time you get to Acts 11 and shortly thereafter — a great dearth coming — they become "the poor saints which are at Jerusalem"

Paul's Own Signs and Wonders Did Not Last

- In Romans 15:18–19 Paul declares mighty signs and wonders were wrought by him, but through his epistles it becomes evident that his ability to work them didn't last
- Near the end of his ministry Paul had to leave Trophimus sick (II Timothy 4:20), prescribed medicine for Timothy's often infirmities (I Timothy 5:23), and could not say he laid his hands on Epaphroditus and healed him (Philippians 2)

Danger in Being Ignorant

- In I Corinthians 12:1 Paul tells the Corinthians they can't afford to be ignorant about spiritual gifts; Satan himself is also in the business of producing signs, wonders, miracles and spiritual phenomena
- There is danger in being ignorant about what God wants us to know regarding signs, wonders, miracles and spiritual gifts: we'll not only be confused, we'll also be victimized by Satan's policy of evil and duped by some counterfeits

L19

Danger in Being Ignorant: Counterfeiting God's Power *I Corinthians 12:1–3; Deuteronomy 13; Matthew 7 and 24; II Thessalonians 2:9; II Corinthians 11; II Timothy 3*

I Would Not Have You Ignorant (I Corinthians 12:1–3)

- Failing to rightly divide — to keep the things of God's program with Israel separate from what God is doing today in this dispensation of grace — is one of the main reasons for so much confusion and discord over spiritual gifts
- Paul begins the subject of spiritual gifts with a warning; every time he uses the expression "I would not have you ignorant" he indicates there is danger
- In verse 2 the Corinthians had been deceived and tricked in the past by counterfeit spiritual phenomena: "dumb idols" couldn't speak, and they were

led to believe the idol spoke by someone in the temple claiming a spiritual gift to communicate for it

- In verse 3 some in Corinth were claiming to speak by the Spirit of God and the Corinthians couldn't tell the difference; Satan was behind the one calling Jesus accursed

Satan Can Do Signs — and Does

- God is not the only one capable of producing spiritual phenomena; Satan can do signs, wonders and miracles — not only can he do them, he does
- Understanding the capacity Satan has to work signs, wonders and miracles is important for handling a number of passages later in this series

Warnings in God's Program with Israel

- In Deuteronomy 13 God warned Israel about Satan counterfeiting demonstrations of His power: the sign or wonder may come to pass, but the prophet or dreamer is not from God; verse 13 calls them "the children of Belial" — Satan's ministers
- In Matthew 7 the Lord says "I never knew you": those working wonders were never saved people but part of the satanic policy of evil operating against Israel
- In Matthew 24, describing the day of the Lord and especially the great tribulation period, false Christs and false prophets show great signs and wonders — Satan is behind it
- In II Thessalonians 2 Paul, our apostle, speaks of when God resumes and fulfills His program with Israel and the man of sin is operating: Satan has the capacity to produce power, signs and "lying wonders"

Warnings for This Dispensation of Grace

- Because of the Corinthians' ignorance about spiritual gifts, they had false apostles operating in their midst and didn't even know it (II Corinthians 11:13–15)
- Satan's ministers today are not workers of wickedness but ministers of righteousness, operating in Christian circles to deceive Christians; any sign, wonder or miracle Paul could do, they could do
- As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses by duplicating what Moses and Aaron did (II Timothy 3), such individuals are going to have a form of godliness, deny the power thereof, and substitute another power

L20

Spiritual Phenomena: A Natural Part of Israel's Program

Exodus 34:10; Psalm 74:9; John 4:48; John 2:18; I Corinthians 1:22; Isaiah 8:18; Joel 2

Over 95% in Israel's Portion

- Over 95% of all the references to spiritual phenomena in the Bible are in the portion pertaining to God's program with Israel; the remaining 5% are in the portion pertaining to what God is doing in this dispensation
- They are found there because they belong there — God's program with Israel called for spiritual phenomena; spiritual gifts and phenomena from God only occurred at the beginning of this dispensation, for a very special reason

The Covenant of Marvels

- In Exodus 34:10 God made a covenant with Israel to do marvels among them and for them to see the work of the Lord; on that basis Israel had the right to

expect signs, wonders, miracles and marvels

- In Psalm 74:9 Asaph doesn't simply say "We don't see any signs" but "We see not our signs"; signs, wonders and miracles are a natural part of God's program with Israel

The Jews Require a Sign

- In John 4:48 — "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" — the Lord is speaking not simply to the nobleman but of the prevailing situation in Israel; the reason Israel wouldn't believe until they saw signs and wonders is based upon Exodus 34
- In John 2:18 the Jews ask the Lord for a sign that authenticates His ministry; God established signs, wonders and miracles as a natural expected part of their program
- In I Corinthians 1:22, an epistle of Paul to us in this dispensation, Paul says "the Jews require a sign" — not simply that they want one, look for one or seek one

