

What about Miraculous Sign Gifts? – Part 1 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

Introduction:

1. The Corinthians were in great spiritual danger. This danger proceeded from their ignorance concerning spiritual gifts. vs. 1
2. Spiritual gifts were being counterfeited in order to communicate false doctrine. In verse 3, Paul is saying:
 - If somebody manifests a supernatural sign, but in so doing, communicates false doctrine concerning Jesus Christ, it is **not** from God's Spirit.
 - On the other hand, if somebody does **not** manifest any kind of outward miraculous sign, but his message is **correct** concerning Jesus Christ, this **is** from God's Spirit.
3. The Corinthians were in danger of being duped, just as they had been duped before salvation. vs. 2
4. Paul spends three chapters (12-14) dealing with the issue of spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit was visibly manifesting Himself through the use of these spiritual gifts. vs. 7
 - They were given for the corporate edification of the church, yet they were being abused, and the church at Corinth had become chaotic and disorderly.
5. There are two types of spiritual gifts that Paul deals with in his epistles:
 - Supernatural gifts that were of a miraculous nature - sign gifts
 - Ministry gifts used in service to God and others - **Romans 12:6-8**
6. Paul is dealing primarily with the use of the supernatural gifts here in Corinthians. Verses 8-10 give us a list of these gifts. In this lesson we will endeavor to explain each of these gifts and what they were in the early church.
7. We will then explain why these supernatural gifts were given and were necessary.

The word of wisdom and word of knowledge - vs. 8

1. These two gifts are closely related. They deal with the supernatural impartation of divine knowledge and information.
2. When the local assembly would meet, God would supernaturally impart to certain ones doctrine. They would receive a word of knowledge. Why was this necessary?
3. Remember - this was written during the Acts time period. Paul wasn't in their midst any more. As Paul would receive additional information from God, the local assemblies had to be brought up to speed with the doctrinal information.
4. People in the assembly were given this supernaturally by God's Spirit. They were fountains of divine knowledge. **Example: Acts 21:10-12**
5. The word of wisdom was the ability to make application of the knowledge. It was the supernatural ability to come up with divine answers to human problems.
 - **Example: Matthew 10:17-20** - don't study or worry about it - the answer will be there when the time comes. cf. **Acts 5:1-3**

Faith - vs. 9

1. This is speaking of a supernatural capacity to exercise faith. cf. 14:2;
Matthew 17:19-20, 21:21-22
 - Why is the mountain removed in the tribulation? **Revelation 8:8, 8:3-6**

2. It has to do with miraculous answers to prayer and removing monumental problems that confront you. **Example: Acts 4:23-33**
3. Have you tried removing any mountains lately? It doesn't work, does it? It is because this is not what God is doing today, and church leaders have to come up with religious gimmicks to keep from embarrassing themselves and God with their false claims.

What about Miraculous Sign Gifts? – Part 2 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

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Healing - vs. 9

1. This was the supernatural capacity to make sick and afflicted people well.
2. This is a consistent part of God's program with the nation of Israel. Physical healing is part of God's covenant with them. **Exodus 15:26, 23:25; Ezekiel 34:16; Jeremiah 30:17**
3. Divine forgiveness and physical healing go hand in hand in Israel's program. **Isaiah 33:24; Psalm 103:3; Matthew 9:6; James 5:14-16**
4. Physical healing was part of Christ's earthly ministry to Israel (**Matthew 9:35, 10:1**), His earthly commission to the twelve (**Mark 16:18**), and we see them exercising this supernatural gift. **Acts 3:1-8, 5:15-16**
5. You can try to exercise this gift all day long, but it won't work because this was part of God's kingdom program with Israel. That kingdom program has been set aside today, but will resume one day after the body of Christ is complete.
 - This dispensation of grace is referred to as "*the sufferings of this present time.*" **Romans 8:18; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16-17**
 - There **is** a healing program for the body of Christ - it is called the "*day of redemption.*" Our corruptible bodies will be redeemed and we will be given a glorified body like Christ's. **Romans 8:23; Philippians 3:21**
 - Do believers sometimes get sick and recover today? Of course, but is it the result of a faith healer touching you and healing you? No!
6. Benny Hinn and all the other TV religious superstars can claim to have the apostolic gift of healing, but rest assured, **they do not**. When scrutinized by the standard of God's Word and the healing ministry of Christ and the apostles, they aren't even on the same planet.
7. What we see today is a mixture of demonic deception, emotional manipulation, mind-control, religious hysteria, and self-induced wishful thinking. They are taking advantage of afflicted people that are looking desperately for an answer to their problems.
 - Every healing revival, these "healing evangelists" send away multitudes of disappointed people that didn't get a cure. Compare this to Christ and the apostles. **Matthew 9:35, 10:1; Acts 5:15-16, 28:8-9**

