

**Enslaved To Win!**  
1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Principle: As a servant of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul,

1. **Contextualized** the gospel
2. Exercised great **personal restraint**

**Application:** As a servant of Jesus Christ, I,

1. Share the gospel in **meaningful ways**
2. Live a **disciplined life**

**Conclusion:** Why do we live this way?

1. The example of **our Lord Jesus Christ**
2. The goal of **winning the lost**

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<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.*

<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>2</sup>

<sup>7</sup> But I discipline my body and keep it under control,<sup>[a]</sup> lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

## Enslaved To Win!

### 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

#### Introduction

#### Hudson Taylor (pic)

In the mid 1800's Hudson Taylor became a missionary to China— When he arrived in China in 1854, many missionaries were content to stay and minister in the coastal cities. Taylor challenged the norms and pushed into the vast unreached interior. Hudson Taylor and the CIM (later called OMF), which he founded in 1865, are well known for their unusual approach to reaching people for Jesus;

Taylor popularized the idea that missionaries should live and dress like the people they seek to evangelize.

- Adoption of Chinese **dress**,
- **Shaving his head** - having a pigtail
- **Eating Chinese food** with Chinese implements;
- He observed **local customs and etiquette**
- **Living** among the Chinese in Chinese housing rather than enjoying the comforts of European-style accommodations.
- **Language**. He set high standards; able to preach in four dialects including Mandarin and Cantonese.

Taylor wrote to his missionaries,

*"Let us adopt their costume, acquire their language, study to imitate their habits, and approximate to their diet as far as health and constitution will allow. Let us live in their houses..."*

Taylor said, "We wish to see true Christians, but truly Chinese in every sense of the word. We wish to see churches and Christians led by Chinese pastors, worshiping the true God in their land, in the dress of their fathers, in their own tongue, and in building a thoroughly Chinese style of architecture.

Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission sought to take the unchanging truth of the gospel and put it into language that fits the context they were trying to reach. They were trying to translate the Gospel—in both word and deed—into understandable terms appropriate to the audience. Sounds like Paul,

#### 1 Cor. 9:22-23

*I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.*

## As a servant of Jesus Christ ...

*Verse 19 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.*

The Apostle Paul was no person's slave. He was "free from all". He was free from entanglements – he was not a puppet on a string, controlled owned by the wealthy or special interest groups lobbying to buy his tongue. He was free from restrictions placed on him by others. Yet he self-identified as a slave. He voluntarily relinquished his rights. He declared, "I have made myself a servant to all". When everyone else wants only to move in the direction of slave to free, he moved in the direction of free to slave. **What's up Paul?**

In the ancient Greek world, the distinction between slave and free as natural a way of categorizing people, men and women, young and old, slave or free. A slave gave up her identity. Cultural adaptation was part of his job. He would be expected to adapt to the Roman culture of the household. If sold to a Jewish or household the she would need to adapt to the culture to become like them. The slave had no rights. A slave adapted to his or her culture, the culture didn't adapt to him or her.

**What's up Paul**, you want to be like this? Paul chose to adjust, to adapt to whatever cultural context he ministers within (whether Jewish or Gentile). **Why?** This reflects his greater identity that springs from a greater reality as a new creation in Jesus Christ.

For the onlooking critics, this is foolishness. But for Paul this is the upside down values he introduced earlier when discussing the wisdom of the cross vs the wisdom of this world. His life incarnated the foolishness of the cross. Why did he do this? His ultimate concern for the gospel and utter lack of concern for the social prejudices or approval of others could hardly be stated more bluntly than to say that for the sake of the gospel he, though free, willingly became the slave of all. Paul abstains because he loves those under the law and wants to win them to Christ.

Paul did not lead from a position above others but from a position below them. Paul adopted the position of the powerless slave to bring salvation to those he serves. Paul willingly and strategically limited himself, placing himself in the role of such a slave because he understood that such an approach, though extremely difficult for him to carry out, was of strategic advantage for the gospel. Paul surrendered his right to live according to his own preferences and live by a missiological flexibility with hopes to reach more people for Christ. Like Taylor, Paul wanted to remove barriers inhibiting those who had not yet responded to the gospel. This came at great personal cost, suffering and even persecution.