Signs Aplenty

- Israel's program has signs aplenty: Paul calls Abraham's physical circumcision "the sign of circumcision" (Romans 4:11), and God began bringing Israel out of Egypt with signs (Exodus 4:8), even before the covenant of marvels
- The feast of Passover and unleavened bread is spoken of as a sign to Israel (Exodus 13:8–10), and all the Sabbaths are described as signs (Exodus 31:12–17); the feasts, Sabbaths and circumcision have a signifying aspect for Israel to see and recognize

Profuse Outpouring at the Climactic Stage

- When the kingdom of heaven began to be preached to Israel as at hand and the Messiah was here upon the earth — the climactic stage in God's program with Israel — Israel began to have a profuse outpouring of spiritual phenomena
- Israel's prophets had foretold it hundreds of years before; in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and the opening chapters of Acts we read of what was prophesied to come upon Israel when that climactic stage arrived
- Isaiah 8:18 describes the Messiah's ministry and the remnant of Israel gathered together unto Him — what is going on in the gospel accounts, with the Messiah performing signs, wonders and miracles Himself
- Joel 2 is the passage Peter quotes on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, alerting Israel it had been prophesied of Israel's last days; one hallmark that the last days had arrived was the profuse outpouring of spiritual phenomena

L21

Signs of the Times in Israel's Program *Romans 15:8; Luke 1; Matthew 3, 4, 10 and 16; Luke 8:1; Isaiah 8:18; Isaiah 35; John 14:12; Joel 2*

Not Describing This Dispensation

- Christians are often taught that what went on when the Lord was here ought to be happening today, but the things recorded in the Gospel accounts are not describing this present dispensation of God's grace
- They pertain to God's program with Israel, in particular the time when its climactic stages had arrived; God has suspended His program with Israel, so He is not now giving the signs of Israel's last days

- God covenanted with Israel to do signs, wonders and miracles; He has made no such covenant with us in this dispensation of grace and is dealing with us quite differently

The Climactic Stage Arrives

- When the Lord was here He was “a minister of the circumcision” confirming the promises made unto the fathers (Romans 15:8) — He wasn’t administering the dispensation of Gentile grace
- In Luke 1 Zacharias, John the Baptist’s father, declares that the climactic stage in Israel’s program has arrived; John declares to the people of Israel that the time for the establishment of the kingdom is at hand (Matthew 3:1–2)
- In the Gospel accounts you are not reading about the mystery of Christ that God kept hidden and said nothing about in ages and generations past

Signs Accompany the Gospel of the Kingdom

- In Matthew 4:23 the Lord is not preaching the gospel of the grace of God, nor the message committed to the apostle Paul for and about us; great signs, wonders and miracles accompanied the gospel of the kingdom
- Per Luke 8:1, the signs done by the Lord, the twelve and others showed “the glad tidings of the kingdom” and demonstrated that the kingdom of heaven was at hand
- Matthew 10 shows the dispensation of Gentile grace was not in effect when the twelve apostles functioned; the Lord gave them power to show the glad tidings of the kingdom as they preached it
- The gospel of the kingdom is the good news of the time being at hand for Israel’s long-awaited covenanted kingdom of heaven on earth; the signs validated to Israel that the climactic stage had arrived

Signs of the Times, Foretold and Increased

- The Lord calls these the signs of the times (Matthew 16); hundreds of years before, God told Israel through the prophets that these signs would be done when the time for the kingdom drew near
- In Isaiah 8:18 the Messiah speaks of Himself and the remnant of Israel, especially the disciples given to Him; Isaiah 35 describes both the established kingdom and what would go on when God first came at His first advent
- Following the Lord’s return to heaven the signs were going to increase (John 14:12; Joel 2), and they did, as in the opening chapters of Acts — which is still God’s program with Israel

L22

The Increased Spiritual Phenomena of Israel’s Last Days *II Corinthians 5:7; Exodus 34:10; John 14:12; Mark 16:15–18; Deuteronomy 32:24; Revelation 8:10–11*

Israel Walked by Sight; We Walk by Faith

- Because God covenanted that Israel would see the work of the Lord, Israel for the most part walked by sight — that’s how God wanted them to walk; Israel is God’s sign people
- God has made no covenant with us to do marvels among us or for us to see the work of the Lord in our midst; through Paul He makes clear that we are to walk by faith and not by sight (II Corinthians 5:7)
- That is almost the exact opposite of what God said to Israel in Exodus 34:10;

because we don't walk by sight, God is not making visible demonstrations of His working in our midst today

- We, the members of the Church, the body of Christ, have no such covenant in this dispensation of Gentile grace, and are taught not to expect to see the work of the Lord in our midst

