

1 Corinthians 7:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

Analysis

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife—the verb *hēgiastai* (ἡγίασται, "has been sanctified") does not mean the unbeliever is saved through the spouse, but that the marriage itself is holy and legitimate. Paul addresses fears that union with an unbeliever defiles the believer. Instead, the believer's presence sanctifies the relationship.

The reciprocal statement **and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband** emphasizes mutuality. Paul's reasoning: **else were your children unclean; but now are they holy**. The term *akatharta* (ἀκάθαρτα, "unclean") versus *hagia* (ἅγια, "holy") draws on Old Testament purity categories. Christian children of mixed marriages are not illegitimate or unholy, but set apart for God.

This teaching directly counters Jewish concerns about mixed marriages defiling the covenant community (Ezra 9-10). Paul asserts that holiness is contagious, not defilement—the gospel reverses Old Covenant separation principles. The believer's presence brings the household within God's covenant sphere, offering hope for the unbeliever's eventual salvation.

Historical Context

Old Testament law required separating from foreign wives to maintain covenant purity (Ezra 10:10-11). Paul's teaching reflects the New Covenant's expansive

reach: rather than contamination through contact with unbelievers, the gospel sanctifies relationships. This parallels Jesus' pattern of bringing holiness through contact (Mark 1:41; Luke 7:14).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's teaching that holiness is "contagious" rather than defilement reflect the gospel's power?
2. What does it mean that children of mixed marriages are "holy"—how should this affect Christian parenting?
3. How should believers in mixed marriages view their evangelistic opportunity without manipulating their spouse?

Interlinear Text

ἡγίασται	γὰρ	ό	ἀνδρί·	ό	ἄπιστος	ἐν	τῇ	γυνὴ
is sanctified	For	G3588	husband	G3588	the unbelieving	by	G3588	the wife
G37	G1063		G435		G571	G1722		G1135
καὶ	ἡγίασται	ή	γυνὴ	ή	ἄπιστος	ἐν	τῷ	ἀνδρί·
and	is sanctified	G3588	the wife	G3588	the unbelieving	by	G3588	husband
G2532	G37		G1135		G571	G1722		G435
ἐπεὶ	ἄρα	τὰ	τέκνα	ὑμῶν	ἀκάθαρτά	ἐστιν	νῦν	δὲ
G1893	else	G3588	children	your	unclean	are they	now	but
	G686		G5043	G5216	G169	G2076	G3568	G1161
ἅγιά	ἐστιν							
holy	are they							
G40	G2076							

Additional Cross-References

Titus 1:15 (Faith): Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

1 Timothy 4:5 (Holy): For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Isaiah 52:1 (Holy): Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

Romans 11:16 (Holy): For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

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