

Mark 9:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For he that is not against us is on our part.

Analysis

Jesus stated a crucial principle: 'For he that is not against us is on our part' (οὐκ ἔστιν καθ' ἡμῶν, ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἔστιν). This seems opposite to Matthew 12:30: 'He that is not with me is against me.' The difference is context. In Matthew 12, Pharisees attributed Jesus' exorcisms to Satan—active opposition. Here, the person performed genuine ministry in Jesus' name—active alignment. Jesus teaches nuanced discernment: don't assume neutrality equals hostility. Those performing kingdom work in Christ's name, even outside official structures, should be affirmed not opposed. However, active opposition (Matthew 12:30) reveals spiritual allegiance. In contested territory (spiritual warfare), neutrality is impossible—either advancing or opposing. But those genuinely working for Christ, though not organizationally aligned, deserve partnership not prohibition.

Historical Context

This principle guided early church relationships. Paul affirmed Apollos' ministry though he was taught independently (Acts 18:24-28; 1 Corinthians 3:4-6). Early Christians distinguished between

1. heretics denying essential doctrine (1 John 2:18-23; 2 John 7-11)
2. immature or incomplete believers (Acts 18:24-26; 19:1-7),
3. genuine believers with different practices or emphases (Romans 14:1-15:7; 1 Corinthians 8-10).

Jesus' principle 'not against us is for us' applies to category three—genuine believers working in Christ's name deserve partnership. However, false teachers

actively opposing Christ (category one) must be rejected. Discernment distinguishes between doctrinal disagreement among believers and fundamental opposition to Christ.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' principle balance necessary doctrinal boundaries with generous affirmation of all genuinely advancing His kingdom?
2. What's the difference between healthy theological discernment and sectarian exclusivism that divides Christ's body unnecessarily?

Interlinear Text

ὅς	γὰρ	οὐκ	ἐστιν	καθ'	ὑμῶν,	ὑπὲρ	ὑμῶν	ἐστιν
G3739	For	not	he that is	against	G5216	on	G5216	he that is
G1063	G3756	G2076	G2596			G5228		G2076

Additional Cross-References

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

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