Grace Theological Journal 4.2 (1983) 173-188.

[Copyright © 1983 Grace Theological Seminary; cited with permission;

digitally prepared for use at Gordon College at biblicalelearning.org]

 **OTHER CONDITIONAL ELEMENTS**

 **IN NEW TESTAMENT GREEK1**

 JAMES L. BOYER

 *To conclude the series of studies on conditional sentences, some*

*conditional elements which do not constitute complete conditional*

*sentences or which present some irregularity or peculiarity of form or*

*meaning are considered.*

 \* \* \*

 MIXED CONDITIONS

THERE is nothing inherently surprising or improper that in actual

usage the recognized patterns for conditional sentences should

sometimes become mixed. There are few of these, perhaps only three

or four; each of these is doubtful to some degree.

Luke 17:6 shows the first-class pattern in the protasis, ei] with the

present indicative. The apodosis is usually identified as a second-class

pattern, ἄν with a secondary indicative, perhaps indicating that Jesus

courteously avoided using the full second-class condition, which

would have stated very harshly "If you had faith, which you haven't

. . . ," then continued with the contrary-to-fact result. Although this is

plausible and possible explanation, the present writer prefers2 to

consider this a simple first-class condition, stating a logical connec-

tion between the protasis and apodosis without any indication of

censure or praise. The imperfect indicative with ἄν then is understood

as a potential indicative which states the result which might be

expected to follow: "If you have faith you can expect impossible

things."

John 8:39 is another example in which a first-class protasis,

indicative, is mixed with a second-class apodosis using a second-

ary indicative. The early textual tradition is somewhat confused, part

1 See James L. Boyer, "First-Class Conditions: What Do They Mean?" GTJ 2

I81) 74-1:4, "Second-Class Conditions in New Testament Greek," GTJ 3 (1982)

88, "Third (and Fourth) Class Conditions," GTJ 3 (1982) 163-75.

2 See my discussion of this verse in "Second Class Conditions," 86-87.

174 GRACE THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

of it supporting a first-class apodosis. If the imperfect ἐποιεῖτε is

accepted, with or without the particle ἄν, it clearly is a second-class

apodosis. In this instance the explanations suggested for the previous

example will hardly work; a courteous softening of the rebuke can

hardly be applicable in the light of the following verses, and the

apodosis is not easily understood as a potential indicative. Rather, it

seems better to understand that when Jesus said, "If you are

Abraham's seed" (first-class), he was not rendering or implying a

judgment of their spiritual relationship, but he was letting that

judgment proceed from their own conscience when they compared

their actions to those of their father.

Acts 8:31 has ἐάν with the future indicative in the protasis, which

may be taken as a first-class condition since the mood is indicative, or

as a third-class since the particle is ἐάν and since future indicatives

frequently function as subjunctives in NT Greek.3 On the other hand,

the apodosis shows an optative verb with ἄν, which on the surface

suggests a fourth-class condition. However, on second look the

apodosis can also be a rhetorical question involving a potential

optative ("How could I, if someone doesn't teach me?"--the obvious

answer is "Of course I can't. . . ."). Thus it is a proper construction

for a first-class condition. In view of the virtual non-existence of

fourth-class conditions in NT Greek, the latter option is preferable.

Acts 24:19 is a fourth-class protasis, εἰ with the optative, and

possibly a second-class apodosis, a secondary indicative verb. The

situation is complicated by the formal court setting (perhaps explain-

ing the rare use of the optative) and the emotionally charged atmo-

sphere (evidenced by the broken construction), as well as by the

structure which makes the apodosis a subordinate clause of the

sentence. This last factor makes the identification of the apodosis as

contrary to fact uncertain; it could be the normal tense structure of

the relative clause.

Not to be cited as examples of mixed conditions are Acts 11:17

and I Cor 7:28. Acts 11:17 is clearly a first-class condition with an

apodosis in the form of a rhetorical question using a potential

imperfect indicative. I Cor 7:28 (two examples) shows a future or

third-class condition. The aorist in the apodosis is not improper,

since it expresses the situation at that future time: "You will be in a

position at that time of 'not having sinned.’"4

3 Cf. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of*

*Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934) 924-25; J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar*

*of New Testament Greek*. Vol. 1: Prolegomena (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906) 149.

Another illustration of this ambivalence is the use of the future indicative in i!na clauses

(15 examples).

4 Cf. Boyer, "Third (and Fourth) Class Conditions."

BOYER: OTHER CONDITIONAL ELEMENTS IN NT GREEK 175

Also not to be considered as mixed conditions are those in-

stances of two protases with one apodosis. Whether they are of the

same (e.g., 1 Cor 9:11) or of different (e.g., John 13:17) classes, each

part retains its own force.

IRREGULARITIES IN THE CONDITIONAL PARTICLES

The almost universal pattern shows εἰ with an indicative verb

and ἐάν with a subjunctive verb, but there are rare exceptions. UBS(3)

shows four examples of εἰ with the subjunctives and four examples of

ἐάν with the indicative.6 Several factors may contribute to this

situation or help to understand it.

