

Essential Doctrines

Part 4 — Spiritual Gifts

An 8-Lesson Study by Keith Blades | © Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Expanded Study Guide & Lesson Summaries

About This Part

Part 4 of Essential Doctrines examines the fourth of the six essential doctrines: Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1). Spanning eight lessons, this is the most extensive section in the series. Keith exposes three categories of ignorance that leave believers defenseless against Satanic counterfeiting, establishes that signs and wonders naturally belong to Israel's covenanted program, identifies the five operations of God that the gifts were designed to accomplish, and demonstrates from 1 Corinthians 13 that a 'more excellent way' — the completed written Word of God — supersedes all spiritual gifts. Paul's later epistles confirm the gifts ceased in his lifetime. The final lessons address the ongoing Satanic counterfeiting operation and provide the doctrinal framework for identifying and avoiding it today.



www.enjoythebible.org

Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
Lesson 15	Why ignorance of spiritual gifts is dangerous: three areas of ignorance, the covenantal naturalness of signs to Israel, and the dispensational contrast between Israel's walk-by-sight and our walk-by-faith
Lesson 16	The mechanics of Satanic counterfeiting: how dumb idols appeared to speak, how Satanic signs are genuinely miraculous (not illusion), and why the gift of tongues is the Adversary's preferred instrument of deception
Lesson 17	The threefold role of the Godhead in spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:4-6): gifts from the Spirit, administrations serving the Lord, and operations designed by the Father — the critical framework for evaluating any gift
Lesson 18	The five operations of God from 1 Corinthians 12:28-31: ranking the gifts according to what each was designed to accomplish, and the introduction of the 'more excellent way' that surpasses all of them
Lesson 19	The more excellent way identified: the most excellent ministry of the Holy Spirit is teaching agape love (not gifts), and 'that which is perfect' — the completed written Word of God — is the superior means of all five operations
Lesson 20	Historical verification that the gifts ceased: evidence from Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Timothy that 'that which is perfect' arrived in Paul's lifetime, the gifts were done away exactly as predicted, and faith, hope, and charity alone abide
Lesson 21	The gifts were literally gone by Paul's final ministry — Timothy's medicine, Trophimus left sick, Luke the physician — followed by a survey of 1 Corinthians 14 exposing three

Lesson	Core Focus
	sources of tongues-chaos and establishing God as the author of peace, not confusion
Lesson 22	The Satanic counterfeit continues: identifying the ongoing operation of false apostles, profane vain babblings, sleight of men, and the practical doctrinal response — refuse, shun, and avoid on the basis of rightly dividing the word of truth

Lesson Summaries

L15

Lesson 15 — Why You Cannot Afford to Be Ignorant of Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:1–3 | Three areas of ignorance that leave believers defenseless against Satanic counterfeits

Lesson 15 establishes the essential foundation for the entire spiritual gifts study by exposing three categories of ignorance that prime believers for deception — Satanic counterfeiting power, the covenantal ownership of signs and wonders by Israel, and the dispensational contrast between Israel's walk-by-sight program and the Body of Christ's walk-by-faith norm.

The Primary Danger — Satanic Counterfeiting

- Ignorance of this doctrine guarantees deception by the satanic policy of evil — Paul's warning in 1 Cor. 12:1 is not academic; it is a survival alert for believers in this dispensation
- The Corinthians had already been deceived by counterfeit spiritual phenomenon as idol-worshippers and were being deceived again in their assembly — 1 Cor. 12:3 reveals someone calling Jesus accursed while claiming to speak by the Holy Spirit
- Verse 2: 'Carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led' — swept along by genuine Satanic phenomenon without any ability to detect it; the experience felt entirely authentic
- The only defense against spiritual counterfeiting is precise doctrinal knowledge — you cannot detect counterfeit gifts by what you see or hear; only by exact application of what God says

Signs and Wonders Belong to Israel's Program

- Ninety-eight to ninety-nine percent of all biblical references to signs, wonders, and miracles appear in the portion of Scripture pertaining to God's program with Israel — they are not naturally ours
- Exodus 34:10 — God made a covenant with Israel to 'do marvels' among them and for Israel to 'see the work of the LORD' — walking by sight was covenanted for Israel, not for the Body of Christ
- Psalm 74:9 — Israel's cry, 'We see not our signs' — they understood signs were their covenantal birthright; 1 Cor. 1:22 — 'The Jews require a sign' (a requirement from their covenant, not a preference)
- Joel 2:28-29 — Spiritual gifts poured on 'your sons and your daughters' (Israel's); confirmed by Peter on Pentecost — the gift of tongues was Israel's covenanted possession prophetically

