

1 Corinthians 14:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

Analysis

But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant—Greek *ei de tis agnoei, agnoeitō* (εἰ δέ τις ἀγνοεῖ, ἀγνοείτω). The present imperatives suggest willful ignorance: "if anyone is ignoring [this], let him continue to be ignored." Some manuscripts read *agnoeitai* (passive, "let him be ignored")—divine or communal ignoring of those who reject apostolic authority.

Paul's sobering warning: those who refuse to acknowledge his teaching as the Lord's command (v. 37) reveal their spiritual ignorance and will be ignored—by God or the church. This isn't harsh; it's realistic: if you reject revelation, you remain in ignorance. The terse command closes debate: Paul has argued his case (vv. 1-36), appealed to universal practice (v. 33), asserted apostolic authority (v. 37). Those still rejecting his teaching are unteachable.

Historical Context

Paul knows some will refuse correction despite his thorough argument. He leaves them to their chosen ignorance, a form of church discipline. The church should recognize and avoid those who persist in disorder.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What's the difference between honest confusion and willful ignorance?
2. Why does Paul not argue further but simply pronounce judgment on the willfully ignorant?
3. How should the church respond to those who persistently reject apostolic teaching?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	δέ	τις	ἀγνοέιτω	ἀγνοέιτω
G1487	But	G5100	be ignorant	be ignorant
	G1161		G50	G50

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 7:6 (Parallel theme): Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Matthew 15:14 (Parallel theme): Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

Hosea 4:17 (Parallel theme): Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.

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