

The Current Era Is Limitless



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... the era is limited ... (I Corinthians 7:29, *CV*).

Paul said that the previous era¹ was limited. However, this current era, which began when he revealed the pinnacle of his revelation found in his latter epistles, is limitless. Limitless is defined as “vast”² and “seemingly boundless.”³ These are appropriate descriptions of unadulterated grace. The very nature of pure grace makes it so. After all, “*where sin abounds grace does much more abound.*” The sin of Israel’s fall ushered in the expansive reign of God’s grace.

While Paul anticipated the era of the Acts period to wrap up quickly with the Coming of Jesus Christ, “*the hope of Israel*” was placed in abeyance, superseded by a previously unrevealed immensity of unparalleled grace. The Coming of Christ graciously has continued to remain in abeyance for centuries now.

IS TIME REALLY SHORT?

What an economy Grace has been! What else would we expect from the pure grace of God? It has, indeed, been vast and seemingly boundless. It has spanned nearly two millennia, which pales in comparison to Paul’s previous profession that “*time is short*” (I Corinthians 7:29).

1. “A period of time that has a particular quality or character” (*MacMillan*).
“A long and distinct period with a particular feature or characteristic” (*Oxford*).
“A period of time considered as being of a distinctive character” (*Collins*).
2. *Webster’s New World College Dictionary*.
3. *MacMillan Dictionary*.

The Law spanned just over 1,500 years. If the Law which caused sin to increase lasted some 15 centuries, does it not make divine sense that Grace would abound long past such a period? Grace now stands at nearly 20 centuries. Is it nearly over? Is Grace about to cease by our appearing with Christ in Glory? Or, has Grace another 5 centuries? Or, perhaps another 10 centuries to double the duration of the Law? Or, even well beyond that? What kind of show will God make of this great attribute of His? None of us should dare to be so presumptuous as to estimate the end of the era of His Grace!

Prophetic prognosticators⁴ are ignorant of God's current unprophesied dealings with man. They use Scriptures addressed to Israel, as well as Paul's earlier epistles, to promote the idea of an "imminent" coming of Christ (or "Rapture"). As a result, their hearers are encouraged to adjust their lifestyles unnaturally for this impending event. One passage from Paul's Acts-period letters that is sometimes used to advocate such an adjustment is:

*This I say, brethren, **the time⁵ is short**: it remains, that both they that have wives be as though they had none (I Corinthians 7:29).*

*This I am averring, brethren, **the era is limited**; that, furthermore, those also having wives may be as not having them (CV).*

We have dealt previously in the *Bible Student's Notebook* with the dispensational context of I Corinthians.⁶ An approach to life based on this passage from a previous economy would be a dishonor to God and contrary to His present purpose as revealed through Paul's further advanced revelations found in his latter epistles. As a result, it will also wreak unnecessary havoc in one's personal and domestic life, bringing added sorrow to the heart and disgrace to the message of His Grace. A husband who erroneously attempts to conduct his life today as though he had no wife, most likely will find himself *actually* not having one!

4. e.g. Hal Lindsey (*The Late, Great Planet Earth*), Tim LaHaye (*Left Behind*), Jack Van Impe (*Perhaps Today*), Harold Camping (*Are You Ready?*), Ernest Angley (*Raptured*), Salem Kirban (*I Predict*), Todd Strandberg (*Rapture Ready*)

5. The word translated "time" (KJV, Young) and "era" (CV) is καιρός (*kairos*). It is defined by A.E. Knoch as "a distinct portion of time having special characteristics" (*Concordant Keyword Concordance*). The *Concordant Version* translates it by four different English words in Paul's epistles. Here are those words along with a verse example:

"era" (I Corinthians 7:29);
 "occasion" (Galatians 6:10);
 "season" (Galatians 4:10);
 "period" (I Corinthians 7:5).