(1) Historical evidence shows a changing idiom in the use of

these particles. "The difference between εἰ and ἐάν is considerably

lessened in the κοινή, though it must be remembered that ἐάν was

never confined to the subj. nor εἰ to the ind. and opt."7

(2) In almost every instance there is evidence of textual varia-

tions. This is not surprising in the light of the changing patterns of

usage during the period of manuscript production.

(3) Many places where this confusion occurs, including two

where the UBS text shows ἐάν with the indicative, involve the future

tense. Since the future indicative often functions as the equivalent of

an aorist subjunctive (see n. 3) and at times is indistinguishable from

it even in form, these examples should probably be classed as simple

third-class conditions with ἐάν and [the equivalent of] the subjunc-

tive.

(4) In two of the examples of εἰ with the subjunctive the particle

is not the simple εἰ (1 Cor 14:5 ἐκτὸς εἰ μή; 1 Thess 5:10 εἰτε . . . ἐιτε)

and to have used ἐάν might have been awkward; neither ἐκτὸς ἐάν

nor ἐάντε ever occurs elsewhere in the NT.

(5) The difference between the classes is determined, as Robertson

has pointed out, "by the mode, not by εἰ or ἐάν."8

5 1 Cor 14:5, Phil 3:12, I Thess 5:10, Rev 11:5. In addition there are at least two

other passages (Luke 11:18, I Cor 9:11) where textual variants show the subjunctive

after εἰ. Luke 9:13 probably is not an example, since the subjunctive seems to reflect a

deliberative question in the compressed structure. There are examples where the form-

could be either indicative or subjunctive; in these the use of εἰ would presume the

indicative identification.

6 Luke 19:40, Acts 8:31, I Thess 3:8, I John 5:15. In addition there are another

eight passages where textual variants show the indicative after ἐάν (Matt 18:19, Mark

11:13, Luke 6:34, Rom 14:8, I Cor 4: 15, Gal 1:8, Rev 2:5, 22). In those instances where

the form is ambiguous, the use of ἐάν would presume the subjunctive identification.

7 Robertson, *Grammar*, 1009-10; cf. also N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testa-*

*ment Greek. Vol. 3: Syntax* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963) 107, 113, 115-16.

8 Ibid., 1007.

176 GRACE THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

ELLIPTICAL CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

*Protasis Unexpressed*

Strictly speaking there are no "missing protases," since without a

protasis a sentence simply is not a conditional sentence. Sentences in

which a participle or an imperative or other structure functions

semantically as a conditional element is discussed below under "Im-

plied Protases." The special case of implied protases of fourth-class

conditions is also discussed there.

*Apodosis Unexpressed*

There is nothing irregular or unusual in those many instances

where the connective verb (εἰμί, γίνομαι) is not. expressed. In con-

ditional sentences this occurs about 33 times in the protasis and about

48 times in the apodosis, including about 12 examples where it is

missing in both. Neither does this section of our study include the

approximately 22 instances where the verb to be supplied is the same

verb already occurring or implied in the context (e.g., I Cor 9:17,

"For if I do this willingly I have a reward; if [I do it] unwillingly, I

have been entrusted with a stewardship"). Such abbreviated expres-

sions are common in all types of sentences.

However, there are about 12 instances in which the entire

apodosis is omitted, or in which there is a protasis without an

apodosis. Whether for deliberate dramatic effect or by an in-course

change of sentence structure, the original construction is left uncom-

pleted. Examples are: Luke 13:9, "and if it bears fruit ["that will be

well; we've accomplished our purpose; let it grow"], but if not. . .";

Luke 19:42, "If only you had known. . . [things might have been

different]"; Acts 23:9, "We find nothing evil in this man; but if a spirit

has spoken to him, or an angel, [we had better not take any

chances!]"; and Rom 2:17-21, "If you call yourself a Jew. . . having

the form of knowledge and truth in the law, you who teach another,

don't you teach yourself?"

In others, the unexpressed apodosis can be supplied by the

context. In John 6:61, 62 Jesus says, "Does this offend you? [Would

you not be offended even more] if you should see. . . ?" In Eph 4:29,

Paul admonishes, "Let no evil word go forth out of your mouth; but

if there is any good word [let it be spoken], in order that. . . ." In

2 Thess 2:3 Paul warns, "Let no one deceive you in any way; because

[that situation (namely, that the Day of the Lord be present) cannot

be true] if the apostasy does not come first. . . ."

Another type of ellipsis is found in a group of passages where the

Hebrew idiom used an abbreviated form of the oath formula which

BOYER: OTHER CONDITIONAL ELEMENTS IN NT GREEK 177

only suggested the penalty involved. Thayer says, "Contrary to Greek

usage, in imitation of the Hebrew אם , εἰ with the Indic. is so used in

oaths and asseverations that by aposiopesis the formula of imprecation

[constituting the apodosis] is suppressed.”9 The NT passages involved

are Mark 8:12, Heb 3:11, 4:4, 5 and possibly Heb 6:14.10 The

unabbreviated form of the oath would be something like "may the

Lord do . . . [something terrible] . . . , if. . . ," or "may I no longer be

Jehovah, if. . . ." Thus, the conditional clause becomes a strong, oath-

supported assertion or denial.