The Increase in John 14

- In John 14:12 the Lord prepares His disciples for an increase in the spiritual phenomena, and it did increase, as the opening chapters of Acts show
- It increased because Israel's program had advanced to the point when its last days, including the Lord's day of wrath, were ready to begin

Mark 16 Belongs to Israel's Program

- Even in the opening chapters of Acts you are dealing with God's program with Israel; the dispensation of Gentile grace was not brought in until God raised up the Apostle Paul as a brand new apostle
- The gospel of Mark 16 is not the gospel of the grace of God we preach today but the gospel of the kingdom; verse 16's salvation package involves not only personal salvation from sins but physical salvation from the events of the Lord's day of wrath
- Casting out devils and laying hands on the sick had already been going on in the Lord's ministry; other signs had not — "they shall speak with new tongues" was soon to be

Serpents and Deadly Things in the Day of the Lord

- Deuteronomy 32, the song of Moses, is about the last stage of God's program with Israel; one judgment in the day of the Lord involves "the poison of serpents of the dust" (verse 24), and in Revelation 8:11 the waters are made poisonous, deadly
- These signs testify that the final stage in Israel's program, the day of the Lord, had arrived; believers of the gospel of the kingdom would have the physical salvation to endure the day of the Lord on this earth

Not Going On During This Dispensation

- During this dispensation of grace revealed to the Apostle Paul, God's program with Israel is temporarily suspended and the things of Mark 16 are not going on; when God resumes His program with Israel they will transpire again
- Confusion, discord and controversy develop when Christians fail to rightly divide the word of truth and try to make the things of Israel's program fit this dispensation of grace

L23

The Baptism with the Holy Ghost at Pentecost *Acts 1:4–5; Matthew 3:11–12; Luke 24:49; Acts 2 and Joel 2; Matthew 24:14; Zechariah 8*

Second of Israel's Three Baptisms

- In Acts 1, preparing to go back to the Father, the Lord talks to His disciples about the kingdom and its establishment and about the baptism with the Holy Ghost
- To be ready for the kingdom, Israel had to go through a prescription for cleansing God had outlined in the prophets (Ezekiel 36, for example), in which three baptisms would be employed
- John's baptism with water was the first; per Matthew 3:11–12 the coming

Messiah would administer the following two — the baptism with the Holy Ghost, and then the baptism with fire that would thoroughly purge His floor

Power from on High

- This promise of the Father (Luke 24:49) would give the remnant of Israel "power from on high" to function in the very trying times of Israel's last days, which would include the day of the Lord with the great tribulation in it
- That power would give the capacity to perform the increased signs and wonders God had prophesied and to testify to the gospel of the kingdom; this is exactly what began on the day of Pentecost

This Is That Spoken by the Prophet Joel

- In Acts 2 the baptism with the Holy Ghost takes place upon the little flock, the little remnant of Israel
- Peter does not say this is the beginning of a brand new dispensation of grace; the day of Pentecost is commonly called the birthday of the church, but that's not the case at all
- This is not the revelation of the mystery of Christ kept secret since the world began — Paul explains the dispensation of grace was a mystery in ages and generations past — but something God had prophesied about
- Filled with the Holy Ghost, Peter says "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel": the beginning fulfillment of Joel's prophecy of the last days — not of this dispensation of grace, but of God's program with Israel
- Joel first sets forth what the Holy Ghost would produce — Israel's sons and daughters would prophesy — then the wonders and signs in heaven and earth when the Lord administers the baptism with fire (Acts 2:19)

New Tongues for the Gospel of the Kingdom

- The particular sign on Pentecost was the remnant of Israel given power to speak in tongues — one of the new signs of Mark 16 that would confirm to Israel the arrival of their last days
- They would preach the gospel of the kingdom among all nations (Matthew 24:14), in a period of only a maximum of seven years — no time to learn a language the normal way; Zechariah 8 speaks of the nations' response

A Natural Thing in Israel's Program

- Signs, wonders, miracles and other spiritual phenomena are a natural thing in God's program with Israel; in this dispensation of grace things are different — God did give spiritual gifts at its very beginning, for a very particular reason and a very limited time

L24

Confirming Signs at the Beginning of This Dispensation

Romans 15:13–19; II Corinthians 12:11–12; Acts 14 and 19; I Timothy 5:23; II Timothy 4:20; Ephesians 3:1

Rightly Dividing the Bible's Two Portions

- Christians think signs and spiritual phenomena ought to be happening today mainly because they fail to distinguish God's program with Israel from His program for the Church, the body of Christ
- Before God brought in this dispensation of Gentile grace there was no need to rightly divide the Bible; now there is, because not everything in the Bible pertains to what God is doing today — that is set forth in Paul's epistles
- Israel's program is not in effect and the kingdom of heaven is not at hand in

this dispensation; neither the phenomena of the Gospels nor the signs of Joel 2 Peter said were beginning to be fulfilled at Pentecost are what God is doing today

