

Moments for YOU

Volume 50, Number 3

Theme: "If"



“JESUS, IF ...”

Just as in our earthly relationships, the condition of our relationship with God is often revealed by how we speak to Him and what we say *about* Him. Do we use His Name in vain? Do we pray irreverently? Do we bargain with God by saying, “Lord, if you ____, then I will ____”?

In the Bible, we find two very different attitudes toward the Lord Jesus. These attitudes were revealed by the statements and challenges that were brought to Him.

“IF YOU ARE THE CHRIST”

No sooner had Jesus begun His public ministry than Satan tempted Him to manifest His power with the words “If Thou be the Son of God” and held out a promise of blessing with an unthinkable condition: “If Thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:1-11).

This challenge of Jesus’ true identity continued at the end of His life, too. While He hung on the cross—about to atone for sin—he heard the cries of the leaders and passers-by saying: “Let Him save Himself, if He be the Christ,” and “If Thou be the king of the Jews, save Thyself.” Even the criminals who were being crucified alongside Jesus called out to Him, “If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us” (Matthew 27:44; Luke 23:35,37,39).

“IF YOU ARE WILLING”

In sharp contrast with those who doubted stands the testimony of those who believed. One day, Jesus was approached by a man “full of leprosy” (Luke 5:12,13). We read that he cast himself down at Jesus’ feet and said: “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make

me clean.” Some in the crowd may have had a little spot of leprosy that they could hide from others; not this man—he was “full of leprosy” and owned up to his need of being healed. What was the outcome? Jesus said, “I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.”

At another occasion, Jesus healed a woman who merely touched His clothes as He walked by. Her faith in the power of God had led her to say: “If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole” (Mark 5:25-34). Like the leper, she fully realized her need of healing and recognized the One who could provide it.

NOT “IF,” BUT “WHEN”

How is it with you? Are you still wondering if Jesus is for real? Are you afraid to put His claims to the test? Do you think that you can get by without Him, or that you can hide your sin from God?

One of the condemned criminals who watched Jesus and heard Him that day at Calvary was struck by the innocence of the Just One and proclaimed: “This man hath done nothing amiss.” Then, with eyes of true faith that could look beyond the suffering of the cross and see the coming glory, he said: “Lord, remember me *when* Thou comest into Thy kingdom” (Luke 23:40-43). It was no longer “if” but “when”!

Someone has said: “If every living person knew what every departing soul discovers, everyone would be saved today!” There are no skeptics in hell. The Bible declares that: “Every knee shall bow ... every tongue shall confess” (Romans 14:11,12; Philip- pians 2:9-11).

When you bow the knee to Christ is

MOMENTS FOR YOU Vol. 50, 3rd Quarter, 2006. A quarterly publication sent free upon request as the Lord provides.

Publisher: Moments With The Book, PO Box 322, Bedford, PA 15522. A non-profit, tax-exempt corporation. Visit us online at www.mwtb.org/mfy **Senior Editor:** Tim Johnson **Editor:** T. Don Johnson



the all-important question. The time to turn to Him is *now*. Like the leper, recognize that you are lost in sin and in desperate need of help (Romans 3:23; 6:23); and, like the sick woman, reach out in faith to Jesus and He will save you (John 6:37).

God's Word says "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

—T. Don Johnson

Always put your "if" in the right place. In the case of the man who wanted Christ to cast the dumb spirit out of his son, the father said, "If Thou canst do anything;" but the Lord answered him, "If thou canst believe." Christ straightened out the "if" and put it in the right place. —D.L. Moody

CHRIST'S HEART-SEARCHING "IFS"

The word "so" in John 3:16 is a little one, but who has ever yet been able to sound the depth of its meaning? It is like some of our Lord's "ifs" in John 8, which are full of eternal significance. Let us examine them.

THE "IF" OF DISCIPLESHIP

"If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed" (v. 31). True discipleship is the result of abiding in the truth revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Difficulties are sure to arise for those who follow Christ, and many stumble and forsake Him in heart or in practice (Matthew 13:20,21). To not continue in His Word is to forfeit our fellowship with Him, for the soul of Jesus Christ can have no pleasure in the man that draws back from the clear light of His Word (Hebrews

10:38). Peter was a disciple indeed when he boldly preached the Christ whom he once denied.

