

1 Corinthians 7:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

Analysis

But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart—the verb *chōrizetai* (χωρίζεται, "separates/divorces") indicates the unbeliever's choice to leave. Paul's permission *chōrizesthō* (χωρίζέσθω, "let him/her depart") releases the believer from the obligation to preserve the marriage. **A brother or a sister is not under bondage** uses *dedoulōtai* (δεδούλωται, "enslaved/bound").

The phrase "not under bondage" has been debated: does it merely permit separation, or allow remarriage? The verb *dedoulōtai* suggests release from marital obligation. Many interpreters see here the "Pauline privilege"—the believer is free to remarry when the unbeliever abandons the marriage. Paul's rationale: **but God hath called us to peace** (en *eirēnē*, ἐν εἰρήνῃ, "in peace").

Paul will not require believers to remain in contentious marriages where the unbeliever refuses to stay. Forced cohabitation contradicts the peace to which God calls His people. This exception (like Jesus' exception for sexual immorality in Matthew 19:9) protects the abandoned believer while upholding marriage's ideal permanence.

Historical Context

In Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts, conversion to Christianity could prompt unbelieving spouses to divorce. Paul's teaching that believers are "not bound" in

such cases provided pastoral care for abandoned Christians, protecting them from being trapped in marriages the unbeliever had dissolved.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does it mean that believers are "not bound" when an unbeliever departs —does this permit remarriage?
2. How does God's call to "peace" inform decisions about remaining in difficult mixed marriages?
3. How should the church support believers who are abandoned by unbelieving spouses?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	δὲ	ό	ἄπιστος	χωριζέσθω·	χωριζέσθω·	οὐ	
if	But	G3588	the unbelieving	depart	depart	not	
G1487	G1161		G571	G5563	G5563	G3756	
δεδούλωται	ό	ἀδελφὸς	ἢ	ἢ	ἀδελφὴ	ἐν	τοῖς
is	G3588	A brother	or	G3588	a sister	in	G3588
G1402		G80	G2228	G79	G1722		
τοιούτοις·	ἐν	δὲ	εἰρήνῃ	κέκληκεν	ἡμᾶς	ό	θεός
such	in	But	peace	hath called	us	G3588	God
G5108	G1722	G1161	G1515	G2564	G2248		G2316

Additional Cross-References

Romans 14:19 (Peace): Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

2 Corinthians 13:11 (Peace): Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Romans 12:18 (Peace): If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

1 Corinthians 14:33 (Peace): For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

Matthew 12:50 (Parallel theme): For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

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