



Spiritual Gifts and Their Purpose

A Look at the Gifts of the Spirit

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Christians today often ask, are Spiritual gifts still active today. In this paper we'll look at the Scriptures to see what they have to say on the issue. Let's begin by looking at the purpose of the gifts. The Gifts and their purpose were prophesied in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 8 Isaiah prophesied the words of Christ

11 For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, {with...: Heb. in strength of hand}

12 Say ye not, A confederacy, to all *them* to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

13 Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and *let* him *be* your fear, and *let* him *be* your dread.

14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

15 And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

16 **Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.**

17 And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion. 19 And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? (Isa 8:11-19 KJV)

Verse 14 is quoted several times by the apostles and attributed to Christ. In verse 16 are the words of Christ prophesied by Isaiah, He says, bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. Jesus gave his law to His disciples and they took it to the nations. Then He says I and the children the Lord gave me are for signs and wonders "in Israel".

It's important to note that Christ says they are for signs and wonders in Israel.

KJV **Isaiah 28:1** Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty *is* a fading flower, which *are* on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine! {overcome: Heb. broken}
2 Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, *which* as a tempest of hail *and* a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.

3 The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet: {under...: Heb. with feet}

4 And the glorious beauty, which *is* on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, *and* as the hasty fruit before the summer; which *when* he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up. {eateth: Heb. swalloweth}

5 **In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people,**

6 **And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment,** and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.

7 But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble *in* judgment.

8 For all tables are full of vomit *and* filthiness, *so that there is* no place *clean*.

9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *them that are* weaned from the milk, *and* drawn from the breasts. {doctrine: Heb. the hearing?}

10 For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little: {must be: or, hath been}

11 **For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.** {stammering...: Heb. stammerings of lip} {will...: or, he hath spoken}

12 To whom he said, This *is* the rest *wherewith* ye may cause the weary to rest; and this *is* the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

13 **But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.**

14 Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which *is* in Jerusalem.

15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, **I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.**

17 Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. {trodden...: Heb. a treading down to it}

19 From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only *to* understand the report. {to...: or, when he shall make you to understand doctrine}

(Isa 28:1-19 KJV)

Both of these passages talk of judgment against Israel and these gifts being a sign to them. According to Isaiah the purpose of these signs and wonders is a warning to Israel of coming judgment.

Notice Isaiah says, with stammering lips and another tongue he will talk to "This people". "This People" is Israel. Both of these passages tell us that the gifts were signs to Israel.

Isaiah says specifically that the purpose of the gifts was to be a sign to Israel. In both passages Isaiah 8 and 25 statements are made that they apply to Christ. Both passages speak of judgment coming against Israel. That the Judgment came in AD 70. In chapter 8 Isaiah said,

¹³ Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and *let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.* ¹⁴ And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. (Isa 8:1 KJV)

He said that the Lord would be a sanctuary and a stone of stumbling. This was quoted by Paul and applied to Jesus. Jesus was a sanctuary to the believing Jews and a stumbling stone to the unbelieving Jews. Isaiah goes on.

¹⁶ Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. (Isa 8:1 KJV)

Here Jesus speaks of His law and testimony which went out from Jerusalem after his death.

¹⁷ And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. (Isa 8:1 KJV)

Jesus said that he was going away and Psalm 110 says that he was seated at God's right hand.

¹⁸ Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me *are* for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion. (Isa 8:1 KJV)

This statement is important. He says, 'I and the children you have given me are for signs and wonders in Israel'. The writer of Hebrews quotes this and applies it to Jesus and believers. Take note that "have given" is in the past tense, this is important because Jesus is going to say the same thing.

In Isaiah 28 there is the same idea, the Lord will be a diadem for the residue of his people, the believers. And for judgment to those who don't believe.

⁵ In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people, ⁶ And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate. (Isa 28:1 KJV)

After telling how the Israelites had stumbled in judgment he says,

⁹ Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *them that are* weaned from the milk, *and* drawn from the breasts. {doctrine: Heb. the hearing?} ¹⁰ For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little: {must be: or, hath been} (Isa 28:1 KJV)

This is speaking of Christ's teaching as He taught His disciples and believer that followed Him. He taught them line by line. Then He says,

¹¹ For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. {stammering...: Heb. stammerings of lip} {will...: or, he hath spoken} ¹² To whom he said, This *is* the rest *wherewith* ye may cause the weary to rest; and this *is* the refreshing: yet they would not hear. (Isa 28:11-12 KJV)

He says, with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. This people is Israel. He also says what the message of tongues would be.