THE "IF" OF FREEDOM

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (v. 36). The freedom which the Son of God gives is a freedom that can come from "none other name under heaven." It is freedom from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:10), from the guilt of sin (Romans 8:33), from the power of sin (Romans 6:14), from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:15), and the fear of man (Acts 4:18-20). It is the freedom of sons who have liberty of access into the Father's presence.

THE "IF" OF SERVICE

"If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (v. 39). "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7). The spiritual children of Abraham show their faith by their works, as he did. Abraham believed God, and his faith was evidenced by his works when he "went out not knowing whither he went," and when he offered up his son Isaac. Those who are the true children of the "Father of the faithful" will do works worthy of their Father. Works of faith are the natural, inevitable product of true spiritual life (James 2:20-24).

THE "IF" OF SONSHIP

"If God were your Father ye would love Me" (v. 42). There is no way to the Father but by the Son (John 14:6). To know the Father, as He is revealed to us in the Son, surely implies that we will sincerely love the Son for bringing us into such a gracious knowledge of the Father. To call God Father, and deny the Son, is to insult both Father and Son. The evidence of our sonship with God is love for His Son. If God is our Father in a true, practical sense, we will not only

supremely love the Lord Jesus Christ, but we will also love every child of God, for “Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him” (1 John 5:1).

THE “IF” OF RESPONSIBILITY

“If I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?” (v. 46). He spoke the truth, and lived it, for no one was able to “convince Him of sin.” He spoke the truth about Himself, about His Father, and about the needs and responsibilities of the people (vv. 12-24). They could not deny the truthfulness of His character or the mercifulness of His mission, yet they did not believe in Him—they did not commit themselves to Him. “Why do ye not believe Me?” Who shall ever be able to justify themselves in their unbelief? Oh, the infinite madness of refusing to believe Him who is the living embodiment of the Eternal Truth! “Why did ye not believe Me” will have an awfully solemn ring about it when the unbeliever meets Him at the judgment throne.

THE “IF” OF ASSURANCE.

“If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death” (v. 51). Eternal life and salvation is in that Word. Death can have no power over that man whose life is hid with Christ in God. To keep His Word is to keep the message Christ brings, and to appropriate it to our own personal needs; it is to wrap ourselves in it as in a garment, and to abide in it. Thus, by keeping it, we are kept by the power of God through faith. The promise is, “He shall never see death.” Of course, it does not mean the death of the body that we often see, but that awful death, the eternal penalty of sin and guilt (Romans 6:23). If it is such a blessing not to see it, what a horror it must be to be in it!

—From *“Handfuls on Purpose”*

“IF” OF ETERNAL LIFE

By His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has provided the means whereby every living person can have their sins forgiven and partake of eternal life. In 1 John 1:9 we are assured that “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Why the “if”? The Bible declares that we “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). When we become convicted of this fact, we need to repent of our sins and cry to God for His mercy and pardon as David did: “Blot out my transgressions. Wash me ... from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (Psalm 51:1-4).

Only when we are thus cleansed by Him is God able to make us partakers of His life and nature. “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life” (1 John 5:11-13).

—L.H.M., adapted

GOD VS. “IF ONLY”

Scott Willis and his wife, Janet, were traveling with six of their nine children on Highway I-94 near Milwaukee when a piece of metal fell off the truck ahead of them. Scott had no choice but to let the object pass under his vehicle; the result was that the rear gas tank exploded and five of the six Willis children died instantly in the flames. The sixth child, Benjamin, died a few hours later.

Scott and Janet were able to get out of the vehicle, sustaining burns from which they would later recover.

Standing there watching their children die in the fire, Scott said to Janet, "This is the moment for which we are prepared." The courage of this couple was reported throughout the United States and the world. Christ walked with them through the deep sorrows of this tragedy.

"Every morning we awake we say, this is one more day to prove the faithfulness of God. Every night we say, we are one day closer to seeing our children again." Such is the testimony of this couple who understood that children are a gift of God; and when God wants them back, He has the right to take them to Himself. Job, the Old Testament patriarch, would agree.