But Paul Himself Worked Miracles

- It's true Paul worked miracles and God gave spiritual gifts to the Corinthian saints and others, but it isn't true to assume these are a part of God's dealings with us throughout this dispensation of His grace
- They operated at the beginning of this dispensation for a very particular reason and a very limited time; in Paul's very own lifetime the signs he performed ceased to function, and he testifies to that

Signs Confirming Paul's Apostleship and Message

- In Romans 15 Paul speaks of his special apostleship; what we have now is "the offering up of the Gentiles" — God has suspended His program with Israel
- "Acceptable" in verse 16 is not the offering up of the Gentiles being acceptable to God but men seeing that that's what God is doing; the Holy Ghost set Paul's ministry apart to confirm the reality of what he was saying
- Paul is a brand new apostle with an unheard of, unprophesied message; to confirm it God gave signs, wonders and miracles to be performed through him — the very means by which his distinctive apostleship and message were confirmed and proven true
- Defending his apostleship against false apostles in Corinth, Paul speaks of "the signs of an apostle" (II Corinthians 12:12) — God's confirming testimony through the signs, wonders and mighty deeds he performed
- In Acts 14 the Lord confirmed the word of God's grace proclaimed by Paul and Barnabas, especially in view of the opposition; in Acts 19, as the opposition increased, the signs and wonders increased

No More Need for Confirming Signs

- The signs were to make the Gentiles obedient, confirming God had suspended His program with Israel and turned to the Gentiles; none of Paul's epistles were yet written, so there was nothing anybody could turn to in the Word of God to confirm what Paul was saying
- Once Paul's distinctive apostleship and message became part of the Bible through the writing of his epistles, there was no more need for the confirming signs; they didn't last throughout this dispensation
- Paul now prescribes medicine for Timothy, whom he used to heal (I Timothy 5:23), leaves Trophimus at Miletum sick (II Timothy 4:20), and in prison (Ephesians 3:1; II Timothy 2:8–9) is not miraculously released as before

L25

Counterfeit Spiritual Phenomena in Corinth *I Corinthians 12:1–3; II Corinthians 11: Satan's Ministers*

No Covenant to Do Marvels Among Us

- God made a covenant with Israel to do marvels among them — especially in the gospel accounts and the opening chapters of the book of Acts, when His program with Israel had entered its climactic stage
- In this dispensation of grace God has made no covenant with us to do marvels among us; He teaches us to walk by faith, not by sight — walking by sight, expecting God to deal with us as with Israel, we end up deceived

- The only one in the sign, wonder and miracle business today is the adversary himself with all his seducing spirits

A Limited Purpose for a Very Limited Time

- Paul warns repeatedly how Satan works in this dispensation to counterfeit the power of God; if God says He has done away with the use of spiritual phenomena and gifts in this dispensation, He has — no matter what we might see, hear or be told
- In I Corinthians 12–14 Paul deals with the spiritual phenomena that did exist at the beginning of this dispensation; in chapter 13 he teaches it served a limited purpose for a very limited time
- An event in the very lifetime of these Corinthians would cause the temporary need for spiritual gifts and other spiritual phenomena to cease

Ignorance Is Disastrous (I Corinthians 12:1–2)

- Paul opens with a warning: you can't afford to be ignorant when it comes to the doctrine of spiritual gifts; at the time he wrote, God was not the only one producing spiritual phenomena
- As idol worshipers, before they became members of the body of Christ, they had been deceived by spiritual phenomena; the one producing it was not the true and living God but Satan and the seducing spirits he employed with the idols

The Test Is the Message (I Corinthians 12:3)

- "I give you to understand" is a very stern expression: get this straight and operate on it
- Some in Corinth claimed to be prophets, apostles, teachers or to have the gift of tongues; some genuine ones and some counterfeit ones were operating in their midst
- The criterion for determining the false from the true is always in the message, not by what you see; the Corinthians were going by what they saw, not by what was being said

A False Apostle, One of Satan's Ministers (II Corinthians 11)

- That character back in I Corinthians 12 was a false apostle, one of Satan's ministers, who didn't look or act like it; Satan has transformed himself into an angel of light, and we wouldn't recognize him in our midst
- His ministers talk about Jesus, the gospel and the Spirit, but not as Paul talks about them; the phenomena they produce is real — it is just not God who is producing it

L26

One of Satan's Favorite Tactics: Counterfeiting God's Power

Isaiah 14; I Timothy 4:1; Mark 13:22; II Timothy 3:5–8; Ephesians 4:14: Seducing Spirits

