

1 Corinthians 7:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

Analysis

But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin —this difficult verse likely addresses fathers (or possibly engaged men) concerned about daughters (or fiancées) remaining unmarried. The phrase *aschēmonein epi tēn parthenon autou* (ἀσχημονεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν παρθένον αὐτοῦ, "acting improperly toward his virgin") suggests shame or impropriety in not marrying her. **If she pass the flower of her age** (ean ē *hypérakmos*, ἐὰν ἡ ὑπέρακμος, "if she is past her prime").

Paul's counsel: **and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry** (*gameitōsan*, γαμειτωσαν, "let them marry"). If the father (or fiancé) feels obligated by cultural expectations or the woman's need, marriage is not sinful. Paul permits marriage even after recommending singleness (vv. 25-35), maintaining that marriage is good and legitimate.

The phrase *ho thelei poieitō* (ὁ θέλει ποιείτω, "let him do what he wishes") indicates liberty in this matter. Neither marrying nor remaining single is sinful; both are permissible. Paul's counsel throughout the chapter balances preference for singleness with strong affirmation of marriage's goodness.

Historical Context

In ancient culture, fathers arranged daughters' marriages, and unmarried women past prime marrying age faced social shame. Paul permits fathers to arrange marriages without guilt, even after recommending singleness. His teaching protects both the legitimacy of marriage and the honor of daughters.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does this verse balance Paul's preference for singleness with recognition of cultural realities and individual needs?
2. What does "acting improperly" toward one's virgin mean—why might fathers feel this obligation?
3. How does Paul protect the honor of both singleness and marriage as equally legitimate choices?

Interlinear Text

Εἰ δέ τις ἀσχημονεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν παρθένον
G1487 But G5100 that he behaveth himself uncomely toward G3588 virgin
G1161 G807 G1909 G3933

αὐτοῦ νομίζει ἐὰν ή̄ ὑπέρακμος καὶ οὕτως
G846 think if G5600 she pass the flower of her age and so
G3543 G1437 G5230 G2532 G3779

όφείλει γίνεσθαι ὅ θέλει ποιείτω οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει
need require what he will let him do not he sinneth
G3784 G1096 G3739 G2309 G4160 G3756 G264

γαμείτωσαν
let them marry
G1060

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 7:9 (Parallel theme): But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

1 Corinthians 7:37 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

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