

The Freedom of Being in the World “As If Not” (1 Cor 7:29–31)

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“Paul tells the Corinthians not to get married because he believes that the Lord is coming soon.” Many of my students express something like this as a summary of Paul’s message in 1 Corinthians 7. Although Caribbean students are generally inclined to give Paul high marks for his doctrinal teaching, when it comes to his social teaching they tend to find him confusing or irrelevant.

Confusing and irrelevant—this judgment is easy to make about 1 Corinthians 7. In part, the sense of irrelevance comes from the common understanding of vv. 25–31. Verse 26 says, according to the NRSV translation, “I think that, in view of the impending crisis, it is well for you to remain as you are.” In the context, “as you are” means unmarried, and Paul’s preference for the unmarried state seems to be supported further by the eschatological grounding in v. 29, “the appointed time has grown short,” and in v. 31, “For the present form of this world is passing away.” The scholarly credentials for this reading are strong.¹ But I will argue that both parts of the common understanding are wrong. In 1 Corinthians

7 Paul is not fundamentally against marriage, and in any case he does not counsel against marriage because he believes that the Lord is coming soon.

In writing this article to honor Everett Kalin, I draw on two important things I learned from him (not to mention that his course on 1 Corinthians was my first serious encounter with this letter). First, questions arising from curiosity may often lead to useful research. An innocent question I once asked in a class led to a large project, because he challenged me to follow it up myself. A second important thing is his passionate concern for the contribution of biblical interpretation to the social engagement of Christians in the world. So here is a question: Could Paul really be so shortsighted in 1 Corinthians 7 that he builds his ethical position, a position supposedly opposed to social change, on the foundation of

¹ Joseph Plevnik represents the common view: “In view of the impending crisis, Paul counsels the virgins not to get married (see 1 Cor 7:29, 31).” *Paul and the Parousia: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 159.

One key to understanding (or misunderstanding) vv. 29–31 is the preceding and following context. . . .

the belief that the world is going to end any day now? The key eschatological statements are in vv. 29–31. What does Paul mean by his “as if not” exhortations in those verses?

It is generally agreed that 1 Cor 7:25, with the opening words, “Now concerning,” as in 7:1, begins Paul’s discussion of a second issue in the chapter. Both issues concern marriage and sexuality, however, and there is a broad coherence in the whole chapter.² For our purposes it is useful to work through the chapter and try to list the principles Paul appears to set out. I have attempted to list them as they come, rather than in any perceived order of importance.

1. Marriage is legitimate, and sexual relations within it are normal and good. A Christian may stay married or get married. This position is advanced or assumed in vv. 2–5, 7, 9, 10–11, 12–14, 27a, 28a, 29b, 36, 38a, 39. At least in part this position is based on two implicit assumptions by Paul, that sexual desires are normal and that “sexual immorality” is wrong (vv. 2, 5, 9, 36–37). With most recent commentators, I think that Paul takes this position in order to oppose some Corinthians who are favoring celibacy and abstinence from sex within marriage, taking “It is well for a man not to touch a woman” in v. 1 as Paul’s quotation of their position.

2. A Christian spouse is not to initiate divorce, even if married to an unbeliever (vv. 10–11, 12–14, 27a, 39). This position is grounded in the command of the Lord against divorce (v. 10). Again, Paul seems to assert this position against some Corinthians who favor separation, at least from a non-believing spouse.

3. A Christian life of unmarried celibacy is preferable, at least for those who have this gift. Paul makes this point in vv. 1 (even if it is a Corinthian slogan, Paul does not entirely disagree), 7, 8, 26, 27b, 28b, 32–35, 37, 38b, 40. Stated reasons for this position are found in vv. 26, 28, 32–35, and as I have mentioned, many think also in vv. 29–31. I will discuss these passages below.

4. A believer has no need, upon becoming a Christian, to change his or her outward circumstances of life. In fact, Paul says, staying as you are is preferable. This position comes out in vv. 8, 17–21a, 24, 26–27, and 40. It is based largely on the theological principle set out in a kind of slogan in v. 19: “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything.” Many take this principle of “stay as you are” to be Paul’s main theme in 1 Corinthians 7. In spite of common opinion, I see nowhere in 1 Cor 7 any grounding of “stay as you are” in an imminent expectation of the coming of the Lord.

