

1 Corinthians 7:29-31^{iv}

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.

^{iv} About the Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Today's reading falls within Paul's long response to the community's questions about marriage. Marriage, which for the ancients was primarily for the continuation of the family, has no more role in light of the "impending crisis" (v. 26), "distress in this life" (v. 28) and the "passing away" of "the present form of this world" (v. 31). The old world and its forms were no longer relevant because the new age had dawned with Jesus and would flower soon when Jesus returned.

Although many scholars conclude that Paul is speaking solely within the context of his expectation of Christ's imminent return, because that return has not been immanent, others apply Paul's teaching to a broader understanding of the nature of this transitory age and the urgency he places on spiritual priorities.

The absolute statements in these verses are not intended to be normative rules of life. They do, however, introduce a basis for a healthy perspective on establishing a value system for contemporary Christian life. Christians cannot approach their ordinary tasks with non-Christian motives.