¹² To whom he said, **This *is* the rest *wherewith* ye may cause the weary to rest; and this *is* the refreshing: yet they would not hear.** (Isa 28:1 KJV)

This is a reference to the new covenant and the rest from the Law that they sought. He continue showing how the teaching of the Lord was a snare to the unbelieving Jews

¹³ But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. (Isa 28:1 KJV)

He goes on from this point to describe the judgment that would come in Christ's time.

We know this passage in Isaiah 28 applies to the New Testament gift of tongues because Paul quotes this Passage in 1 Corinthians 14.

²⁰ Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. {men: Gr. perfect, or, of a ripe age}

²¹ In the law it is written, With *men of* other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. ²² Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying *serveth* not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. (1Co 14:1 KJV)

Notice Paul tells them not to children (immature) in understanding. So he wants them to understand. Then he says, "it is written in the Law, with men of other tongues and other lips I will speak unto this people and yet for all that they will not hear me." He want them to understand that God had said that He would speak to the Jews with men of other tongues (Gentiles) and other lips, yet the Jews would still not hear it. Having quoted Isaiah Paul draws a conclusion, that is that tongues were a sign for unbelievers, in context for the unbelieving Jews. The fact that God's signs and wonders which Israel had been partakers of throughout their history had now been

transferred to believer, both Jew and Gentile. This giving of the gifts to the believing Jews and Gentiles was a sign to Israel.

I wanted to make sure that this is clear, that Jesus and the apostles were for signs and wonders in Israel. Isaiah tells us that this is the purpose of the signs and wonders.

Moving on to the New Testament. Something that needs to be pointed out is that there is no recorded event in the New Testament where anyone received Spiritual gifts apart from the presence of an apostle. We have an incident in Acts 8 where Phillip and evangelist goes to Samaria and takes them the Gospel. He performs many miracles yet none of his converts receive any Spiritual gifts, he's not able to bestow the gifts.

⁵ **Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria**, and preached Christ unto them.

⁶ And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, **hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.**

⁷ For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

⁸ And there was great joy in that city.

⁹ But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

¹⁰ To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

¹¹ And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

¹² **But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.**

¹³ Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. {miracles...: Gr. signs and great miracles}

¹⁴ Now **when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard** that Samaria had received the word of God, **they sent unto them Peter and John:**

¹⁵ Who, when they were come down, **prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:**

¹⁶ (For as yet **he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**)

¹⁷ **Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.**

So, Phillip goes to Samaria, preaches the gospel and people believe and are baptized, yet none of them have received any Spiritual gifts, in Luke's words, He was fallen upon none of them. According to Luke the Spirit "falling on" someone is receiving Spiritual gifts. We see Luke use this same term in Acts 10.

⁴⁴ While Peter yet spake these words, **the Holy Ghost fell** on all them which heard the word.

⁴⁵ And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

⁴⁶ **For they heard them speak with tongues,** and magnify God.

According to Luke the Holy Spirit Was being given by the laying on of the apostles' hands.

¹⁸ And when Simon saw that **through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given,** he offered them money,

¹⁹ Saying, **Give me also this power,** that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. (Act 8:18-19 KJV)

Notice Simon's words, 'give me this power'. He saw that the apostles had the ability to bestow the gifts of the Spirit through the laying on of their hands and he wanted that same power. Paul also makes mention of the signs of an apostle in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians.

¹¹ I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chieftest apostles, though I be nothing.

¹² **Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you** in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

¹³ For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except *it be* that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong. (2Co 12:11-13 KJV)

We have further evidence of the necessity of an apostle's presence in the receiving of the gifts. The Apostle Paul started the Corinthian church and he says in his letter to the Corinthians,

⁴ I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;

⁵ That in every thing ye are enriched by him, **in all utterance, and in all knowledge;**

⁶ Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:

⁷ So that ye **come behind in no gift;** waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: (1Co 1:4-7 KJV)

We see that the Corinthian church was not lacking in Spiritual gifts. That's understandable as it was started by Paul. However, the church at Rome was not started by an apostle and look what Paul says.

