

1 Corinthians 7:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

Analysis

But to the rest speak I, not the Lord—Paul transitions to a situation Jesus did not explicitly address: mixed marriages between believers and unbelievers. The phrase *legō egō, ouch ho kyrios* (λέγω ἐγώ, οὐχ ὁ κύριος, "I say, not the Lord") does not diminish Paul's authority; as an apostle, his teaching is inspired. But he distinguishes it from Jesus' direct commands (v. 10).

If any brother hath a wife that believeth not (*gunaika apiston, γυναῖκα ἀπιστον*, "unbelieving wife") addresses marriages where one spouse converted to Christianity after marriage. Paul's counsel: **and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away**. The conditional *syneuddokei* (συνευδοκεῖ, "consents/is willing") emphasizes the unbeliever's choice.

This counters any notion that Christians must divorce unbelieving spouses to maintain purity. Paul will explain (v. 14) that the believer's presence sanctifies the relationship, and there is hope for the unbeliever's salvation (v. 16). The believing spouse must honor the marriage covenant unless the unbeliever chooses to leave.

Historical Context

Paul's mission churches inevitably included converts whose spouses remained pagan. Jewish tradition required divorcing foreign wives to maintain covenant

purity (Ezra 9-10). Paul's instruction to remain married was radical, reflecting the gospel's power to sanctify rather than requiring separation from the world.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Why does Paul instruct believers to remain married to unbelievers rather than separate for purity?
2. What does it mean that the unbeliever must "be pleased" to remain—how should believers respond if pressured to compromise faith?
3. How does Paul's teaching on mixed marriage reflect the gospel's penetration into pagan households?

Interlinear Text

Toῖς	δὲ	λοιποῖς	ἐγὼ	λέγω	οὐχ	ό	κύριος·	εἴ	τις
G3588	But	to the rest	I	speak	not	G3588	the Lord	G1487	G5100
G1161		G3062	G1473	G3004	G3756		G2962		
ἀδελφὸς	γυναῖκα	ἔχει	ἄπιστον		καὶ	αὐτήν·			
brother	a wife	hath	that believeth not		and	her			
G80	G1135	G2192	G571		G2532	G846			
συνευδοκεῖ	οἴκεῖν	μετ'	αὐτήν·	μὴ	ἀφιέτω	αὐτήν·			
be pleased	to dwell	with	her	not	away	her			
G4909	G3611	G3326	G846	G3361	G863	G846			

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 11:17 (References Lord): That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

1 Corinthians 7:6 (Parallel theme): But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.

1 Corinthians 7:25 (Faith): Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

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