



12 And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice. 13 If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; 14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 15 Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. 16 For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. 17 And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments; 18 Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel. 19 But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; 20 Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations. 21 And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and unto this house? 22 And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them. (2 Chron 7:12-22 (KJV))

God is able to cram profound meaning in profoundly FEW words. Consider two words that highlight today's devotion – IF and BUT! Having been raised in the South, I am sure you will understand my meaning if I say, "Old so-and-so is a fine fellow but, bless his heart, he possesses all of the qualities of a dog – except loyalty!" The one word that enlarges the negative here is the word BUT. God uses this word often in scripture to contrast the difference in righteous obedience of His Word and wanton disregard thereof. He also uses it to contrast circumstances that are starkly opposed to one another. Take our old friend Naaman as related in 2 Kings: *1 Now Naaman, captain of the*

host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper. (2 Kings 5:1) You will note that the first mentioned prospects of Naaman were far reduced by the last which follow the word, BUT.

Naaman had everything – all of material wealth and advantage a man could desire. BUT, the satisfaction of material desire does not satisfy the growing hunger and thirst of the soul. It is perhaps true that Naaman, a great commander of the armies of the Syrian nation, did all that he could to cover the outward symptoms of leprosy. Had it become general knowledge, he would have been ostracized and committed to the life of the leper colony. He may have worn expensive perfumes to cover the disgusting odor of his rotting flesh which only grew worse with time. He probably covered his eroding flesh with fine robes and shiny armor; but this battle with leprosy was not one that this man of valor could win. Great shades and shadows of the abyss loomed large in his mind constantly. He could not have been happy despite his power and pelf. He had it all, BUT, he was a leper. Of course, we all will remember that Naaman was healed of his leprosy by following the advice of a little servant girl who told him that there was healing even of leprosy if Naaman would consult the prophet in Israel (Elisha).

So Naaman took leave of his sovereign and traveled to Jerusalem where he expected a prophet of the Lord to find the comfort and opulence of living. He took with him many precious treasures as gifts. When he showed the king of Israel the note from his own powerful king requesting healing, the king of Israel was terrified that this was a ruse to pick a fight with him. “Who can heal a leper?” thundered the king. Elisha, upon hearing of the king’s distress, sent him a message to have Naaman come to him. So Naaman appeared on the dusty road outside Naaman’s humble shack miles outside the gates of Jerusalem. When Elisha did not come out we read of Naaman’s anger: *But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.* (2 Kings 5:11) It is obvious Naaman had been watching too much of Benny Hinn and Joel Osteen for the Holy Ghost is not at the beck and call of the TV hour programming.

All Naaman had to do was so simple that he was offended by it – “*wash in the River Jordan seven times.*” Such an act would have required a simple faith that was beneath man of Naaman’s dignity. He rebelled at first against such an idea, but his subordinates convinced him – and he was made whole at the seventh washing. There was no healing at the first, fifth or sixth washing, but only at the completion of faith in the seventh.

We are all like Naaman. We are either like the pre-washed Naaman, or the humble and completely washed Naaman. We all began as lepers with a deadly blood disease, and by the grace of God, faith has healed us. This troublesome little word, BUT, appears in many parts of Scripture and it always adds a modicum of displeasure to our souls. It always represents a reversal of the narrative preceding.

There is another conditional and even shorter word ‘IF’ that places a responsibility to heed that which follows, else the condition promised is withdrawn. To the general mind of the Millennial generation, we are not to mention the negatives – only the positives; however, there is an even balance of negatives and positives in God’s Holy Word. It is true of the natural law as well. An equal and opposing positive force is required to overcome the negative pull of gravity in walking. Newton’s 1st Law of Motion) And electric current could not flow without a negative and a positive pole to attract the flow of electrons.

In Deuteronomy 28, there are a number of wonderful blessings of the Lord that are based upon the obedience that follows the word 'IF.' (verses 1-14) Then comes a slew of NEGATIVE curses that befall the commission of disobedience to the terms of the Lord – all following the conditional 'IF!' and in a far greater number of negatives – see verses 15-68!

Our very salvation follows the conditional 'IF.' Of Abraham God says: *17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. 18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: 20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. 22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. 23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; 25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.* (Romans 4:17-25)

The IF's of God's Word are as certain as the rising and setting of the sun. They are promises of blessing, but also of curses. Which shall we heed? Which would render more joyful our situation on earth and in eternity as well? Now review the leading text at the top of this devotion. The IF's of this passage is based upon a resort to prayer in order to bridge the gap between what God demands, and what man, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, can perform. *12 And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice. 13 If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people. . . .* those are fairly harsh if's that precede the curses. But there is a conditional IF that follows that should assuage our alarm: *"14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."* There are only four conditions that follow these profound IF', as a nation we must:

1. Humble ourselves;
2. Pray;
3. Seek His face;
4. Turn from our wicked ways.

But note: this counsel is directed – not to the entire nation – but rather to those only *"who are called by my name."* There are many in America who call themselves Christians but would not be enough to constitute a wart on the nose of a true and faithful Christian and Bible scholar. The unbelievers do not count in this equation!

Now, suppose we simply reject the 'IF's' of Verses 13-18 of 2 Chron 7 – what then? Read for yourselves: *19 But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; 20 Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations. 21 And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and unto this house? 22 And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them."*

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