

Bible Controversies

Spiritual Gifts

Part 3 of 3 — Lessons 18–31 | A Study by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®
 Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Study

Part Three of Bible Controversies (Lessons 18–31) by Keith Blades of Enjoy the Bible Ministries® is the most extensive section of the series, examining the deep controversy surrounding spiritual gifts, signs, wonders, and miracles. Keith demonstrates that over 95% of all references to spiritual phenomena in scripture belong to the portion of the Bible pertaining to Israel’s program — because God covenanted with Israel to do marvels among them and for them to see His work in their midst. God made no such covenant with the Body of Christ. Instead, the principle for us in this dispensation is to walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Even the transitional spiritual gifts given at the beginning of this dispensation were temporary — God promised in 1 Corinthians 13 to do away with them when the completed word of God arrived, and He fulfilled that promise in Paul’s own lifetime. Today, all claimed spiritual phenomena are satanic counterfeits, and God’s power in this dispensation operates through the effectual working of His word in the inner man.



Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
Lesson 18	Introduction to the Spiritual Gifts Controversy — Right division again the key; Israel’s program vs. the Body of Christ; confusion is preventable
Lesson 19	The Danger of Ignorance About Spiritual Phenomena — Not always God’s will; Paul could not heal near the end; Satan’s counterfeits exploit ignorance
Lesson 20	95% of Spiritual Phenomena Belongs to Israel’s Program — God’s covenant to do marvels; Israel walked by sight; this is why so much is in the Old Testament
Lesson 21	Why the Gospels Are Full of Signs and Wonders — Israel’s climactic stage; kingdom at hand; miracles confirmed Christ’s identity to the nation
Lesson 22	Walk by Faith, Not by Sight — 2 Corinthians 5:7 vs. Exodus 34:10; God’s covenant with Israel contrasted with His program for us today
Lesson 23	Acts 2 and Israel’s Last Days — Pentecost belongs to Israel’s program; Joel’s prophecy; tongues and healing confirm Israel’s last days, not our program
Lesson 24	God’s Program for Us: Romans Through Philemon — Why rightly dividing became necessary at Acts 9; Paul’s unique commission; 1 Corinthians 12 introduced
Lesson 25	Only Satan Is in the Sign Business Today — Counterfeit phenomena; walk by faith prevents deception; Paul’s repeated warnings about Satan’s ministers
Lesson 26	The More Excellent Way: 1 Corinthians 13 — Spiritual gifts temporary and partial; “when the perfect is come”; gifts replaced by the completed word

Lesson	Core Focus
Lesson 27	Childish Things Put Away — The gifts were childish and partial; the completed word is mature and perfect; Corinthian saints to experience the transition
Lesson 28	Paul's Prison Epistles Declare the Transition — Colossians 1:25 fulfills the word; that which is perfect has come; gifts done away as promised
Lesson 29	Paul's Last Epistles Confirm Gifts Have Ceased — Paul cannot heal Timothy or Trophimus; the contrast with early ministry is intentional and instructive
Lesson 30	Only Satan Produces Spiritual Phenomena Today — God's power works inwardly in the inner man; Satan's counterfeits continue; Paul's warnings in later epistles
Lesson 31	Conclusion: God's Power in the Inner Man — The effectual working of His word; strength made perfect in weakness; the series summarized and concluded

Lesson Summaries

L18

Introduction to the Spiritual Gifts Controversy *The Third Major Bible Controversy Introduced*

- The controversy over spiritual gifts (tongues, healings, miracles, signs, and wonders) is widespread, persistent, and divisive among Christians
- Right division is again the key: failing to distinguish Israel's program from the Body of Christ's program is the primary cause of all the confusion
- The portion of the Bible describing God's program with us today is Romans–Philemon; everything else pertains to Israel's program or its fulfillment
- Israel's portion of scripture is full of signs, wonders, and spiritual phenomena; the Body of Christ's portion is not
- Christians who seek signs, wonders, and miraculous gifts are taking things that belong to Israel's program and misapplying them to themselves — the same error as with water baptism and the Lord's return

L19

The Danger of Ignorance About Spiritual Phenomena *Why Every Christian Must Understand This Issue*

- It is easy to be confused about spiritual gifts because the Bible demonstrates that it is not always God's will to have them in operation — even in Israel's program there were extended periods without miracles
- Paul worked many signs and miracles at the beginning of his ministry, but near the end he could not heal Timothy (1 Timothy 5:23), Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20), or Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:27)
- This demonstrates that God's will regarding spiritual phenomena is not constant — it changes in accordance with His purposes
- The critical danger: ignorance of what God teaches about spiritual phenomena makes Christians easy targets for Satan's counterfeit operations (1 Corinthians 12:1)
- No Christian can afford to be ignorant on this issue — deception is the direct result of ignorance when counterfeits are in operation