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Working of Miracles

1. This is the God-given ability to exercise power over natural laws. It is a supernatural demonstration beyond natural causes.
2. We use this term very loosely today, and not in the Biblical sense.
 - "I needed \$20 to pay my electric bill; I was at the mall and in the parking lot was a \$20 bill, right by my car on the ground. It was a miracle!"
 - That certainly would be a wonderful thing, but it is not a miracle.

3. A miracle is when the laws of nature are clearly and obviously suspended.
 - **Example: Acts 3:1-8** - when a guy that has been lame from his mother's womb is walking and leaping and there are verifiable witnesses, this is a miracle.
Acts 4:16
 - **Example: Acts 12:5-11** - when a guy is locked in a prison with guards on both sides and bound with two chains and gets out, this is a miracle.
4. God has always used miracles as a sign to the nation of Israel. This was one of the signs to Israel that Christ was the Messiah. **Acts 2:22**
5. God sent Spirit-filled men to Israel after they crucified Christ, and they, too, worked miracles. **Acts 6:8, 8:5-6**
6. Paul's apostleship, message, and ministry were also validated by miracles.
Acts 15:12, 19:11
7. Miracles are not common everyday occurrences in the Bible. During Israel's history, there were brief time periods where miracles were witnessed commonly (Exodus from Egypt, wilderness, prophetic ministries of Elijah and Elisha, 3-year ministry of Christ, certain times in the book of Acts).
8. Remember, the false prophet has the ability to work miracles in the tribulation (**Revelation 13:14, 16:14, 19:20**), as did the Egyptian sorcerers in Exodus.
9. Today we do not need a miracle as a sign of God's truth. We are complete in Christ and possess the complete and final revelation of God to man, the Bible.

Prophecy

1. This is the ability to declare what can't be known by natural means.
2. The idea of a prophet is one who speaks for another, a spokesman, a mouthpiece.
Exodus 4:16; cf. 7:1
3. A true prophet of God was a person through whom God revealed His truth.
Jeremiah 35:15
4. At times, God would reveal future events, in advance, to these prophets (**Acts 11:27-28**). During the book of Acts, God was still dispensing prophetic truth. His Word was not complete yet.
5. There were obviously prophets in the Corinthian church that had the ability to speak for God and communicate truth that God was making known. cf. **Ephesians 3:4-5**

Have the Sign Gifts Ceased Today?

Introduction:

1. The carnal Corinthian church had become enamored with the miraculous sign gifts. They are listed in 12:8-10. We defined each one of these gifts from the Scripture in past studies.
 - Sign gifts were miraculous demonstrations that communicated or confirmed truth. **Mark 16:17-20**
2. There are people today who claim to have spiritual powers to work signs, miracles, and wonders. Is God giving this power today to individuals? Does the body of Christ need the operation of sign gifts today?
3. The best way to answer these questions is to answer the simple question, "Why were the sign gifts given in the first place?"
4. If we can understand from the Bible why God gave these sign gifts, then we can discern readily if they are still needed and operative today.

The sign gifts were given to validate the apostles of Christ.

