



Daily Verse and Comment

1 Corinthians 9:19-22

(19) Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. (20) To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. (21) To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. (22) To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.

New International Version

Paul mentions five times here that he is trying to “win” different people, and in verse 22, he writes that he is trying to “save some.” This passage is commonly interpreted that Paul would present himself differently in various circumstances to win people for Christ; he became all things to all men in order to “save” at least some of them. This interpretation fits the general evangelical belief that Christians should do whatever is necessary to “win souls for Christ” and to get all manner of people “saved” before they die.

However, if that is what this passage means, then holy Scripture is broken (see [John 10:35](#))! Such a reading contradicts numerous other clear biblical statements. For example, in [John 6:44](#), Jesus says, “*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.*” A little later in [John 6:65](#), He reiterates this: “. . . no one can come to Me *unless it has been granted to him by My Father.*” Without the Father providing an individual an approach to Christ, he cannot come to Him for salvation. The Father must intervene first—human intervention makes no difference.

Acts 13 contains the story of Paul and [Barnabas](#) preaching to Gentiles in Antioch. Luke writes in verse 48: “Now when the Gentiles heard this, they

were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And *as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.*” Even though the apostles preached to many, only certain people believed what they heard because only they had been appointed to eternal life.

[John 17:3](#) provides a basic definition of the eternal life to which some were appointed: “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true [God](#), and [Jesus Christ](#) whom You have sent.” Eternal life, then, is not merely endless living, but is the quality of life that comes from having relationships with the Father and the Son—and only the Father determines who will have such relationships during this age. Those who are not appointed to eternal life now will have their opportunity in the second resurrection.

This parallels Paul's statement in [Ephesians 2:8](#) that grace and saving [faith](#) are both gifts from God. He is not beholden to give the faith that saves—that is why it comes as a gift only to some. In fact, in [II Thessalonians 3:2](#), the apostle says that “not all [people] have faith.” An interlinear Bible will show that the Greek contains a definite article—“the”—before “faith”: “not all have *the* faith.” There is a *specific* faith, but only those to whom God gives it have it.

Jesus declares, “Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the [kingdom of heaven](#), but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” ([Matthew 7:21](#)). Claiming Jesus as our Lord has no effect if He does not know us (verse 23), and as [John 6:44](#) shows, the Father determines whether a person can even approach Jesus Christ.

In [Acts 2:38](#), Peter speaks about receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then he says, “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, *as many as the Lord our God will call*” (verse 39). But without that calling, the promise does not apply. Many verses mention God's specific foreknowledge, calling, and election of some and not others ([Acts 13:2](#); [22:14](#); [Romans 1:6-7](#); [8:28-30](#); [9:11](#); [11:2](#); [16:13](#); [I Corinthians 1:9](#); [1:24-28](#); [Galatians 1:6](#); [5:8](#); [Ephesians 1:4](#); [4:1](#); [Colossians 3:15](#); [I Thessalonians 1:4](#); [2:12](#); [4:7](#); [5:24](#); [II Thessalonians 1:11](#); [2:13-14](#); [I Timothy 6:12](#); [II Timothy 1:9](#); [Hebrews 3:1](#); [9:15](#); [I Peter 1:2](#); [2:9](#); [5:10](#); [II Peter 1:10](#); [Jude 1](#); [Revelation](#)

[17:14](#)). Clearly, God has specifically determined who will come into a relationship with Him during this age—and it is not everyone! The rest will have this opportunity in the resurrection.

If the scriptures are to remain unbroken, either all of these examples of God limiting salvation right now are wrong, or the common interpretation of [1 Corinthians 9:19-22](#) misses the mark!

— David C. Grabbe

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