6. *Rightly Dividing Paul's Epistles: The Distinctive Messages of the Prison and Pre-prison Epistles* (D.L. McCroskey; BSN #10; BSN #197); *Paul's Perfection Epistles* (A.E. Knoch; BSN #310); *The Chronological Order of Paul's Letters: Their Dispensational Significance* (Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.; BSN #319); *Paul's Post-Acts Ministry* (R.B. Shiflet; BSN #346); *The "Lord's Supper" Brief Thoughts on Israel's Passover* (Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.; BSN #382); *Paul's Five Ministries* (Edward H. Clayton; BSN #484); *The Dispensational Place of Marriage in I Corinthians 7* (Charles H. Welch; BSN #485); *The Hope of Israel in Paul's Early Epistles vs "That Blessed Hope" in Paul's Latter Epistles* (Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.; BSN #485); *The Lord's Coming in the Early Epistles* (Charles H. Welch; #486); *Right Division Includes Paul* (Stephen Hill; BSN #487).

OUR FOCUS DURING THIS ERA

Ephesians represents the pinnacle of Paul's revelation. Here he lays forth the Secret Economy in which we now live today. In this epistle, rather than prompting singleness and a weaning of domestic life as he had done previously in I Corinthians 7, he tell us that domestic life now has a paramount place in spirituality.

In the last two chapters of this unparalleled revelation, we are entreated not to be *"foolish"* in our domestic lives by making the mistake of thinking that these heavenly truths should somehow make us distant or disassociated from domestic life. He desired that we should understand what the Lord's will is for us today,⁷ and he leaves no doubts as to what that will is:

- (1) that we are filled full with His spirit (5:18)⁸ and,
- (2) that we become focused on and dedicated to domestic life.

In Ephesians 5:17-6:9 Paul plainly lays forth what it means to be filled with God's spirit:

- It enables us, from melodious hearts, to be an encouragement to ourselves and others (5:19).
- It enables us be to be thankful always for all things (5:20).
- It enables wives to be better wives (5:22-24, 33).
- It enables husbands to be better husbands (5:25-33).
- It enables children to be better children (6:1-3).
- It enables fathers to be better fathers (6:4)
- It enables servants to be better servants (6:5-8)
- It enables masters to be better masters (6:9)

Religion has its own list of what it suggests are the effects of a spirit-filled life; but here Paul lets us see exactly what spiritual life looks like in our day. Unlike Paul's earlier instruction,⁹ domestic life has now moved front-and-center. The focus of our era is marriage, parenting and employment, all done from melodious hearts always giving thanks for all things.

According to Paul, this is the advanced will of our Lord for today. So much so, that single women are instructed to *"marry, bear children and guide the house"* (I Timothy 5:14). Moreover, ideal family life¹⁰ is made a prerequisite to taking care of the ecclesia, for *"if anyone is not aware how to control his own household, how will he care for the ecclesia of God?"* (:5). Even service to the Body of Christ

7. Ephesians 5:17:

*"Wherefore be ye not **unwise**, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (KJV).*

*"Therefore do not become **imprudent**, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (CV).*

*"For this cause, do not become **foolish**, but have discernment as to what is the will of the Lord" (Rotherham).*

*"Because of this become not **fools**, but understanding what is the will of the Lord" (Young).*

8. Ephesians 5:18:

"be filled with the Spirit" (KJV).

"be filled full with spirit" (CV).

"be getting filled in Spirit" (Rotherham).

"be filled in the Spirit" (Young).

9. This instruction was based on his at-that-time expectation of the Lord's coming.

10. *"Controlling his own household ideally"* (I Timothy 3:4, CV).

is predicated on ideal household service from which one is “*procuring for themselves an ideal rank ... in the faith*” (:12-13).

Life matters. The details of life matter. The details of life are strategically designed by God to have meaning and purpose. Don't waste your time imagining that you will be “raptured” (*i.e.*, delivered away) from your divine training ground. It will be a costly mistake. Father is getting you ready for something bigger. Don't come up short in your experience for celestial service.

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