In some instances the conditional clause fits into a subordinate

clause of a sentence in such a way that the full apodosis cannot be

expressed (except perhaps by a parenthesis), but is implied in another

part of the sentence. Two examples of a protasis without an explicit

apodosis show the εἰ μή clause functioning as a dissimilar element in

a series, as a paraphrastic descriptive identification of an additional

item in the series. Thus they are practically the equivalent of a relative

clause. The conditional element is there, but it identifies some hypo-

thetical example of the class. In I Tim I: 10 Paul lists a long series of

things for which the law is intended, and concludes the list, "and if

there is anything else contrary to sound teaching [it is for them too],"

or practically, "anything else which is contrary. . . ." Similarly in Rev

14:11 those who have no rest day and night are identified as "those

who worship the beast. . . and anyone who (literally, 'and if anyone')

receives the mark. . . . “

Two more examples express what seems to be an assumed

situation. Perhaps a free paraphrase will help to bring out the sense

of 2 Cor 5:2-3: "In the body we groan, looking forward to the

heavenly dwelling with which we shall be clothed, if indeed, as I

assume to be the case, when we put off this dwelling we shall befound not to be naked." Similarly in Eph 3:2, as Paul starts speaking

of the mystery revealed to him, he assumes that his readers have

already heard about it. In both these instances he uses the particle γέ

with εἰ, expressing confidence that the assumed situation is true. Note

that this certainty is conveyed by the particle γέ and by the context,

not by his use of the first-class form of condition.

9 J. H. Thayer, *A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: American,

1899) 170.

10 Three of these, Heb 3:11, 4:4, 5, are a direct quote from Ps 95:11 (Ps 94 LXX).

Other OT examples of the abbreviated form are Gen 14:23, Num 14:30, I Sam 3:17,

Jer 29:22.

Mark 8:12 is precisely the same idiom, but does not involve an OT quotation. Heb

6:14 involves a textual variant in both the NT quote and in the source passage in the

LXX, Gen 22:17. If the reading adopted by the UBS(3) text is used, it is simply another

example of this idiom. If the alternate reading is followed, the ἦ μήν is a particle of

confirmation or assertion common in Greek from earliest times.

178 GRACE THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

*Εἰ μή = 'except'*

A special class of elliptical conditional clauses which occurs

frequently and needs particular consideration involves the use of εἰ

μή in the sense of 'except.' It was common also in classical Greek and

probably arose as an unconscious abbreviation of the conditional

clause because its verb was the same as the main verb.11 It belongs to

the first class or simple conditions. Its stereotyped form, in which εἰ

μή becomes almost one word, accounts for the use of μή as the

negative particle, thus preserving the classical pattern where all

protases used μή as the negative, even though in Hellenistic Greek οὐ

has become the negative for first-class conditions. The idiom ex-

presses ". . . not a condition of fulfillment of which the apodosis is

true or its action takes place, but a limitation of the principal

statement.”12

The idiom shows three characteristic features. First, there is an

ellipsis of the verb in the protasis which is supplied from the principal

clause, often the same verb. Second, there is a negative comparison

between the two clauses. And third, the protasis always13 follows the

apodosis.

The idiom appears in three forms or patterns, differing in the

way the negative comparison is expressed.

Οὐδείς . . . εἰ μή . . . . The most characteristic form of the idiom,

about 31 instances,14 uses the negative pronominal adjective οὐδείς or

μηδεις (in the case appropriate to its function) in the apodosis,

followed by a protasis introduced by εἰ μή, and names the exception

(also in its appropriate grammatical form) with no verb stated. An

illustration is Matt 17:8, . . . οὐδένα εἶδον εἰ μὴ αὐτὸν Ἰησοῦν
μόνον, "they saw no one except Jesus himself alone"; or in un-

abbreviated form, "they saw no one if [they did] not [see] Jesus."

Both οὐδένα and Ἰησοῦν are objects of the verb εἶδον (expressed in

11 E. Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (Chicago: Chicago University, 1897) 111.

12 Ibid., 111.

13 There are a couple of apparent exceptions, but fuller consideration shows that

they are not the same semantically. Several are negative second-class conditions (Matt

24:22, Mark 13:20, John 9:33, 15:22, 24, 18:30, Rom 9:29) and thus not true examples

of εἰ μή = 'except' (see below). Several are cases of εἰ δὲ μή, where the negative

contrast has already been mentioned in the preceding context; the apodosis is actually

missing. One (1 Cor 7:17) may be an instance where εἰ μή functions as an adversative

conjunction (see below). The only instance which might be a valid exception is Mark

8:14, but even here the lack of bread had been mentioned in the preceding clause.

14 Matt 5:13, 11:27 (first occurrence), 17:8, 21:19, 24:36, Mark 5:37, 6:5, 9:9, 29,

10:18, 11:13, 13:32, Luke 4:26, 27, 10:22 (bis), 18:19, John 3:13, 14:6, 17:12, Acts 11:19,

Rom 13:8, 14:14, I Cor 1:14, 2:11 (second occurrence), 8:4, 12:3, Phil 4:15, Rev 2:17,

14:3, 19: 12.

