

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 ἄπιστον*, "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

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

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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