This is a passage dealing with the difficult issue of contextualization.

**Principle: As a servant of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul,**

1. **Contextualized** the gospel

Paul's attitude as a servant reflects his "zeal and love for Christ" and his "insatiable desire for the salvation of humanity.

His call – Acts 26:16-18

<sup>16</sup> But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, <sup>17</sup> delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you <sup>18</sup> to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

He had a strategy – bring more glory to God by winning more to Christ. How can I do that?

Identity – slave. Method – contextualization.

### Contextualization

v. 22 I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

Paul wasn't cookie cutter in his approach, one size fits all – nor was he producing "Christianettes" who looked and acted and sounded the same in different cultures,

He was not a chameleon who changed his message or his morality; he was not a compromiser who adjusted to please his audience. He simply adapted his approach to different groups. He was a bridge builder with people. To some this may have appeared inconsistent – but he was very consistent, for he was acting in accordance with his overriding purpose, which was to win people to Christ.

Paul understood that the gospel does not belong to any particular culture. As the gospel comes to different peoples and cultures its message will remain the same but its look and feel may be somewhat different. The gospel adapts but does not accommodate.

#### a. Jews / Under the law –

<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.

Paul was Jewish and had a great burden for his own people however his calling was to the Gentiles (Eph 3:8). He would go into a new city and went where? - Straight for the synagogue and shared the gospel. His statement, *To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews* seems especially strange coming from a Jew. Yet, although Paul understood himself to live under the conditions of the new covenant in Christ rather than under the law of Moses he adapted his language and lifestyle observing the Law when living among those who might have stumbled if he had not. e.g. Acts 16:1-3 (Timothy's circumcision)

#### b. Gentiles - If Paul was rejected by the Jews he turned to the gentiles.

<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.

Paul revered the law but set that aside to reach the Gentiles. He adapted to the ways and customs of the Gentiles among whom he worked. It didn't mean he was lawless, or reckless, but still under Christ's law, still bound in obedience to God.

Paul lived so that he did not offend either the Jews or Gentiles. He didn't parade his liberty before the Jews, nor impose the law on the Gentiles.

**c. Weak** - young believers (ch. 8)

<sup>22</sup> *To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak.*

He even identified with weak, immature Christians to help them grow. His MO was not compromise but the law of love for the glory of God.

Personal preference and comfort is not foremost in Paul's mind or heart. The power of the gospel and is seen in the messenger who both speaks and incarnates this messages

**Principle:** By becoming all things to all people Paul means he adopted the most appropriate and effective approach for each group of people with which he worked. With respect to methodology and negotiable habits and customs, gospel workers are willing to adapt in order to win as many as possible,

The end? **Salvation.** 5x in this passage we see the word "**win**". We seek to communicate the truth about our Lord in a responsible and responsive way.

The means? Contextualization

Everyday this is at work in us and around us. Everyone contextualizes their message. We all try to get information to someone else in a way they can understand and receive.

*e.g. The tension on the taut metal cable is inappropriate for the desired frequency.*

Contextualization is about good communication. The first rule is know your audience.

- So I speak in **English** to you (not in French) so you can hear God's Word.
- So we use the **ESV** Bible in English (not Greek, Hebrew or Latin) so you can understand
- So I use **ppt** slides and we print sermon notes to aid your retention.

Contextualization in mission is the idea that we need to be translating gospel truth into language understood by our culture.

Contextualization occurs in our children's ministry; curriculum developers and teachers work hard to use language, concepts, and illustrations that children will understand. As a result, they get it.

Contextualization begins with a heart for the lost and a driving desire to help them understand God's liberating truth.

As believers in Jesus, as those who citizenship is in heaven, we are to be radically distinct from the culture around us and yet, out of our identity as servants of Christ, we should sacrificially serve our friends and neighbours and bring them the gospel.

However, in the quest of connection, there are limits: our efforts at contextualization should not distort the gospel message or hide the tougher parts of the gospel. We don't remove its offence. But we seek to bring clarity to it. We remove the negotiable barriers but we don't remove the content or cost of following Jesus. If we are not careful we create a new gospel, an easy gospel, which is no gospel at all;

What do we need to watch out for? Two ditches; on one side, legalism that can accompany cultural withdrawal or the compromise and watering down of the gospel that comes with over-adaptation.

