

1 Corinthians 14:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

Analysis

But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church—Paul's stark command: *ean de mē ē diermēneutēs, sigatō en ekklēsia (ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἔδιερμηνευτής, σιγάτω ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ)*, "but if there is no interpreter, let him be silent in church"). The imperative *sigatō* (σιγάτω, "let him be silent") is unequivocal. **And let him speak to himself, and to God**—private tongues-prayer remains legitimate: *eatō de heautō lalein kai tō theō (ἐατῶ δὲ ἐαυτῷ λαλεῖν καὶ τῷ Θεῷ)*, "let him speak to himself and to God").

Paul distinguishes public and private speech: without interpretation, tongues belong in private devotion, not corporate worship. This isn't suppressing the Spirit; it's channeling spiritual expression toward edification. The allowance for private prayer shows Paul values tongues—in their proper context.

Historical Context

Some Corinthians apparently felt compelled to speak in tongues publicly regardless of interpretation. Paul insists: no interpreter, no public tongues. Keep it between you and God.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Why does Paul command silence rather than simply encouraging interpretation?
2. What's the difference between 'speaking to himself and to God' versus public speech?
3. How does this verse honor both spiritual expression and corporate edification?

Interlinear Text

ἐὰν	δὲ	μὴ	ἢ	διερμηνευτής	σιγάτω	ἐν
G1437	But	G3361	there be	G1328	let him keep silence	in
G1161		G5600			G4601	G1722

ἐκκλησίᾳ	ἐαυτῷ	δὲ	λαλείτω	καὶ	τῷ	θεῷ
the church	to himself	But	let him speak	and	G3588	to God
G1577	G1438	G1161	G2980	G2532		G2316

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