

If

#0594

Study given by W.D. Frazee—June 22, 1963

I thought I would like to find the first time the word if is used in the Bible. It is significant that it is not found in the first three chapters of Genesis. I don't think it belongs in the first chapter at all. But when I get over to the fourth chapter I find it. I find it twice in one verse. And it is quite significant that it is God who is using the word, and using it in something He says to the human being who needs to make a decision.

"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" Genesis 4:7.

There is no if with God. But God uses the word to address the human being that needs to make a decision. Who was He talking to here? Cain. Cain needed to make a decision to go the right way instead of going the wrong way. And God said to him, Look here, Cain. If you will do well, you will be accepted. But if you won't, then sin lies at the door.

Sad to say, Cain went the wrong road at that fork. He took the left hand and became the first murderer. It was a terrible experience. Cain is lost because he didn't take the right hand fork at God's if.

Many times God raises the question if. We will look at some of them.

Jesus was in the upper room with His disciples. He had washed their feet and taught them the precious lessons at the communion table. He gave them the command to love one another. Then He uses the little word, and again it is used twice in one verse:

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them"
John 13:17.

Does this mean everybody will be happy? No. There is an if. There are two ifs. It is like I might say, Take this quarter and go down to the store and get such and such a thing and bring it back to me, and I will do something for you. You would have to take the quarter and go down to the store, and you would have to trade the quarter for the thing and bring it back to me. Then I would be obligated to give you what I promised.

There are things God wants you to know. Where did He put them? In the Bible. To take care of that you need to study. So if you study the Word of God that takes care of that if. But it isn't enough to know it. You must do it. Then you will be happy.

Whose business is it to make me happy? God's business. We can't make ourselves happy, but God can. He tells us the recipe. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

So if you want to be happy you will study the word and do it. If you know it and do it you will be happy. That's what God says.

Let's take another promise. It is the promise the Lord gave the children of Israel through Moses early in their desert experience. They were very thirsty and needing water. In the distance they saw some. The cry rang out through the multitude, Water. They were very happy. But Moses' heart sank. He had been a shepherd many years in that desert. He knew what that water was. The place was Marah, which means bitter. Moses knew they wouldn't be happy when they got it.

One time my wife and I were out in the rocky mountains. We were thirsty. We came to a most beautiful stream of water. When we got down to get a drink we were not that thirsty. It was bitter.

So the people were disappointed and murmured. Moses cried to God. God showed him a tree. He cut it down and put it into the water, and God healed the water. When the people were satisfied God said to Moses, Tell the people:

"If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee" Exodus 15:26.

Is the Lord in the healing business? Yes, just like He healed the water. But there is an if.

Somebody says, "That's the trouble."

Yes, that is the trouble. There are those who seem to have the idea that God has promised to heal anybody and everybody without any if. But He hasn't.

There is an if to every promise of God. That's what I am studying. Sometimes it is express right in the verse like these we are studying. But whether it is expressed in the verse or not, it is always implied. And the person who takes a promise of God and goes out without the if and tries to cash it, is like a man who is trying to hold another man to a promise when he has not fulfilled the conditions on which the promise is made. There are conditions to every promise.

What are the conditions here? God says, If you will listen to what I tell you to do, and do it, then I will heal you.

Why not listen?

We have to listen to know, and we have to act in order to do. Oh, that God may help us to see how simple this is. If we meet the conditions we have the right to claim the promise.

I want you to see the story of a man who tried to put the if on Christ. Jesus wouldn't take it. If you read the whole story you will see that Jesus had been with Peter, James, and John up on the mountain. They had spent the night up there in prayer, and Jesus was transfigured. Filled with power, Jesus and the disciples came down. They found the other disciples at the foot of the mountain. A man had brought a boy to be healed. It seemed to be an especially hard case. The boy was possessed of the Devil. The disciples had tried to cast out the evil spirit, but they couldn't.

They saw Jesus coming and ran to meet Him. The man brought the boy, and the boy was thrown into a convulsion by the evil spirit. Jesus asked the man about the child, and the man said:

"Oft times it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us" Mark 9:21-22.

That is the way some people talk to God. If you can do anything, help me. What did Jesus say?

"If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" Mark 9:23.

Jesus said, Man, you are talking to me about if. If is the other way around. There is no if with me. All things are possible. I am the Creator. There is nothing too hard for the Creator. There is no if to it. But the if is with you. Will you believe? If you can, all things are possible to you.

Jesus took that if the man handed to him and handed it right back. The if is not where you think it is. It isn't with me. It is with you.

Is there anyone here who has been putting an if to God? Some people try to bargain with God. Here is a man who is trying to quit tobacco. He wants to for he knows it might give him lung cancer or ulcers or a coronary attack. He knows it shortens his life. He wants to quit. So he says, Lord, if you will take away that desire I will quit.

God says to that man, The if is the other way around. If you can't believe that all things are possible, don't wait for God to answer your if. Get busy and answer God's if.

