

The recent popular teaching that the “big arms of God” will accept *all* — as His children — even those who do nothing more than “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” is not according to what His Word says. According to God’s own Inspired Word, the “ifs” in numerous verses tell us that there *are* conditions that must be met to *make* us His children and *make* us co-heirs with His Son. We *must* meet the presupposed conditions of the “ifs” that are included in the Word or we walk in darkness and therefore can not have “*fellowship with one another.*”

As part of this recent call for “fellowship” with every denomination, we frequently hear John 17:21 quoted. In that verse Jesus prayed “...*that they all may be one...*” Reading only verse 21 however, fails to take into account that in verse 6, Jesus said “*they have kept your word.*” Then in verse 15 and 17, He prayed that they might be “*kept from the evil one*” and be “*sanctified through the truth.*” So here is the criteria as to exactly *how* they would be able to be one. Sanctification through the truth is *how* they would be kept from the evil one (v. 15). That is *how* they would avoid walking in darkness. Without recognition and acceptance of that truth, there would be no unity since those who walk in darkness would have no fellowship with Christ — and “*what fellowship can light have with darkness?*”

The term “fellowship” itself has been grossly abused in the church today and has come to mean not much more than sharing fun and food. Secular fellowship is indeed often about such things as that. But *that* meaning of fellowship has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the fellowship *in Christ* that Christians experience *because* of “*the blood of Jesus (purifying) us from sin*” or *because* of being “*heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ*” or *because* of being “*united with Him in His death and in His resurrection.*” Whatever the conditions are, for meeting the “ifs,” those who share fellowship in Christ have met them. Those who have not met those conditions walk in darkness and do not have fellowship with Him *or* fellowship in Christ with those who *have* met them. Our fellowship in Christ is the same with Christians who stand beside us while we eat our ice cream as it is with those in a foreign country whom we have never met and probably never will.

By the secular definition, we have fellowship every day with many who “walk in darkness.” They may be neighbors or friends who are in the same clubs as we are. They may even be those of denominations who *claim* to have fellowship with Him, but if they are not walking in the light, the fellowship we have with them is not fellowship *in Christ*. *That* is enjoyed only through meeting God’s criteria.

*“Diligence” is a privately funded publication of:
Dennis and Sherri Owens — Cincinnati, Ohio
diligence@gorfsystems.com — <http://www.gorfsystems.com/diligence/>*



DILIGENCE

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11

A ministry of Dennis and Sherri Owens

Volume 3

October 1, 2004

Issue 16

If

Such a tiny little word. So tiny that we may read right over it and hardly even notice that it’s there. None of us question its meaning nor do we feel it necessary to go to a dictionary to determine its meaning. However, for the sake of this article, the dictionary states that “if” means “*In the event that*” — or — “*on the condition that.*” That’s no big revelation to any of us — but the question we want to consider in this issue is whether or not we have given much thought to the word “if” as it relates to the relationship we may or may not have with God. For example:

*“...God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. **If** we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But **if** we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” (1 John 1:5-7 KJV)*

Here’s another “if” verse

*“Now **if** we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, **if** indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.” (Romans 8:17 NIV)*

What about this verse?

*“**If** we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection.” (Romans 6:5 NIV)*

How about the consequence that resulted when the “*on the condition that*” part of this next verse wasn’t met? Consider how very much hung on *this* “if!”

*And the Lord said, **If** I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. (Gen. 18:26 KJV)*

Of course, we know He *didn’t* find the fifty righteous (not even ten) and the city was destroyed. The plagues on Egypt (Exodus 8-11) are certainly another example that clearly demonstrate that God doesn’t take His “ifs” lightly.

We obviously could go on and on. There are numerous scenarios throughout the Scriptures that make it perfectly clear to us that when God says “if” He is definitely prepared to carry out whatever consequence results from failing to meet the required condition.

So let’s put this in different terms. One study source claims that the word “if” appears 1,595 times in the King James Version of the Bible. So let’s think this

continued on page 2

through — if “if” means “*in the event that*” or “*on the condition that*” — and the word “if” appears that many times in the Bible, should we thus conclude that there *are* things that God requires — or should we say conditions that must be met **if** we are to receive the rewards promised? Well, it’s obvious that the answer to that question has to be “yes.” But we must also remember that in addition to promised rewards, there are also negative consequences promised when the conditions are not met — as was the case with Sodom and Gomorrah and the plagues on Egypt.

