

## That which is perfect?

In this study we are going to look at a popular doctrine among non-Spirit filled Churches. These teachings espouse the cessation of spiritual gifts especially tongues, prophesying and interpretation. The following scripture is their big sword to separate themselves from the responsibility of having to produce any "signs and wonders".

1 Corinthians 13:8-11, "*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<5046> is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*"

They go on to teach this doctrine by adding to this scripture that the words "*that which is perfect*" in this scripture refer to the Holy Bible. Saying; "after all, these people did not have the scriptures, like little children they needed God's help to promote the Gospel. But now, we have the "Word of God" and it is perfect, so the childish things were put away.

Let us take a good look at this word "perfect" as it appears in other scriptures:

Matthew 5:48 *Be ye therefore perfect<5046>, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect<5046>.*

Matthew 19:21 *Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect <5046>, go [and] sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come [and] follow me.*

1 Corinthians 14:20 *Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men <5046>. {men: Gr. perfect, or, of a ripe age}*

1 Peter 5:10 *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<5046>, stablish, strengthen, settle [you].*

Hebrews 5:9 *And being made perfect<5046>, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;*

Hebrews 7:19 *For the law made nothing perfect<5046>, but the bringing in of a better hope [did]; by the which we draw nigh unto God. {nothing: Gr. no man, no one}*

Hebrews 10:1 *For the law having a shadow of good things to come, [and] not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect<5046>.*

Hebrews 11:40 *God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect<5046>.*

Hebrews 12:23 *To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect<5046>,*

Hebrews 13:21 *Make you perfect<5046> in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom [be] glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

## THE FOLLOWING ARE DEFINITIONS FROM STRONG'S CONCORDANCE:

**5046 teleios** {tel'-i-os} from **5056**;

AV - perfect 17, man 1, of full age 1; 19

- 1) brought to its end, finished
- 2) wanting nothing necessary to completeness
- 3) perfect
- 4) that which is perfect

**4a) consummate human integrity and virtue**

**4b) of men**

**4b1) full grown, adult, of full age, mature**

**5056 telos** {tel'-os} from a primary tello (**to set out for a definite point or goal**);

AV - end 35, custom 3, uttermost 1, finally 1, ending 1,

by (one's) continual + 1519 1; 42

1) end

1a) termination, the limit at which a thing ceases to be

(always of the end of some act or state, but not of the end of a period of time)

1b) the end

1c) that by which a thing is finished, its close, issue

1d) the end to which all things relate, the aim, purpose

2) toll, custom (i.e. indirect tax on goods)

**You will notice that all the scriptural uses of the word "perfect" refer to a state or condition of man, not to an inanimate object like a Bible. The word for an inanimate object that is "perfect" is not the word used in these scriptures**

1 Corinthians 2:6 *Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect <5046>: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:*

1 Corinthians 14:20 *Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men<5046>.*

Ephesians 4:13 *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a **perfect**<5046> man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*

Philippians 3:12 *Not as though I had already attained, either were already **perfect**<5046>: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 3:15 *Let us therefore, as many as be **perfect**<5046>, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*

Colossians 1:28 *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every **man** **perfect**<5046> in Christ Jesus:*

Colossians 4:12 *Epaphras, who is [one] of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand **perfect**<5046> and complete in all the will of God.*

1 Thessalonians 3:10 *Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might **perfect**<5046> that which is lacking in your faith?*

2 Timothy 3:17 *That the man of God may be **perfect**<5046>, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

Hebrews 2:10 *For it became him, for whom [are] all things, and by whom [are] all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation **perfect**<5046> through sufferings.*

James 1:4 *But let patience have [her] **perfect**<5046> work, that ye may be **perfect**<5046> and entire, wanting nothing.*

1 John 4:17 *Herein is our **love made perfect**<5046>, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.*

1 John 4:18 *There is no fear in love; but **perfect**<5046> love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made **perfect**<5046> in love.*

**These are some of the uses of other forms of the same word. Most are #5047 - #5050 in the Strong's Concordance.**

Luke 1:3 *It seemed good to me also, having had **perfect** understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,*

Luke 6:40 *The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is **perfect** shall be as his master.*

John 17:23 *I in them, and thou in me, that **they may be made perfect in one**; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

Acts 3:16 *And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this **perfect soundness** in the presence of you all.*

2 Corinthians 12:9 *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made **perfect in weakness**. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

2 Corinthians 13:11 *Finally, brethren, farewell. **Be perfect**, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*

Hebrews 6:1 *Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, **let us go on unto perfection**; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,*

Hebrews 7:11 *If therefore **perfection** were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need [was there] that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?*

1 Peter 1:13 *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope **to the end**<5049> for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; **{to the end: Gr. perfectly}***

Luke 1:45 *And blessed [is] she that believed: for there shall be a **performance**<5050> of those things which were told her from the Lord.*