BOYER: OTHER CONDITIONAL ELEMENTS IN NT GREEK 179

the apodosis, omitted in the protasis) and are in the accusative case.

The parallelism may be in sense rather than in form, as in Matt 5:13:

“salt that has lost its saltiness. . . εἰς οὐδὲν ἰσχύει ἔτι εἰ μὴ βληθὲν
ἔξω καταπατεῖσθαι . . . it is sufficient (fit for) nothing except [it is fit]

to be trampled. . . ." Εἰς οὐδέν is parallel with the infinitive

καταπατεῖσθαι. The dissimilarity in form sometimes makes it appear

that there is no ellipsis of the verb. In Mark 6:5 (οὐκ ἐδύνατο ἐκεῖ
ποιῆσαι οὐδεμίαν δύναμιν, εἰ μὴ ὀλίγοις ἀρρώστοις ἐπιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας ἐθεράπεθσεν), ἐθεράπεθσεν is not the verb of a clause intro-

duced by εἰ μή; rather it is a clausal parallel to οὐδεμίαν δύναμιν.

The sense is "he was not able there to perform a single miracle except

[the miracles in which] he healed a few."

Οὐ (or οὐδέ) . . . εἰ μή . . . This pattern closely resembles the

first and is almost as frequent, about 30 instances.15 The specific

οὐδείς is represented by a simple negative particle;16 the rest of the

construction is the same. This pattern permits even more flexibility of

expression. For example, in Mark 6:4 Jesus says, "a prophet is not

without honor [anywhere] if [he is] not [without honor] in his own

country."

Τίς . . . εἰ μή . . . A third variation of this pattern, about 10

examples,17 uses interrogative τίς to introduce the apodosis as a

rhetorical question, the obvious answer to which is "no one." Thus

the expression is fully equivalent to the others. For illustration, in

Mark 2:7 the scribes ask, "Who is able to forgive sins except [literally,

‘if not'] one, namely God?" Again dissimilarity in structural form of

the items compared may seem to obscure the ellipsis of the verb. In

2 Cor 12:13 the parallel to τί in the apodosis is the ὅτι . . .

κατενάρκησα clause in the protasis: "In what respect were you

treated worse than other churches, except [you were treated worse in

respect] that (ὅτι) I did not burden you?" So also Eph 4:9 in

expanded form becomes, "What is the meaning of the expression 'he

ascended' except [its meaning is] that he descended. . . ?"

*Εἰ μή = 'instead, only'*

Included in the preceding category are a few examples which are

not strictly exceptive. The εἰ μή protasis does not name the only

15 Matt 11:21 (second occurrence), 12:4, 24, 39, 13:51, 14:11, 15:24, 16:4, Mark

2:26, 6:4, 8, 8:14, Luke 6:4, 8:51, 11:29, 11:18, John 6:22, 46,10:10, 13:10, 19:15, Rom

13:1., I Cor 2:2, 10:13, 2 Cor 12:5, Gal 1:19, 6:14, Rev 9:4, 13:11, 21:21.

16 Usually οὐ or its strengthened form οὐδέ. Where the grammatical structure of

the apodosis calls for a subjunctive verb, the negative may be μή or μηδέ.

17 Mark 2:1, Luke 5:21, Rom 11:15, I Cor 2:11 (first occurrence), 2 Cor 2:2, 12:13,

Eph 4:9, Heb 3:18, I John 2:22, 5:5.

180 GRACE THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

exception to the negation of the apodosis, but rather it names the

only alternative to the apodosis. For example, in Rev 9:4 εἰ μὴ τοὺς
ἀνθρώπους does not name the exceptions among τὸν χόρτον κ.τ.λ.

who were not hurt, but rather states another class who, in contrast,

were to be hurt. Rev 21:27 tells who will not enter the holy city, then

after εἰ μή it describes a different group who will enter. So also

probably Matt 12:4, unless we make the unlikely assumption that the

priests mentioned were those who were present in David's company.

There is no difference in the idiom used, and the difference in sense is

so obvious18 that it is almost unnoticed.

*Εἰ μή = adversative conjunction 'but'*

It is readily admitted that εἰ μή may often be translated 'but' or

'but only' in English, particularly in those instances belonging to the

last-mentioned category.19 However, there is another group of

examples in which there seems to be no ellipsis of the verb and εἰ μή

introduces a clause with its own verb, where the sense seems to call

for an adversative conjunction, 'but.' Grammarians have debated

whether εἰ μή is ever the equivalent of ἀλλά;20 their claim is evaluated

in the following examples.

Rom 14:14: οἶδα . . . ὅτι οὐδὲν κοινὸν δι' ἑαθτοῦ εἰ μὴ τῷ
λογιζομένῳ τι κοινὸν εἶναι, ἐκείνῳ κοινόν. “I know. . . that nothing

is unclean by itself; but to the one who considers anything to be

unclean, to that one it is unclean." This manner of punctuating the

verse makes good sense using the εἰ μή as an adversative conjunction

introducing another clause, but it ignores the obvious similarity to the

simple exceptive formulas (οὐδέν . . . εἰ μή) which is common else-

where. If we follow the lead of the idiom, the sense becomes, "I know

that nothing is unclean except to the one who thinks it is. To him it is

unclean." The sense is good, and any tautology involved in the last

clause is not uncommon.