Programs Kept Distinct; Gifts for a Very Short Period

- Failing to keep God's program with Israel separate and distinct from His program with us is the major reason Bible confusion and controversies exist; Christians look for God to do today what He had covenanted to do for Israel
- The gifts were needed only for a very short period and a very particular reason, which came to an end in Paul's lifetime; since then performing spiritual phenomena has not been an operation of God, but of the adversary
- The gifts have been replaced with something far better; counterfeiting them to

make Christians think they still continue today is a favorite tactic of the satanic policy of evil; we can't afford to be ignorant of the doctrine of spiritual gifts, and that applies not only to the Corinthians but to all Christians for as long as this dispensation of grace continues

"I will be like the most High" (Isaiah 14)

- Satan was not created evil; he was created as Lucifer, the anointed cherub that covered the throne of God as described in Ezekiel 28; when he sinned and fell he became Satan, the adversary of God
- Of the five "I wills" that compose Satan's plan of evil, the final one — "I will be like the most High" — is his ultimate objective
- Satan's plan is not to be unlike God but to be like Him, so he counterfeits what God does; one of his favorite tactics is to counterfeit the power of God

Seducing Spirits (I Timothy 4:1; Mark 13:22)

- Paul warns of the great success Satan will have in seducing members of the body of Christ by counterfeit spiritual phenomena
- Mark 13 is in God's program with Israel, but the way Satan seduces is the same there and in this dispensation of grace: by counterfeiting signs and wonders, and spiritual gifts like prophets
- Such individuals claim to be prophets, apostles, or to have a gift of communication from God; the mover and shaker behind them is a seducing spirit

The Magicians in Pharaoh's Court; the Sleight of Men

- Paul declares the counterfeiting of God's power will be just like the two magicians Satan utilized in Moses' day — the two magicians in Pharaoh's court, who withstood Moses by counterfeiting the demonstration of the power of God that Moses produced
- The goal and objective of the satanic policy of evil is to prevent Christians from growing and maturing; the expression "sleight of men" refers to how a magician does his tricks involving illusions
- Just about every gift God provided at the beginning of this dispensation was being counterfeited in Corinth itself
- God gave the gifts only until He provided something better than any spiritual gift could provide; since then He has not given gifts or performed phenomena, but the adversary has continued his counterfeits

L27

A More Excellent Way: Knowing in Part *I Corinthians 12:31–13:11; Ephesians 4:11–13: Partial and Perfect Knowledge*

Israel's Program, and Something More Excellent

- Christians read of the signs and wonders in the gospel accounts and look for God to work something similar today, failing to realize it all pertains to God's program with Israel, not to His program with us
- In the very lifetime of Paul and the Corinthian saints God did away with their spiritual gifts and replaced them with something Paul calls more excellent — which we still have today, and which God expects us to operate upon

"Yet shew I unto you a more excellent way" (I Corinthians 12:31)

- In chapter 12 Paul showed that some gifts were far better than others — verse 28: first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers — against the Corinthians' inappropriate emphasis on other gifts

- The gifts were a less excellent way; God had a more excellent way that would arrive in the very lifetime of these Corinthians, and then their spiritual gifts would be done away

Prophecy, Tongues and Knowledge (I Corinthians 13:1–8)

- The most excellent ministry of all that the Holy Ghost has is to teach us to have charity like God himself does (verses 1–7)
- From verse 8 Paul describes the more excellent way that would replace the less excellent way of spiritual gifts; he cites prophecy, tongues and knowledge — one from each of the three groupings in chapter 12 — though really talking about all the gifts
- Prophecies failing is like a well of water failing — no more water in the well, no more to be given; those with the gift of knowledge would no longer possess its supernatural insight and discernment

Why and When (I Corinthians 13:9–11)

- Verse 9 gives why: gifts are only needed while the knowledge God has for us is partial or incomplete — the state of things at the beginning of this dispensation of grace, which wasn't going to last for very long
- That which is perfect is a reference to the perfect or the perfecting or the completion of the knowledge God wants us to have and possess today as members of the body of Christ; it is not a person — even in the Greek text it is a neuter concept
- All the gifts would be done away when God provided all the knowledge He wanted us to possess; the childish things of verse 11 were the spiritual gifts, perfectly fitted to the partial knowledge situation

The More Excellent Way Has Come (Ephesians 4)

- This more excellent way has already come — that which is perfect has been here for a long time; the completed revelation from God has been here since the very lifetime of Paul and these Corinthians, and we have it in the completed written word of God
- In Ephesians 4:11 Paul refers to the gifts in the past tense — God gave them; He wasn't giving them anymore when Paul was writing Ephesians
- The perfect man is the fully educated man, no longer in a childhood status; in Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and the pastoral epistles you are dealing with the full knowledge situation

L28

That Which Is Perfect Has Come *I Corinthians 13:8–10; Ephesians 4:11–14; Colossians 1: To Fulfil the Word of God*