⁷ **To all that be in Rome,** beloved of God, called *to be* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; {with: or, in}

¹⁰ Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

¹¹ For I long to see you, **that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;**
(Rom 1:7-11 KJV)

Paul says I long to see you that, or so that, I may impart unto you some Spiritual gift. He wants to do that so that they will be established. This church did not have the Spiritual gifts, they lacking unlike the Corinthian church which Paul said came behind in no gift. The only supernatural Spiritual gift the Church at Rome had was prophecy and that most likely was the gift given to the evangelist who had started the church in Rome. Notice what Paul says regarding this church.

⁵ So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith;

⁷ Or ministry, *let us wait* on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

⁸ Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. {giveth: or, imparteth} {with simplicity: or, liberally}

⁹ *Le* (Rom 12:5-9 KJV)

Notice, other than the gift of prophecy, all of the others are natural gifts. When Paul was addressing the Corinthians it was tongues, prophecy, knowledge and the like. Here addressing the Romans it's teaching, ministry, giving etc. As I said, there is the mention of prophecy but that would be the gift of the person coming and stating that church.

There is still additional information from Paul. Paul, writing to Timothy said,

⁶ Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir **up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.** (2Ti 1:6 KJV)

The Greek word translated "by" is "dia" and it means through.

Notice Paul says this again but a little differently.

¹⁴ Neglect not the **gift that is in thee**, which was given thee by prophecy, **with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.** (1Ti 4:14 KJV)

In this instance Paul uses a different word. He says "with" the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. The Greek word translated "with" is "meta" it means with, as in to accompany. The idea is that Paul and the presbytery laid hands on Timothy but the Spiritual gift as came through Paul as he said, it was through his hands.

There is also Jesus' words at the Great commission.

¹⁵ And he said unto them, **Go ye** into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

¹⁶ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

¹⁷ And **these signs shall follow them that believe**; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

¹⁸ They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. (Mar 16:15-18 KJV)

The context here is the Apostles being sent out on the Great commission. Jesus tells them to go and preach the gospel and that the signs would follow them that believe. Remember, the context here is the Apostles ministry, when "They" preach the gospels the signs would follow. That doesn't apply to all Christians. This is confirmed in the next statement.

²⁰ And **they** went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen. (Mar 16:20 KJV)

Mark says, and "They" went forth and preached the Lord working with them confirming the word with signs following. So, the Lord went with the apostles confirming their preaching with the gifts.

There is quite a bit of evidence showing that the receiving of the gifts "Required" the presence of an Apostle of Jesus Christ. Yes, it was the Spirit who gave the gifts, however, as we've seen He did so through the apostles.

In 1 Corinthian 13 Paul says that prophecy, knowledge, and tongues will cease. He says that Prophecy and knowledge will cease when that which is perfect comes. The cessation of tongues, however, is not tied to the coming of 'which is perfect'. When Paul says that prophecy and knowledge will cease he uses the Greek word **καταργέω**. In both instances it is in the passive voice. The Greek passive voice indicates that the subject is being acted upon by another. Thus Paul's statement they will cease when that which is perfect is come. The coming of that which is perfect will cause prophecy and knowledge to cease.

When Paul says that tongues will cease he uses the Greek word, **παύω** and it is in the middle voice. The Greek middle voice indicates that the subject is both performing and receiving the action of the verb. In other words he is doing it to himself. When this is applied to tongues it means that there is nothing that is going to cause tongues to cease, but rather tongues will cease of its own accord. This is what would be expected since Isaiah said that tongues was a sign of judgment to the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem. After the destruction of Jerusalem the sign would have been realized and would no longer be necessary.

Paul's analogies,

All three of the examples Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 13 refer to his statement of the gifts ceasing. Paul doesn't say we will see "HIM" face to face. He says,

1 Corinthians 13:10-12 (KJV)

But when that which is perfect 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. 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.

But then face to face" is contrasted to now seeing through a glass darkly. His example here like the others explains a process that takes place over time (Maturity). He says, but now we see through a glass darkly but when the maturity comes we will see face to face. In other words now things are not clear but when the maturity come things will be clear. He also speaks of being a child and growing into a man, a process that takes place over time (maturity). Again, he says I will know (Ginosko- to know) as I am known (Epiginosko- to have full knowledge). All of these examples involve a process that takes place over time, a process of maturing. Now let me ask you a question, how does the return of Christ fit these examples? Is the Coming of Christ going to take place over a period of time, or is it going to be as Jesus said, as a thief in the night? The appearing of the Lord will be a sudden event, it will not be a drawn out process.

