

THE BIGGEST LITTLE WORD

There are many people who believe that the gifts that God gives us—grace, love, mercy, forgiveness, eternal life – are given to us by God unconditionally. He loves us, many say, and would never expect us to do anything in order to receive his favor. Besides, there is nothing we can do to “pay” for God’s gifts.

True, we don’t earn any of what God has determined he wants to give us as a free gift. However, the gifts are conditional. And to know that’s true, one needs only to look to the scripture and what it says when the biggest little word in the English language is used.

That word, of course, is “IF.”

1. Forgiveness is conditional: (Matthew 6:15) “...**if** you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”
2. Having God’s love in us is conditional: (John 1:25) “...**if** anyone obeys His word, love for God is truly made complete in them.”
3. Life eternal is conditional: (Romans 8:13) “...**if** you live according to the flesh, you will die, but **if** by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.”
4. Our continual cleansing by Jesus’ blood is conditional: (I John 1:7) “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.”
5. The Christian’s inheritance is conditional: (Romans 8:17) “...**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.”
6. Our “harvest” is conditional: (Galatians 6:9) “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest **if** we do not give up.”

These aren’t the only instances in which Jesus and the writers of the New Testament used the word “if” to set the conditions we need to meet in order to be well pleasing to God. But these few are good examples that point out that our reward, though freely offered by God, is conditional. Our lives determine our eligibility for that free gift.