The Dispensational Contrast — Walk by Faith, Not by Sight

- Israel's program: walk by sight — covenanted spiritual phenomenon was the designed norm; Body of Christ's program: 2 Cor. 5:7 — 'We walk by faith, not by sight' — stark programmatic contrast
- The Adversary exploits ignorance of this contrast — if you don't understand that spiritual phenomenon is not the norm for our program, you become an easy candidate for his counterfeits
- Acts 10:45-46 — The circumcision believers were astonished that Gentiles received the gift of the Holy Ghost — a reaction that was entirely natural, because they knew those gifts belonged to Israel
- God gave Gentile members of the Body of Christ spiritual gifts at the start of the dispensation for a specific, limited, purposeful reason — ignorance of that reason creates additional vulnerability to the Charismatic counterfeit

L16

Lesson 16 — The Counterfeiting Capacity of the Satanic Policy of Evil

1 Corinthians 12:2-3 | How Satan successfully fakes the power of God and why tongues is his preferred counterfeit

Lesson 16 moves from categories of ignorance into the mechanics of Satanic counterfeiting — examining how dumb idols appeared to speak, establishing that Satanic signs are genuinely miraculous (not illusion), and identifying the gift of tongues as the Adversary's instrument of choice throughout this dispensation.

How Dumb Idols Appeared to Speak

- 'Carried away unto these dumb idols' (1 Cor. 12:2) — 'dumb' means unable to vocalize, yet the Corinthians were convinced the idols spoke; the mechanism was a Satanic counterfeit operating through an idol attendant
- Psalm 115:5,7 — 'They have mouths, but they speak not...neither speak they through their throat' — both expressions because heathen idolaters believed the idol spoke through its throat without moving its lips
- Acts 8:9-11 — Simon the Sorcerer: genuine Satanic phenomenon convinced an entire Samaritan population he was 'the great power of God' — they were not pretending; the counterfeit was fully convincing
- Zechariah 10:2 — 'The idols have spoken vanity' — God's own confirmation that idols were given to speak through Satanic phenomenon; Israel's prophets warned of this repeatedly

Satanic Counterfeiting Is Genuine Miracle Power — Not Illusion

- Deuteronomy 13:1-3 — A false prophet's sign or wonder would actually come to pass — God warned that the miracle itself is genuine; discernment is by the message, never by the miracle
- Matthew 7:22-23 — People who prophesied, cast out devils, and did many wonderful works in Christ's name were people He never knew — Satanic operators not even aware of their own deception
- Matthew 24:24 — False Christs and false prophets show 'great signs and wonders' sufficient to deceive the very elect if possible — the quality of counterfeit is that high
- Revelation 13:11-15 — The False Prophet calls down fire from heaven and gives life to the image of the Beast — peak Satanic miracle power; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 — Man of Sin comes 'with all power and signs and lying wonders'

The Gift of Tongues — Satan's Preferred Counterfeit

- 1 Corinthians 12:3 — Someone in Corinth was calling Jesus accursed while claiming to speak by the Spirit of God — counterfeit tongues already operating in the assembly
- Tongues is the Adversary's pet counterfeit for two reasons: (1) most emotionally captivating to flesh; (2) easiest to fake through emotional stimulation or natural multilingualism
- 2 Corinthians 11 — False apostles in Corinth performing deceitful works validating another Jesus, another spirit, another gospel — by Paul's second epistle the counterfeit had escalated significantly
- When God is out of the spiritual gifts business (as 1 Cor. 13 will declare), every spiritual phenomenon remaining in the dispensation is either Satanic counterfeit or human fakery — making doctrinal precision essential

L17

Lesson 17 — The Threefold Role of the Godhead in Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:4–27 | Diversities of gifts, differences of administrations, and diversities of operations

Lesson 17 surveys 1 Corinthians 12:4-27 to establish the corrective doctrinal framework the Corinthians needed: each member of the Godhead has a distinct role in the spiritual gifts system, and gifts must be evaluated not by their impressiveness but by the operations of God the Father they are designed to accomplish.