L20

95% of Spiritual Phenomena Belongs to Israel's Program *God's Covenant to Do Marvels — Exodus 34:10*

- Over 95% of all references to signs, wonders, miracles, and spiritual phenomena in the Bible are found in the portion pertaining to God's program with Israel
- This is not a coincidence — God specifically covenanted with Israel to do marvels among them and for them to see the work of the Lord in their very midst (Exodus 34:10)
- Because of this covenant, Israel was God's "sign people" — they were designed to walk by sight; expecting and receiving signs from God was appropriate for them
- The remaining 5% of references in Paul's epistles occurred only at the beginning of this dispensation for a specific, temporary purpose
- Understanding why spiritual phenomena dominate Israel's program is essential to understanding why they do not characterize our program today

L21

Why the Gospels Are Full of Signs and Wonders *Israel's Climactic Stage: The Kingdom of Heaven at Hand*

- The profuse miracles in the Gospel accounts are explained by Israel's program entering its climactic and final stage — the time when the kingdom of heaven was being proclaimed as at hand
- The Lord's miracles confirmed His identity as Israel's Messiah and King — they were signs to Israel (John 20:30–31) and fulfilled the covenant God made to do marvels before them
- The twelve apostles were also given power to perform signs and wonders because they were commissioned exclusively to the lost sheep of Israel — their sign ministry was Israel's program in operation
- "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (John 4:48) — the Lord's own characterization of Israel's sign-requiring disposition
- These Gospel miracles are not models for the Body of Christ to expect today — they belong to Israel's program and must be interpreted in that context

L22

Walk by Faith, Not by Sight *2 Corinthians 5:7 vs. Exodus 34:10 — Two Contrasting Programs*

- God made no covenant with the Body of Christ to do marvels among us or for us to see His work in our midst — in stark contrast to His covenant with Israel
- The defining principle of the Body of Christ's walk in this dispensation: "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7)
- "Not by sight" means exactly that — we do not look for God to demonstrate His power visibly, give us signs, or confirm His presence through outward phenomena
- Walking by sight in this dispensation — looking for signs, wonders, and miracles — is not only wrong but dangerous, because the only producer of visible phenomena today is the adversary
- This is God's better plan for us: walk by the completed, written word of God in faith, not by outward demonstrations in our circumstances

L23

Acts 2 and Israel's Last Days *Pentecost Belongs to Israel's Program, Not the Body of Christ*

- Acts 1–2 is Israel's program in its climactic final stage — the disciples are asking about the kingdom being restored to Israel (Acts 1:6) and the Lord speaks of the Holy Ghost baptism in that context
- Acts 2:17 quotes Joel 2: "in the last days I will pour out of my Spirit" — Joel's "last days" are Israel's last days, not the beginning of the Church Age
- The tongues, healings, and dramatic phenomena at Pentecost were signs to Israel confirming that their nationally-promised final days had arrived upon them
- Applying Acts 2 phenomena to the Body of Christ today is a right division error — it belongs to Israel's program exclusively and is not the pattern for the dispensation of grace
- The opening chapters of Acts, like the Gospels, are part of Israel's program and must be recognized as such before they can be correctly understood and applied

L24

God's Program for Us: Romans Through Philemon *Why Right Division Became Necessary at Acts 9*

- Before Acts 9, everything in scripture pertained to God's program with Israel — there was no need to rightly divide because only one program was in view
- When God raised up Paul in Acts 9 and revealed the dispensation of grace through him, a second program came into being — and right division became necessary
- Romans–Philemon is the portion of the Bible that describes what God is doing with us today — everything else pertains to Israel's program or its coming fulfillment
- Even in the early chapters of Acts, spiritual gifts were in operation as part of the transition period — but they had a specific, temporary purpose that would come to an end
- 1 Corinthians 12–13 is the key passage for understanding both how God gave gifts and why He would eventually do away with them — replaced by something far better

L25

Only Satan Is in the Sign Business Today *Counterfeit Phenomena and the Walk of Faith as Protection*

