

Sunday, January 8, 2017—I Corinthians 7:29-35: Serving the Lord Without Distraction

Introduction

- It has been four weeks since we were last in our study of I Corinthians. With the holidays now behind us, I would like to resume our study.
- Our last study we discussed I Corinthians 7:25-28 which furthered our discussion about divorce and remarriage during the dispensation of grace.
- This morning we want to look at the section beginning at verse 29 and running down through verse 35.

I Corinthians 7:29-31

- **But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.**
- *But this I say, brethren, the time is short*—Paul begins this paragraph with a statement/declaration that “the time is short.” Recall from our previous studies that Paul’s instructions regarding virgins, divorce, and remarriage beginning in verse 25 were given in light of the “the present distress” in verse 26.
- Taken together with verse 29 it seems that Paul viewed the Corinthians as living in a time of undue stress and peril the duration of which he thought would be “short.” Given the fact that I Corinthians was the fourth book that Paul wrote it might be helpful to place the book in relation to the previous three in order to help us understand what Paul is talking about.

Epistle	Time of Writing	Scriptural Proof
Galatians	Shortly after Acts 16:23	Gal. 6:17; Acts 16:6, 23; 18:23
I Thessalonians	Acts 18:5-18:18	Acts 18:5, 18; I Thess. 3:6
II Thessalonians	Acts 18:5-18:18	Acts 18:5, 18; I Thess. 3:6
I Corinthians	Acts 19:22	Acts 19:1, 21-22; 20:1; I Cor. 4:17, 16:8-10

- If one takes some of the statements Paul wrote before penning I Corinthians they will help us determine the nature of the “present distress” and the time being “short” in I Corinthians 7.

The Present Distress

- Galatians 1:4—the world these first century saints were living is described by Paul as “this present evil world.”

- I Thessalonians 1:6; 2:2; 3:3-4—there was much affliction and opposition to the gospel of grace as Paul ministered in Thessalonica.
 - Acts 17:1-14
- II Thessalonians 1:5-8—the saints at Thessalonica were being troubled by the enemies of the cross in that city.
- II Thessalonians 2:7—the mystery of iniquity was already working.
- Paul and these early 1st century churches were laboring under less than ideal circumstances. Opposition and danger lurked around every corner.

The Time is Short

- I Thessalonians 4:13-18—Paul tells the Thessalonians that they would not all die before the Lord returned to meet them in the air. This implies that Paul viewed this event as potentially happening at any moment.
- I Thessalonians 5:1-8—because of the event described in chapter 4, the Thessalonians don't need to worry about the times and the seasons related to the day of the Lord prophesied in the Old Testament. The saints are of the day not of the night.
- II Thessalonians 2:1—Paul beseeches them on the basis of the catching up and our gathering unto him that they be not shaken. There is no prophetic event that stands in the way of the “our gathering together unto him.” In other words, the Lord could return at any time and fulfill the promise of I Thess. 4:13-18.
- I Corinthians 15:51-53—not all believers will “sleep” i.e., die before the event described will occur. This is the same teaching we observed in I Thess. 4.
- Romans 13:12—in the book of Romans, written after I & II Corinthians Paul speaks about the night already being far spent. In other words, the dispensation of grace had already lasted longer than Paul thought it would.
- I Corinthians 7:29—when Paul said that the time was short, I believe he thought that the Lord would shortly return to catch away the saints to meet him in the air.
- *it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none*—how “short” was the time in Paul's mind? The time was so near that those who had wives will be like those not having them. Herein lies another reason folks should maintain the status quo in light of the present distress in the previous paragraph.

- Verse 30 is an interesting verse. There are three sets of positive and negative statements all of which are in the present tense. In each set, the positive is canceled out by the negative. Paul is saying that very soon what one is currently doing or possessing they will not be doing or possessing. Taken together all three statements seem to indicate the cessation of all physical things related to the believers' earthly existence.
 - *And they that weep, as though they wept not;*
 - *and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not;*
 - *and they that buy, as though they possessed not;*
- The first part of Verse 31 contains a fourth one of these positive/negative statements.
 - *And they that use this world, as not abusing it:*
- *for the fashion of this world passeth away*—the word “fashion” refers to the external appearance, form, or condition of something. The verb “passeth” is in the present tense. Paul appears to literally be saying that the external appearance, form, or condition of the world is passing away i.e., it is temporal as are all the other things in this paragraph.
- I Corinthians 7:28—while virgins and loosed believers have not sinned if they get married they will have trouble in the flesh. It is this trouble in the flesh that Paul is trying to spare believers.
- I Corinthians 7:29-31—the time is short and the things of the world are temporal and passing away.
- I Corinthians 7:32-35—married persons by definition must care for the things of this world. Given the “present distress” and the short “time” Paul was trying to save believers from the trouble and care that comes with being married.