Three Roles of the Godhead — The Evaluative Framework

- 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 — Three parallel statements: the Holy Spirit gives diversities of gifts; the Lord (Christ) is served by differences of administrations; the Father designs and directs diversities of operations
- The Holy Spirit does not give gifts as a maverick — he gives according to a master plan designed by the Father and in service of the Lord; gifts serve administrations, administrations serve the Lord, service to the Lord accomplishes the Father's operations
- The Corinthians recognized gifts as Spirit manifestations (v. 7) but failed to understand the other two roles — producing confusion and misranking that the policy of evil fully exploited
- The evaluative hierarchy: the ranking of any gift is determined by the ranking of the operation it serves — impressiveness or emotional impact is irrelevant to this evaluation

The Nine Manifestation Gifts and the Body Analogy

- 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 — Nine gifts listed: word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healings (always plural), working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues
- Gifts of healings is always cited in the plural — pointing to the specific, covenantally meaningful healings associated with Israel's program (sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, cleansing to lepers — Israel's hallmark signs)
- Gift of discerning of spirits — supernatural capacity to detect Satanic operation; directly relevant to the Corinthian problem of counterfeit gifts in the assembly
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 — The body analogy establishes that diverse gifts are designed for cooperation, not competition; God has 'set' the members purposefully (v. 18), using the same word used in v. 28 for the ranking of gifts

Diversities of Operations — The Critical Concept for Chapter 13

- Verse 6 — 'Diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all' — the most important statement in the chapter for everything that follows in chapters 13 and 14
- Operations of God are specific, identifiable objectives God designed the gifts to accomplish; each gift lines up with at least one operation; gift rankings follow directly from operation rankings
- Without understanding the operations of God, a believer evaluates spiritual gifts by emotional impact — exactly the Corinthian error that the policy of evil exploited to produce disorder
- Verse 31 — 'Covet earnestly the best gifts' — coveting the best requires knowing which gifts are best, which requires understanding which operations they serve, which requires understanding all of this framework

L18

Lesson 18 — The Five Operations of God and the Gift Rankings

1 Corinthians 12:28–31 | Why certain gifts are 'best' and what each operation of God was designed to accomplish

Lesson 18 unpacks the five distinct operations of God from 1 Corinthians 12:28-31, assigning each spiritual gift to its divinely-designed purpose — an analysis that is the essential prerequisite for appreciating why the completed written Word of God is the 'more excellent way' that supersedes every gift.

Operations One through Three — Assembly, Gentiles, and Israel

- Operation One — Communication of God's Word in the local assembly: apostles first, prophets second, teachers third (12:28) — all three serve the same primary operation and are therefore the 'best' gifts for the local assembly context
- 1 Timothy 3:15 — The local assembly is 'the pillar and ground of the truth'; gifts designed to accomplish that function are the 'best'; these are the gifts to 'covet earnestly' for assembly use
- Operation Two — Confirmation to Gentiles: working of miracles was designed to confirm God's reality in dealing with the Gentiles — Romans 15:18-19 — 'mighty signs and wonders' made Gentiles obedient and confirmed the dispensational change
- Operation Three — Sign to Israel: gifts of healings (always plural, always Israel's hallmark signs: blind seeing, lame walking, lepers cleansed) taken and given to Gentiles as God's sign that he had turned from Israel to visit the Gentiles (Acts 15:14)

Operations Four and Five — Orderliness and Final Sign to Israel

- Operation Four — Assembly orderliness: helps and governments maintained local assembly functioning as God designed it, with peace and proper procedure, enabling edification to occur
- Operation Five — Final sign to unbelieving Israel: the gift of tongues was designed as a sign to unbelieving Israelites outside the assembly, quoting Isaiah 28 — 'with men of other tongues...will I speak unto this people...and yet for all that will they not hear me' (1 Cor. 14:21-22)
- Tongues was never designed for the local assembly — when operated there (as in Corinth), it produced disorder precisely because it was misapplied outside its designed operation
- The Corinthian inversion was now fully exposed: they treated the lowest-ranked gift (tongues, designed for unbelieving Israel outside the assembly) as the supreme gift inside the assembly