1. An apostle of Christ was a person who had actually seen the resurrected Christ. **1 Corinthians 15:4-8**
2. Not only this, an apostle's message had to be validated with undeniable miraculous sign gifts. **Hebrews 2:3-4; Acts 2:43, 4:16, 29, 30, 33; 5:12**
 - These signs would serve as a confirmation for their message. **Mark 16:20**
3. When Paul defended his apostleship, he reminded them of "*the signs of an apostle*" that were demonstrated by him. **2 Corinthians 12:11-12**
4. Christ is referred to as "*the Apostle*" in **Hebrews 3:1**. During Christ's earthly ministry to Israel, His Messiahship & message were validated by signs. **John 20:30-31; Acts 2:22**
5. But in the early church, there were already ministers of Satan that claimed to be the apostles of Christ who were "*false apostles.*" **2 Corinthians 11:13**
6. Today, many men claim to be apostles, but they are not. How do we know this? To be an apostle, you had to have seen the resurrected Christ in person, literally and physically.
 - No man knows Christ after the flesh today (**2 Corinthians 5:16**). Christ is not appearing physically and visibly to people.
7. Therefore, we know there are no apostles today; hence, there is no longer the need for the apostolic sign gifts.

The sign gifts were given to reveal, communicate, and confirm truth.

1. We read in **Mark 16:20** that as the twelve proclaimed the good news that Israel's Messiah was raised from the dead, God would confirm their message with miraculous signs. God did exactly that. **Hebrews 2:3-4**
2. All throughout the book of Acts, while the early church was taking shape, God was progressively revealing more and more truth.
 - When the apostles preached of Christ's resurrection and told Israel to repent and Christ would return (**Acts 3:18-20**), it was a miraculous sign that saved their skin (**Acts 4:16**), and confirmed their words (**Acts 4:29-30**).

- When Peter preached Christ's resurrection to Cornelius' house, it was a miraculous sign that kept him out of hot water with his Jewish brethren. **Acts 11:17-18**
 - God saved the apostle Paul and began to reveal to him truth that had been kept secret since the world began. Paul would desperately need the signs of an apostle to validate this new message that he proclaimed.
 - This new message involved the salvation of Gentiles apart from Israel, apart from the Mosaic Law, and apart from Israel's rite of circumcision. Gentiles could be saved by grace through faith alone in the finished work of Jesus Christ.
 - It was signs that confirmed and validated his Gentile message to the church at Jerusalem. **Acts 15:12-13**
3. As God revealed more and more truth to Paul, there had to be a way to keep the churches up to speed on this new revelation during this transitional period. God used sign gifts to do this, such as the word of knowledge, word of wisdom, prophecy, tongues, etc.
 - People in the church were given these supernatural gifts in order to communicate truth to their local assembly.
 4. This was necessary until all of God's truth could be given, written down, and preserved in a Book. Today we have that Book and it is called the Bible. God is not dispensing new truth today. We have it all, and God's Word is sufficient to furnish us unto all good works. **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
 5. Today our job is not to pretend to be getting some new revelation from God, but to take God's completed Word and proclaim it to others. **2 Timothy 2:2, 4:2; Titus 1:9**

The sign gifts were given as a sign to Israel.

1. The nation of Israel was born through the use of miraculous signs. **Exodus 4:30-31**
2. **1 Corinthians 1:22** states, "*For the Jews require a sign...*" When Christ came to minister to Israel, He came with signs and wonders. **Acts 2:22**
3. **1 Corinthians 14:22** informs us that the gift of tongues was a sign to unbelievers. Paul clearly had Israel in mind because he quotes a prophecy concerning Israel from **Isaiah 28:11-12**.
4. The Corinthian church started right next door to the Jewish synagogue. **Acts 18:5-7**
 - As Israel observed these pagan Gentiles demonstrating **their** sign gifts, it was a testimony that God had left them and gone among the Gentiles.
 - It was physical, visible evidence (which the Jews required) that God was now among the Gentiles and judgment was imminent if Israel did not repent.
 - As they saw their spiritual possessions now going to the Gentiles, it was to provoke them to jealousy that they might come to Christ and be saved. **Romans 11:11, 13-14**
5. This explains why such a carnal church as Corinth had the physical, visible evidence of God's Holy Spirit at work through these miraculous sign gifts (1:6-7). It was to confirm the testimony of Christ to Israel next door (1:22, 14:22).
6. This provoking ministry to Israel ended in **Acts 28:25-28**. After this declarative statement of judgment, we note several important things.

