

1 Corinthians 7:29-31 I also say this, brothers: The time is short. From now on, let those who have wives live as if they have none; ³⁰those who weep, as if not weeping; those who rejoice, as if not rejoicing; those who buy, as if not possessing; ³¹and those who use the world, as if not getting any use out of it. For the way of life that belongs to this world is passing away.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. I'm no doctor, but I have to say, Paul seems pretty depressed here. Things must have been pretty bad for him to want to walk away from everything like that. And he wants us to do the same? Speak for yourself Paul!

Or maybe you feel like you're in the same boat. At times we look around at everything in our lives, throw up our hands and say, "What does it matter any more? The world, or at least my little corner of it, is falling apart! What I think or what I do makes no difference. I'm done."

But, actually, Paul wasn't in that boat at all. He was in a spiritual point in his life where he was able to see God and his perfect will in one hand, so that everything else in his other hand, if he needed to, he could let it all go. And the things in that other hand, he didn't pick those at random. He was listing all the things that make life in this world, well, life in this world. This is a list of what is most important to us. These are what makes us who we are: there are those we love — the top of that list being our spouse, the people and things we dread to lose, the things we rejoice to gain, the things we buy — material wealth, and the successes and fulfillment we get from using them.

Well if those are the things that make up life in this world, make us who we are, it sounds like there's nothing we can do about them — we're going to have them — that's life in this world. You're going to inevitably fall in love, there will be things you weep over, things you rejoice in, things you buy and things you use. And that's all true. But the problem is that we forget what is also true: **The way of life that belongs to this world is passing away.**

So we get sucked in to the way of life in this world and hold on tightly to these things as if that's all there is, this is all we have. The lows become devastating — how can I go on? We set Christ down to hold more tightly on to the earthly life we desperately fear we'll lose. The highs become invigorating — this is all I need, this is all I want. We set Christ down to add to these things and try and take our successes even higher. Or we become so obsessive over the worldly things in this hand — all of the events of the last year, or last month for example, we don't set Christ

down, but we can't see him over the mountain of worry, doubts, and fears we've put in front of him.

This way of life that belongs to the world becomes our enemy. Satan knows he will never be a contender in our hearts for God's top place, but those we love, the things we hate to lose, the thing we love to gain, material wealth and worldly treasures and successes, they find their way to the top of our hearts with ease, pushing God and our Savior, his will and power in our lives out. God says, "**You shall have no other Gods,**" but we do, making us nothing more than idolators, worshiping the false gods of this age.

And just what are all the worldly things in this hand going to amount to? Nothing. It's passing away. It will all be destroyed with fire on the last day, and so too will we if we're holding on to these things *instead* of our God and his message of our salvation.

Suddenly Paul doesn't sound so crazy in his call to detach ourselves from the way of life in this world. Now, is he telling us who are married to really live like we're not? Is he saying we should never have any reason to grieve or rejoice, or to not enjoy the things we have and do? No. Of course not. He's talking from the perspective of Christ's return. "**The time is short,**" he said. There's not much time left, and there are no do-overs. Make sure what is most important in this life is secure in your life — the object of our faith and our hope for our life after this one.

So, don't let love for your spouse take the place of Christ's love for you. Don't let this world's grief dampen what Christ has done for you. Don't let this world's joy and happiness overshadow the true joy and happiness Christ has won for you. Don't let the things we buy in this world with money cheapen what Christ purchased with his blood. Don't let the things we accomplish in this world for this life eclipse what Christ has accomplished for us now and forever.

For no love, no loss, no gain, no purchase, no accomplishment comes close to God sending his Son to live, suffer, and die for our sins. While we were still sinners, destined to pass away like the rest of this world and everything in it, God sent his Son to rescue us from that fate. Amazingly, here was his thinking, "Since you have disobeyed me and sealed your own fate, I will undo it by sending my Son to obey my law for you. He will be perfect in your place, and when the time comes, he will suffer and die to pay for your sins."

On our own, every day the sin of idolatry is ever with us. That thing to which we look to for the highest good is not always our God and his

Savior. But it's that truth, too, that widens the gulf between the treasures, pleasures, and accomplishments of this world and the treasures, pleasures, and accomplishments our God has stored up for us here in his Words and promises, and thereafter in our eternal life. For while all that we see in this world, all that we love, all that we enjoy, will all pass away, God's promises, his grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness, never will.

Paul's warning here makes it sound like we have our work cut out for us, doesn't it? Like it's a whole new way of life we have to conform to. But this is nothing new. It's the same message God spoke in the Old Testament to his people, "**Hold to my teaching, put me first.**" It's the same as Jesus taught in the New Testament when he called his disciples to follow him.

And it's the same message by which he called you. At your baptism God made you his own, a follower of Christ, called you to put him and his word first. At your confirmation you made a solemn vow to do just that, all your life. And it's not an ego thing with God — "I have to come first." It's a salvation thing for you. If God isn't first, if our faith in Jesus' work, not our own, isn't a priority, all that we see, all that we have, all that we do becomes a danger to our eternal future. And so it's for our good, because God loves us, that he comes first, so we don't lose all that he's secured for us, forgiveness of sins, life, salvation...

So love your loved ones, but not more than Christ, so that your love for them is not only for the here and now, but for eternity. Weep, but not like the rest of the world who have no hope or future. Rejoice, but not like the rest of the world for whom this is as good as it gets. Buy and enjoy the material blessings of our God, but only as their temporary stewards and caretakers, giving the glory to God.

For the time is short. If it was short when Paul wrote these words, it's 2000 years shorter today. The devil is working harder than ever to make the things of this world all we see and all we consume ourselves with. Paul is not saying to let go of these things, but only, to live as if you can let go of these things if they ever threaten your faith, hope, and trust in God.

No doubt that's all been tested over the last year, and even the last weeks, and it looks like it will continue to be for some time. No matter! All those things are in this hand. They do not direct our future. They do not dictate our fate. Christ has already seen to that.

It shouldn't be a surprise when things we love in this world come to an end. That's the way of this world. We'll be disappointed, but live as if

you're not. For Jesus has overcome. And we'll be doubtful and fall into worry. But live as if you're not, for God is in control. And we'll have bad days full of negativity, but live as if it's all good. For Christ has given us everything we need, for this life and the next. God's promise proves his love. Jesus' fulfillment in his life, death, and resurrection is our hope and stay, even while all else passes away.

The time is short. Thank goodness! The things that fail, the things we fear, the things that are all passing away, soon will, forever. And what is most important, the thing we hope for most of all, rescue, redemption, and release from this world will soon be here. Until that day may we heed Paul's warning. Let us not hold on to the things of this world so tightly that we lose the things of the next. Instead, with God's help and through our Savior's call may we cling to him, and only him, today, tomorrow, and forever. Amen!

Main point: Don't hold on to the things of this world so tightly that you lose the things of the next.