The 'More Excellent Way' Introduced

- 1 Corinthians 12:31b — 'Yet shew I unto you a more excellent way' — a superior means of accomplishing all five operations is coming; not better than some gifts but more excellent than all of them combined
- 'More excellent' is a comparative superlative — it is the ceiling, not a stepping stone; believers who understand the operations of God should be zealous for this, not resistant to it
- The more excellent way — identified in Lesson 19 as the completed written Word of God — achieves every operation of God in a superior manner for the full duration of the dispensation of grace

L19

Lesson 19 — The More Excellent Way: Why Spiritual Gifts Were Temporary

1 Corinthians 13:1–10 | *Agape love is the most excellent ministry; 'that which is perfect' ends the gifts*

Lesson 19 addresses the heart of 1 Corinthians 13 — establishing that the most excellent ministry of the Holy Spirit is not gifting but teaching agape love, that spiritual gifts were always temporary (partial knowledge heading toward perfect knowledge), and that 'that which is perfect' — the completed written Word of God — is the more excellent way that surpasses all gifts.

The Most Excellent Ministry — Agape Love, Not Gifts

- 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 — Possessing all spiritual gifts without charity produces nothing: sounding brass, nothing, profit nothing — zero genuine spiritual benefit without the Holy Spirit's most excellent ministry
- The most excellent ministry of the Holy Spirit is not giving spiritual gifts but teaching believers the agape love of God — to value and esteem as God values and esteems
- Romans 5:5 — His very first described ministry in the edification design: shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts; Galatians 5:22 — first fruit of the Spirit is love (agape), not any gift
- 1 Thessalonians 4:9 — 'Taught of God to love one another' — the Holy Spirit's teaching ministry producing God's charity; 1 Cor. 13:13 — charity is the greatest because it is produced by the most excellent, never-failing ministry

Charity Never Fails — But the Gifts Will

- 1 Corinthians 13:8 — Three representatives of three gift categories: 'prophecies shall fail' (gradual petering out), 'tongues shall cease' (abrupt cease-and-desist event), 'knowledge shall vanish away' (here then gone)
- These three shades of cessation match three classification groups from chapter 12 — all gifts are done away; the different terminology describes different cessation patterns for different gift groups
- The contrast is absolute: charity (most excellent, never fails) vs. gifts (less excellent, will definitely be done away) — the Corinthians had the less excellent and were missing the most excellent

Partial Knowledge, Perfect Knowledge, and the Gifts' Temporary Nature

- 1 Corinthians 13:9-10 — 'We know in part, and we prophesy in part: but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away' — gifts existed because the knowledge God wanted believers to possess was incomplete

- 'That which is perfect' is neuter (not a person), not the Lord's return, not the kingdom — it is the completion of the written revelation of God; the antithesis of the partial knowledge of verse 9 (same subject matter, now complete)
- Psalm 138 — 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name' — God has always valued his written word above every other means of doing things; the completed written Word is the supreme expression of this
- All five operations of God are better accomplished by the completed written Word than by the less excellent means of spiritual gifts — the more excellent way surpasses not just one operation but all five

L20

Lesson 20 — The More Excellent Way Has Arrived: Confirming 'That Which Is Perfect'

1 Corinthians 13:11–13; Ephesians 4; Colossians 1–2; 2 Timothy 3–4 | The gifts ceased in Paul's lifetime exactly as predicted

Lesson 20 moves from the declaration of 1 Corinthians 13 to its historical verification — demonstrating through Paul's prison epistles and final letters that 'that which is perfect' arrived during Paul's own ministry, the gifts were done away exactly as predicted, and all that remains is faith, hope, and charity sustained by the completed written Word of God.

