

Sunday, May 29, 2016—Great Lakes Grace Bible Conference—The “IF” Factor

Introduction

- II Corinthians 2:11—since the time of Paul, Satan has been seeking to “get an advantage of us” as believers. The adversary has been seeking to establish a state, condition, or circumstance that he could exploit to his advantage against believers.
- According to verse 11, the Adversary seeks this “advantage” through the implementation of what Paul calls his “devices.” According to Noah Webster a device is:
 - “That which is formed by design, or invented; scheme; artificial contrivance; stratagem; project; sometimes in a good sense; more generally in a bad sense, as artifices are usually employed for bad purposes.”
- Ephesians 6:11—believers are instructed to put on the armor to God in order “to stand against the wiles of the devil.” A “wile” is defined as, “a trick or stratagem practiced for ensnaring or deception; a sly, insidious artifice.” (*Webster’s, 1828*)
- II Corinthians 11:3—we know that Satan is willing to use any means necessary to obscure God’s truth and/or keep believers in the dark with respect to what God is doing during the dispensation of grace.
- Ephesians 4:14—I believe that the Adversary possesses a wide array of devices/wiles that he can employ depending on where an individual person is at with respect to God’s truth. These devices/wiles are cunningly utilized by the Adversary to keep believers susceptible to the winds of doctrine.
 - False Gospels—keep people from getting saved (II Cor. 4:14).
 - False Bibles—no final authority (Gen. 3).
 - Undispensational Bible Study—obscures the truth of the mystery and the word rightly divided.
 - Grace Life Issues—living under grace based upon your new identity in Christ.
- Just because one comes to a proper understanding with respect to the four general categories does not mean the believer have successfully averted the enemy’s devices. As believers stand for these four truths they will encounter ever more sinister devices designed to cunningly coax believers away from the truth.
- I Timothy 1:19—in recent years I have come to believe that some are making shipwreck of the Pauline Grace Message by failing to properly understand the basic condition “if.”

- I Corinthians 15:2—some are saying this passage is not the gospel that saves today because it is conditional.
- Colossians 1:23—likewise, some maintain that one must continue and be not moved away “if” they wish to be presented holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight in verse 22.
- In both of these passages, how one understands the English condition “if” makes a world of difference in terms of what one believes the passage to be teaching.
- Herein resides the goal of this study. I would like to examine how the conditions found in I Corinthians 15:2 and Colossians 1:23 should be understood. In order to accomplish this task we will consider the following three points:
 - How do conditional statements work?
 - I Corinthians 15:1-4
 - Colossians 1:23

How Do Conditional Statement Work?

- First of all, anytime you see the English word “if” you are dealing with a condition. The question one must ask is what TYPE of condition am I dealing with?
- The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* offers the following basic definition for the English word “if.”
 - “Introducing a **clause of condition or supposition** (the protasis of a conditional sentence). On condition that; given or granted that; in (the) case that; supposing that; on the supposition that.”
- So according to the basic definition, the English word “if” can either introduce a “clause of condition” or introduce a “supposition” i.e., an assertion.
- The dictionary uses the technical term *protasis*. The word *protasis* is a word of English grammar.
 - “a proposition, the major premise of a hypothetical clause”
- In other words, it deals with the portion of a conditional sentence containing the “if” statement. In philosophy and logic a *protasis* is also known as an *antecedent*.
 - *protasis* = *antecedent*—i.e., they are the same thing.

- Please identify the *protasis/antecedent* in the following statement.
 - “If your my son, then act like it.”
- “If your my son” = the *apodosis/antecedent*. So then what do we call the “then act like it” portion of the statement?
- In English grammar the second part of the statement is known as an *apodosis* or *consequent* in philosophy and logic. The *OED* defines *apodosis* as, “The concluding clause of a sentence as constructed with the introductory clause, or *protasis*, now usually constricted to the **consequent clause** in a conditional sentence.”
 - *apodosis* = *consequent*—i.e., they are the same thing.
- So, the “then act like it” portion would be the *consequent* or main result of the statement “If your my son, than act like it.”
- In this example, what is the function of the condition?
 - To call into question or raise doubt as to whether or not the child is my son.
 - OR
 - Establish the **FACTUAL** relationship between both parts of the statement.
- Sometimes the condition “if” means to establish the absolute **FACTUAL** relationship between two things; whereas other times it seeks raise a question or introduce doubt.
- The determining factor in which function a particular condition is serving is the mood on the verb following the condition. According to the *OED* conditions followed by the *indicative mood* are **FACT** stating.
 - “With the conditional clause or *protasis* in the indicative. **The indicative after if implies that the speaker expresses no adverse opinion as to the truth of the statement in the clause; it is consistent with his acceptance of it.**”
- The entry for the word “*indicative*” reads as follows:
 - “Gram. That points out, states, or declares: applied to that mood of a verb of which the essential function is **to state a relation of objective fact between the subject and predicate** (as opposed to a relation merely conceived, thought of, or wished, by the speaker).” (*OED*)
 - “Of a form of statement: Having the verb in the indicative mood; **assertive of objective fact.**” (*OED*)