I Cor 7:17: Εἰ μὴ ἑκάστῳ ὡς ἐμέρισεν ὁ κύριος, ἕκαστον ὡς
κέκληκεν ὁ θεός, οὕτως περιπατείτω. "But let each one walk in such

manner as the Lord has apportioned to each, as God has called

18 Gal 1:19 is a passage where the difference is of considerable importance, but the

issue must be settled on other considerations than the meaning of εἰ μή.

19 For example, the NASB in all but three of this last group, translates by 'but.'

Even in the first group 'but' is sometimes used, e.g., Matt 24:36.

20 Cf. G. B. Winer, *A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek*

(Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1870) 566; A. T. Robertson, *Grammar*, 1187; J. H.

Moulton, *Grammar*, 291. In the lexicon, W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-*

*English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago:

University Press, 1957) 219 (section VI:8b) this meaning is listed with one passage

(Gal 1:7) cited as an example, but with a cross-reference to a contrary explanation of

that passage.

BOYER: OTHER CONDITIONAL ELEMENTS IN NT GREEK 181

each." The εἰ μή stands at the beginning of a sentence and at the

beginning of a paragraph. The adversative conjunction makes

tolerable sense, and there is no apodosis with a negative comparison.

The meaning 'except' seems totally out of the question. Conceivably

we might take it as a case of extreme ellipsis of a negative first-class

condition: "If (this does not happen [cf. v 16]) then let each walk. . . ."

Gal 1:6-7: εἰς ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον, ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν αλλο εἰ μή τινές
εἰσιν οἰ ταράσσοντες ὑμᾶς . . . "another gospel, which is not another;

but there are some who are troubling you. . . ." Again the meaning

'except' is difficult and the adversative 'but' makes good sense.

However, it is again possible to see here another case of extreme

ellipsis of a negative first-class condition: ". . . not another [and I

would not speak of it as such] if (it were not for the fact that) some

are troubling you. . . ."

If such explanations seem extreme, they must be weighed against

the fact that the adversative 'but' is otherwise unsupported for εἰ μή.

Perhaps the stereotyped formula has evolved from 'except,' to 'but

only,' then to 'but' as a full-fledged conjunction governing its own

verb, but in the NT there are only these rare examples to support it.21

*Εἰ μή = negative second-class conditions*

Not all occurrences of εἰ μή are exceptive; they may also be

simply 'if not,' negative second-class condition.22 Of the 13 instances

of εἰ μή which could be negative second-class protases23 only one,

Rom 7:7 (first occurrence), shows the three characteristic features of

the εἰ μή = 'except' idiom, and the sense is agreeable: "I would not

have known sin except [I had known it] through law." Even here the

negative sense 'if not' is appropriate. All the other instances are not

elliptical and are not involved in this study.

 *Ἐὰν μή = 'except'(?)*

The vast majority, if not all, of the occurrences of ἐἂν μή are

simply negative protases in third-class conditions and hence are not a

part of this study. Μή is the normal negative, both from the historical

pattern which used μή as the negative in all protases, and from the

appropriateness of its contingent character to the subjunctive mood.

21 For a similar problem with ἐὰν μή see below.

22 Negative first-class conditions in NT Greek use the negative particle oὐ except in

the stereotyped formula εἰ μή under consideration. For negative third-class conditions,

see below. There are not negative fourth-class protases.

23 Matt 24:22, Mark 13:20, John 9:33, 15:22, 24, 18:30, 19:11, Acts 26:32, Rom 7:7

bis), 9:29.

182 GRACE THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

The question here raised is whether ἐὰν μή is ever used in a

third-class version of the idiom εἰ μή = 'except.' The question is not

whether ἐάν μή can be translated 'except.' It can, and is frequently

translated this way in English version, for in English 'except' can

mean simply 'if not.' But, does ἐὰν μή ever occur in the exceptive

sense of εἰ μή?

One of the characteristics of the exceptive idiom was seen to be

the ellipsis of the verb in the protasis. This almost never happens with

ἐὰν μή. One apparent exception is John 5:19 where οὐδὲν ἐὰν μή τι

looks much like "nothing except something. . . ," but that would

require a relative in place of, or in addition to, τι. It should rather be

read, "the Son cannot do anything himself if he does not see the

Father doing something," with no ellipsis of the verb.

Mark 4:22 expresses either the intended purpose or the necessary

outcome of hiding something. The form is in part like the εἰ μή

construction, but the sense is not. Perhaps it is a case where ἐὰν μή,

like εἰ μή, can be considered an adversative conjunction (note the

parallel ἀλλ' in the next clause) but that gives a different sense. It

seems easier to consider it a simple negative second-class condition:

"There is no such thing as a hidden thing if it is not destined to be

revealed.”

Mark 10:30 is another strange example of ἐὰν μή. It is the

opposite of 'except,' and states that it is always true without excep-

tion: "There is no one who forsakes. . . , if he does not also

receive. . . .”