- Soon after this, Jerusalem was sacked and destroyed by the Roman emperor Titus. The Jews were scattered among the nations.
 - The Word of God is completed through Paul's post-Acts books.
Colossians 1:25
 - Paul never mentions Israel again in any of his post-Acts books. There are no more verses like **Romans 10:1**. Paul refers to himself as the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. **Ephesians 3:1**
 - The sign gifts are never mentioned again in any of Paul's post-Acts books. No mention of healings, miracles, tongues, etc. Paul is in prison, and no Philippian jail experience occurred.
 - There is evidence of the sign gifts ceasing in Paul's post-Acts books.
2 Timothy 4:20; 1 Timothy 5:23; Philippians 2:25-27; 2 Timothy 2:15 (no miraculous word of knowledge)
7. In the gospels and Acts when Israel was still there and still an issue, we see the demonstration of miraculous signs. Once Israel was set aside nationally there was no longer a need for these sign gifts. Once Israel was no longer an issue, the sign gifts ceased.
 8. Christian, you do not need a miraculous sign today. You have God's completed Word, you are part of Christ's body (where there is no Jew or Gentile), and you are complete in Christ.
 9. Nowhere in the Bible are you told to seek a sign. In fact, Jesus said that a wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. **Matthew 16:4**
 10. God gave to the apostles and early church miraculous signs, and we know why He did this, but there is no reason to be enamored with signs and wonders today. Be enamored with Christ and His Word.

The True Marks of an Apostolic Healer

Introduction:

1. Last week we learned that true apostles of Christ had two primary characteristics:
 - First, they had actually seen the resurrected Christ, physically, after His resurrection from the dead. **1 Corinthians 15:4-9**
 - Second, they demonstrated the validity of their apostleship through the manifestation of miraculous signs and wonders. **Hebrews 2:3-4; Mark 16:20; 2 Corinthians 12:12**
2. There are men today who claim to be apostles and have the apostolic sign gifts. It seems that the number one gift that they purport to have is the apostolic gift of healing.
3. Multitudes of people with sickness and disease crowd into auditoriums hoping to find deliverance from their infirmities through the means of a "faithhealer." Make no mistake about it, it is a big money business.
 - **Illustration:** Benny Hinn lives in a multi-million dollar oceanfront mansion, drives a Mercedes-Benz, sports elaborate clothes and jewelry. He brought in \$89 million in donations in 2002 (L.A. Times).
4. We learned last week that the sign gifts were given for three reasons:
 - To validate the apostles of Christ
 - To confirm new truth given to the apostles
 - To serve as a sign to the nation of Israel
5. There are no apostles today, we have God's completed revelation, and Israel was set aside nationally in Acts 28. Therefore, there is no reason for sign gifts today.
6. Many people go crazy when you say this. They quote **Hebrews 13:8**, "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*" From this verse, they draw the false conclusion that Jesus is **working** the same way today as He did in the gospels and Acts time period (this verse is dealing with Christ's character, not His dealings with man).
7. Then here is what I propose. Let's put them to the biblical test. Jesus said that His apostles would actually do greater works than He did. **John 14:12**
8. Faithhealers today should exemplify the same biblical characteristics in their healing ministries that Jesus and the apostles did in their ministries. Let's look at some of these characteristics from God's Word.

First, Jesus and the apostles went where the sick people were. Matthew 9:35; Acts 5:15

1. Jesus went from city to city finding and healing sick people. The apostles went through the streets of Jerusalem healing sick people.
2. They went where the sick people were; they didn't wait for them to come to them.
3. How thrilling it would be to really have this gift. Imagine being able to go to the hospital and walk through the hallways and touch people that are sick or dying and heal them.
4. Think about flying to great disease pockets of the world and walking through the crowds healing aids, cancer, etc.

5. Why is it that the faith healers are not hanging around the nursing homes, hospitals, and sanitariums? Why is it that they rarely come out of their church buildings, auditoriums, tents, and coliseums to exercise their gift?
6. They seem, for the most part, to exercise their gift in a controlled environment, staged their way, according to their schedule, with their workers prompting and screening the crowd.