*"The gospel itself holds the key to appropriate contextualization. If we over-contextualize, it suggests that we want too much the approval of the receiving culture. This betrays a lack of confidence in the gospel. If we under-contextualize, it suggests that we want the trappings of our own sub-culture too much. This betrays a lack of gospel humility and a lack of love for our neighbour." Tim Keller*

No adaptations will be considered that are destructive to the nature of the gospel. In seeking to win others, we speak ultimately to please God and not the approval of others.

As believers who are called to be salt and light in the world, we want to find ways to faithfully communicate the gospel message to others cultures without compromising the message. *Contextual without compromise*, as one writer has put it.

So we use methodological flexibility, with self-restraint and gospel faithfulness.

### **As a servant of Jesus Christ ...**

#### **2. Exercised great personal restraint**

*24 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.*

*25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.*

*26 So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.*

Paul used the athletic metaphor to provide an inspirational image of a person who was looked up to for their remarkable self-discipline in the pursuit of excellence and glory. *Do you not know?* The Corinthians would have known about games and stadiums based on the proximity of Corinth to the Isthmian games, which were held in city of Corinth and which attracted thousands of visitors to the city. Here Paul seeks to inspire the believers by talking about his own example so that they may follow it and not lose their reward.

Christian - run to win. Consider these athletes – athletes were held to be excellent models of self-control (unlike many today) – they mastered their skills by mastering their bodies. They have focus, and sacrifice, show determination and exercise self-control – not to that apple fritter (gotta keep the weight at 165)! No to 10 more minutes of sleep (time to train). The athlete forgoes present pleasures for the sake of a later ultimate good.

*25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.*

**Strict training” is “to keep one’s emotions, impulses, or desires under control, control oneself, abstain. ...in all respects.**

If these athletes do all this – years of training and focus for a moment on the podium and a pine or celery wreath (yah, that was before gold medals), for something that is here and then gone (or rotten), how much more Christian should you exercise self-control? To ‘enslave’ the body means, in this context, to devote it unreservedly to God’s service through service to others. Take my life Lord and let it be an offering to You for Your glory.

In fact, you run in vain if you do not have self control ... bring your body into subjection ...exercise the discipline of self control and run the Christian life to obtain the prize / reward.

Self-restraint is a distinguishing mark of a people who stay in God’s favor.

**Application:** As a servant of Jesus Christ, I,

**We need** to settle this – *I am a slave to Christ, and this makes me free. As Christ’s slave, I am free from my own control and free to set aside my rights to be servant of all. Here’s what a Christian understands and says, “I am not my own, I belong to Christ. I have been bought with a price. I am His forever and I will glorify God in my body.”*

### **These verses have massive implications for strategies for outreach**

#### 1. Share the gospel in **meaningful ways**

Let’s remember that contextualizing isn’t the goal. Being hip and relatable isn’t the end. Acceptance isn’t the goal. What does Paul have in mind when he says “*so that I might win some*”? It is seeking the salvation of the lost, but it is even more than that to make disciples who have a radical understanding of personal identity as servants of Christ who live as slaves of the gospel in order to save some. Paul wanted believers to understand what it looked like for them to become members of Christ’s body.

We struggle to figure this out. We wrestle with what does this mean in my school, or workplace, or on the driveway talking to my neighbour. Let’s remember that the gospel is alien in every culture. It is always cross-cultural. However let’s remember that in the hands of the Holy Spirit the gospel crosses every cultural barrier. Isn’t that good news? God’s Word by God’s Spirit through God’s people is being lived and spoken and shared around the world today...and we are part of it.

### **We look for connection points**

- Work
- Sports – hockey or baseball or be a soccer coach
- Music and the arts
- School bus or at your locker or on the rugby team
- Parents @ school (MOPS)

## **We go to connection places**

Contextualization involves building relationships with people who don't know Jesus. Don't expect them to come to you; we are go to them and meet them where they are. As we do, we seek to enter into their world by hearing their stories, understanding their worldview and identifying with their struggles.