- Since God has made no covenant to produce signs and wonders for us today, those who walk by sight — expecting miraculous demonstrations — will be deceived by the adversary
- Satan has always counterfeited God's power — he did it in Egypt before Pharaoh, throughout Israel's program, and Paul warns he does it today in this dispensation
- Paul's warnings are specific and repeated: Satan's ministers transform themselves as ministers of righteousness, operate by sleight of men and cunning craftiness, and produce seducing doctrines (2 Corinthians 11; Ephesians 4:14; 1 Timothy 4:1)
- The walk of faith — going by the completed word of God rather than by sight

- is the God-given protection against satanic deception
- Knowing precisely what God says about spiritual phenomena today is not merely academic — it is a matter of being protected from or being exposed to satanic deception

L26

The More Excellent Way: 1 Corinthians 13 *Spiritual Gifts Were Temporary — “When That Which Is Perfect Is Come”*

- God did give spiritual gifts to the Body of Christ at the beginning of this dispensation — tongues, prophecy, knowledge, healings, and others — but only temporarily and for a specific purpose
- 1 Corinthians 12:31–13:10: Paul introduces something “more excellent” than all the spiritual gifts — and promises that the gifts are partial, temporary, and destined to be done away
- “When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (1 Corinthians 13:10) — a specific promise about the replacement of gifts with something better
- The spiritual gifts were the less excellent, partial, childish way of doing things — the more excellent thing that would replace them is the completed, written word of God
- This promise was made to the Corinthian saints themselves — they would witness the transition from gifts to completed word in their own lifetimes

L27

Childish Things Put Away *The Gifts Were Partial; The Completed Word Is Perfect*

- Paul’s illustration: as a child I spoke and understood as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things (1 Corinthians 13:11) — the gifts were the childish, partial stage
- Tongues shall cease, prophecy shall fail, knowledge shall vanish away — each gift was “in part” and was therefore designed to give way to the complete
- Counterfeit spiritual gifts were already operating in the Corinthian church — Paul’s extensive teaching in 1 Corinthians 12 was necessary so they would not be ignorant or deceived
- The Corinthians were going to experience in their own lifetime the transition from the less excellent way of spiritual gifts to the more excellent way of God’s completed word
- This passage is about the replacement of gifts within the dispensation of grace, not about eternity or a future coming of Christ

L28

Paul’s Prison Epistles Declare the Transition *Colossians 1:25 — Fulfilling the Word of God*

- In Paul’s prison epistles (Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians, Philemon), Paul begins to declare that the word of God is being completed and fulfilled
- Colossians 1:25: Paul says his God-given dispensation is “to fulfil the word of God” — this is the arrival of “that which is perfect,” the complete revelation promised in 1 Corinthians 13

- With the completion of the word, God fulfilled His promise and did away with the spiritual gifts He had given at the beginning of this dispensation
- The saints who had possessed spiritual gifts in the early stage of this dispensation were now in possession of something far better: the complete, written word of God
- This is vastly superior to partial gifts — the whole counsel of God in written form, available to all believers throughout the entire dispensation

L29

Paul's Last Epistles Confirm Gifts Have Ceased *The Completed Word Has Replaced Them — Confirmed in Practice*

- Paul's final letters (2 Timothy, Titus) demonstrate that miraculous gifts have ceased in practice — Paul cannot heal Timothy (1 Timothy 5:23) or Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20)
- The contrast with Paul's early ministry — when he worked many signs, wonders, and healings — is stark, intentional, and instructive
- This transition from gifts to completed word is exactly what God promised in 1 Corinthians 13: when the perfect came, the partial would be done away
- The completed, written word of God is our possession today — not spiritual gifts; those have been retired by God Himself
- Christians who seek spiritual gifts today are seeking something God has already replaced with something better, and by doing so they open themselves to satanic counterfeits

L30

Only Satan Produces Spiritual Phenomena Today *The Adversary's Counterfeits Continue — Paul's Warnings in the Later Epistles*

- Though God has done away with producing spiritual phenomena in this dispensation, Satan has not — he is the only one still in that business today
- Paul's later and final epistles specifically warn about seducing spirits, doctrines of devils, and false ministers who produce counterfeit spiritual demonstrations (1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:8; 2 Corinthians 11:13–15)
- Any and all claimed miraculous gifts, tongues, healings, or signs today are satanic counterfeits — not genuine works of God
- God's power in this dispensation is not manifested in outward signs and circumstances — it operates inwardly through the effectual working of His word
- Christians grounded in Paul's teaching on this issue are protected; those who are ignorant are easy targets for being seduced and deceived by Satan's policy of evil

