

September 22

Scriptures: Read 1 Corinthians 7

Key Verse: "... the time is short... the form of this world is passing away." (1 Corinthians 7:29a, 31b)

Overview

I'd like to caution you before reacting to Paul's apparently low view of marriage in this chapter. First of all, read 9:5, "Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas (Peter)?" Apparently, as he delineated the rights of apostles, Paul felt the need to defend his and the others' right to take a wife along on missionary travels. Whether or not Paul actually did so remains unestablished. But there is, at least, room to believe that he was married.

Secondly, look at those key verses (29 & 31). Paul had a very real expectation that the end was near. Jesus was coming back soon, and life for the believer should be as uncomplicated as possible—"I would like you to be free from concern", he says. Marriage brought concern about this world's affairs, whereas singleness brought the potential for single-mindedness in the "Lord's affairs". (vv.32, 34). He wanted as many believers as possible to "live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord" (v.35). So it wasn't so much a low view of marriage that fueled Paul's words in chapter 7, but an urgent view of the shortage of time before the Lord's return.

Theologians call the hope of the soon return of Christ the doctrine of "imminence"—meaning that the Lord's return could be today, so be ready. Anticipate the Day of the Day of the Lord; live in the light of it and look forward to it. Do this, and your values will be altered. Your eyes will rise from the immediate concerns to the far horizon, where the dawn of the kingdom of Heaven is about to break.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, as we've read 1 Corinthians 7:3, we pray that You'll help us to give all the affection due to our spouse. Keep us faithful to You, Lord, and to one another. Amen.