- Coffee shop
- Arena
- YMCA
- Front lawn

## **Let's Consider What Contextualization is Not**

For some Christians, contextualization has devolved into compromise – they tell people only what they want to hear and this makes them popular. They try to eliminate the tougher (unpopular) parts of the message for example, talking about repentance, or reducing sin to a lack of self-esteem, or denying the exclusivity of Christ. However, as one writer put it, they've missed that contextualization is *"giving people God's answers to the questions they're really asking and in ways they can understand."*

Whether at school or having coffee at the Mariposa, on the jobsite in the GTA, on the mission trip to India, we're to be missionary minded in everything we do. This takes work as we seek to translate our faith into the language of the culture we're trying to reach.

Becoming "all things to all people" does not mean losing your distinctiveness as a believer by being just like your non-Christian friends. So we don't start swearing with the boys in the locker room to contextualize, and we don't hang out at the strip club, we don't steal with the thieves, while trying to enter into their world". While living in the world we must avoid adopt styles, standards, and strategies that compromise our witness and the content of the gospel. Paul never says he "became strong to the strong."

Why do it – for the sake of the gospel's greatest impact.

Where do we flex – not on the gospel or morality but being all things to all people in matters that don't compromise the gospel of the law of Christ.

Our calling to use the freedom we have in the interests of the wellbeing and salvation of others. The gospel leads us to live in ways that will win others to Christ and promote their best interests, not to promote our own personal interests and freedom at others' expense.

## **2. Live a disciplined life**

What's it going to take to run well, to live well, to win the prize? You are to run as if your usefulness and fruitfulness depends on it. Follow Paul's example. For the sake of the prize, exercise self control, restraint. BTW...Israel did not. They started off well, but didn't finish the race. Therefore stay the course, persevere and win the race. Do everything to reach the goal, keep yourself from being disqualified, disciplined self-restraint. You will be hearing more about that next week in the message.

Most of us are a weak in the area of self-discipline. Good for a couple of days, or weeks and then we falter. It calls us to gives up the pleasurable for the best. There is a price to pay for self-denial, but there is a reward to be received from it as well. Ask, does this help or hinder the gospel?

v. 26 *So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.*

Using a boxing illustration – don't punching the air aimlessly. You have no goal or target. Rather, land the punch, live deliberately, stay focused on the target, aim for the goal. Run with the finish line in mind. Don't be like an occasional jogger who goes out for a run once in a while, go into strict training. Paul suggests our opponent is his own body. We must make it our slave, bring it under control, beat it black an blue and make it to serve God's purposes.

We must not underestimate the dangerous attitudes and practices we have. One of the ways in which God secures the perseverance of believers is by such stern warnings. Don't play games. Don't mess around. Be in it to win it. Fleeing sexual immorality and idolatry of your appetites. Take seriously this warning that you do not fall away by your lusts. Whether we eat or drink, or in whatever we are o glorify God.

**Conclusion:** Why do we live this way?

Why do we do this? We want to be faithful, fruitful and we want to finish well. Failure to do so can knock us out of the race and severely limit our fruitfulness. What's at stake? Ongoing usefulness and fruitfulness.

Where did Hudson Taylor get his understanding of how to approach his gospel work in China?

Where did the Apostle Paul get his understanding of how to approach his ministry?

1. The example of **our Lord Jesus Christ**

The decision to become a slave for the sake of the salvation of others reflects the pattern established by Christ. The commitment to becoming like those one seeks to save has never been as perfectly incarnated as in the case of Christ himself, who "became what we are ... in order that we might become what he is. God took the nature of a slave. He became all things to all men to bring salvation to all. Paul, an imitator of him spent his life for those he wished to win." Paul follows Christ's model of taking on the form of a servant for our sakes.

How do we live? With one basic motivation: to imitate Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word of God, who "became flesh and dwelt among us."

2. The goal of **winning the lost**

Win the prize ....

Hudson Taylor believed not only in the theological truth of this affirmation, but also in its missiological necessity and the numerous practical advantages which flowed from following the example of Christ.

Rather let the love of Christ constrain you to seek to commend yourself and your message to the Chinese, as becomes the followers of such a Master. Let there be no reservation; give yourselves up fully and wholly to Him whose you are and whom you wish to serve in this work; and then there can be no disappointment.