5. Changing one’s outward circumstances, even if not preferable, is legitimate. This principle of concession is found in vv. 9, 15, 21b (a notorious exegetical *crux*; I follow the interpretation in the NRSV foot-

²The recent commentary that discusses the issues most sensibly and persuasively, in my opinion, is that of Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), although I do not agree that the problems in Corinth have been caused by an ideology of realized eschatology.

note, "avail yourself of the opportunity" to become free from slavery), 28a, 36, 38a, 39b.³ This principle, interestingly, is grounded in the very same theological position behind the "stay as you are" principle. The fact that outward circumstances of life are "nothing" one way or the other cuts two ways: it can support "stay as you are," but it can also support "go ahead and change." I believe that the double-edged use of this theological grounding has not been fully appreciated by many scholars.

No wonder that readers of 1 Corinthians 7 find Paul confusing! The problem, of course, is to figure out the order of preference of these principles. Further, the principles apply in different combinations to different groups. If one is already married, then points 1, 2, and 4 together form a powerful argument to stay married and give the "celibacy party" no room to make a negative judgment of married Christians. If one is not married or even is engaged to be married, then points 3 and 4 support a decision to remain unmarried. There is much persuasive power in favor of such a decision, which Paul grounds very fully and carefully in vv. 17–24, 25–28, and 32–35. However, if one is not married, there are two other principles that give freedom to make a decision to get married, numbers 1 and 5. What is particularly striking about this latter possibility is that Paul is so careful to enunciate principles that allow non-compliance with his own stated and well-supported preference for celibacy. This all suggests very clearly that there is more to 1 Corinthians 7 than a socially conservative "stay as you are" position or a lifting up of celibacy as the "better way."

But what about vv. 29–31? How do these verses fit into the chapter? Which of Paul's points do they support, if any? How can Paul's eschatology here help us to determine his overall purpose and main theme

in chapter 7? One key to understanding (or misunderstanding) vv. 29–31 is the preceding and following context in vv. 25–28 and 32–35.

Many scholars link vv. 25–28 closely with vv. 29–31, under the theme of eschatology. The "virgins" mentioned are probably persons who are formally engaged to be married.⁴ Some Corinthians were probably arguing that such engaged couples should break it off or at least not go ahead with marriage. This is the issue discussed in all of vv. 25–38.

After introducing the issue in v. 25, Paul sets out his basic view in v. 26, "it is well for you to remain as you are." There are a number of ambiguities in vv. 26–27, but in general v. 27 supports the principle of staying as you are, and v. 28 supports the legitimacy of getting married (implying both that marriage in itself is legitimate and also that changing one's outward circumstances is legitimate). The effect of all of this is hardly a resounding argument in favor of celibacy.

But what about the two clauses that give specific grounds for Paul's preference for not getting married, in vv. 26a and 28b? The NRSV translates v. 26a, "in view of the impending crisis." That is almost certainly wrong, and the NRSV footnote is better, "the present crisis."⁵ Whatever the "crisis"

³ Neil Elliott, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 34–35; Vincent L. Wimbush, *Paul, the Worldly Ascetic: Response to the World and Self-Understanding according to 1 Corinthians 7* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 16, 21.

⁴ Wimbush, *Paul, the Worldly Ascetic*, 20.

⁵ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 329. The perfect participle of *enistēmi* is almost always used with the meaning of "present" as opposed to the future. See Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 3:22; Gal 1:4. The evidence cited by *BDAG*, 337, in favor of "impending" or "imminent" is unconvincing.

is, therefore, Paul sees it as something already present, not something soon to come. What is the crisis? This is far from clear. Often it is thought that Paul refers to the "messianic woes," that is, the belief that a period of intense tribulation will come just before the final consummation.⁶ The sense would be that, since we are now experiencing the predicted end-time troubles, the Lord's coming cannot be far off; therefore, it is better not to get married or to change one's position, either because it is pointless to enter into new circumstances when the time is so short or because, since the times are getting worse, it is best not to add to one's troubles.

