

I Corinthians 13:10

“But when what is perfect has come, then what is in part shall be done away with.”

From verses 8-9, we can know that “what is in part shall be done away” refers to the end of spiritual gifts. However, what does the word “perfect” in this verse refer to? Some say it means Christ. Some say it means love. Some say it means the Bible.

Let’s do a study of God’s Word (the Holy Bible) and see what it reveals about this verse.

The word “perfect” in the original Greek language is “teleios” which means “complete.”

First, let’s study the context the verse is in.

Verses 1-7 discuss the importance of having love (agape) and how if we do not have love (agape), then anything else we do in life does not matter.

Verses 8-9 compare the permanence of love compared to the temporary spiritual gifts.

Verses 11-13 compare a child’s immaturity and lack of understanding to being a mature adult with more knowledge.

So how does verse 10 fit in to these thoughts?

I do not believe the verse reads, “When Christ has come, then spiritual gifts will cease.” Spiritual gifts were still in use after Christ’s birth, life, death and resurrection. The very next chapter (I Corinthians 14) talks about how the gift of prophecy is better than the gift of speaking in tongues. Could it mean Christ's second coming? That does not seem to fit because everything will end when Christ comes again.

Here is what I think this means. When we have all we need to be complete as children of God, then we no longer need spiritual gifts. After all, the purpose of spiritual gifts was to confirm the word of God (Mark 16:20). II Timothy 3:16-17 says, “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 [complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Therefore, Scripture (the Holy Bible) provides us with everything we need to know to be complete. In addition, II Peter 1:3 says, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness...” Again, this verse shows us that God’s Word (the Holy Bible) gives us everything we need to be perfect or complete as children of God. Therefore, I believe the word “perfect” refers to the complete and inspired Word of God (the Holy Bible).