If/Then

2 Peter 2:4-10a

In a number of situations in higher mathematics systems and in computer software there is something called an If/Then statement. Such statements say that if one thing is true, then another must also be true. Here we can see that God has inspired Peter to write an If/Then statement. In our Scripture we can see four of these statements. Each one says to us that if God can condemn the ungodly, He can save the godly.

A good parent uses this system. The parent says to the child, “If you do as you are told, then there will be positive results,” or, “If you do not do as you are told, then there will be negative results.” This gives the child useful information to make a good decision. The child knows that he has some control over the outcome of his behavior. If he desires good results, he knows what to do. If he wants something else more than the good outcome or if he does not believe the parent his behavior will demonstrate that.

The parent has the control and the child can choose his behavior. But, the child must always keep in mind that the parent will respond. Our spiritual life is like that, also.

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Let’s look at these statements in 2 Peter and examine what the Holy Spirit is telling us through the Apostle Peter. In verse 4 we can see that if God did not spare the angels when they sinned but sent them to hell and chained them in darkness awaiting judgment, then… We know that God has done this and Peter is using this to warn those who have read his letter and to all who are alive that if Jesus has sent angels to hell to await judgment, mankind should not expect be spared the same.

What does it mean that if God did not spare the angels who sinned? Peter goes on to tell us that the sinning angels were cast into hell and have been chained in darkness until the day of judgment. This is a stern warning. Do not take this topic lightly. It has extremely significant consequences.

Next, Peter reminds people that God destroyed mankind with a great flood when mankind turned against Him. In Genesis 6 we can see that God was grieved by the sinfulness of man. God had created mankind but mankind had turned away from God. Because of His great sorrow, He destroyed mankind with a great flood. He also destroyed all that lived on the earth because of the sinfulness of man.

Then we move ahead to the sinfulness of Sodom and Gomorrah. This sinfulness raised up to God and He came down to see if the sins were as bad as he had heard. They were sinful. They had no fear of God and they acted sinfully toward God.

In response to the sinfulness of Sodom and Gomorrah God rained down burning brimstone from heaven. This burning sulfur totally destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and everything that was living within them.

In these events God was unhappy with the sinfulness of man. Unhappy is probably the wrong word. God was very sorry because of the sinfulness of those that He created. These people grieved God.

God cannot tolerate sin so he brought great destruction. The sinful angels were chained in darkness. The people in the flood drowned in the great waters and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were burned down to ashes. Sin has consequences: terrible consequences. Notice in the two calamities involving men that mankind did not believe the Word of God. They chose to ignore God and do whatever they wanted. In the case of the angels who sinned, they decided to rebel against God. None of the behaviors is good and none is wise.

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We can see the results of turning against God. They are terrible. Notice that people have an advantage over the angels. When an angel sins that angel goes to hell. There is no salvation for angels. In 1 Peter 1:12 we can see that the angels long to look into these things. However, God, in His Mercy, made a way for man if man will take advantage. But, it is imperative that you understand this truth. An unrepentant person who continues to deny God who dies will not go to heaven and will have no further opportunity to change destination. This is why believers should care so much about those who continue in sin.

Let’s look at the great flood. God warned the people and He had Noah work on the ark to 120 years. Our Scripture passage tells us that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. Are you a preacher of righteousness? He was telling the people that time was short and there was still some opportunity to get right with God. They did not take advantage of this opportunity and that was a bad decision.

God opened the earth and water gushed out. Then He caused rain to fall for 40 days and nights. Almost everyone died in the flood but God saved eight people. Noah, his wife, his sons and their wives entered the ark and safely rode out the flood. Through world-wide catastrophic destruction, God saved eight people.

When God had decided to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He decided to save Lot his wife and their daughters. God was about to rain down fire from heaven and destroy these cities and all around them. But, He saved one family.

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There is another day of judgment coming and just like the flood and just like the burning brimstone from heaven, all will be affected. Is that frightening? A day is coming when all people will be judged. This time it will not be a flood and it will not be brimstone falling from heaven. This time it will be a lake of fire and all of those who are judged will be cast into it.

The Bible tells us something about the lake of fire. It burns with a fire that will never go out. Never is a long time. It is dark so it will be lonely. Those who enter the lake of fire will feel the pain of fire and they will never die nor will they escape. The lake of fire is a place of eternal suffering – forever pain. The pain will never stop. It will never go away. It will be worse than dying in a flood and it will be worse than dying by fire from heaven because there will be no relief afforded by death. It will be hell.

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But, let’s look at verse 9 of our Scripture passage. This is the conclusion of the if/then statement. God has brought judgment at the flood and He has brought judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah but He also rescued the godly while He punished the unrighteous. If there is judgment, God knows how to rescue the godly from such trials.

When the flood came, God rescued Noah’s family. When fire came from heaven, God rescued Lot’s family. When that final judgment comes God will rescue the righteous. If destruction comes then God rescues the godly.

Who are these godly people that God will rescue? Ecclesiastes 7:20 and Psalm 14:3 tell us that there is no one who is righteous. Romans 3:10 tells us that no one is righteous, no not one. Who can be saved from the eternal fires of hells? No one can be saved by his own doing. But God has done, once again, what is necessary to save some from complete and eternal suffering. God sent His son to the earth to take the punishment that mankind deserves. God so loved the world that He gave His Only Son to pay that penalty. Then, whoever really believes that will not perish in the fires of hell and the lake of fire but will have everlasting life.

IF God could save Noah and Lot, THEN He can save you, too. If God foretold of the flood, and He did, THEN the flood came. IF God foretold the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and He did, THEN fire fell from heaven. IF God told us about eternal suffering in the lake of fire, and He did, THEN, there will be eternal suffering in the lake of fire.

There are many placed in Scripture that tell that those who deny God will suffer eternally. In our Scripture there are many places that tell us that those who deny Jesus and his sacrifice will suffer in the lake of fire. In the first chapter of Romans and the 6th chapter of 1 Corinthians are lists of those who will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. If a person does not enter the Kingdom of heaven, then that person will go into the lake of fire. There is no other option.

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But our God is merciful. He made the perfect sacrifice and he made the way for all who believe to be saved. Let’s go to Revelation 20:12ff. John saw the Great White Throne and Jesus was sitting on it. All of the dead are standing before him and books were opened. Then one very special book was open. This book is called the Book of life. When it opened the one on the throne, Jesus, checked for each person’s name. If their name was not in the book, they went to the lake of fire.

That leads to the question, how does one get his/her name written in the Book of Life. All have their name written in this book but when someone denies Jesus their name is blotted out and removed from this book. Another way to look at it is to say that all who believe in Jesus have their name in the Book of Life. This Book is the guest list for entrance to heaven. Is you name here? Those whose name is here will never see the lake of fire.