

1 Corinthians 5:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?

Analysis

For what have I to do to judge them also that are without?—the rhetorical question expects a negative answer: "Nothing!" Krinō (κρίνω, "judge") here means rendering moral verdicts and exercising discipline. **Them that are without** (τοὺς ἔξω) refers to those outside the church, unbelievers. Paul isn't called to police the morality of pagan Corinth—that's God's prerogative. The church's jurisdiction is internal, not external. **Do not ye judge them that are within?**—another rhetorical question expecting "Yes!"

Esō (ἔσω, "within") are church members who have covenanted together under Christ's lordship and submitted to mutual accountability. The church is responsible to exercise discernment and discipline within its own ranks. This principle protects against two errors:

1. ignoring sin among believers while condemning the world (hypocrisy),
2. crusading to impose Christian standards on unbelievers through force (theocracy or moralism).

The church's witness is maintained by internal holiness, not external coercion. We evangelize the world with grace while maintaining accountability within the covenant community.

Historical Context

Paul's distinction between insiders and outsiders reflects Jewish practice—synagogues exercised discipline over members but didn't judge Gentiles. Early Christians faced tension: how to maintain distinct moral standards while living in pagan cities. Paul's answer: hold believers accountable to gospel ethics; extend grace and gospel witness to unbelievers without expecting them to live as Christians before conversion.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. Do you spend more energy condemning the world's sin or addressing sin within the church?
2. How can you maintain high standards for Christians without self-righteousness toward non-Christians?
3. What does it mean to judge those 'within' the church—how is this done lovingly and biblically?

Interlinear Text

τί	γάρ	μοι	καί	τούς	ἔξω	κρίνετε	οὐχὶ
what	For	have I	them also	G3588	that are without	do	not
G5101	G1063	G3427	G2532		G1854	G2919	G3780
τούς	ἔσω	ὑμεῖς	κρίνετε				
G3588	them that are within	ye	do				
	G2080	G5210	G2919				

Additional Cross-References

Mark 4:11 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

1 Timothy 3:7 (Parallel theme): Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Luke 12:14 (Judgment): And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

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