Second, Jesus and the apostles healed instantly. Matthew 8:13; Mark 5:29; Luke 17:14; Acts 3:7-8, 9:32-34

1. People will say, "I've been healed and now I'm getting better. My back feels better, my arthritis isn't as painful, my tumor is shrinking, my cancer is in remission, etc."
2. This is wonderful, but it is **not** the gift of healing as exercised by Christ and the apostles. When they healed, it was instantaneous.

Third, Jesus and the apostles healed totally. Matthew 8:14-15; Acts 4:14, 16

1. There was no recuperation period necessary when Jesus and the apostles healed.
2. Peter's mother-in-law was healed and got up and started serving them.
3. When Jesus and the apostles healed, there were no "lying symptoms" to ignore.
4. When the apostles healed the man lame from his mother's womb, the next day he was seen standing with them before the Jewish council and unbelievers could not deny that he had been healed miraculously.
 - **Illustration:** Hobart Freeman, little boy at Hinn crusade.

Fourth, Jesus and the apostles healed everyone.

1. Many times in the Scripture, the Bible is careful to note this. **Matthew 4:23-24, 9:35; Mark 6:56; Acts 5:15-16, 28:7-9**
2. Obviously, people had to want to be healed and come in faith. Jesus and the apostles didn't push their gift on somebody who was antagonistic toward them.
3. But when somebody did come to them and sincerely and genuinely desired healing, they healed them. There were no misfires. It wasn't a case of some being healed and others left in their sick condition.
4. Unlike healers today, they did not leave long lines of disappointed people who had to return home in their wheelchairs. They didn't end their healing service to catch a jet or because their TV time expired.
 - **Illustration:** William Nolan, a medical doctor who wrote, "*Healing: a Doctor in Search of a Miracle.*" He attended a Kathryn Kuhlman meeting.

Fifth, Jesus and the apostles healed organic disease.

1. They didn't just heal lower back pain, headaches, heart palpitations, arthritis, and other invisible ailments.
2. They healed legs crippled from birth, withered hands, palsy, blind eyes, deaf ears, leprosy, etc.
3. Their healings were undeniably miraculous. **Matthew 15:31; Acts 4:16**
 - Jesus took an ear that had been cut off and healed it. **Luke 22:50-51**
 - Peter healed a man who had been crippled and in bed for 8 years. **Acts 9:34**

4. Paul actually does the reverse of this to a man in **Acts 13:8-11**. He was withstanding Paul, and Paul strikes him with blindness.

Sixth, Jesus and the apostles performed the ultimate of all healings - they raised the dead.

1. And they did it in front of crowds of people. **John 11:38-45; Acts 9:36-43, 20:7-12**
2. Those who claim to have the apostolic gift of healing are not raising people from the dead that have been dead for four days as Jesus did, or dead bodies that have been washed and laid in an upper chamber as Peter did.

In Conclusion:

1. We have seen from the Bible six characteristics of a true apostle's healing ministry.
2. Despite the claims being made today, nobody is exhibiting these six characteristics from God's Word in their healing ministries.
3. If a person wants to conveniently disregard the six things that typified the biblical sign gift of healing, that is fine, but they should not call themselves apostles and claim to have the sign gift of healing.
4. Why is this important to look at and study? Because so many people today are living under guilt and condemnation because they did not receive their healing. They are afraid maybe they are inferior, maybe God is mad at them, maybe they aren't good enough, maybe they don't have enough faith.
5. There are others who are filled with false hope and end up devastated with their faith in God being undermined.
6. Christian, do not despair. Paul called this dispensation "*the sufferings of this present time.*" Paul said that though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day.
7. We have a hope that extends far deeper than the physical healing of these corruptible, mortal bodies.
8. "*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*" **2 Corinthians 4:17**

Something Better than Super-Natural Sign Gifts 1 Corinthians 13:8-13

Introduction:

1. Chapter 13 is well known as "the love chapter."
2. The Corinthian church was a carnal church that was failing to demonstrate godly love.
3. They were extremely self-consumed and it manifested itself in several different ways. One of the areas was the area of spiritual gifts. This was during the Acts time period when all the sign gifts were still operative. Why?
 - As a sign to Israel that God had left Israel and gone among the Gentiles.
 - As a means of communicating divine revelation from God as Israel's kingdom program diminished and the mystery program was being revealed.
4. The Corinthians were totally enamored with the super-natural sign gift program of that time, but it had degenerated into a fleshly, experience-based demonstration.
5. There was an absence of godly love so Paul reminds them (vs. 1-7) what true godly love looks like.
6. But then Paul will show them the superiority of love over the sign gift program (vs. 8-13). The sign gift program was temporary, but love is enduring.
7. There are a lot of different thoughts about this text, so I will handle these verses in a verse by verse fashion as we seek to understand their true meaning.

