

# *Time Management*

## **Doctrine vs Judgment**

**1 Cor 7:29-31**

**1**

**29** But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none; **30** and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess; **31** and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.

**2**

Most accept that the book of 1 Corinthians was written somewhere between 54 and 59 or 60 AD. There are some who think that Paul's appearance before Gallio and the chronology of Acts is earlier than accepted and that the book was written in the late 40's, say 48 or 49 AD. Regardless, the circumstances of the world during this time, primarily in reference to the Church and the Roman government, were not pleasant. The Romans had begun their persecution of the Church, though not yet in earnest, and Christians were having to endure this persecution because of the faith they professed. I can't imagine what it must have been like for those brethren so long ago. What is it like to live in fear because you have chosen to believe in God, believe in Christ, believe in their Word and to act on that belief? In the world of today we have brethren that face many of the same types of persecution, not the least of which is the inability to assemble, at least to assemble legally. This is unconscionable for us to even consider. To be put to death because of one's faith, to be forced to watch your family put to death because of the faith that you have chosen. These are things that are beyond our comprehension, thankfully, but an understanding of these circumstances helps us to have a better understanding of what Paul is writing.

**1 Cor 7:26**

**3**

**26** I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.

Recognizing the circumstances, Paul gives the Corinthians what might at first be thought to be some random suggestions but, on closer inspection with the understanding of the circumstances at work, they all work together. There is another factor in this equation that needs to be considered...

**1 Cor 7:25**

**4**

**25** Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy.

There is a lot of discussion on what Paul means by this. Personally, I don't get to wrapped up in a lot of that discussion, my way of thinking, taking as simple approach to my understanding of the scriptures as possible, I see Paul saying that in response to the question that the Corinthians had apparently asked about virgins, and about these other things he discusses, he is giving his opinion, as opposed to a divine decree from God. But, that said, we must also harmonize this with...

**2 Tim 3:16-17**

**5**

**16** All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; **17** so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Regardless of how we choose to view what Paul means in verse 25, if God had not intended for us to have this advice, it would not be a part of the Holy, inspired scriptures, because...

**6**

### ***“All scripture is inspired”***

Again, not to put too simplistic a spin on this, but I see Paul’s advice, given the times, as being good advice for all Christians that are facing persecution, but that the advice is not to be taken as divine doctrine. There is a vast difference between doctrine, commandment, and judgment. God has not given situational commandments. By that I mean, he hasn’t established a doctrine that is only valid in specific situations. His commandments are just that in all situations. I had a young man ask me one time whether it was a sin for his wife to work outside the home. The answer I gave him was in the form of a question. I asked him whether it would be a sin for his wife to take a job if he were to have an accident that left him a quadriplegic. He said not at all.

The point is that, if it is not a sin given those circumstances, then it is not a sin, under any circumstances. It may not be the best judgment, but that does not make it sin. The advice Paul is giving falls into the category of judgment not doctrine. That’s why he says that he has no command from the Lord, but that he is giving an opinion as one who is a trustworthy servant of God and His Word.

Paul is giving advice to Christians because of the...

**7**

### ***“Present Distress”***

There are some thoughts that I would like to look at from Paul’s advice here...

**8**

- 1) The World around us
- 2) How should the Christian view it
- 3) Time is Short

Paul gives his advice based on this “Present Distress,” our first point...

**9**

- 1) The World around us

Historically speaking, the Romans tended to be very tolerant of what they considered to be local beliefs. They allowed conquered people to maintain their religions and idol gods. They seemed to think that a change in government was much easier to accept than a change in core beliefs, as an example we see the allowed worship of territorial gods, such as Saturn in North Africa and even Jehovah among the Jews, being tolerated and allowed. Remember, governments, rulers, come and go, but gods are eternal. At least that seems to have been the attitude of the Romans, so why the persecution of Christianity?

The basic tenements of the Church and Christianity, at their very core, might, to the Romans, seem to be rebellious to established government. The Romans tolerated “Local” beliefs, they were not prepared to accept a belief that was spreading throughout the world. Most local beliefs were centered around a pagan god that didn’t do anything. Now along comes Christianity and a belief in a supreme God that is God of gods, one whose followers are performing supernatural acts while

teaching people to give their loyalty, their allegiance to this supreme God. This flies in the face of everything that the Romans wanted. They didn't care what people believed as long as they gave their allegiance to the Romans. When faced with a belief that demanded a different allegiance, they didn't like that. Then on July 19, AD 64, a fire devastated 10 of the 14 quarters of Rome, and while it was probably the madness of Nero that was the cause, he turned the blame towards this new group of radicals that were denying the Roman way of life, Christians. Very quickly, this grew into a persecution so great that to even wear the name would bring a sentence of death. That was the world they lived in.