Others, however, have taken "crisis" to refer to some specific problem afflicting the church or city, such as a famine (although this can fit with the "end-time woes" interpretation),⁷ or the necessity of the gospel mission, or the general distress of Christian existence (without seeing this as part of a sequence of events leading to the end). I do not think that Paul means "crisis" as a sign of the nearness of the end.

Two observations support this non-eschatological interpretation. First, two uses of the same word (*anagkē*, with the basic meaning of "necessity," "pressure," "distress") in 1 Corinthians are clearly not eschatological, in 7:37 and 9:16. (The only clear NT use of this word in a sense of the final tribulation is in Luke 21:23.) In 1 Cor 9:16 *anagkē* is used of the compulsion to preach the gospel; in 7:26 Paul could also refer to the necessity of the work of the gospel. Second, this would be the only passage in Paul's letters where the "messianic woes" play a role. This latter observation calls for a brief comment.

Much scholarship on Paul's eschatological beliefs has followed the kind of methodology exemplified by Albert Schweitzer.⁸ Wherever Schweitzer found a hint of a

Jewish eschatological belief in Paul's letters, he assumed that Paul was taking over a whole systematic doctrine from his Jewish background. So, for example, a mention of "tribulation" may be taken to refer to the "messianic woes" as a part of an eschatological sequence. There are two problems with this approach. First, the Jewish eschatological beliefs were hardly such a set system. The texts show a wide variety of different motifs and understandings related to "messianic woes."⁹ Second, this approach assumes too much about what Paul took over from his background. When we look carefully at Paul's own statements, we never find Christian tribulation as a clear part of an eschatological sequence. Yes, Christians do experience tribulation (1 Thess 3:3–4), but for Paul this is part of the sharing of Christ's sufferings (Rom 8:17; Phil 1:29; Col 1:24; 2 Cor 1:3–7; 12:7–10; 13:4). Tribulation is not necessarily a sign of the nearness of the end. Since 1 Cor 7:26 is therefore probably not a reference to an apocalyptic timetable, "the present necessity" would be a better translation, understood as the compulsion of the work of the gospel.

In v. 28 Paul says that such people who get married will "experience distress in this life." Here again, the NRSV translation "in this life" for the literal "in the flesh" sug-

⁶ Wimbush, 20–22. See, for example, Dan 12:1 and Mark 13:8–20.

⁷ Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001), 223–25, 259–60.

⁸ For his comments on 1 Cor 7:29–31 see *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York: Henry Holt, 1931), 311–12.

⁹ On the variety of Jewish beliefs gathered under the term "The Great Tribulation" see Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The End of the Ages Has Come: An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 5–25.

gests an eschatological meaning where probably none was intended. Paul is most likely simply saying that married people will have more stress and trouble than the unmarried, not from the marriage itself, but in view of the present life and work of a Christian in the church and world. Both v. 26a and v. 28b, I believe, are best interpreted in line with vv. 32-35.

Some interpreters join vv. 29-31 more closely with vv. 32-35, as a double argument against marriage, first eschatological, then practical. However, I am suggesting that vv. 25-28 are parallel to vv. 32-35. Both sections support Paul's preference for not getting married. Verses 32-35 do so on practical grounds. A married person has two good and important things to be anxious about—serving the Lord and caring for a spouse. Paul wants them to be free from this division of concern. So Paul in both vv. 25-28 and vv. 32-35 uses practical arguments about the stress of the Christian mission, notes eschatological reasoning, to advise against getting married.

Effectively, then, I have isolated vv. 29-31 from their immediate context. Verses 29-31 form a digression, relatively unconnected from its immediate context but deeply related to the larger context in the chapter. Verse 29 begins in a way that sets off what follows, especially with the address, "brothers [and sisters]." There is a clear structured coherence within vv. 29-31. Brief eschatological declarations frame this little section: "the appointed time has grown short," and "the present form of this world is passing away." In between these framing eschatological warrants there are five parallel statements, each centered around the words *ὡς μὲν*, "as though . . . not." So vv. 29-31 form a tight coherent unit, with a decisive introduction, framing warrants, and parallel internal structure. The digression serves to broaden the vision, as is shown by the fact

This age is the time of fulfillment and decision, in light of the final plans of God having been set in place.

that only one of the five parallel statements concerns the subject of the chapter, marriage. The most obvious structural parallel to this kind of digression is 7:17-24.