Verse 8

1. Notice the contrast, "*Charity never faileth, but...*"
2. Paul proceeds to warn the Corinthians that the sign gift program is not permanent, but rather temporary.
3. When Paul mentions prophecies, tongues, and knowledge, it is clear from the context that Paul is referring to the **gifts** of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge.
4. Paul is clearly teaching that at some point in the future, these gifts will no longer be necessary and operative.
 - The phrases "they shall fail" and "it shall vanish away" are the exact same Greek word and it means "to be rendered entirely idle (useless)."
 - He says that "tongues shall cease" which means "to stop, restrain, quit, come to an end."
 - Charity never fails, but clearly the spiritual sign gifts one day will.
5. The Corinthians were placing great stock in the super-natural sign gift program, but what would they be left with when it passed away? If they didn't possess true love, they would be left with nothing. vs. 2, 3

Verse 9

1. Notice how Paul narrows his discussion to prophecy and knowledge in this verse. Paul will deal with tongues extensively in chapter 14.
2. It is interesting that the exact same Greek word is used to explain what will happen to the gifts of prophecy and knowledge in verse 8, but when he says "tongues shall cease" he uses a different Greek word. Even the verb tense is different.

- *"They shall fail"* and *"it shall vanish away"* are passive verbs, indicating that the subject (prophecy and knowledge) are the recipients of the action. Something very definite happens that causes them to be rendered idle and useless.
 - When it says tongues *"shall cease"*, this is the middle/active voice indicating that tongues will come to an end in and of themselves as their purpose is done. We will cover this subject extensively in chapter 14.
3. So clearly Paul narrows his discussion to the gifts of prophecy and knowledge in verse 9. We covered these gifts in chapter 12, but let's review:
 - **Prophecy** - the ability to declare divine truth that cannot be known by natural means.
 - **Knowledge** - the supernatural impartation of divine knowledge and information.
 - If a person in the local assembly at Corinth received a word of knowledge from God and then declared it to the local assembly, this would be the exercise of these two gifts.
 4. Why were these two gifts necessary? Paul explains why in this verse. Paul says that at that time (Acts 20 time period), *"We know **in part**, and we prophesy **in part**."*
 - The phrase "in part" means "to get as a section, allotment, division or share."
 5. God gave to Paul revelation for the body of Christ, but He didn't do it all at one time. It came in sections or allotments. **Acts 26:16**
 6. So when Paul writes 1 Corinthians (Acts 20 time period), he knew that he hadn't received all the divine information that would eventually come.
 7. Of course, we know today that much more revelation would come to Paul and he would in turn give it to the church. Paul had only written a few of his 13 epistles at this point.
 8. So Paul makes it clear that at that time they had partial knowledge. They only prophesied **in part** because their knowledge was incomplete.

Verse 10

1. People make this verse tougher than it really is. Many people argue over what Paul means when he speaks of that which is perfect coming.
2. It is an extremely important issue. If Paul is referring to something still yet future (such as the rapture), then this would mean that we are still missing some divine revelation.
3. This would mean that God's Word is yet incomplete and we do not have all of God's truth. We must depend on men and women to receive words of knowledge from God and declare them to us.
4. Rather, Paul had something in mind that would happen in the Corinthians life-time. What did he have in mind? Let's begin by defining the word "perfect."
 - This word "perfect" means "complete." It is never used in reference to the rapture, Second Coming or heaven.
 - It is often used to describe a person who is spiritually mature and of full age.
5. If taken in context, that which is **perfect** replaces that which was **in part**. So it must be referring to the time when all the knowledge and prophetic truth will be dispensed. No longer will we know **in part**, but complete knowledge will be given.