Things Different in This Dispensation

- Through Paul, God teaches He has made no covenant with us today to work marvels among us; He isn't going to be doing signs, wonders and miracles for us to see today
- Concerning God's power in this dispensation, the Lord teaches that His strength is made perfect in weakness; the issue is the excellency of the power of His Word in our inner man, not demonstrations of His power in our circumstances
- Not understanding that God is not in the business today of performing spiritual phenomena and giving spiritual gifts makes us easy targets for Satan's counterfeits

Partial Knowledge and That Which Is Perfect (I Corinthians 13:8–10)

- The Holy Ghost's most excellent ministry will never fail; in contrast, the giving of spiritual gifts served a limited purpose for a very limited time and was going to be done away
- When Paul wrote they possessed only part of the knowledge God wanted them to have; when a perfect, complete knowledge situation replaced it, both the partial knowledge situation and the gifts designed for it would be done away
- That which is perfect is not a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ himself nor to Christ's kingdom; it is the completed revelation from God for us today in the completed written word of God

"He gave some" (Ephesians 4:11–14)

- Paul speaks of four particular spiritual gifts God had given for the saints to be perfected; he does not say "he gives some" but "he gave some" — a past tense issue that happened a long, long time ago
- The gifts had an objective — providing the full knowledge of God for full doctrinal edification — and would operate only until it was achieved; they achieved it, and God wasn't continuing to give apostles and prophets
- Ephesians 4 speaks not of knowing in part but of perfect knowledge; Satan's objective is to keep us as children in understanding, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine and not growing up

To Fulfil the Word of God (Colossians 1)

- In Colossians 1 Paul declares it was his responsibility to fulfil or complete the Word of God; if you fulfil something you can't add anything more to it — it is completed, perfected
- When I Corinthians 13 was written that which was perfect was coming but they didn't possess it yet; the written Word of God was being completed through Paul's ministry while he was in prison
- The capstone revelation gives knowledge not just about the mystery dispensation now in effect but about the riches of the glory associated with it
- That which is perfect has come: Paul told the Corinthians to expect it in their very lifetimes, and it did arrive then — now there is a completed knowledge situation and a full capacity to function unto all pleasing

L29

Fulfilling the Word of God; Gifts Done Away *Colossians 1–2; II Timothy 3–4; I Timothy 5:23; I Timothy 3; Titus 1*

Fulfilling the Word of God (Colossians 1)

- What Paul communicated as the prisoner of Jesus Christ, writing from prison, was fulfilling the word of God; Keith says the word rendered fulfil in verse 25 is the same concept as that which is perfect in I Corinthians 13
- That which is perfect was the complete full revelation from God — not there when Paul wrote I Corinthians, but coming
- Beyond the revelation of the mystery, the capstone piece of information is the riches of the glory of this mystery program, which Paul writes of especially in Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians

All the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge (Colossians 2)

- Paul underscores "all riches of the full assurance of understanding" (verse 2) and "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (verse 3); God is going to

provide nothing more — the word of God is being fulfilled, completed

- Through the completed word of God all those treasures of wisdom and knowledge are now the possession of the members of the body of Christ

Throughly Furnished (II Timothy 3–4)

- Timothy is left with the complete revelation from God, the more excellent way for the balance of this dispensation of grace; when he brings the books and especially the parchments, “Paul and Timothy put the whole Bible together”
- Possessing the completed written word, Timothy as the man of God has everything he needs to be “perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works”; you don’t need anything more than all scripture
- Paul’s course could not have been finished without the preaching being made fully known, and in II Timothy, his very last epistle, he declares its accomplishment

The Gifts of Healing Done Away

- Earlier in his ministry Paul had the gifts of healing and healed people constantly; even before he wrote II Timothy he no longer had the power to heal anybody, and he left Trophimus sick at Miletum
- Paul did not tell Timothy to find someone with the gifts of healing; he had to prescribe some medicine — even when I Timothy was written, the gift of healing had been done away with

Bishops Qualified by Edification; No Miraculous Release

- For pastors, bishops, overseers in a local assembly Paul doesn’t speak of God giving the man a gift, but of spiritual edificational qualifications — a bold testimony that no one was being given the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher any longer
- Paul describes being in prison at the beginning of Ephesians 1, Philippians 1 and Colossians 1 — a testimony that there were no more miraculous releases from prison; though the Lord stood by him, He did not release him
- The spiritual gifts were done away; the only spiritual phenomenon Paul continues to talk about is the satanic counterfeits, which continue on after the completed full revelation from God arrived

L30

Only the Adversary Producing Spiritual Phenomena Today

I Corinthians 12:1–3; Ephesians 4:13–14; I Timothy 4:1–3; II Timothy 3: Doctrines of Devils

