

1 Corinthians 14:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

Analysis

And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets—Greek kai pneumata prophētōn prophētais hypotassetai (καὶ πνεύματα προφητῶν προφήταις ὑποτάσσεται, "and spirits of prophets are subject to prophets"). Hypotassō (ὑποτάσσω) means to arrange under, subject, subordinate.

Paul's principle: genuine Spirit-inspiration doesn't override self-control. Prophets can control when and how they speak; the Spirit doesn't possess them ecstatically, forcing speech. This refutes the Corinthian assumption (borrowed from pagan religion) that ecstatic loss of control validates spiritual experience. True prophecy is subject to the prophet's will, enabling orderly, sequential sharing. The Spirit's work doesn't bypass human agency; it works through it.

Historical Context

Pagan oracles and mystery cults featured ecstatic possession where the medium lost control. Paul insists Christian prophecy is different: the Spirit enables, not overwhelms. Prophets retain agency.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What's the difference between Spirit-inspiration and ecstatic possession?
2. Why is it important that prophets can control when and how they speak?
3. How does this principle apply to other forms of Spirit-prompted ministry?

Interlinear Text

καὶ πνεύματα προφήταις προφήταις ὑποτάσσεται
And the spirits of the prophets of the prophets are subject
G2532 G4151 G4396 G4396 G5293

Additional Cross-References

1 John 4:1 (Spirit): Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

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