L31

Conclusion: God's Power in the Inner Man *The Effectual Working of His Word — The Series Concluded*

- God's power is not absent in this dispensation — but it works differently from how it worked in Israel's program: not in outward, visible circumstances but in the inner man
- "His strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9) — outward weakness is the context in which God's inner working is most clearly seen

- The effectual working of His power in our inner man (Ephesians 3:16–20; Colossians 1:9–11) — spiritual transformation, the knowledge of God, soundness of mind — is God’s program for us
- Series conclusion: every Bible controversy examined — the Lord’s return, water baptism, spiritual gifts — is resolved by the same remedy: rightly divide the word of truth
- The command of 2 Timothy 2:15 is not optional — it is God’s instruction for handling His word honestly; following it eliminates confusion and settles every controversy

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

Spiritual Phenomena Are Natural to Israel’s Program, Not Ours

Over 95% of all references to signs, wonders, miracles, and spiritual phenomena in scripture are found in the portion of the Bible pertaining to God’s program with Israel. This is because God covenanted with Israel to do marvels among them and for them to see the work of the Lord in their very midst (Exodus 34:10). Israel is God’s sign people — designed by God to walk by sight, to expect signs and wonders, and to require them as confirmation. No such covenant exists for the Body of Christ in this dispensation. We were never promised that we would see God’s work in our midst by way of signs and miracles. Therefore Christians today who seek such things are seeking things that belong to Israel’s program, not to ours.

The Principle of This Dispensation Is Walk by Faith, Not by Sight

In direct and intentional contrast to His covenant with Israel to do marvels visible to their eyes, God’s instruction to the Body of Christ in this dispensation of grace is plain: “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). The expression “not by sight” is precise — it means we do not evaluate God’s working or seek His confirmation through visible phenomena. We do not look for signs, we do not seek miraculous demonstrations, and we do not test truth by emotional experience. We go by the completed word of God in faith. This is not a lesser arrangement — it is God’s intended and better way of dealing with us in this mature dispensation.

Spiritual Gifts Were Temporary and Have Been Replaced by the Completed Word

God did give spiritual gifts at the beginning of this dispensation of grace, but only for a temporary and specific purpose. In 1 Corinthians 13:8–10, Paul promised that the gifts were partial and would be done away when “that which is perfect” arrived. The perfect is the completed, written word of God — the full revelation of knowledge that Paul was completing in his later epistles. Paul’s prison letters declare this completion (Colossians 1:25), and his final letters demonstrate it practically: he can no longer heal. The spiritual gifts were the less excellent, childish way; the completed written word is the more excellent, mature way. God has replaced gifts with something far better, and He has done so permanently.

All Claimed Spiritual Phenomena Today Are Satanic Counterfeits

Since God has done away with producing signs, wonders, miracles, and spiritual gifts in this dispensation, any and all claimed spiritual phenomena today — tongues, healings, prophecies, miraculous signs — are not genuine works of God. They are counterfeits produced by Satan and his ministers, who have always imitated the power of God as one of their most successful tactics. Paul’s warnings about this are specific and repeated: seducing spirits, doctrines of devils, false apostles, deceitful workers, ministers of Satan transformed into ministers of righteousness. Ignorance of this reality makes Christians vulnerable to deception. Knowledge of it — grounded in Paul’s teaching — is the only reliable protection.

Key Scripture References

Reference	Significance in This Study
Exodus 34:10	God's covenant with Israel to do marvels and for them to see His work — the foundation of Israel's sign program; no such covenant exists for the Body of Christ
2 Corinthians 5:7	"We walk by faith, not by sight" — the defining principle of the Body of Christ's walk; the direct contrast to Israel's sign-based covenant
1 Corinthians 12:1–3	Warning against ignorance about spiritual gifts; even in Corinth, counterfeit phenomena were present — knowledge is the only protection
1 Corinthians 13:8–10	Tongues, prophecy, and knowledge shall cease and be done away when the perfect comes — God's own promise to remove the gifts and replace them
Colossians 1:25	Paul fulfilling (completing) the word of God — the arrival of "that which is perfect" promised in 1 Corinthians 13; the transition confirmed
2 Timothy 4:20	Paul could not heal Trophimus — a practical demonstration that the transitional gifts had ceased, confirming 1 Corinthians 13's promise fulfilled
2 Timothy 3:16–17	All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable — the completed word is sufficient for every need; no gifts or signs are required
Ephesians 3:16–20	God's power working in our inner man — the manner in which God's power operates in this dispensation; inward, not outward and visible

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