Counterfeits from the Beginning (I Corinthians 12:1–3)

- Counterfeit spiritual phenomena was going on right from the beginning of this dispensation of grace; even while God’s genuine gifts were in operation, counterfeit gifts were in operation amongst the Corinthian assemblies
- The main reason you can’t afford to be ignorant is that, if you are, you will be deceived by counterfeits from Satan’s policy of evil
- At least one individual in Corinth claimed to speak by the Spirit of God and gave all evidence of it; the counterfeit was so perfect the Corinthians couldn’t tell any difference

Gifts Done Away, Counterfeits Continue

- When the perfect, complete revelation arrived, that which is in part — both partial knowledge and the gifts that supplied it — would be done away; Paul not only declares the gifts done away with that which is perfect arriving, but

also makes evident that Satan's counterfeits would continue on

- Once God was out of the business of giving spiritual gifts, the only one left producing spiritual phenomena would be the adversary himself
- We are far better off today possessing the completed written word of God than living when the more excellent way had not yet come

Kept as Children (Ephesians 4:13–14)

- Satan's objective is to keep us as children, the opposite of fully maturely educated members of the body of Christ; his counterfeit spiritual phenomena is an instrumental means of accomplishing it
- Paul borrows terminology that came right from the world of the magician, the seducers and the wizards; those counterfeits continuing on will be the very effective means Satan uses to deceive members of the body of Christ

Seducing Spirits and Doctrines of Devils (I Timothy 4:1–3)

- By the time Paul wrote I and II Timothy God was out of the spiritual gift business, but counterfeit phenomena deceiving Christians will continue for as long as this dispensation of grace lasts
- Satan's spirits and their production of spiritual phenomena are the very way Christians will be seduced, and a lot of Christians will be deceived and depart from the faith
- The doctrines of devils come from the Bible: Satan has his ministers teach the Bible but not rightly divide the word of truth — he is after Christians being scriptural, but not dispensational
- He seduces Christians back into Israel's program by counterfeiting the power of God as it operated in Israel's program

"Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses" (II Timothy 3:8)

- The tactic the Egyptian magicians Jannes and Jambres used to withstand Moses is used by the satanic policy of evil today to withstand the truth, and it is going to increase; stick with the completed revelation of the knowledge God has given us in His completed written word, the scripture (II Timothy 3:14–17)

L31

Excellency of God's Power in the Inner Man *I Thessalonians 2:13; II Corinthians 1, 4, 12; Ephesians 3:20*

Operating Differently Than in Israel's Program

- The power of God isn't absent in this dispensation of grace, but it operates differently than in His program with Israel, where He made it known outwardly, in the circumstances of their lives, personally and nationally
- In this dispensation of grace God has made no such covenant with us; instead of seeing the work of the Lord, we are told to walk by faith, not by sight
- God displays to us and the angelic world that His greatest operation of power isn't in working miracles and intervening in circumstances; He makes known the excellency of the power of His word in our inner man, soul and spirit

The Word Effectually Working (I Thessalonians 2:13)

- Paul declares the issue today is the effectual working of God's word in our inner man as we believe what He says; His word is designed to produce a whole array of results
- Christians see such things going on in God's program with Israel and look for

God to be doing them today; rather, it is His word effectually working in your inner man — strengthening, comforting, consoling, enabling you to endure anything this present evil world can produce

The Sufferings of Christ (II Corinthians 1)

- In II Corinthians Paul is particularly talking about what he calls the sufferings of Christ; God's issue is not delivering us from them but producing within our inner man comfort, strength and consolation that enables us to endure them
- Paul teaches not to expect to be delivered or shielded from those things, but to expect God to equip you to handle them in a manner that honors and glorifies Him
- The tribulation here is not the time on Israel's time schedule called the Great Tribulation

Earthen Vessels (II Corinthians 4)

- Earthen vessels describe our bodies, easily damaged and hurt; the excellency of God's power does not operate in the circumstances of our lives but in our inner man
- God's word working in Paul produced strength, comfort and consolation — more excellent than having the trouble disappear; something supernatural took place, not in his circumstances but in his inner man, where the excellency of God's power operates today

My Strength Is Made Perfect in Weakness (II Corinthians 12:7–9)

- With the thorn in the flesh Paul wanted the Lord to operate as in His program with Israel and deliver him; the Lord instead taught him how the excellency of His power is displayed today in a different manner
- "My grace is sufficient for thee": by grace Paul had everything needed to handle the situation; the Lord's strength is made perfect not by delivering him or manipulating his circumstances — unless you are weak, His strength cannot be made perfect
- The adversary will work to make you think God's power operates today in signs, wonders and miracles; it works in the inner man through the more excellent ministry of His completed word — "according to the power that worketh in us"

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

Israel's Covenant of Marvels vs. No Such Covenant with Us

God made a covenant with Israel to do marvels among them and for them to see the work of the Lord in their very midst; in this dispensation of grace God has made no covenant with us to do marvels among us. Israel, for the most part, walked by sight; through the Apostle Paul, God makes it clear to us today that He wants us to walk by faith and not by sight.

