

Luke 9:50

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

Analysis

Forbid him not (μὴ κωλύετε, mē kōlyete)—Jesus issues a present imperative prohibition: 'stop forbidding him.' The command directly reverses the disciples' exclusivism. Christ refuses to monopolize ministry or restrict the use of His name to credentialed apostles. **For he that is not against us is for us**—this kingdom principle counters sectarian gatekeeping. Anyone doing kingdom work in Christ's name demonstrates allegiance, regardless of formal association with the Twelve.

This maxim has a flip side elsewhere: 'He who is not with me is against me' (Luke 11:23). Together they teach that neutrality toward Christ is impossible, but diversity within genuine faith is acceptable. The man casting out demons in Jesus's name had clearly chosen sides—his exorcisms proved it. The disciples' concern for organizational control mattered less than the reality of kingdom advance. Jesus prioritizes fruit over franchise, substance over structure.

Historical Context

This principle would prove crucial for the early church's expansion beyond its Jewish origins. Acts repeatedly shows God working outside established channels—Philip in Samaria, Peter with Cornelius, Paul's Gentile mission. The lesson John learned here prepared the apostles to recognize authentic faith in unexpected places and people, preventing the church from becoming an exclusivist Jewish sect.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How can you discern the difference between defending essential gospel truth and defending mere organizational or denominational boundaries?
2. What legitimate kingdom work might you be 'forbidding' through criticism, suspicion, or non-cooperation simply because it doesn't align with your preferred methods or affiliations?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	εἶπεν	πρὸς	αὐτὸν	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς	Μὴ	κωλύετε·	ὅς
And	said	unto	him	G3588	Jesus	him not	Forbid	he
G2532	G2036	G4314	G846		G2424	G3361	G2967	G3739
γὰρ	οὐκ	ἐστιν	καθ'	ἡμῶν	ὑπὲρ	ἡμῶν	ἐστιν	
for	not	is	against	us	for	us	is	
G1063	G3756	G2076	G2596	G2257	G5228	G2257	G2076	

Additional Cross-References

Luke 11:23 (Parallel theme): He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

Matthew 12:30 (Parallel theme): He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

1 Corinthians 12:3 (References Jesus): Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

Luke 16:13 (Parallel theme): No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

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