

# 1 Corinthians 14

by John Nelson Darby

---

*In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul emphasizes the importance of understanding, order, and love in the exercise of spiritual gifts within the church.*

**Scripture:** Acts 2:4, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 1 Corinthians 14:3, 1 Corinthians 14:15, 1 Corinthians 14:23-25, 1 Corinthians 14:30, 1 Corinthians 14:32, 1 Corinthians 14:34

**Topics:** "Spiritual Gifts", "Order in Worship"

---

## Description

John Nelson Darby discusses 1 Corinthians 14, emphasizing the proper use of spiritual gifts, particularly tongues and prophecy. He highlights that while tongues were a sign for the nations, they were being misused by the Corinthians, who valued them for their own sake rather than for edification. Darby explains that prophecy serves to build up the church through understanding and comfort, contrasting it with the unintelligibility of tongues. He stresses the importance of order in worship and the moral responsibility of believers to exercise their gifts in a way that honors God and edifies others. Ultimately, he points to love as the guiding principle in the exercise of spiritual gifts.

---

## Transcript

In this chapter the apostle is referring to these tongues which shall cease; the Corinthians were vain of them; and he says they are not to use them save conditionally.

Verse 3 is the way in which prophecy works, rather than a definition of prophecy. It is speaking unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. It can be now, of course, in that way; knowledge and doctrine abide, though the giving forth of revelation does not, because all is revealed (that is, in the word). We speak of revelation in a lower sense, when anyone gets something he had not before; but then that is only what is already in the word. It is not so much here a question as to the character of the prophecy, but he contrasts the prophesying with tongues, when no one understood them; and it is as regards those who are within, not those who are without.

In "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also" (v. 15), suppose I was praying, and did not understand what I was saying, what good would there be in that? In "my spirit prayeth," it is just as it might be in a groan that could not be uttered. The tongues, in a sense, superseded the confusion of tongues. Instead of grace confining itself to Israel, the gift of tongues opened it up to all nations. We see a specimen of it in Acts 2; it reversed Babel, as it were. Only on the day of Pentecost it was all plain and simple; but now the Corinthians were abusing it. The moment it was given, it was for all the nations in

carrying the gospel to them.

The saying Amen, in verse 16, is general, I think; it would include the Lord's supper too. But if some prayed in Dutch or Persian, nobody here, at least, could say, Amen. A very wonderful thing were the tongues. There is little difference between "when ye come together in the church," in chapter 11:18, and "the whole church be come together into some place," in chapter 14:23. It may be more emphatic in chapter 14, that is all. The way the difference at all comes about is in chapter 11; it is the character of their coming together, in assembly; here is the whole assembly come together. The one is a character; the other is a thing. The "unlearned" persons (v. 23) are those not taught in the word. This is true of an unbeliever, but we have the unbelievers named also. The word is "idiotes," and a person not instructed in an art was called such; a private person. It makes two classes, the untaught in the things of God, and the actual unbeliever. There were no catechumens at that time. When the catechumen was first invented, they were allowed to hear the first exhortations; and when the church part came on, they were all sent out. That is the origin of the word mass, from 'Ite: missa est.'\*

{\*The formula of dismissal by the officiating minister.}

285 In thinking of the one who was "convinced of all, and judged of all" (v. 24), we must remember how instruction was obtained; Peter and John were not taught as Rabbis were. They had not rabbinical instruction, though this was much esteemed of course. How many poor people now will say, If a man is not a clergyman, how can he know anything about it? That would be the feeling. Such a one, convinced and judged, will "worship." Because he finds God working thus, and falls down and owns Him. The presence of God acts upon his spirit, and bows it; and his conscience is reached. The secrets of his heart are told out to himself. God's presence finds it all out to himself, without his speaking to others. It is the power of the Spirit of God on a man's conscience.

In verse 25 "God is in you" is collective. Ev is used for "among" and "in," when the noun is collective. "In you" is perhaps better, because it looks at the assembly as a whole. Verse 26 does not imply a censure, nor that the things were all looked out ready. He speaks of a revelation, and this could not be a cut and dried thing. But they were abusing the power of the Holy Ghost: there was no order. Verse 30 is merely the general spirit of subjection. But now there is no revelation. I do not think one was to wait\* till another had done; order is before power. God is never the author of confusion. Verse 32 teaches that the moral power is superior to mere power. The "tongue" is subject to me, as we said before. Whatever I might have in power, if it were spiritual wisdom not to speak, I should not speak. The moral judgment of the prophet is superior to mere power, however real and mighty. Verse 34 is the tenor of the law, if not a particular law. The apostle is peremptory about it in Timothy. "I suffer not a woman to teach," he says. I think it is a little out of place for a woman even to raise a hymn; but I do not object, if she do it modestly. If three women were on a desert island, I do not see why they should not break bread together, if they did it privately. A man and his wife being alone, I see no objection to their breaking bread, if they themselves feel free and are disposed.

{\*? 'speak.'}

286 Chapters 12 and 14 are separated by a chapter on love. Charity comes in, by the bye, in the middle, to teach them how to use their gifts. He brings in love too, as the root of all right action, as of everything else; and then he goes on to the order and exercise of gift. We have the doctrine in chapter 12, and the exercise of gifts in chapter 14. There is no law as to the order of the morning meeting. If a person had a

word to say before the breaking of bread, I should not object; but I enjoy prominence given to the breaking of bread on the Lord's day morning.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-nelson-darby/1-corinthians-14/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**