The Child-to-Man Analogy — Growing Up into That Which Is Perfect

- 1 Corinthians 13:11 — 'When I was a child, I spake as a child...but when I became a man, I put away childish things' — spiritual gifts are 'childish things': not shameful, but appropriate only for a season of partial knowledge
- The transition is natural — a grown man who clings to childhood toys is spiritually unbalanced; clinging to spiritual gifts after the completed Word arrives is the same kind of immaturity
- 1 Corinthians 13:12 — 'See through a glass darkly' (partial knowledge, dim mirror) vs. 'face to face' (completed Word clarity) — the final realm of knowledge being 'known as I am known' points to the exaltation-with-Christ doctrine of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians
- Ephesians 4:14 — 'No more children tossed to and fro' — the Adversary's goal is to keep believers as children through sleight of men and cunning craftiness; counterfeit spiritual phenomenon is his primary tool for doing so

Evidence from Paul's Prison Epistles — 'He Gave' Past Tense

- Ephesians 4:11 — 'He gave' (past tense) apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers — by the time Ephesians is written the giving of these gifts is already past tense, not continuing
- Ephesians 4:13 — 'Till we all come in the unity of the faith...unto a perfect man' — the 'till' establishes these gifts had a specific, objective-bound terminus; when the doctrinal objective was met, the gifts stopped
- Colossians 1:25 — 'To fulfill the word of God' — 'fulfill' means to fully fill, complete; Paul's prison ministry is the completion of the written Word; Colossians 2:2-3 — 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (when you have all, the partial situation is over)
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 — 'All scripture...that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works' — 'all' and 'thoroughly furnished' confirm the completed state of the written Word

What Now Abides — And What Was Done Away

- 1 Corinthians 13:13 — 'And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three' — not one spiritual gift is in the list of what abides; all gifts are done away; these three

are sustained by the completed Word

- God has been out of the spiritual gifts business since the close of Paul's ministry — every spiritual phenomenon operating in this dispensation since then is Satanic counterfeit or human fakery
- 2 Timothy 4:6-7, 13 — Paul at end of his life: 'I have finished my course'; asks for 'the books and the parchments' — one of his final acts is assembling the completed Bible; the era of gifts is definitively over

L21

Lesson 21 — The Gifts Were Done Away: Historical Proof and the Survey of 1 Corinthians 14

1 Timothy 5; 2 Timothy 4; Colossians 4; 1 Corinthians 14:1–33 | Timothy's medicine, Trophimus sick, and three sources of tongues-chaos

Lesson 21 verifies from Paul's final ministry that the spiritual gifts actually ceased — using Timothy's medicine, Trophimus left sick, and Luke the physician as documentary evidence — then surveys 1 Corinthians 14 to expose three sources of tongues-chaos in Corinth and establish that God is the author of peace, not the confusion the Adversary was producing through ignorance.

The Gifts Were Literally Gone — Paul's Own Final Ministry

- 1 Timothy 5:23 — Paul prescribes wine for Timothy's stomach infirmities rather than healing him — if the gift of healing remained, he would have used it; the gift was gone, exactly as predicted
- 2 Timothy 4:20 — 'Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick' — Paul could not heal a traveling companion; Colossians 4:14 — Luke is 'the beloved physician'; Paul valued medical expertise precisely because supernatural healing was no longer available
- No miraculous prison deliverance in Paul's Roman imprisonment — unlike Acts 16 (earthquake and deliverance), no sign or wonder accompanied his captivity; he knew the miraculous era was definitively over
- 1 Timothy 3:1-7 — Bishop qualifications are entirely edification-based (spiritual maturity through doctrine), not gift-based; if God were still supernaturally gifting pastors, a qualification process would be unnecessary

Three Sources of Tongues-Chaos in Corinth

- When 1 Cor. 14:23 acknowledges 'the whole church' speaks in tongues despite chapter 12 establishing not everyone had the gift, three categories are implied: Satanic counterfeit operators, persons faking it emotionally or deliberately, and natural multilingual speakers using second languages in assembly
- The person with the legitimate gift of tongues was not the problem — the three illegitimate categories produced the chaos; Paul's correctives in chapter 14 target these, not the legitimate gift-holder
- 'Ye may all prophesy' (v.24) does not mean everyone had the gift of prophet — 'prophesy' in chapter 14 is used broadly to include the assembly handling and applying prophetic revelation unto edification
- 1 Corinthians 14:18-19 — Paul spoke in tongues more than all of them, legitimately, outside the assembly where it belonged; yet in the church he would rather speak five understandable words than ten thousand in an unknown tongue

God Is Not the Author of Confusion

- 1 Corinthians 14:33 — 'God is not the author of confusion, but of peace' — the chaos at Corinth was not God's doing; leaving only two sources: the Corinthians' own carnality and the Adversary behind it