We live in a different world. We don't have a government that is trying to eradicate us, yet. That government isn't demanding that everything we teach bring about a death penalty. But that government is slowly trying to force us to alter our beliefs to be more of what they call tolerant, politically correct. Add to that the pressure that is coming from the religious world. This idea of tolerance is the rallying cry of all religion. We're ok, you're ok, accept us for what we believe and do. The problem is that while they demand we be tolerant of them and their beliefs, they are not so willing to be as tolerant of anyone who doesn't accept their beliefs. The world we live in. Our next point is...

**10** 2) How should the Christian view it

In the passage that we started with, Paul gave advice on how to live, what to do, because of the way that the world was. Note what he says in verses 26 & 27...

- 11** A) Remain as you are
- a) Married, don't get a divorce
  - b) Single, don't get married

He then differentiates between judgment and doctrine when he says...

**1 Cor 7:28** **12**

**28** But if you marry, you have not sinned;

What he is saying is that if they chose to not take his advice and made a different judgment, it was not sin. As long as judgment does not violate doctrine it is not sin. But what Paul is saying is that there can be poor judgment.

**13** B) If a virgin marries, its ok

He apparently answers the question that had been posed to him concerning virgins. It is their judgment if they choose to be married, but it is not sin. But that judgment can lead to problems. That's the point he is getting at...

**1 Cor 7:29** **14**

**29** Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.

Regardless of the judgments we make, good or bad, there is always a consequence. The judgments we make in this life will have a direct bearing on how this life is going to affect us in the future. Paul is giving his advice to help Christians make good judgments. The caveat is that the advice he gave to them was predicated on the "Present Distress." If we aren't living under that same distress then the advice he is giving concerning the judgments we are to make, may not necessarily be the best judgments for us. Paul tells them that if they are not married, don't get married. This

isn't a ban against marriage, its saying that given the current distress, not having the encumbrance of being married might be the best option. But he also says that the circumstances of the world don't justify sin. That said, then what is his point in...

**1 Cor 7:29-31**

**15**

**29** But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none; **30** and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess; **31** and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it;

If Paul isn't telling those that are married to get a divorce, what is he saying when he says to...

**16**

### ***“Act like they had none”***

He isn't saying to neglect or ignore their responsibilities as a husband or wife, he is saying that regardless of what the circumstances are that surround them, they are to not let those circumstances cause them to lose their faith in God and Christ. He is saying that they must stand faithful and strong in whatever their personal circumstances are as they face the current times of distress. That is seen in his statements concerning weeping, rejoicing, buying, or even living in the world. I think the point he is making is that we are to put our trust in God and his word and not in family, or grief, or joy, or possessions or even the blessings of the creation, the world, which he has given us. Paul then states why our trust must not be put in the temporal, things and emotions of this world...

**17**

### ***“For the form of this world is passing away”***

There is a lot of discussion about what this phrase means. Is it speaking about the second coming, the final demise of this world? Or is it talking about the changes that Christ has brought into the world with His sacrifice and the establishment of the Church? Or is he saying that “This present Distress” is just temporary and will soon pass? There are probably other ideas that I didn't come across, but these were there. I'm not sure which one makes the most sense to me, there are pros and cons for each, but this I do know, Paul is saying that our trust must be placed on God, Christ, the Word, and not on anything in or of this world. That's the point...

**18**

#### **3) Time is Short**

Regardless of how we decide to view this idea, the point is that our time in this world is short. What we do with that time is entirely up to us, but it is imperative that we understand that the decisions we make will have consequences. If we want our judgments to turn out good then we need to put our trust in the Lord.

Note...

**1 Cor 7:32-35**

**19**

**32** But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; **33** but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, **34** and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that

she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. **35** This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

Here is Paul's summary. Keep your trust and commitment on the Lord. The one who is married has an added burden, their spouse or family that they have an obligation to. This is natural, this is scriptural. When we marry, God tells us we are to have an obligation to our spouse. The point isn't that we are to avoid other commitments in this life, the point is that we are to recognize that whatever other commitments we might have chosen to make, our commitment to faith is to be the only commitment that matters.

Christ says it this way...

**Matt 10:37-39**

**20**

**37** "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. **38** And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. **39** He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

Nothing in this world, not family, not possessions, not emotions are worthy of placing our trust or commitment in. None of those things will sustain when this world is over. When Christ comes to take His followers home, everyone will be judged by the decisions that we make.

**2 Cor 5:10**

**21**

**10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Paul is addressing specific question that the Corinthians had asked him about. Can a virgin marry? What about the persecution? Should we leave our families? What about our possessions? What about the joy or grief that this world brings? Paul answers each of their concerns and the answer is the same for each, trust in the Lord.

**Ps 91:2**

**22**

**2** I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!"

The Psalmist says that he puts his trust in God. Paul says it this way...

**2 Cor 1:9-10**

**23**

**9** indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; **10** who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us,

So while Paul answers their questions, he establishes the principle by which we should live...

**24**

***"Put your trust in God and His Word"***

If we make our choices, our judgments, based on His Word, our judgments will be good. The real question that needs to be answered is, is it our judgment to put God first?