We say that the Willis family had an accident, but was not this, from God's perspective, a providential happening? I believe so. What we call an accident might be a well-planned event to God. Just think of all the contingencies, the events that had to converge for the accident to happen. Here are a few: *If only* they had started their trip a minute earlier in the morning—or a minute later. Then again, *if only* the truck had been at a different location on the expressway, either a few seconds earlier or later. Or one can say, "*If only* that piece of metal had fallen earlier, or later, or *if* it had scuttled into the ditch rather than in the middle of the lane of traffic ... "

With a little bit of ingenuity we could identify a dozen "if onlys." After all, this accident would not have happened unless a number of circumstances had converged at the right time and the right place.

Listen to the conversation at almost any funeral and you will hear some "if onlys."

"*If only* we had called the doctor sooner ... "

"*If only* there would not have been ice on the highway ... "

"*If only* we had noticed the lump sooner ... "

"*If only* they had operated ... "

"*If only* they had not operated ... "

Let me encourage you to take those "if onlys" and draw a circle around them. Then label the circle, "The providence of God." The Christian believes that God is greater than our "if onlys." His providential hand encompasses the whole of our lives, not just the good days but the "bad" days too. We have the word *accident* in our vocabulary; He does not.

Accidents, ill health, or even dying at the hand of an enemy—God uses all of these means to bring His children home. As long as we entrust ourselves to His care, we can be confident that we are dying according to His timetable (Job 14:5). We can't control events outside of us; we are, however, responsible for how we react to what happens in the seemingly random events of life. The fact is that God can send any chariot He wishes to fetch us to Himself.

Martha and Mary had their "if only" too (John 11:1-44). When Christ was told that His friend Lazarus was sick, He stayed away for two extra days so that Lazarus would already be dead and buried by the time He arrived in Bethany. The sisters individually voiced their complaint that if Christ had been there, their brother would not have died. Yet Christ wanted them to know that Lazarus had died within the will of God; he had died according to the divine schedule.

Nothing is gained by bemoaning the fact that "if we had only known then, things could have been different." We must see that God is bigger than our mistakes; He is bigger than a piece of steel that falls randomly

from a truck on the expressway. We must remember that those events that are completely out of our control are firmly within His grasp.

—Taken from *One Minute After You Die*, Moody Publishers, copyright © 1997 by Erwin Lutzer. Used by permission.

A sovereign God is never confronted with “what if” because what He wills always happens.

—H.J. Sala

“IF SO BE”

The little phrase “if so be” is used four times in the New Testament, each time setting forth a vital spiritual result established on the basis of a vital spiritual premise.

1. *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:2,3).* The true Christian life is one of thirst for the Word of God.

2. *“Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you” (Romans 8:9).* The true Christian life is one of guidance by the indwelling Spirit of God.

3. *“We have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not” (1 Corinthians 15:15).* The true Christian life is one of certainty of future resurrection.

4. *“If children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:17).* The true Christian life will necessarily entail suffering for the sake of Christ.

These “if so be’s” of Scripture, although seemingly expressed in the form of conditions, actually speak great assurances.

—Henry M. Morris (1918-2006), adapted

“IF” INSECURITY?

Nothing is more clearly taught in the Word of God than the everlasting security—the present and eternal salvation—of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He gives His sheep eternal life and assures them that they will never perish; they are held in His hand of power, and that of His Father; He saves evermore all who come unto God through faith in Him (John 10:27-29; Hebrews 5:9; 7:25).

However, there are many passages of Scripture, generally introduced by the little word “if,” that seem to many to imply a doubt as to the eternal salvation of all God’s children.

A careful consideration of these warning “ifs” will reveal the fact, though, that they are the testing of profession. Many take the place and name of Christians, but only those who endure are truly born of the Spirit. Therefore the Lord Jesus says, *“If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:6).* Genuine branches in the living Vine will abide. Those who take that place in profession, but do not continue, are dead despite their pretenses.

So, likewise, the apostle Paul could write to the Corinthians of “the gospel ... by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain (1 Corinthians 15:1,2). He tells the Colossians that they are now reconciled to God and will be presented unblameable in His sight, *“If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Colossians 1:21-23).* The Hebrews, likewise, are

told “whose [God’s] house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end (Hebrews 3:6). It is of mere professors that he writes: “If they shall fall away” in chapter 6:6, and again, “If any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Hebrews 10:38).

Of those who are real he immediately adds, in verse 39, “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

The “ifs” never contradict the direct, positive affirmations of Scripture. They are put in to rouse the consciences of any who might be content with a mere profession, but who give no evidence of possessing that divine life which leads the believer to press on to the end.