The framing of vv. 29-31 is clearly eschatological. "The appointed time has grown short." The only real New Testament parallel to this idea is in Mark 13:20, "And if the Lord had not cut short those days [of suffering], no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he has cut short those days" (parallel in Matt 24:22).¹⁰ There is not much in Paul's letters to help interpret this statement. Most likely Paul is not concerned with a count of how many days are left but rather is declaring in this vivid language his conviction that "the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor 10:11). It is not so much a particular time frame that is important here but rather the conviction that this age is the time of fulfillment and decision, in light of the final plans of God having been set in place.¹¹

¹⁰ A similar idea is found in some Jewish texts, such as 4 *Ezra* 4:26 and 14:10; 2 *Baruch* 20:1-2; 54:1; 83:1. In early Christian texts it is found in *Barnabas* 4:3.

¹¹ See Rom 3:26; 8:18; 11:5; 13:11; 2 Cor 6:2. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1998), 693.

The other framing eschatological declaration is in v. 31b, "For the present form of this world is passing away." As has long been noted, Paul does not say that the world is passing away, but rather its *schēma*, its form.¹² Paul is referring to the manifestations of life in the world—its institutions, relationships, emotions, structures, culture. Paul cuts the legs out from under precisely those things that seem to give life its order and stability. Implicit here is a critical stance over against these orders and institutions, but from within, not from a stance of rejection or denial. We might even suggest that there is an ideological opening here for a critique from below of the pretensions of the oppressive status quo. Further, the present tense "is passing away" suggests a process already set in motion, which again brings to mind the conviction that "the ends of the ages have come." As v. 29a, so also v. 31b is unique in Paul. Paul elsewhere shows little or no interest in the fate of the world as such. Only a few other references come to mind. In 1 Cor 6:13b Paul speaks about God destroying both the stomach and food, but here the reference is probably more to individual death, and besides, Paul may here be quoting a Corinthian slogan. In 1 Cor 13:8 he speaks about prophecies, tongues, and knowledge coming to an end, unlike love. Paul's vision of the future largely revolves around the promise of the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, and final judgment. To put it another way, Paul is mostly concerned with the fate of people, not with the fate of the world or its forms. Even Rom 8:21, with the hope "that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay," is really concerned with the people more than the physical creation, as the following phrase shows: "and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." Still, when Paul says in 1 Cor 15:28 that God will "be all in all,"

we can suppose that this implies that the normal order of things will come to an end. It is important to see that in 1 Cor 7:31b Paul is not characterizing the world as "the present evil age" (Gal 1:4). The "form" of this world is seen as temporary, but not evil as such. There is a similar contrast in 2 Cor 4:18, "for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal."

Of Paul's eschatological declarations in 1 Cor 7:29a and 31b one might ask: How do we know that the time is shortened and that the form of this world is on its way out? The answer for Paul can only be that we know this by virtue of our new way of seeing things through Christ (2 Cor 5:16). Christ is the turning point of the ages, the one who came in the fullness of time. So Paul's future statements are firmly grounded in his sense of the "now," the time set in motion by the coming of Jesus the Christ. This time is characterized by temporal and spatial limitation, and thus we exist within another ultimate framework of meaning. Although there is no explicit christological statement in 1 Cor 7:29–31, Paul can hardly be understood here unless we perceive the importance of his whole christological perspective. I believe that this observation is of crucial importance for understanding Paul's "as if not" exhortations. For Paul is most definitely not following the kind of logic by which a temporary worker may do a slack job because the job will soon end. No, for Paul the eschatological logic is that in Christ we can now see that we are in a new time frame and that the form of this world is not of ultimate significance. It is not the quantity of time left that determines his view-

¹² Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 179.

point but the changed perception of the time in which believers now live.¹³ Still, the quality of the time in which we now live is determined not only by the past coming of Christ but also by the expectation of Christ's future parousia and the end of the world's form.