- James 3:15-16 — Wisdom from below is 'earthly, sensual, devilish'; 'where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work' — the Devil is the author of confusion; the Corinthians were cooperating with him through ignorance
- The gift of tongues was designed as a sign to unbelieving Israel (1 Cor. 14:21-22; Isaiah 28) — three Jewish populations in Acts received this final sign; when Paul made his final declaration at Rome (Acts 28:25-28), the gift instantly ceased everywhere

L22

Lesson 22 — Satanic Counterfeiting Continues: Identifying and Avoiding It

2 Corinthians 11; Ephesians 4; 1 Timothy 4; 2 Timothy 2–3 | God is out of the spiritual phenomenon business; the Adversary is not

Lesson 22 concludes Part 4 by demonstrating that once the completed Word of God arrived and spiritual gifts were done away, the Satanic policy of evil continued its counterfeiting operation unabated — intensifying throughout the dispensation — and provides the doctrinal framework for identifying, avoiding, and refusing to be deceived by counterfeit spiritual phenomenon today.

The Counterfeit Continues — Satan as Angel of Light

- 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 — False apostles are 'deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ'; Satan transforms himself into an angel of light; his ministers transform into ministers of righteousness
- In this dispensation Satan operates differently than in Israel's program — not as a roaring lion of darkness but as an angel of light, appearing thoroughly legitimate and righteous; this makes detection entirely doctrinal, never experiential
- 2 Corinthians 11:4 — The false apostles preached 'another Jesus, another spirit, another gospel' — counterfeit spiritual phenomenon was the vehicle for getting corrupt doctrine accepted; the phenomenon validates the message in undiscerning minds
- Paul glories in his infirmities (2 Cor. 12), not in signs and wonders — anyone promoting miracles as validation of ministry is immediately identified as Satanic in character by this standard

Sleight of Men and Cunning Craftiness

- Ephesians 4:14 — 'Sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive' — magician terminology; the hand is quicker than the eye; even knowing you're being tricked, you cannot figure out how
- 2 Timothy 3:13 — 'Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived' — the Satanic counterfeit operation intensifies as the dispensation proceeds; it does not diminish
- Colossians 2:18-19 — Angel worship, claimed visions, extra-Biblical revelations: Paul says these men 'have not seen' what they claim; 1 Timothy 6:16 — 'whom no man hath seen, nor can see' — anyone claiming a vision of God today is marked immediately
- 2 Timothy 3:5-8 — 'Form of godliness but denying the power thereof' — the power is sound doctrine; they substitute phenomenon for it; 'as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses' — counterfeit miracles are the mechanism of resistance to truth

The Practical Response — Refuse, Shun, Avoid

- 1 Timothy 6:20 — 'Profane and vain babblings' — the word 'babblings' traces to Babel (Genesis 11); incoherent speech claiming divine inspiration; counterfeit tongues continuing by another name long after the genuine gift ceased
- 2 Timothy 2:16 — 'Shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness' — Paul does not say expose or debate them; he says shun them, avoid them entirely
- 1 Timothy 4:6 — The good minister puts brethren 'in remembrance of these things' and is 'nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine' — the Word is the only weapon and the only protection; no other defense is provided
- 2 Timothy 2:15 — 'Rightly dividing the word of truth' is the foundational qualification separating those who can identify counterfeit spiritual phenomenon from those who will inevitably be taken in by it

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

Signs, Wonders, and Miracles Belong to Israel's Prophetic Program

Ninety-eight to ninety-nine percent of all biblical references to signs, wonders, and miracles appear in connection with God's program with Israel. Exodus 34:10 records a specific covenant to do marvels among them and for them to 'see the work of the LORD.' Israel's program was a walk-by-sight program; ours is a walk-by-faith program (2 Corinthians 5:7). The gift of tongues was prophesied for Israel (Joel 2:28-29; Isaiah 28). Signs are Israel's covenantal birthright — Psalm 74:9 calls them 'our signs.' Ignorance of this distinction makes believers immediate candidates for Satanic counterfeiting in this dispensation.