6. As Paul penned his last prison epistles, he fulfilled (finished) the Word of God.
Colossians 1:25
7. Some of the very last words Paul wrote were **2 Timothy 3:16-17**. The Scripture is now complete and is able to make every believer complete and fully mature, thoroughly furnishing us with everything we need. We lack nothing!
8. We no longer know **in part** because that which is perfect (complete knowledge) has now been given.

Verse 11

1. Paul is using an illustration to drive home the point that the sign gift program is temporary.
2. When you are in childhood, you are not able to understand, reason, and think as an adult. But typically this is not a permanent mental and emotional state.
3. As you mature in years, you gain more knowledge and you are expected to quit acting as a child and begin to think and act as an adult.
4. The sign gifts were given during the infancy and childhood stages of the early church, when God's revelation was incomplete. The Corinthians were babes in Christ (3:1) and were totally enamored with these sign gifts as a child is with a new toy.
5. As a child eventually "puts away" childish things, the Corinthians would one day be putting away the sign gifts. They would be rendered inoperative when God's complete knowledge and revelation was dispensed.
6. Therefore, they must learn to walk on the more mature basis of faith, hope, and love, which we will see in verse 13. The sign gifts will be put away as a man puts away childish things, but love never fails and abides forever.

Verse 12

1. The Bible is likened to a mirror in Scripture (**James 1:23-25**). A clear, clean mirror reveals to us our true state and let us see ourselves as we really are.
 - If my face is dirty, or there is a spot on my shirt, etc., the mirror provides me with the information, light, and knowledge I need to make the necessary changes.
 - In Bible days, it was not unusual for people to just use a piece of polished metal of some sort as a mirror. Of course many times, it did not give the clear reflections that our mirrors do today. It would be very dark and shaded.
 - **Illustration:** Ever look into a mirror that was hazed with fog or steam? You may be able to see yourself, but not clearly.
2. This was the state of the early church. They had **part** of God's Word, but not all of God's revelation. This is why Paul says, "*For now we see through a glass darkly...*"
3. But this was not a permanent state. Paul goes on to say, "*But then face to face...*"
4. When the full revelation was finally given, no longer did Paul know in part, but full knowledge was given, and the Corinthians knew God's truth just as fully as they knew Paul when seeing him face to face.
5. The issue in verse 12 is one of clarity. The maturity of verse 11 can now take place because of the full light that has been given (vs. 10, 12). Paul knew that one day

things would be made crystal clear. The revelation was soon to be complete (**Colossians 1:25**), and the haze would be lifted.

6. If "*that which is perfect*" is referring to some future time in heaven or the future kingdom, then this would mean that spiritual maturity could **not** be achieved right now on earth. We would be locked into the childhood state of verse 11, continuing to know **in part** and seeing through a glass darkly.
7. This is not what Paul taught. Paul affirmed that spiritual maturity could happen right now on earth. **Ephesians 4:13-15; Colossians 1:27-28; 2 Timothy 3:16-17**
8. No longer do we see through a glass darkly and know in part, but rather we have face to face clarity and knowledge through God's completed Word. What makes believers perfect and takes away partial knowledge? The authority of God's written Word!
9. If a preacher tells you that he has a word of knowledge or special revelation from God, you can simply answer that you no longer see through a glass darkly, but you have God's completed Word. You will do well to ignore and disregard him.

Verse 13

1. Paul concludes the chapter, "*And now abideth...*"
2. There are three things that are going to last past the infancy and childhood of the church, and into adulthood. The three things are not the gifts of prophecy, knowledge, and tongues. That much is clear from the context.
3. It is faith, hope, and charity. When Paul says that charity is the greatest, he doesn't mean that it is more valuable than faith and hope. It is the greatest in the sense that it is the crowning issue. It is the basis and source of everything else.
4. These three things are designed to bring fullness in the life of a believer. They represent true spiritual maturity. **1 Thessalonians 1:3**
5. The Christian life is to be empowered by faith, sustained by hope, and motivated by love.
6. The Corinthians had it all wrong. They thought that spiritual maturity was manifested through use of the sign gifts. Paul sets their thinking straight, and he says, "No, these sign gifts will one day be rendered useless, but faith, hope, and charity will abide." This is where their emphasis needed to be. It is something better than the sign gifts.