To be saved, safe, and secure forever, it is imperative that a person accepts the gift of God which is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23). Have you received this gift?
—H.A. Ironside

QUESTION & ANSWER

QUESTION: In the gospel of John the Lord Jesus makes this statement: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death” (John 8:51). This does not seem to be true as I have been to many funerals of Christians who have died. What is the explanation?

ANSWER: That is a good question. If we go to chapter 11 of John we find the Lord Jesus also repeating the same truth. “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die” (John 11:25,26). The death that the Lord is speaking

of in John 8:51, as well as here, is the *second death*. It is mentioned in Revelation 20:11-15, where we read these solemn words: “And death and [hades] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Death came into the world through sin (Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12). “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Is that all? No: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). For those who enter into eternity still in their sins, any terror they had while facing earthly death will be as nothing compared to the dread of the second death—an eternity apart from God in the lake of fire.

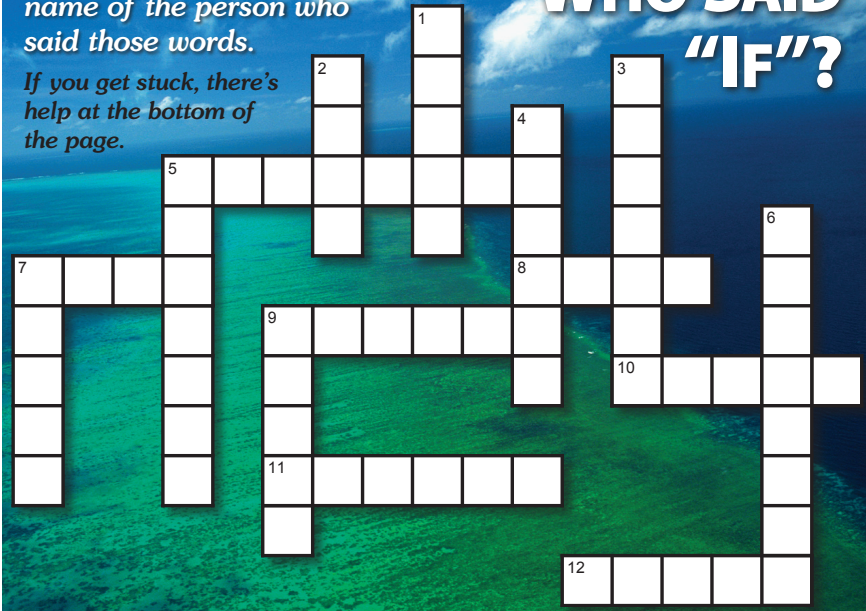
However, when a person accepts Christ as their personal Saviour—thus being saved from the second death—even the first death is not something to be feared. As the apostle Paul said, “[I have] a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Philippians 1:23). He also said: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). “Absent from the body ... present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). The believer in Christ can truly say: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:55).

So, in conclusion, when a person has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior—trusting only in Him—that person will never see the second death which is reserved for unbelievers. We may often speak of a believer as having died, but we can also say that this person is now with the Lord.
—John D. McNeil

For each clue, fill in the name of the person who said those words.

If you get stuck, there's help at the bottom of the page.

WHO SAID "IF"?



ACROSS

- “If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but *if* it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it.”
- “If God be for us, who can be against us?”
- “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar.”
- “If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”
- “If Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and *if* not, blot me, I pray thee out of Thy book.”
- “If I perish, I perish.”
- “What profit is it *if* we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?”

DOWN

- “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”
- “If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but *if* thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me.”
- “If the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath.”
- “How long halt ye between two opinions? *If* the Lord be God, follow Him.”
- “If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants.”
- “If thou return, then will I bring thee again.”
- “If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise.”
- “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.”

REFERENCES ACROSS: 5 Acts 5:38,39; 7 Romans 8:31; 8 1 John 1:10; 9 Joshua 24:15; 10 Exodus 32:32; 11 Esther 4:16; 12 Genesis 37:26; DOWN: 1 Psalm 11:3; 2 Ruth 4:4; 3 Genesis 24:6-8; 4 1 Kings 18:21; 5 1 Samuel 17:9; 6 Jeremiah 15:19; 7 Mark 14:31; 8 James 1:5