

That Which Is Perfect

When would miracles end?

First Corinthians 13.8–10

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • March 20, In the year of our Lord, 2013

Prelude:

I. When would miracles end?

A. Notice the fifth infinitive in Daniel 9.24,

24 “Seventy weeks are determined
For your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression,
To make an end of sins,
To make reconciliation for iniquity,
To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy.”
(Dan 9.24)

1. Do you see how in the first century how Jesus
 - a) finished the transgression,
 - b) made an end of sins,
 - c) made reconciliation for iniquity, and
 - d) brought in everlasting righteousness?
2. Did He also do the last thing, anoint the Most Holy?
 - a) Hebrews 9.12–28 shows that He did.
 - b) So, at His first coming He fulfilled
 - (1) the first four purposes, and
 - (2) the sixth one.
 - c) Would someone argue that He did not accomplish the fifth one?

B. Zechariah 13.1–5 also shows

1. that the time of a sacrifice for sin,
2. would also signal the end of demon-possession and prophesying,

1 “In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. 2 It shall be in that day,” says the Lord of hosts, “that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land. 3 It shall come to pass that if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who begot him will say to him, ‘You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the Lord.’ And his father and mother who begot him shall thrust him through when he prophesies. 4 And it shall be in that day that every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive. 5 But he will say, ‘I am no prophet, I am a farmer; for a man taught me to keep cattle from my youth’” (Zec 13.1–5).

II. First Corinthians 13.8–10 also answers the question.

- A. Most people agree that modern-day miracles stand or fall on this text, and
- B. it all hinges on phrase “that which is perfect,” because
 1. when it comes
 2. miracles will cease.
 - a) Therefore, by looking at what the perfect is,
 - b) we shall see whether or not it has come.
 3. Is it Christ, heaven, love, moral perfection, sinlessness, or something else?

III. The Context

- A. First Corinthians 13 is in the middle of a context on miraculous gifts.
- B. After showing that not everyone worked miracles, or
 1. that not everyone in the first century could do all miracles,
 2. Paul showed that a more excellent way than miracles exists,

31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way (1Co 12.31).

C. Chapter 13 shows why love is more excellent than miraculous gifts.

1. Love never fails,
2. miracles will,
 - a) not in purpose, but
 - b) in existence.

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away (1Co 13.8–10).

Persuasion:

I. Contrast

A. What does the word perfect mean, especially in this context?

1. “Complete; whole; brought to its end; finished; full age; full measure.”
2. It does not always mean sinlessness.

B. Notice that in this context Paul also speaks of something that was “in part.”

1. What does that mean?
2. “Not complete; a piece of the whole; not brought to its end; not finished; not at full age; not at full measure.”

C. The contrast is (v. 10) :

1. “That which is perfect”
2. “That which is in part”

D. What is “that which is in part?”

1. v. 9 “we know in part...we prophesy in part.”

- a) They only had partial knowledge and prophecies.
 - b) Knowledge and prophecies they had came miraculously or from a preacher.
2. Paul did not say the body of truth would be done away, because
- a) we have prophecy in N. T.,
 - b) we have tongues in ordinary sense (explain),
 - c) we have knowledge.
3. What would be done away was connected with the “in part” (partial), i.e.,
- a) The miraculous operation which conveyed the body of truth.
 - b) New *inspired* knowledge and prophecy.
- E. Paul did not declare that knowledge would disappear.
- F. The “in part” dealt with revelation:
1. Revealed knowledge,
 2. Revealed prophecy.
- G. Therefore, the perfect thing (or complete thing) was the partial completed.
1. Complete or whole knowledge.
 2. The whole would not be different from the parts.
 - a) If each had a car part,
 - b) would not have elephant.
 3. Complete knowledge would replace partial knowledge.
 4. v. 12 this is Paul’s point,
 - 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known (1Co 13.12).
 5. “Perfect” — complete revelation, i.e., N. T.
- H. Not referring to Christ.

1. Neuter (neutral, neither male or female) gender (English or Greek), is used.
2. If masculine “When he who is perfect is come.”

II. Implications of Saying Miracles Today

- A. It implies God’s word is not complete, but more needs to be revealed.
- B. It implies that Jesus failed to reveal all truth to His apostles.

¹² “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come (John 16.12, 13).

1. Second Peter 1 shows all truth revealed,

³ as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue (2Pe 1.3).

III. Why Would Miracles Cease?

- A. Once they served their purposes, their need disappeared.
- B. Ephesians 4.11–16 shows them establishing the church,

¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love (Eph 4.11–16).

1. Apostles and prophets (associated with miraculous) given to do these things.
2. Evangelists, pastors, teachers to keep it in built condition.

C. Mark 16.17–20 confirming the gradually revealed word

17 And these signs will follow those who believe. In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” 19 So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen (Mark 16.17–20).

D. Hebrews 2.2–4 was confirmed

2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? (Heb 2.2–4).

E. Apostles died

1. Acts 8.13–18; 19.6; Romans 1.11 laying-on-of-hands by the apostles was necessary.
2. They are no longer here.