

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 ἢ διερμηνευτής, 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* (ἐατῷ δὲ ἑαυτῷ 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 G1437	δὲ But G1161	μὴ G3361	ἢ there be G5600	διερμηνευτής interpreter G1328	σιγάτω let him keep silence G4601	ἐν in G1722
ἐκκλησίᾳ the church G1577	ἐαυτῷ to himself G1438	δὲ But G1161	λαλεῖτω let him speak G2980	καὶ and G2532	τῷ G3588	θεῷ to God G2316

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