

How important is the word “IF” in man’s relationship with God?

One of the first forms of logical reasoning we learn as children is the significance of the word, “IF.” It is tragic that we do not remember the meaning of this word as we reach adulthood, especially in the realm of religion.

Grammatically speaking, “if” is recognized as a conditional particle. It refers to conditions or circumstances upon which certain consequences follow.

“If” is a word that comes into play in so many areas of our lives. It might involve opportunities, punishment, blessings, etc. Always remember, if does not stand alone. If you use the word “if” it must be in conjunction with something else. “If” by itself stands for nothing and has no meaning. However, when mother says, “Johnny, ‘if’ you eat your green beans you may have some ice cream,” now “if” means something. Johnny knows that he will not get the ice cream without eating those terrible green beans. How much does the ice cream mean to him? Is it worth eating the beans? “If” stands between Johnny and the ice cream.

As we get older the “ifs” begin to come fast and furious and we hear this word many times each day. “If you finish your homework, you may go out and play.” “If you finish your work, you may use the car this evening.” “If you take your medicine, you will feel better.”

Why is it that “if” is so well understood except in religion? There are those who teach the impossibility of falling from the grace of God. Jesus said, “If a man keep my words, he shall never see death” (John 8:51). Does this text say that no one will ever be lost regardless of how he lives? Certainly not! It does affirm that no one who “keeps Christ’s word” will be lost.

But in this scripture the word “if” is critical for it states a condition. Let us notice the word “if” in the following scriptures:

IF we hold fast the word, we will be saved (1 Cor. 15:2).

IF we faint not, we shall reap in due season (Gal. 6:9)

IF we endure, we shall reign with him (2 Tim 2:12).

IF we add the Christian graces we shall never stumble (2 Peter 1:10),

IF we walk in the light, Christ’s blood keeps us free from sin (1 John 1:7).

In each of the scriptures just cited, observe the leading conditional word, “IF”. Also note the action verbs that are connected to “if”. How can one, in the light of these texts, contend that the retention of one’s salvation is unconditional? How can one say that God will save us no matter how we live our lives? Eternal salvation cannot be considered without looking at the word “if”. The bible is clear that our salvation is dependent upon our sincere and determined effort to pursue the will of the Son of God.

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