- Conditions of this TYPE are known as indicative conditional statements and are FACT stating, i.e., IF AND ITS TRUE.
- In contrast, a condition with a verb in the *subjunctive mood* following “if” serves a completely different function. The *OED* entry for “if” identified these TYPES of conditions as well.
 - “The subjunctive after if implies that the speaker guards himself from endorsing the truth or realization of the statement; it is consistent with his doubt of it.”
- Likewise, the *OED* defines *subjunctive* as:
 - “That is subjoined or dependent. “
 - “Designating a mood the forms of which are employed to denote an action or a state as conceived (**and not as a fact**) and therefore used to express a wish, command, exhortation, or a contingent, hypothetical, or prospective event.”
- So, a subjunctive conditional statement means to express DOUBT and can be summarized as, IF MAYBE IT IS MAYBE IT ISN’T.
- Colossians 3:1—what is the function this condition? Is Paul calling into question whether or not the Colossians are risen with Christ? No, he is telling them on the basis of the FACT that they are risen with him to seek those things which are above.
 - Colossians 2:12—established the FACT that the Colossians ARE RISEN WITH HIM.
- Colossians 3:1—takes the established FACT from chapter 2 and informs the Colossian how to live in light of it.
 - The function of the condition here is IF AND ITS TRUE.
- Romans 7:2—so the wife being bound by the law to her husband is subject to whether or not he is alive. So if the husband is alive is the wife subject to the law of the husband? Yes. The only way the wife is loosed from the law of the husband is if the husband is dead.
- In this example its subjunctive. In other words, the satisfaction of the condition is subject to the circumstances. As long as the husband is alive is the wife bound to the husband? Yes. If the husband is dead is the wife loosed from the law of the husband? Yes.
 - The function of the condition here is MAYBE IT IS MAYBE IT ISN’T.

- Helpful Hint—when dealing with a conditional statement always ask yourself the following question, “what type of condition am I dealing with?” Does the condition call anything into question or establish the absolute connection between two things?
 - If—and it’s true?
 - OR
 - If—maybe it is maybe it isn’t?

I Corinthians 15:1-4

- Some are arguing based upon the condition in verse 2 that this passage is not the gospel. Is this claim true? How should one understand this condition?
- I Corinthians 15:1—Paul begins the chapter by addressing the Corinthians as “brethren.” Why would he do that? Because the Corinthians were already saved. They had already trusted in the finished work of Christ as the only total complete payment for their sins.
 - I Corinthians 1:2
 - I Corinthians 6:11—the Corinthians have already been washed, sanctified, and justified
- I Corinthians 15:1—also note the past tense on the verbs “preached” and “received.” Had Paul already preached the gospel unto them? Had the Corinthians already “received” Paul’s gospel? Yes. Therefore they possessed a present tense standing in the truths of Paul’s gospel.
- I Corinthians 15:2—how were the Corinthians saved? By receiving and believing the gospel Paul preached unto them. Notice that the Corinthians “are saved” as a present reality (present indicative).
- *if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you*—here we encounter the condition causing all the fuss. Is the function of this condition to call into question whether or not the Corinthians are justified based upon whether or not they keep Paul’s gospel in memory. Is this verse saying that one must keep Paul’s gospel in memory in order to be justified or saved from their sins?
- I believe the answer is NO. First, the verb “keep” is in the indicative mood meaning that this is the TYPE of condition designed to establish the FACTUAL connection between two things i.e., it is serving the logical function.
- If one reads this condition as the TYPE that introduces doubt or contingency into the situation than the justification of the Corinthians would indeed be conditioned upon them keeping Paul’s gospel in memory.

- Not only does this reading confuse the condition it also assumes that the word “saved” is only used to refer to justification or initial salvation from sin. Let’s consider the context.
- I Corinthians 15:3-4—was the resurrection of Christ part of the gospel that Paul preached to the Corinthians? Yes.
- I Corinthians 15:12—despite the contents of Paul’s gospel some in Corinth were saying that “there is no resurrection of the dead.”
- I Corinthians 15:13-19—set forth the implications for the no resurrection position that had been embraced by “some” of the Corinthians. If one denied the reality of resurrection the following would be the case:
 - Verse 13—Christ would not have raised from the dead.
 - Verse 14—if Christ had not risen, than Paul’s preaching would be vain along with the faith of the Corinthians.
 - Verse 15—Paul and the Corinthians would be “false witnesses of God” for having testified that God raised up Christ from the dead.
 - Verse 17—if Christ didn’t rise from the dead the Corinthians are still in their sins.
 - Verse 18—if Christ didn’t rise from the dead departed believers have “perished.”
 - Verse 19—if Christ didn’t rise from the dead humanity is in a truly miserable state.
- I Corinthians 15:20—Christ is raised from the dead. Therefore; we are not of all men most miserable (v. 19), departed believers are not perished (v. 18), the Corinthians are not still in their sins (v. 17), Paul and the Corinthians are not “false witnesses of God” (v. 15), and Paul’s preaching and the Corinthians faith is not in vain (v. 14).
- I Corinthians 15:2—in the context, what are the Corinthians saved from by keeping the contents of Paul’s gospel in memory? They are saved from the hopelessness, misery, and despair that would follow the belief “there is no resurrection of the dead,” which some of them had embraced.
- Does the condition in verse 2 call into question the nature of the Corinthians justification? No, it is part of the logical argument that Paul is making throughout the chapter regarding the reality of resurrection. It is the “if” of logical argumentation.
- Is I Corinthians 15:3-4 the gospel? Yes, it is the gospel in a nutshell. It is Paul’s gospel boiled down to its most basic expression.
- Do you see how a failure to properly understand the condition makes a mess out of the text?