A theologically important passage involving ἐὰν μή is Gal 2:16:

. . . οὐ δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως
Ἱησοῦ Χριστοῦ. It follows the exceptive pattern completely, yet it

clearly is not the exceptive sense: "the only one who is justified by

works is the one who is justified by faith." Rather it is the alternative

sense: "no one is justified by works, but [the only one justified at all is

justified] only by faith."

Εἰ δὲ μή, εἰ δὲ μήγε

The idiom εἰ δὲ μή occurs 6 times24 and the strengthened form εἰ

δὲ μήγε 8 times.25 In each case it is a compressed negative conditional

clause; the verb of the protasis is left unexpressed but may be

supplied from the preceding context. It is used to express an opposite

alternative to the one in the preceding clause: "If you don't do that

. . ." or "If that is not the case. . . ." 'Otherwise' is a good English

rendering.

24 Mark 2:21, 22; John 14:2, 11; Rev 2:5, 16.

25 Matt 6:1, 9:17; Luke 5:36, 37; 10:6; 13:9, 14:32, 2 Cor 11:16. The editions vary

between μή γε (e.g., UBS(3)) and μήγε (e.g., UB(2)).

BOYER: OTHE,R CONDITIONAL ELEMENTS IN NT GREEK 183

It, may seem strange, but the idiom is unchanged whether the

preceding alternative is stated positively (8 times in the NT) or

negatively (6 times). As an example of the positive, Rev 2:5 has

“Remember . . . and repent. . .εἰ γὲ μή . . .but if [you do not do so

I will come. . . .” An example of the negative alternative preceding is

Matt 9:17: "They do not put new wine in old bottles. . . , εἰ δὲ μήγε

. . . , but if [they do not follow that course (of not putting)], the

bottles are bursted," where we would have said, "But if they do. . . .”

The translation 'otherwise' will fit either situation.

Εἰ μήτι

This occurs 3 times in the NT.26 Its sense seems to be 'unless

indeed' or 'unless perhaps.' Μήτι by itself occurs 14 times and is a

negative interrogative particle used with questions expecting a nega-

tive or doubtful answer. In Luke 9:13 the interrogative idea gives

good sense to the εἰ μήτι construction and explains the use of a

subjunctive verb. Taking it as a doubtfully stated deliberative ques-

tion, the meaning is "We have no more than five loaves and two

fishes, unless [εἰ μήτι]--shall we go and buy. . . ?" The interrogative

idea is not so easily applied to the other two examples except in the

sense that there is an affinity between "doubtful" and "questionable.

 Ἕκτὸς εἰ μὴ

 Ἐκτὸς occurs once as a simple adverb, 4 times as an improper

preposition governing the genitive case, and 3 times27 it is combined

with εἰ μή, apparently as a post-classical strengthening of the εἰ μή =

‘except' idiom. Its root meaning fits this sense well; 'outside of,’ or

beside suggests an alternative or an exception.

 INDEFINITE RELATIVE AND TEMPORAL CLAUSES

This term is applied to those clauses which are expressed in

English by adding '-ever' to the relative word: 'whoever,' 'whatever,’

‘whenever,' 'wherever.' The Greek idiom uses with the relative word

the indefinite particle ἄν or ἐάν and the subjunctive mood of the

verb. They are common m the Greek NT--about 320 examples.

26 Luke 9:13. I Cor 7:5; 2 Cor 13:5. In I Cor 7:5 it is augmented by adding the

particle ἄν.

27 1 Cor 14:5 with subjunctive verb following; 15:2 with indicative verb following;

1 Tim 5:19 with verb to be supplied.

28 The indefinite particle ἄν is by far most frequent, about 238 times. Ἐάν, which is

combination of the conditional εἰ with ἄν, is used about 63 times. There are about 19

where the subjunctive verb is used in such clauses without either of these

particles. In Hellenistic Greek ἐάν and ἄν even ἤν, where sometimes interchanged, so

that either form could function for either the conditional or the indefinite sense. See

n.7 above.

184 GRACE THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

The propriety of including these constructions under a discussion

of "other conditional elements" is suggested in two ways. First, there

is the fact that they use the same basic formula as third-class

conditional protases (ἐάν or ἄν with the subjunctive) which suggests a

relationship between indefiniteness and supposition or condition.

Second, there is the almost unanimous judgment of grammarians29

that such is the situation. There is not much difference in actual sense

between ὅς ἄν, 'whoever,' and ἐάν τις, 'if anyone.' But this word of

caution from A. T. Robertson is needed to avoid over-zealous appli-

cation: "But after all, it is not a conditional sentence any more than

the so-called causal, final consecutive relative clauses are really so. It

is only by the context that one inferentially gets any of these ideas out

of the relative.”30

IMPLIED CONDITIONS

This category should not be confused with that discussed above

under "elliptical conditions." By "elliptical" we refer to conditional

sentences which have some part unexpressed but the conditional form

of the sentence remains intact. By "implied conditions" we refer to

sentences or elements which are not in form or fact conditional, but

which are judged from context to imply a conditional sense.