The Five Operations of God — The Ranking Framework for Spiritual Gifts

The gifts are not ranked by impressiveness but by the operations of God they serve (1 Corinthians 12:6, 28). Operation 1: communication of God's Word in the local assembly (apostles, prophets, teachers — the 'best' gifts). Operation 2: confirmation to Gentiles that God was dealing with them (miracles — Romans 15:18-19). Operation 3: sign to Israel that God had turned to the Gentiles (gifts of healings — Israel's hallmark signs given to Gentiles). Operation 4: local assembly orderliness (helps, governments). Operation 5: final sign to unbelieving Israel (gift of tongues — 1 Corinthians 14:21-22). Tongues were ranked lowest because their designed operation was the most limited in scope.

'That Which Is Perfect' — The Completed Written Word of God

'That which is perfect' (1 Corinthians 13:10) is neuter, not a person, and is not the Lord's return. It is the antithesis of the partial knowledge situation described in verse 9 — same subject matter (knowledge/revelation), now complete rather than partial. The completed written Word of God achieves all five operations of God more excellently than any combination of gifts. Paul declares he was given his ministry 'to fulfill the word of God' (Colossians 1:25), and 2 Timothy 3:16-17 confirms the Scripture is complete and 'thoroughly furnishes' the man of God. The child-to-man analogy (1 Corinthians 13:11) captures the relationship: gifts were the less excellent childhood means; the completed Word is the mature, more excellent way.

Charity Never Faileth — The Most Excellent Ministry of the Holy Spirit

The most excellent ministry of the Holy Spirit is not giving spiritual gifts but teaching believers the agape love of God — to value and esteem as God values (Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 4:9). Charity is the greatest of the three abiding realities (faith, hope, charity — 1 Corinthians 13:13) precisely because it is produced by the most excellent, never-failing ministry. All spiritual gifts, by contrast, are done away. Not one appears in the list of what abides. The Corinthians had all the gifts and were missing the most excellent ministry — making them spiritually noisy but producing nothing of genuine value.

Key Scripture References

1 Corinthians 12:1–3	Foundation: ignorance of spiritual gifts guarantees deception; Satanic counterfeit tongues already operating in Corinth calling Jesus accursed
Exodus 34:10	God's covenant with Israel to 'do marvels' among them — signs and wonders are Israel's covenantally natural possession, not ours
Psalms 74:9; 1 Cor. 1:22	'We see not our signs' (Israel's lament); 'The Jews require a sign' — confirming signs as Israel's covenantal birthright, not the Body of Christ's norm
1 Corinthians 12:4–6	Threefold Godhead role in gifts: Spirit gives gifts, Lord served by administrations, Father designs operations — the complete evaluative framework
1 Corinthians 12:28	Gift ranking: apostles first, prophets second, teachers third — determined by the operations they serve, not by impressiveness
1 Corinthians 14:21–22	Gift of tongues identified as a sign to unbelieving Israel (quoting Isaiah 28) — designed for outside the assembly, not inside it
1 Corinthians 13:1–3	All gifts without charity = sounding brass, nothing, profit nothing — zero spiritual benefit without the Holy Spirit's most excellent ministry
1 Corinthians 13:8–10	Prophecies fail, tongues cease, knowledge vanishes; 'that which is perfect' comes and ends all partial-knowledge gifts
1 Corinthians 13:13	Faith, hope, charity abide — not one spiritual gift in the list; all gifts done away; charity is greatest (produced by most excellent ministry)
Ephesians 4:11,13	'He gave' (past tense) gifts; 'till we come to a perfect man' — the 'till' establishes a specific, objective-bound terminus for the gifts
Colossians 1:25	Paul's commission 'to fulfill the word of God' — the completion of written revelation happening in Paul's prison ministry
2 Timothy 3:16–17	'All scripture...man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished' — confirms the completed state of the written Word
1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Tim. 4:20	Timothy's stomach treated with medicine; Trophimus left sick — documentary evidence that gifts of healing had already ceased
Acts 28:25–28	Paul's final declaration to unbelieving Israel in Rome — the event that caused the gift of tongues to instantly cease everywhere
2 Corinthians 11:13–15	False apostles as deceitful workers; Satan as angel of light — the ongoing

	Satanic counterfeiting operation that fills the post-gifts vacuum
2 Timothy 2:15–16	'Rightly dividing the word of truth'; 'Shun profane and vain babblings' — the only defense and the only proper response to the counterfeit

For further study visit www.enjoythebible.org