[Revelation 3:11 (KJV)

Behold, **I come quickly**: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Revelation 22:7 (KJV)

Behold, **I come quickly**: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

Revelation 22:12 (KJV)

And, behold, **I come quickly**; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

Revelation 22:20 (KJV)

He which testifieth these things saith, **Surely I come quickly.** Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

So, to say that the coming of that which is perfect is Christ simply does not fit the examples that Paul has given.

Another problem with that interpretation is the grammar. The "perfect" is in the neuter gender in the Greek language, this usually refers to a "Thing" not a person. Additionally, where in Scripture is Jesus "Ever" referred to as a "THAT"? If Paul had said, when He who is perfect is come, you would probably have an argument, but "That"?

Now in regard to "When". I don't hold the idea that "The Perfect" is the canon, Paul is not speaking of the canon of Scripture in his letter, he was speaking of the gifts. In particular, prophecy, tongues, and knowledge, however, it was prophecy and knowledge that he said were in part. What was the prophecy and knowledge in regard to? Was it not the Gospel, the good news?

Isaiah 28:9-13 (KJV)

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.

For **precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line;** here a little, and there a little:

For **with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.**

[To whom he said, **This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing:** yet they would not hear.

But **the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line;** here a little, and there a little; **that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.**

So, it seems when the maturity would come, the fullness of the Gospel message, that which is in part (prophecy and knowledge) would no longer be necessary. Notice that this fits with Paul's examples, "The Faith" maturing over a period of time, which is what we see when we look at Scripture. The apostles matured in "The faith" as they ministered, they did not have everything revealed to them at once, It was a process of maturing. Notice Jesus' words to the apostles,

John 16:12-13 (KJV)

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.

This fact is shown when Peter went to Cornelius and asked 'Why have you sent for me'? It is also shown in the Jerusalem council when the apostles had to come together and decide whether or not the Gentiles should follow the Law. James says, 'it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us', so, they were learning "The Faith" as they went.

This leads to the question, did "The faith" come to maturity at some point and if so when? Well, Jude answers that question for us.

Jude 1:3 (KJV)

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you **that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.**

"Once delivered" is past tense. Therefore, "The Faith" at some point prior to Jude's writing his epistle, did reach maturity. All of this fits nicely with the examples that Paul gives describing the coming of "That which is Perfect".

Paul uses this same example of "Perfect" in Ephesians 4

Ephesians 4:11-15 (KJV)

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 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:** [

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; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even

Christ:

We see Paul speaking of the "Perfect" (Mature) man. Again we have this idea of a process of growing and maturing.

Some claim that this passage like 1 Corinthians 13 is speaking about when Christ returns. However, that simply doesn't fit the argument that Paul is making. He says that the reason for Christ giving these men was for the perfecting of the saints so that they would no more be tossed about with false teachings. If the perfect is the coming of Christ it would mean that the Christian is being prepared to resist false teachings in Christ's kingdom. Does anyone think there is going to be false teachers in the kingdom of God? Rather, Paul said that Christ gave those men to bring believers to maturity in the faith so that when they were faced with false teaching they would recognize it and not be led astray.

But, there is yet another problem with that interpretation. Paul tells them that Love is the better way and that it is better than Prophecy and knowledge. He contrasts two things here Prophecy, tongues and knowledge, which he said will cease, with faith, hope, and love, which he said will remain. We know what faith is, and we know what love is, but what does Paul mean by hope? That is easy enough to see in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 8:22-25 (KJV)

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

Paul says we are saved by hope, this hope is in the promise of God. However, Paul says when that hope is realized it is no longer hope. Now Paul was contrasting Prophecy, tongues, and knowledge, with faith, hope, and love. He says the latter three will remain. Well if you are correct and "The Perfect" is the return of Christ. Why would faith and hope continue? When Christ returns and we are with Him we won't need to have faith that he will

return, the writer of Hebrews puts it this way,

Hebrews 11:1 (KJV)

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

When Jesus returns he will be seen, there will be no need to have faith that he will fulfill His promise. Likewise there will be no need of hope since our hope will have been realized. As Paul said, hope that is seen is not hope. So, if these three remain, it must be prior to the return of Christ, because they will no longer be necessary when we see Him.