These are hard to deal with specifically. One cannot go through

and count, for example, all the conditional participles in the NT; one

must first study every participle in the NT, then decide which are

adverbial, that is, are modifying the verb of the sentence in some way,

then decide in what way it is affecting the verb (conditional is only

one of many possibilities, and the decision is purely an interpretive

one). Only then can one study conditional participles. The same is

true of the other types to be mentioned in this section. Our present

purpose will be served by illustrating from examples.

29 All the grammars examined which dealt with this construction agreed that it was

conditional. Following Goodwin's complex system of classifying conditional sentences

based on time and particularity, many classical grammarians develop in detail this

same scheme in analyzing the "conditional relative clauses." Many NT grammarians

who do not follow that system still identify these indefinite relative clauses as forms of

the third-class future condition. See W. W. Goodwin, *Greek Grammar* (Boston: Ginn,

1930) 303-6; H. W. Smyth, *A Greek Grammar* (New York: American, 1916) 361;

Robertson, *Grammar*, 961, 956; F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Grammar of the New*

*Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (trans. and rev. by R. Funk; Chicago:

University of Chicago, 1961) 191-2; Burton, *Moods and Tenses*, 119; W. LaSor says,

“A relative clause may be used to indicate contingency by the use of one of the

conditional participles [sic particles] in conjunction with the relative pronoun. Such a

relative clause is actually a type of conditional clause" (*A Handbook of New Testament*

*Greek* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973], 2. 200).

30 Robertson, *Grammar*, 961-2.

BOYER: OTHER CONDITIONAL ELEMENTS IN NT GREEK 185

*Conditional Participles*

That participles do sometimes bear a conditional relationship to

the governing verb is undoubted. In Matt 16:26 the conditional clause

ἐὰν τὸν κόσμον ὅλον κερδήσῃ is paralleled in Luke 9:25 by the

participial phrase κερδήσας τὸν κόσμον ὅλον. Heb 2:3 literally says,

"How shall we escape, having neglected. . . ." The participle ἀμελή-

σαντες could possibly mean "since we have neglected," but that does

not fit the sense as well as "if we neglect." It is not necessary to

multiply examples, but compare also Acts 15:29 (διατηροῦντες),

I Cor 11:29 (διακρίνων), Gal 6:9 (ἐκλυόμενοι), I Tim 4:4 (λαμβανό-

μενον).

*Conditional Imperatives*

This is more rare and less obvious, but a few cases seem clear. In

John 2:19 Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews who were challenging

him, Λύσατε τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον καὶ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἐγειρεῖς αὐτόν;

“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it." He was not

commanding or requesting that they kill him, or even that they tear

down the building. Rather, he was challenging them: "You do that

and I'll do this!" or "If you. . . , I will. . . ." So in Eph 4:26 it is

difficult to understand "Be angry and sin not" as a command or even

a permission, especially in light of the context (see v 31). It is much

easier to take it as a condition, "If you are angry, do not sin."

Perhaps also this may apply to passages like Matt 7:7, Mark 1:17,

11:24, James 4:7, although the ordinary imperative sense makes good

sense. Even less likely is its use in Matt 19:21, Luke 7:7, John 14:16.

*Conditional Questions*

A couple of passages have been used to show that an independent

interrogative sentence may function as the protasis of an implied

condition. I Cor 7:21: "Were you called as a slave? Let it not be a

concern to you" is understood to say, "If you were. . . let it not. . . ."

James 5:13: "Is there anyone sick among you? Let him pray" becomes

“If anyone is sick. . . ." Such an expression is possible and permis-

sible; whether it was actually so intended by the author is a matter of

interpretive judgment or stylistic preference on the part of the reader,

not a matter of grammar.

Other grammatical structures may also be treated in this manner.

Mark 4:9 for example, the relative clause "He who has ears to

hear, let him hear" may be called an implied conditional clause, since

may be understood as equivalent to "If anyone has ears. . ."

particularly in the light of the parallel in v 23. Here also may be

placed the so-called "conditional participle" in Heb 6:6. Since

186 GRACE THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

παραπεσόντας is one of a series of 5 participles governed by the article

τούς, it is adjectival and not circumstantial. Therefore, it is not an

example of what is usually called a conditional participle.31 As

adjectival all 5 are most readily translated by a relative clause which

itself may be conditional in character if the context suggests it: "It is

impossible to renew to repentance those who do these five things."

The statement seems to be speaking of a hypothetical situation rather

than an actual instance. The sharp contrast with the four preceding

descriptions (which are all favorable) with the last (which is drasti-

cally unfavorable), serves to heighten the hypothetical nature of the

whole.

*Implied Protases of Fourth-Class Conditions*

A few of the optative verbs in the NT are called by some

grammarians "potential optatives," and as such are sometimes de-

scribed as apodoses of fourth-class conditional sentences with implied

protases. Chamberlain lists 5 of these constructions: "These are the

potential optative, practically the apodosis of an unexpressed

protasis.”32 Such terminology comes from grammarians of classical

Greek, such as Goodwin,33 who says, "The optative with ἄν expresses

a future action as dependent on circumstances or conditions," and

This optative is usually called potential, and corresponds generally to

the English potential forms with may, can, might, could, would,

etc. . . . The limiting condition is generally too indefinite to be dis-

tinctly present to the mind, and can be expressed only by words like

perhaps, possibly, or probably, or by such vague forms as "if he

pleased, if he should try, if he could, if there should be an opportunity,"

etc.