Here is a man who hears the message of God and sees that the seventh day is the Sabbath. Sunset Friday until sunset Saturday is holy time. He says, Oh Lord, if you will just help me get a job where I can keep the Sabbath, I will keep it as long as I live.

Is that the way to pray? No, it isn't. The man might pray when he didn't know any better, but God answers that pray, If you can believe all things are possible.

I see dear Elder Tindell sitting here. I remember the first series of meetings when, as a young man, it was my privilege to assist him in San Francisco. I remember a man and his wife who came night after night to those tent meetings. I remember the great test that came to that man. He was a baggage master down at a big steamship company on the dock. He had done that work for years. That's what he was acquainted with.

As he heard this message night after night he was brought face to face with the test about what he would do to keep the Sabbath. One night Elder Tindell and I went over to see this dear man and his wife. I remember the struggle that man and his wife went through. But Elder Tindell helped him to see that the thing to do was not to wait until the job question got settled. The thing to do was to believe in Jesus, and to believe that God would help him one way or another to obey the commandments.

So instead of putting the if up to God, that man answered God's if. He gave his heart fully to God.

He went down and told his employer. He didn't go down and ask whether he could keep the Sabbath. You don't ask men whether you can obey God or not.

The very idea. You tell your little boy or girl to do something. Wouldn't you think it strange if they would run next door and ask the neighbor if they could do what you say?

No. This man didn't ask his employer if he could keep the Sabbath. In a kind, but definite way, he explained to his employer that he had heard a message, and knew the seventh day was the Sabbath, and he must keep it.

There are some stories I could tell you about how people keep their jobs and get a raise afterward. But this didn't happen that way. His employer said, We have ships that unload every day of the week, every hour of the day. If you can't be here when we need you, we will have to get a man who can.

So he lost his job. He walked the streets of San Francisco for days and days and weeks, hunting for work where he could keep the Sabbath. Thank the Lord, he was faithful. He had answered God's if instead of putting an if up to God. He and his wife were baptized. He finally got into some health food work baking whole wheat bread, and taking it from house to house.

Several years later, when I came back to San Francisco for a visit, that dear man was one of the deacons in the church. God had blessed him. He never got rich, but he was able to make a living for himself and his family because instead of putting an if to God he had answered God's if.

Oh, it makes so much difference what we do about God's big little word, "if."

Did you ever get into a problem and felt why something wasn't done? Can't God do anything about this? If you can, Lord, please do.

No. God says that isn't the way to go at it. He that comes to God must believe. Without faith it is impossible to please Him. I am so glad that the father of the child cried out and said with tears:

"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" Mark 9:24.

The boy was healed because instead of putting the if up to God, that boy's father took hold of Christ's if and said, You say if I believe. Lord, I do believe. Therefore fulfill your word to me.

That's the simple way to come to God.

We started with Genesis. Now we are going to go to Revelation. We can't go any further.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" Revelation 3:20.

There is God's word again. If any man hear My voice and open the door. There is the listen and do something about it again. There is the harken.

Take some action. Pay attention and make a decision.

I cannot read your heart, but I can tell you something. Everybody is in one of two classes. Either Jesus is in your heart, or He is outside. And it isn't a matter of whether your name is on the church book or not. It isn't a matter of what your friends think about you. You might fool men. You might even fool yourself. But you will never fool God.

There is good news for anybody who is in the place where Jesus is on the outside. He is very close to you. In fact, he is at the door. Do you know how close a person is who is at the door? He is just as near as he can get without being inside. That's where Jesus is. If He isn't in your heart, He is just as close as He can get.

If He is that close, why doesn't He come on in? Ah, if. That little word stands there. And all heaven stands powerless before the human will that does not surrender. The Creator of the universe waits on the porch. He knocks on the door. If. If.

Oh, if you will just listen and open the door, then I will come in.

When will He come in? Just as soon as you open the door.

Thank God, you can take hold of that door and open it. You can fall down with tears and say, Lord, I do believe. Help Thou my unbelief. Come into my heart. I want you inside. I want to know you are inside.

The strongest man in the world will have to do it that way, or else he will never get help. The weakest man can do it that way and get help, and get it now. It doesn't make any difference how big your sins are, Jesus can forgive them.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" 1 John 1:9.

So no matter what our sins are, if we will confess them He will take them away.

Jesus stands at the door. How long will it take Him to come in? That's up to you. If you have waited a year, He has waited a year. If you have waited five years, He has waited five years.

But you don't have to wait another five minutes. Thank God, If you will open the door, He will come in. There is that great little word.

Oh, Jesus, Thou art standing outside the fast closed door; Oh, Jesus, Thou art knocking, and low that hand is scarred.

Let's open the door and let Him in. Those who have already done it, let's tell Him we love Him and want Him to stay inside. And any who have never let Him in, or who have had in the past but have had Him go, why not ask Him back in? Why not get that if out of the way? Why not tell the Lord that He died for you and you will live for Him?

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