

Bible Questions and Answers

(By Robert C. Veil, Jr.)

Question: What is “that which is perfect” in 1 Corinthians 13:10?

Answer: “Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away,” (1 Cor. 13:8-10). A study of the context of this passage makes it clear that “that which is perfect” is the completed, written revealed New Testament, the Gospel.

In the prior chapter, Paul dealt extensively with the misuse of the miraculous gifts at the church in Corinth. He begins that chapter responding to questions they had evidently asked about spiritual gifts, and dealing with their gross perversion of them. They had become proud in these gifts, especially speaking in tongues, (foreign languages they had not studied). Paul lists the nine spiritual gifts, (1 Cor. 12:8-11) and stresses that all were important, and that every member should work together in the body of Christ, (1 Cor. 12:12ff). He then goes on to discuss the “more excellent way,” (12:31).

This “more excellent way” (the ASV says “most excellent way”) was far superior to the temporary and partial spiritual gifts, which were bestowed in various portions and in various ways, (see Heb. 1:1ff). When the complete written word was finished, and fully revealed unto the saints, there would be no need for partial revelations. As Jude would later write, “Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints,” (Jude 3).

When that completed, perfect word of God was fully revealed and by inspiration recorded, it became the “perfect law of liberty,” (James 1:25). It is “perfect” because it is *complete*. There is no need for additional revelations, visions, dreams, etc., because we have the totality of God’s revealed Word. It is simply a matter of studying it diligently, accepting it by faith, and putting it into practice in our daily lives.

All Christians should love and cherish the Bible, the completed revelation of the Word of God. It provides us with all that we need to live the Christian life. “Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust,” (2 Peter 1:3-4).

By warmly embracing and obeying the gospel, any person can come to know God, and live a faithful life for Jesus Christ. All of the marvelous spiritual blessings are then available in him, as we grow and mature through the Word. As Paul said, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things,” (1 Cor. 13:11). Truly, the

completed, fully recorded gospel of Jesus Christ is “that which is perfect.” May we embrace it and live it out daily!

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