In view of this admission that the implied condition is "generally too

indefinite to be distinctly present to the mind" of the speaker, it seems

better to recognize that the potential optative is a construction which

stands alone without an implied protasis. All the NT examples are

questions, either direct or indirect, except one.34 In none of them is

there a clearly implied protasis.

CONCESSIVE SENTENCES

A special category of conditional sentences is marked by an

adverbial use of καί in association with the conditional conjunction,

31 J. A. Sproule, "παραπεσόντας in Hebrews 6:6," *GTJ* 2 (1981) 327-32.

32 W. D. Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament*

(Grand Rapids: Baker, 1941) 85.

33 Goodwin, *Grammar*, 281.

34 Acts 26:29. See Robertson, *Grammar*, 938, where he speaks of the construction

as a "softened assertion."

BOYER: OTHER CONDITIONAL ELEMENTS IN NT GREEK 187

εἰ or ἐάν. These are called concessive. They are in no way distin-

guished in form from other conditional sentences and are best

thought of as a variety of them rather than as a separate classifica-

tion.35 They have been included, though not called attention to, in the

previous treatment of conditional sentences.

When the καί precedes the conditional conjunction (καί εἰ or καὶ

ἐάν) the sense is climactic, 'even if.' "The supposition is considered

improbable. . . the truth of the principal sentence is stoutly affirmed

in the face of this one exception. It is rhetorically an extreme case.”36

The idea is ". . . improbable in itself, or especially unfavorable to the

fulfillment of the apodosis.”37 An example is Gal 1:8, "But even if

(καὶ ἐάν) we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other

than what we preached, let him be anathema.”38

When καί follows the conditional conjunction (εἰ καί or ἐὰν καί)

the sense is 'if also,' 'although,' 'even though.' "Here the protasis is

treated as a matter of indifference. . . sometimes a note of contempt

is in εἰ καί.”39 The protasis is ". . . conceived of as actually fulfilled or

likely to be fulfilled",40 ". . . fulfilled in spite of the fulfillment of the

protasis.”41 An example is Col 2:5: "For although (εἰ καί) I am

absent in flesh, yet I am with you in spirit." This type is more

common in the NT than the other.42

Conditional sentences may be concessive even without the καί.

For example, Matt 26:33 uses simply εἰ, where the parallel passage in

Mark 14:29 has εἰ καί. Also in Mark 14:31, ἐάν is used where the

parallel Matt 26:35 has κἄν [= καὶ ἐάν]. Other passages where the

sense seems to be concessive without kai< are Rom 3:3, 9:27, 1 Cor

4:15, 9:2.

On the other hand, καί in conjunction with εἰ or ἐάν most

frequently43 does not involve the concessive idea at all. It may simply

be a connective conjunction, 'and if,' as in the series of conditional

sentences in 1 Cor 13:1-3: Ἐὰν . . . καὶ ἐὰν . . . καί ἐὰν . . . κἄν

35 Burton, *Moods and Tenses*, 112, attempts to make a strong differentiation

between the two, but then admits that sometimes "to make distinction between them is

difficult. "

36 Robertson, *Grammar*, 1026.

37 Burton, *Moods and Tenses*, 113.

38 The passages so identified in this study are (1) first-class with καὶ ἐι (2

occurrences): I Cor 8:5, I Pet 3:1; (2) third-class, with καὶ ἐάν or κἄν (6 occurrences):

Matt 26:35, Mark 16:18, John 8;14, 10:38, 11:25, Gal 1:8.

39 Robertson, *Grammar*, 1026.

40 Burton, *Moods and Tenses*, 113.

41 Ibid., 112.

42 The passages so identified are (I) first-class with ἐι καί (16 occurrences): Mark

14:29, Luke 11:8, 18:4, I Cor 7:21, 2 Cor 4:3, 16, 5:16, 7:8 (three times), 12, 11:6, 12:11,

Phil 2: 17, Col 2:5, Heb 6:9; (2) third-class with ἐάν καί (3 occurrences): I Cor 7:11, 28,

43 66 times, as compared with 29 where καί is concessive.

188 GRACE THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

[= καὶ ἐάν]. Or the καί may go with some specific word or part of the

sentence, not with the protasis as a whole, as in 2 Cor 11:15 where

καί goes with οἰ διάκονι αὐτοῦ and means 'also.'

Concessive conditions are usually of the first class (21 times),

also frequently of the third class (14 times). Καὶ εἰ appears three

times with second-class conditions, only one of which could be

concessive.44 The one possible example of a fourth-class condition,

1 Pet 3:14, has εἰ καί and is concessive in sense.

44 Heb 11:15. In the other two (Matt 24:22 and its parallel in Mark 13:20) the kai<

must be taken as a simple continuative conjunction; the concessive 'even if' cannot be

the sense of the statement.

This material is cited with gracious permission from:

 Grace Theological Seminary

 200 Seminary Dr.

 Winona Lake, IN 46590

www.grace.edu

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: thildebrandt@gordon.edu
 biblicalelearning.org.