1 Corinthians 13:10 *But when that which is **perfect** <5046> is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*

**If we are to correctly interpret this scripture it must be done in context and then look for the second and third witness to compare it to. All truth in scripture is in harmony and God's word will never contradict itself. This scripture is found in the "love" chapter. It is not wrong to correctly translate the word "charity" as love. There is hardly a preacher worth his salt that wouldn't take the liberty to transpose this word without any fear that he would be accused of adding to or taking away anything from scripture. There are many words like this in scripture that lose meaning because of the change in usage over time has changed the meaning. The word "perfect" is such a word and as we have seen in the previous scriptures does not mean "something that is flawless" as would be the modern meaning of that word if we were to use it today. The word charity also today has a very different connotation than it did in these scriptures.**

1 Corinthians 13:7 *Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

1 Corinthians 13:8 *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 Corinthians 13:9 ***For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.***

1 Corinthians 13:10 *But when that which is **perfect** is come, **then that which is in part shall be done away.***

1 Corinthians 13:11 *When I was a child, I spake as a child, **I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.***

1 Corinthians 13:12 *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 Corinthians 13:13 *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these [is] charity.* 1 Corinthians 14:1 *Follow after charity, and desire spiritual [gifts], but rather that ye may prophesy.*

**The context of these verses is referring to the state of man and his spiritual immaturity and how at Jesus' return that will change to complete maturity when we see him face to face. The words "became a man" in verse eleven is what the word "perfect" speaks of.**

4) that which is perfect

4a) consummate human integrity and virtue

4b) of men

4b1) full grown, adult, of full age, mature

**If this is true than there are other scriptures that say the same thing.**

1 John 3:1-3 *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 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. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

1 Corinthians 15:52-54 *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal [must] put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

2 Corinthians 3:18 *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.*

Ephesians 4:12-13 *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*

Ephesians 4:14 *That we [henceforth] be no more children, 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;*

Romans 12:2 *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<5046>, will of God.*

1 John 2:28 *And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

**The confirmation of these scriptures is surely enough to settle the intention, meaning and purpose of "that which is perfect" in the letter to the Corinthians.**

**The following are verbatim excerpts from the most respected biblical dictionaries and lexicons we have available today.**

**Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**

I. TELEIOS - signifies having reached its end (telos), finished, complete, perfect. It is used of persons, (a) primarily of physical development, then, with ethical import, fully grown, mature, I Cor.2:6; 14:20 ("men;" marg., "of full age"); Eph.4:13; Phil.3:15; Col.1:28; 4:12; in Heb.5:14, R.V., "fullgrown" or "of full age"; (b) complete, conveying the idea of goodness without necessary reference to maturity or what is expressed under (a), Matt.5:48; 19:21; Jas.1:4 (2nd part);...

**Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament**

5046 substantively that which is perfect: consummate human integrity and virtue, belonging to the perfect state of all things, to be ushered in by the return of Christ from heaven, 1 Cor.13:10; of men, full-grown, adult; of full age, mature,... until we rise to the same level of knowledge which we ascribe to a full-grown man, until we can be likened to a full-grown man, Eph.4:13; ..of mind and character, one who has reached the proper height of virtue and integrity: Mt.5:48; 19:21; Phil.3:15; Jas.1:4;...

**The only conclusion is that there is agreement among the scriptures that the word "perfect" in I Corinthians 13:10 is describing the state of man, not the printing of The Bible. To insist that this is a reference to the codification of scripture is to add too much to a verse in scripture that it does not say. It also confuses and puts in disorder the harmony of scripture. After all if this "that which is perfect has come" has already happened, does that mean knowledge has ceased? It can't have because too many scriptures encourage us to increase our knowledge and that in the end times knowledge will not cease but increase. Does it say that spiritual gifts have ceased? How can they when Paul himself says that all the gifts of the Spirit continue until Jesus' return.**

1 Corinthians 1:7 *So that ye come behind<5302>\* in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:*

\*5302 hustereo {hoos-ter-eh'-o}

AV - lack 3, be behind 2, want 2, come short 1, be in want 1, fail 1, come behind 1, be destitute 1, misc 4; 16

1) behind

1a) to come late or too tardily

1a1) to be left behind in the race and so fail to reach the goal, to fall short of the end

1a2) metaph. **fail to become a partaker**, fall back from

1b) **to be inferior in power**, influence and rank

1c) to fail, **be wanting**

1d) to be in want of, **lack**

2) to suffer want, **to be devoid of, to lack** (be inferior) in excellence, worth

1 Corinthians 1:5-7 *That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and [in] **all knowledge**; Even as the testimony of Christ was **confirmed in you**: So that ye **come behind in no gift**; waiting for the **coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**:*

Romans 11:29 *For the **gifts and calling of God [are] without repentance**.*

1 Corinthians 12:1 *Now concerning **spiritual [gifts]**, brethren, **I would not have you ignorant**.*

1 Corinthians 14:1 *Follow after **charity**, and **desire spiritual [gifts]**, but rather that ye may prophesy*

**Finally, any doctrine that contradicts the scriptures, that uses one scripture out of context is not a sound doctrine. It is a doctrine of man at best.**