Sandwiched between the framing eschatological declarations in vv. 29a and 31b come the five "as if not" exhortations:

I mean, brothers and sisters,
 the appointed time has grown short;
 from now on,
 let even those who have wives be
 as though they had none,
 and those who mourn
 as though they were not mourning,
 and those who rejoice
 as though they were not rejoicing,
 and those who buy
 as though they had no possessions,
 and those who deal with the world
 as though they had no dealings with it.
 For the present form of this world
 is passing away.

The five parallel "as if not" exhortations are headed by the one that obviously links them to the context in 1 Cor 7, "let even those who have wives be as though they had none." What is Paul saying? Clearly he assumes that some are married and will stay that way, and also that some may get married. Also, he cannot mean that those who are married should cease normal married life, for that would contradict vv. 2–5. So Paul is speaking about an attitude or practice within the normal relations and responsibilities of marriage, responsibilities he assumes any married person will seek to fulfill (vv. 33–34).

Likewise, the further "as if not" exhortations assume a normal participation in life in the world by Christians: mourning, rejoicing, shopping in the market, conducting business. The fact that Paul assumes these emotions and relations to be part of the daily

life of Christians is sometimes overlooked by commentators. Some have even absurdly suggested that 1 Cor 7:29–31 contradicts Rom 12:15, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." Nothing in 1 Cor 7:29–31 suggests that Christians should have a stoic life of denying emotions and relations. The first three "as if not" exhortations have precisely parallel subject and predicate nominatives ("those who mourn . . . not mourning"), but the final two are somewhat different in form. The fourth is, "and those who buy as though they had no possessions." The final one is "and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it." These both indicate that Paul is concerned with how one engages in these activities in the world, one's attitude toward one's dealings. We can conclude that the same is true for the first three "as if not" clauses.

There has been much discussion among scholars about the background of these "as if not" exhortations. There is a certain resemblance to Cynic and Stoic philosophical ideals of resignation and inner detachment from outward circumstances. We need not deny a certain affinity to and perhaps even influence from Greek philosophical ideals of inner freedom and detachment (*apatheia* and *ataraxia*).¹⁴ But the obvious difference is in the motivation. For the Stoic such inner detachment comes from an act of will through the recognition that outward circumstances are beyond our control. But Paul's "as if not" statements are grounded in a recognition that outward cir-

¹³Norbert Baumert, *Woman and Man in Paul: Overcoming a Misunderstanding* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 417–18.

¹⁴Will Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Corinthians 7* (SNTSMS 83; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 190–93.

The "outside" world may contain evil, but evil is destined for God's judgment and therefore poses no threat to the church or Christians.

cumstances are part of a penultimate reality, as seen through the eschatological act of God in Christ. Others have suggested that Paul's exhortations have parallels in Jewish apocalyptic texts. There is a close similarity with *4 Ezra* 16:40-48,¹⁵ but this text is much later than Paul, and the purpose is quite different.

I suggest that trying to see the "as if not" exhortations as ethical in purpose misses the point. Paul in 7:29-31 in no way counsels against marriage on eschatological grounds. Verses 25-28 and 32-35 argue for Paul's preference for celibacy, but not on eschatological grounds. Verses 29-31, on the other hand, are indeed eschatological but in no way are against marriage or other involvement in the world. So what is Paul's purpose in vv. 29-31?

Here we should remember that Paul's overall purpose in 1 Corinthians 7 is not confined to advising against marriage or even to counseling Christians to "stay as you are." His purpose is also to show that marriage is legitimate and normal, whether one is already married or chooses to get married after becoming a Christian. Thus a larger point Paul makes in the chapter is that one's outward status is a matter of indiffer-

ence in the realm of salvation and the church. Remember how the principle of 7:19 serves to cut both ways. In my judgment, taken as a whole, the rhetorical effect of 1 Corinthians 7 is in fact to underscore the flexibility of the church in regard to such outward circumstances as marriage, slavery, circumcision, and so on. And this is precisely what vv. 29-31 underscore as well, supporting in the immediate context vv. 27-28a. Thus the two "digressions" in the chapter, vv. 17-24 and 29-31, make largely the same point.

