

Influencing for Christ  
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1 Corinthians 9:19-27; 10:31-33; 11:1

**When Jesus saves us, why doesn't He take us to heaven right then?**

Dr. D. James Kennedy the great pastor, author, and the creator of Evangelism Explosion training used to pose that question. His answer: Because of "them."

God doesn't save us and snatch us away to Heaven immediately because of the INFLUENCE he wants us to have on "them"--- those who don't know Him.

**Who had the greatest influence in your decision to follow Jesus?**

Big Idea: Believers represent God by using their influence to bring others to Him.

- Example: Dale Carnegie's *"How to Win Friends and Influence People"*
- The thrust of that book was being considerate of others in order to win them over -- to INFLUENCE them.
- In another sense that's what Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 9 and 10.
- This section of his letter might be titled: *"How to Win Souls and Influence Young Disciples for the Glory of God."*
- In chapters eight and nine Paul wrote about the balance between exercising our freedom in Christ and yet, not offending those we need to reach for Him or causing them to stumble into sin.
- I may be free to eat, drink, or do something without sinning, but if it makes someone who is immature in his or her faith "stumble," it's a problem.
- Paul said he would surrender his "rights" to win people to Christ.

1 Corinthians 9:19–23 (ESV)

<sup>19</sup> For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

- In verse nineteen Paul states that he is free but has chosen to become a servant to others to win them to Christ.
- Because we are saved by grace and not by the law, followers of Christ have “Christian liberty” in living our lives. **What does that term mean, practically speaking?**

Romans 14:12–16 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

### **Do Not Cause Another to Stumble**

<sup>13</sup> Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. <sup>14</sup> I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. <sup>15</sup> For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. <sup>16</sup> So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil.

- In modern life, this is an issue of personal behavior. *“Most of these activities revolve around social “do’s” and “don’ts, such as whether or not to wear certain kinds of clothes, make-up, jewelry, tattoos, piercings, and/or practicing certain things, such as smoking, social drinking, recreational gambling, dancing, or viewing movies or videos.”<sup>i</sup>*
- **How can I determine if something is within my Christian liberty?**

- **How can Christian liberty be carried to an extreme? What's the other extreme – the opposite of Christian liberty?**
- *Quoting the same article: "...it is wise to seek God in prayer and His Word to determine whether or not a particular activity is actually forbidden in Scripture. If it is, it should be avoided. If it is not forbidden, then we should seek to determine how the activity reflects on our reputation as Christians and whether it will help us or hinder us in representing Jesus to unbelievers around us, whether it edifies them or not."*<sup>ii</sup>
- An activity may be available to me in my Christian liberty, but it may be advisable for me to surrender that right in certain circumstances so I won't hinder another person from coming to Christ or growing deeper in Him.

Romans 15:1–2 (ESV)

**15** We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

1 Peter 2:12 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Galatians 5:13 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

- Paul said, *"I have become all things to all people"* to reach them for Christ.
- Wait! Would this great apostle be a wishy-washy "chameleon" who changed his beliefs to suit those he was trying to influence?
- **What DOES he mean by becoming "all things to all people" to win them to Christ? What would that look like?**
- The Life Application Study Bible: *"Paul gives several important principles for ministry: (1) Find common ground with those you contact; (2) avoid a know-it-all attitude; (3) make others feel*

- accepted; (4) be sensitive to their needs and concerns; and (5) look for opportunities to tell them about Christ. These principles are just as valid for us as they were for Paul.*<sup>iii</sup>
- When Paul said I became a Jew (he already was one,) or I became a Greek, or I related to fellow believers, it doesn't mean "salad bar" religion where you take a little from this religion and little from that [syncretism.<sup>iv</sup>]
  - John MacArthur writes: *"Within the bounds of God's Word, he would not offend the Jew, Gentile, or those weak in understanding. Not changing Scripture or compromising the truth, he would condescend in ways that could lead to salvation."*<sup>v</sup>
  - Paul lived in a way to avoid offending those he was trying to win to Christ.
  - Jesus set that example for Paul. *"To the highborn Jew, Nicodemus, He talked about spiritual birth (John 3); but to the Samaritan woman, He spoke about living water (John 4). Jesus was flexible and adaptable, and Paul followed His example. Neither Jesus nor Paul had an inflexible "evangelistic formula" that was used in every situation."*<sup>vi</sup>
  - Next Paul shifted to one of his favorite metaphors, training for a race:

1 Corinthians 9:24–27 (ESV)

<sup>24</sup> Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. <sup>25</sup> Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. <sup>26</sup> So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. <sup>27</sup> But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

- Paul would have known about the Isthmian (is-mee-un) games (held every other year and second only to the Olympics.)
- He used this familiar athletic metaphor multiple times in his letters.
- He speaks of both self-control and training to win the prize -- painful and exhausting work.

- **How does an athlete prepare? What kind of training? What restrictions? How does this picture of discipline and self-control apply to running to win others to Christ? What kind of training regimen keeps us fit to run the Christian race?**
- When Paul says he might be disqualified he doesn't mean losing his salvation. He does mean losing the opportunity to win people to Christ and to win a "crown" in Heaven some day.
- If we jump ahead to the end of chapter ten Paul gives us the real reason we should live like this to reach people for Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1 (ESV)

31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

- Verse 31 is a great verse to memorize! It's a great "lens" or "filter" to use when making a decision about how we choose to exercise our freedom.
- Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. If I do this will it glorify God?
- Why should we live this way? Paul reiterates the reasons:

32 Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God,  
33 just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. [And we do that in order to...]

11 Be imitators of me [Paul], as I am of Christ.

- Paul wasn't on an ego trip when he said they were to imitate him. It was safe to imitate Paul because Paul was imitating Christ.

Philippians 2:5–8 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,  
<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

## So, What's the Takeaway?

- God didn't take us straight to Heaven when we were saved because He has called us to be INFLUENCERS for Him. Every follower of Christ has a responsibility to influence others in a way that draws them to Him.
- But, wait a minute! I'm saved by grace and not by "good deeds." I've got Christian freedom to live my life without being legalistically obsessed with man-made rules. That's true, but that's not the end of the story.
- It's true that the only "rules" we must follow are those specifically outlined in scripture, not to earn our salvation, but to glorify God and be blessed.
- On the other hand, just because we can do something doesn't mean we should.
- Sometimes we need to give up our rights to certain behaviors and activities to influence people to come to Christ and grow closer to Him.
- As we strive to influence others for Christ, we need to look for common ground and not do anything that would cause them to "stumble" either into sin or further from Jesus.
- We need to ask ourselves: Does this build others up? Does it glorify God? Does it draw people closer to Christ?
- How can you and I live this week so we can be influencers for Christ? Is there anything we need to change to make that happen?
- How can we say like Paul, "...I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do it all for the sake of the gospel..."
- Who are YOU influencing for Christ?

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-liberty.html>

<sup>ii</sup> ibid

<sup>iii</sup> Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 171292-171294). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>iv</sup> Syncretism - The incorporation into religious faith and practice of elements from other religions, resulting in a loss of integrity and assimilation to the surrounding culture. - Manser, M. H. (2009). *Dictionary of Bible Themes*

<sup>v</sup> MacArthur, John. The MacArthur Study Bible, NASB (Kindle Locations 280360-280361). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

<sup>vi</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 601). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.