

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Some Big ‘IFs’

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Little words often carry big meaning. To hear your father or mother say, “*if you do not clean up your room you cannot go play;*” a maturing mind suddenly zooms in on the “big picture.” We are not probably dwelling on “clean up your room;” but “you cannot go play” may be the most important issue of the day.

The little word “if” makes us focus. In the English language it is not just a “conjunction” but a “subordinating conjunction.” It connects the dependent clause: “*if you do not clean up your room*” with the independent clause: “*you cannot go play.*” I can’t play is a big deal in our youth. With little “if,” so is clean up your room.

The New Testament focuses on big, important matters using the little conjunction “if.” The small Greek word, “ἐάν” introduces necessary conditions effecting not only our present walk with the Lord but also our future eternal destiny. In our Testaments, the word may be translated, “if,” “unless,” or “except.” But the word is always working to manifest an essential “must” in our lives.

Jesus said, “... *except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew

5:20). Not entering the kingdom of heaven should grab our attention. Eternal separation from God in Hell is the only other alternative (*Matthew 10:28*).

Jesus makes us focus on the proper standard for “righteousness.” The Jews, led by the scribes and Pharisees “had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge (*Romans 10:2*). Christ “is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth” (*Romans 10:4*). Obedience of faith in Christ is the way unto righteousness before God; not through works of the law, which no man apart from perfect law keeping could ever achieve (*Philippians 3:8-9, Galatians 3:10-11*).

Jesus is not saying that our righteousness must “exceed” the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees in the sense of “doing more of the same,” but our standard of righteousness must be founded upon God’s higher standard of “faith in Christ” through the revealed Gospel (*Romans 1:17, 10:17*).

The big picture of salvation in Christ is highlighted by little “ifs.” Jesus stressing the necessity of believing in His Deity, said, “...except (if and only if, unless) ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins” (*John 8:24*). Jesus emphasizing that one must be born

spiritually from above through obedience to the Spirit revealed Gospel via water baptism, said, “...except (if and only if, unless) one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (*John 3:5*). Focusing on a “perishing” worse than sudden physical death, Jesus warns of an eternal destruction facing all when He said, “...except (if and only if, unless) ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (*Luke 13:3*).

While we live on earth, the little “if” carries big meaning when contemplating the decision of divorce. We can put our husband or wife in jeopardy of eternal damnation in Hell by divorcing for the wrong cause. Jesus said, “*Every one that putteth away his wife saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress; and whosoever shall marry her when (if) she is put away committeth adultery*” (*Matthew 5:32*). The only cause for divorce is “fornication.” To put away your mate who is not guilty of this sin, you place her or him in the position of being guilty of adultery in his or her next sexual relationship if he or she marries or not. There is only one reason for divorce according to God. If and only if you divorce for the cause of fornication do you have the right to marry another. I fear this little “if” will look bigger in eternity for many!