Colossians 1:23

- In my opinion, this is the most challenging condition in all of Paul’s epistles. One needs to exercise extreme care when expounding upon this passage.
- If one understands the condition in verse 23 to be a subjunctive condition (Maybe It is Maybe It Isn’t) they are placing a condition upon saints being presented holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight in verse 22.
- In contrast, if one views the condition in verse 23 as a indicative statement of FACT, they are establishing the factual connection between verses 22 and 23. In other words, the reason believers are holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable is his sight is because they will as a matter of FACT continue and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel in verse 23.
- Textually, the verb “continue” following the condition in verse 23 is in the indicative mood. According to the *OED*, this grammatical structure serves to establish the objective FACTUAL relationship between two things.
- In order to confirm whether or not this is the proper understanding of the condition in verse 23 one needs to examine the context.
- Colossians 1:12-14—Paul uses the past tense to discuss accomplished FACTS as they pertain to Colossians as members of the body of Christ.
 - Verse 12—“hath made us meet”
 - Verse 13—“hath delivered”
 - Verse 13—“hath translated”
 - Verse 14—“have redemption” & “forgiveness of sins”
- Colossians 1:15-20—outlines FACTS pertaining to the creative and redemptive work of Christ as well as his position of preeminence over all things in relation to the body of Christ.
- Colossians 1:21—directs the reader’s attention back to the Colossians themselves. It points out their past and contrasts it with their present situation.
 - Past—“were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works”
 - Present—“yet now hath he reconciled.”
- In the present, the Colossians are in the state of having been “reconciled.” In other words, their reconciliation is a present accomplished FACT in verse 21.

- Colossians 1:22—how was the reconciliation of the Colossians accomplished? “In the body of his flesh through death.” It was by placing their faith in the sacrificial death of Christ for their sins that the Colossians were reconciled.
- Why was this reconciliation accomplished? To present the Colossians holy, unblameable, and unproveable in his sight. Positionally, all believers are holy, unblameable, and unproveable in his sight.
 - Galatians 3:27—all reconciled believers have put on Christ. When God the father looks at us he sees Christ.
- Colossians 1:23—the presentation spoken of in verse 22 is based upon the FACT that the Colossians will continue in the faith, grounded, and settled in verse 23. The verb “continue” is a present tense indicative statement, indicating that the Colossians saints were already continuing at the time of Paul’s writing.
- Paul is not saying that the Colossians might possibly one day be presented holy, unblameable, and unproveable if they continue in a subjunctive sense and meet the conditions. Paul is not saying, “maybe you will continue or maybe you won’t, we need to wait and see how it turns out.”
- Rather, Paul is saying on the basis of the established FACT that the Colossians will continue they are presented accordingly in verse 22. If Paul is saying in verse 23 that only those who meet the conditions will be presented “unblameable” in verse 22 than he is directly contradicting something he said elsewhere in his epistles.
 - I Corinthians 1:8—being presented “blameless” is not conditioned upon one’s behavior but upon Christ accomplished work.
- Colossians 1:23—everything in this context is talking about Christ work on our behalf.
- Can the Colossians be moved away “from the hope of the gospel?” Notice that the hope of gospel is embedded within the gospel that they had “heard.”
- Colossians 1:5-6—the hope of the gospel is contained within the word of the truth of the gospel which the Colossians had already heard, received, and believed.
- Colossians 1:23—can the Colossians be moved away from their hope which is laid up for them in heaven?
- Positionally, the Colossians cannot walk away from what they were freely given in Christ. Practically, they could lose sight of it and thereby fail to walk by faith in light of it. But they cannot undo what was imbedded within the truth of the gospel they had received.

Conclusion

- Failing to recognize the existence of different TYPES of conditions is causing some to make shipwreck on the Pauline Grace Message and the Grace Life. Functionally, it is replacing the freedom that we have in Christ with a program of works based sanctification that appeals to the flesh nature in every believer. It is modern form of Galatianism that has believers striving for the attainment of greater reward and position in eternity.
- II Corinthians 2:11—we need to not be ignorant of the enemy's devices.