**If This, Then That**

Conditional statements are made hundreds of times in the Scriptures. These statements tell us what to expect when certain conditions are met. In these passages, the relationship between the initial premise and the outcome is not coincidental. The results depend on the precondition.

Jesus taught, “If you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you” (Matthew 6:14). If you want God’s mercy, you must be merciful yourself. James wrote to those coddling the wealthy, “If you show partiality, you are committing sin” (James 2:9). The frequent use of these conditional statements suggests several important principles useful to profitable Bible study.

**Our actions and decisions have consequences.** If I am doing my best to provide for myself and my family, but conditions beyond my control result in hardship, God expects the generosity of others to carry me through the tough times (Galatians 6:10). But He has no patience with the lazy. “If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). My decisions matter to God.

**Sovereign God has chosen to impart His grace to us on a conditional basis.** This one is not difficult. “’I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). “If we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Some believe in unconditional election. These look like conditions to me.

**God created us with free will.** All these conditional admonitions throughout the Bible are meaningless if I have no innate ability to give heed to them. God loves every person enough to sacrifice His Son to make our salvation possible, but He extends His grace only to those willing to love Him back. Love is meaningful only if the individual has the right either to offer it or withhold it. God’s simple conditions are not meritorious works; even if we were to accomplish everything He has commanded, we have earned nothing (Luke 17:10). Obedience is simply demonstrated love and devotion.

Hebrews 2:3 asks the question, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” How indeed. God has made every provision for our salvation (2 Peter 1:3). It is up to each of us to comply with His conditions to accept it.

**John McKee**

**West Murray church of Christ**