Thinking of it in those terms places greater importance on those “if” verses we read at the beginning of this article. We could now almost think of them as cause and effect verses. **If** we do “this” — “that” will be the result. Let us not overlook the fact that the opposite is also true. **If** we do *not* do “this” — “that” will *not* happen. Let’s look at them again with a “cause and effect” idea in mind.

CAUSE	→	EFFECT
<i>if we walk in the light</i>	→	<i>the blood of Jesus purifies us from sin.</i>
<i>if we are children</i>	→	<i>we are heirs of God.</i>
<i>if we are heirs of God</i>	→	<i>we are co-heirs with Christ</i>
<i>if we share in His sufferings</i>	→	<i>we also share in His glory.</i>
<i>If we have been united with Him like this in His death,</i>	→	<i>we will be united with Him in his resurrection.</i>

Every “if” says that the result will occur only “*on the condition that*” the criteria of the “if” is met. So it is absolutely necessary for us to determine exactly what those presupposed conditions are that will allow us to meet God’s criteria stipulated in these verses. How *do* we “*walk in the light?*” How *do* we become His “*children?*” How *do* we become “*heirs of God?*” How *do* we “*share in His suffering?*” How *do* we become “*united with Him like this?*” There is of course, only one place we can look to find the answers to all of these questions. That place is in the Inspired Word of God. His Word includes the “how” for every “if” contained within it’s pages. (Since we have discussed the answers to most of these “if” verses in previous issues of *Diligence*, we won’t discuss them in this particular issue. If you have questions, please call, e-mail or see previous issues at the web address shown at the bottom of page four). Discovering the “how” is not enough though. We must also be willing to *obey* whatever it is we learn is the presupposed criteria required to fulfill the “if” part of the verses. Obedience is necessary.

“If you obey my commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in His love.” (John 15:10 NIV)

Now, let’s zero in more on that first verse we read and move on to somewhat of a different focus. It says that **if** we “*claim to have fellowship with Him, yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.*” So according to this verse, we can’t walk in darkness and at the same time have fellowship with Him. It’s impossible to do. So how do we avoid walking in darkness?

“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12 NIV)

That makes sense. The other verse said that if we walk in darkness we have no fellowship with Christ. So fellowship with Christ is “*on the condition that*” we follow Him. How do we follow Him? We accept and obey the presupposed criteria of the “*on the condition that*” verses contained in the Scriptures. In other words, we *do* whatever the Word says we have to do — or we don’t have fellowship with Christ.

Fellowship with Christ is what sets us apart from the world and keeps us from walking in darkness. It’s not something we can acquire on our own terms however. It’s only available “*on the condition that*” we live by the truth of the Word of God.

*“Sanctify them **through thy truth**: Thy word is truth.” (John 17:17 KJV)*

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” (John 17:19 KJV)

(the NIV is not accurate in the translation of this verse)

Those who “*walk in the light*” do so *because* they have been sanctified (or set apart) by meeting the conditions required in the Word of God. Those who have not met — or refuse to recognize — the conditions required by the Word of God are not following Christ and have no fellowship with Him. So they are walking in darkness. Notice again that the first verse we read indicates that there are some who “*claim to have fellowship with Him*” but are in fact walking in darkness. They “*do not live by the truth.*”

Why are we going to such great lengths to break this down to the point that there can be no mistake about whether or not we have fellowship with Christ? Because, in recent years there are multiple religious denominations seeking to have “fellowship” with one another — no matter what their differences or how serious the error of their teachings. If fellowship *with* Christ is only through living by the truth and walking in the light, then how would it be possible to have fellowship *in* Christ with those who are not doing that? There can be no fellowship *in* Christ when there is no fellowship *with* Christ. So the “fellowship” shared among those denominations may be fellowship in the secular sense — meaning it is nothing more than companionship — but it surely *isn’t* fellowship *in Christ*.

That first verse we read stated also that “*fellowship with one another*” exists only **if** we “*walk in the light.*” So fellowship in Christ is not possible with those who choose to walk in darkness because of rejecting portions of the Word. II Corinthians 6:14-15 is often used in discussions about marriage, but when taken in context it is a warning against being influenced by those who walk in darkness.

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? (II Cor. 6:14-15 NIV)