Israel's Last Days vs. This Dispensation

Keith says over ninety-five percent of all the references to spiritual phenomena in the Bible are found in the portion of the Bible pertaining to God's program with Israel — they are found there because they belong there. The opening chapters of the book of Acts are still God's program with Israel; God has suspended His program with Israel, so He is not now going to be giving the signs of Israel's last days. Peter does not say that Pentecost is the beginning of a brand new dispensation of grace; it is the beginning fulfillment of what Joel prophesied about the last days of God's program with Israel.

Paul's Confirming Signs — and Their End

When God confirmed Paul's unique and special apostleship and message, He did it through the ministry of signs, wonders and miracles: Paul was a brand new apostle with an unprophesied message. Once Paul's distinctive apostleship and message became part of the Bible through the writing of Paul's epistles, there was no more need for the confirming signs; near the end of his ministry Paul couldn't do anything about Trophimus' sickness.

That Which Is in Part vs. That Which Is Perfect

Spiritual gifts are only needed while the knowledge God has for us is partial or incomplete; that was the state of things at the beginning of this dispensation of grace. Keith says that which is perfect is not a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself or to Christ's kingdom; it is the completed revelation from God for us today in the completed written word of God. Paul does not say "he gives some"; he says "he gave some" — the giving of those gifts is a past tense issue.

God's Genuine Gifts vs. Satan's Counterfeits

God is not the only one capable of producing spiritual phenomena; the adversary, Satan himself, can do them, and does. Since the better provision arrived, God has not been in the business of giving spiritual gifts and performing spiritual phenomena, but the adversary has continued on with his counterfeits. The criterion for determining the false from the true is always in the message, not by what you see.

Scriptural but Not Dispensational

The doctrines of devils come from the Bible: Satan has his ministers teach the Bible, but they don't rightly divide the word of truth. Satan is after Christians being scriptural but not dispensational, and seduces them back into Israel's program by counterfeiting the power of God as it operated in Israel's program.

Power in the Circumstances vs. Power in the Inner Man

With Israel God made His power known in an outward manner, in the circumstances of their lives; to us He is making known the excellency of the power of His word as it operates in our inner man. The Lord told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" — not by physically delivering him from his circumstances.

Key Scripture References

Exodus 34:10	God's covenant of marvels: Israel would see the work of the Lord
Psalm 74:9	"We see not our signs"
Isaiah 8:18	The Messiah and the children given Him for signs and wonders in Israel
Isaiah 14:12–14	Satan's plan is to be like the Most High — so he counterfeits what God does
Joel 2:28–32	The profuse outpouring of Israel's last days; quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost
Matthew 10:1–8	The twelve given power to show the glad tidings of the kingdom
Mark 16:15–18	Signs that pertain to God's program with Israel — not going on during this dispensation of grace
John 4:48	"Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe"
Acts 2:1–21	The baptism with the Holy Ghost on Pentecost: new tongues; "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel"
Acts 14:1–3	The Lord granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands — the confirming issue of Romans 15
Romans 15:18–19	Mighty signs and wonders confirmed Paul's apostleship and message
I Corinthians 1:22	"the Jews require a sign"
I Corinthians 12:1–3	"I would not have you ignorant": counterfeit spiritual phenomena in Corinth
I Corinthians 13:8–12	Gifts for the partial knowledge situation, done away "when that which is perfect is come"
II Corinthians 4:7	"the excellency of the power" — operating in the inner man
II Corinthians 5:7	Walk by faith, not by sight
II Corinthians 11:13–15	False apostles: Satan's ministers are ministers of righteousness
II Corinthians 12:7–10	"my strength is made perfect in weakness"
II Corinthians 12:12	"the signs of an apostle" — confirming testimony of Paul's apostleship
Ephesians 4:11–14	"he gave some" — past tense; gifts in operation until their objective was achieved
Colossians 1:25	"to fulfil the word of God"
I Thessalonians 2:13	The word "effectually worketh" in you that believe
II Thessalonians 2:9	Power, signs and lying wonders when God resumes and fulfills His program with Israel
I Timothy 4:1–3	Seducing spirits and doctrines of devils
I Timothy 5:23	Medicine prescribed for Timothy, whom Paul used to heal
II Timothy 3:5–8	As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses by counterfeiting the power of God
II Timothy 3:14–17	The completed word of God: the man of God "throughly furnished"

II Timothy 4:20	Trophimus left at Miletum sick: no more power to heal