

1 Corinthians 7:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

Analysis

But and if she depart—Paul acknowledges the reality of separation (possibly physical separation short of legal divorce, or divorce that has already occurred). The concessive ean de kai (ἐὰν δὲ καί, "but if indeed") suggests Paul is addressing actual cases in Corinth. He offers two options: **let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband.**

The command meneto agamos (μενέτω ἄγαμος, "let her remain unmarried") forbids remarriage after divorce, as this would constitute adultery (Matthew 5:32). The alternative, katallage (καταλλαγή, "reconciliation"), is strongly preferred—restoration of the marriage covenant. Both imperatives protect the permanence of marriage: if divorce occurs, the bond is not truly severed.

Paul adds **and let not the husband put away his wife** (aphienai, ἀφιέναι, "send away/divorce"), using the standard Jewish term for divorce. This repeats the command of verse 10 with emphasis on the husband's responsibility. Paul's repetition underscores that neither spouse may initiate divorce, reflecting Jesus' teaching on marriage's indissolubility.

Historical Context

Jewish law allowed husbands to divorce wives (Deuteronomy 24:1) but not vice versa. Roman law permitted wives to initiate divorce. Paul addresses both,

maintaining Jesus' standard that neither party should divorce. His insistence on remaining unmarried or reconciling protected divorced women from economic vulnerability while upholding marriage's permanence.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Why does Paul forbid remarriage after divorce, even though separation has occurred?
2. What does "reconciliation" involve—how can a divorced couple work toward restoring their covenant?
3. How should the church balance upholding marriage permanence with compassion for those in difficult marriages?

Interlinear Text

ἐὰν	δε	καὶ	χωρισθῇ	μενέτω	ἄγαμος	ἢ	τῷ
if	But	and	she depart	let her remain	unmarried	or	G3588
G1437	G1161	G2532	G5563	G3306	G22	G2228	
ἄνδρα	καταλλαγήτω	καὶ	ἄνδρα	γυναῖκα	μὴ	ἀφιέναι	
the husband	be reconciled	and	the husband	his wife	not	let	
G435	G2644	G2532	G435	G1135	G3361	G863	

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 3:1 (Parallel theme): They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD.

1 Corinthians 7:10 (Parallel theme): And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

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