To put this another way, vv. 29-31 are not so much ethical admonition as they are explanation for the situation of these new Christians in Corinth. These are new Christians, having made a recent transition through baptism into a new life (1 Cor 6:9-11). They have left many aspects of their old life behind, and it is not surprising that some Corinthians think that they must leave behind marriage and sexuality as well. For Paul such a radical withdrawal from the circumstances and relations of life in the world is neither necessary nor practical. In 1 Cor 5:9-13 Paul clarifies for them his stance: Christians do not need to withdraw from the world. The "outside" world may contain evil, but evil is destined for God's judgment and therefore poses no threat to the church or Christians. In a parallel way Paul argues in 1 Cor 7:29-31 on a slightly different eschatological note. Christians can, indeed must, live in the world. But they can do so without fear of being "worldly." For they have the knowledge of the reality that the times are new and the form of this world is already passing away. So they can live "as if not."

I believe, therefore, that Paul in 1 Cor

¹⁵ Wolfgang Schrage, "Die Stellung zur Welt bei Paulus, Epiktet und in der Apokalyp- tic: ein Beitrag zu I Kor. 7, 29-31," *ZTK* 61 (1964): 125-54.

7:29–31 is concerned with a tension experienced by Christians, particularly new Christians. In this new life everything should be new and good. Yet there is still marriage, mourning, business to conduct, marketing to do. Should not Christians seek to be free of these entanglements? Paul, as he does in 1 Corinthians 5, answers that such involvements are in themselves no problem for a Christian. The tension between the new life in Christ and the continued involvement in the "old" world is inevitable in this present age. Paul is exploring an aspect of the perennial "already–not yet" tension of Christian existence. In this case it is the tension of the new life in Christ set in the midst of much of the same old life in the world as before. He argues that there is freedom for involvement, but with a critical stance. For us today Paul is providing a platform for a critique to be made from within our involvement in such arenas as globalization, ecumenical relationships, and cultural diversity. Since we know that these relations and institutions are all part of the form of the world already passing away, we can live freely and responsibly in the world, but "as if not."

I would not deny that there is a secondary ethical purpose of these exhortations.¹⁶ But they do not support celibacy or any other withdrawal from such emotions and relations. Rather, they speak about how to live within these relations. Nothing of the "form of this world" can be our ultimate purpose; the forms are not ends in themselves, though we easily make them out to be. They are the arena in which we can serve the Lord, with our eyes fixed on the ultimate goal (Phil 3:20–21).

I have argued that in 1 Corinthians 7, and especially in vv. 29–31, Paul is not merely arguing against marriage or telling Christians to "stay as you are." These two ideas are prominent, but they are argued

largely on practical grounds. He is also, and more deeply, saying that outward circumstances are matters of freedom for a Christian. His theological principles in vv. 19 and 29–31 serve ultimately to support a freedom and flexibility in dealing with one's status in the world. We are free to engage in life in the world, knowing we can do so "as if not." Further, he is not in vv. 29–31 counseling some kind of inner detachment, but he is opening up the possibility that engagement with the world is an opportunity for living out one's life in Christ. "As if not," grounded in our knowledge of the times in Christ, is a charter for critical freedom, not a call for withdrawal.

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¹⁶Note should be taken of the great influence of 1 Cor 7:29–31 on the thought and life of two great twentieth-century interpreters of Paul. Albert Schweitzer, though he actually says little about these verses, apparently relied on them a great deal for his own sense of spiritual, inner liberation from earthly things, and the "as if not" principle helped to motivate his decision to go to Africa. See *Out of My Life and Thought: An Autobiography* (New York: Henry Holt, 1933), 70, 268–69. Rudolf Bultmann also found 1 Cor 7:29–31 important for his understanding of how eschatology establishes a dialectic relationship with the world; a Christian faces the world free to participate in its tumult, but with an "inner aloofness." *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 182, 351–52.



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