John 12:32 (DT) 69292

Bible Treasury: Volume 18, All in John 12:32 (12:32)

My dear friend,

When Christ says “all,” depend upon it He means all. He makes no mistakes. True, there is here and there a word which has been badly translated by man; but that is not your difficulty. However, I venture to say that as far as the soul's salvation is concerned, and the full assurance of it, I have never yet seen, in our Authorized Version of the Bible, a single word but that left this clear enough. So when by grace I have received the truth, the gospel of my salvation, and therefore know that I am safe now and for eternity, I can, after this, afford to meet with difficulties by the way. The knowledge that Christ is mine and I am His, forever and ever, makes me, in comparison think little of unsolved problems. I can afford to wait the Lord's time to open my eyes. If this be His time now, I trust He may help you through these few lines. But I would remind you again, that no true progress can possibly be made until the foundation be first made sure, i.e., until your own eternal salvation is once for all settled and sure. If it be not so with you, I beg of you not to be enticed to try and settle any other question first. No other is of any value to you in comparison with this. But the enemy is well satisfied, even if you ponder spiritual problems, so long as you leave your soul's salvation a thing uncertain.

I repeat then, that when God says “all,” He means all. But to whom the “all” applies depends upon the context, just as it does in your conversation and mine. Suppose I said to you, “I have just been to a sale and bought ten cows: they are very fine cattle—all black.” You would not think that I meant all the cows in the world were black; but you would clearly see from the connection in which it was used to what the “all” referred. On the other hand I might say, “Cows are very useful cattle, they all give milk,” and you would clearly see that “all” here refers to the cows of the whole world. Of course, if my object be to pick holes in the word of God, I shall be mightily helped of the devil to “wrest it to my own destruction” (2 Peter 3:16). But if my desire he humbly to ascertain what God means, He will honor me by opening my understanding (1 Sam. 2:30). When you get a letter from a friend, you do not settle down to try what you can make his words mean, but, even though he express himself badly, you try to arrive at the meaning which the words conveyed to him that wrote them. Now God expresses Himself perfectly, but still in a way that unstable men may wrest, if they choose to do so. This spirit was in man when Christ was on earth. They went to hear Him, not to learn of Him, but “to catch Him in His words” (Mark 12:13). Dear friend, beware of men who quibble about words to no profit.

As to the verse you refer to (John 12:32). Read ver. 31 with it. “Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out: and I, If I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all [men] unto me.” The devil will be “cast out” of heaven “into the earth” (Rev. 12:9) before the world will be rid of him, temporarily, by his being cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years (Rev. 20:2-3); finally and eternally, by his being cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). It is evident from the context that the “casting out” in John 12:31 is in relation to the words “this world” in the same verse. The word “men” is in italics in the Authorized Version, i.e., to signify that it is not in the original, but put in by the translators to help the meaning. I see no reason to object to its being put in here, if it be used legitimately.

Looking at the two verses just quoted, I gather Christ's meaning. All from Adam down had been his slaves; but now, the death of Christ, in the perpetration of which the world and its prince joined together, settled the doom of both (although the judgment passed is not yet executed). So Christ goes on to say that as all had been drawn aside by and to the devil, so He (Christ) here says that He will draw all unto Himself. But it is evident that all are not drawn to Christ at present, because, although his sentence is passed, the devil has not yet been cast out. Judgment is passed on a murderer days or weeks before its execution. So in this verse, “Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out,” you see the judgment was a present thing; the casting out was a future thing. Between the verdict and its execution there is this present day of grace, which the word “now” embraces, as in 2 Cor. 6:2, God in His long-suffering delaying the execution of judgment.

But the day of God's wrath will come. The prince of this world will be cast out. Then Christ (in virtue of His lifting up on the cross) will draw all unto Him.

The mistake commonly made is to think that all scripture points to the present time; whereas such a scripture as we have been considering, relating to what will follow the casting out of the devil, necessarily cannot refer to present time (excepting indeed in the limited sense to those who by grace, through faith, have had anticipated the execution of their judgment in Christ on the cross; as likewise these await not the actual casting out of the devil, but being now, through faith, delivered from His dominion by being translated into another kingdom (Col. 1:13), anticipate through faith the sequence of the devil's casting out. These even now are all drawn unto Christ).

All, however, are not drawn unto Christ now; but it is just as true that all upon the face of the whole earth will be drawn unto Him. We who now are drawn to Him have “fore-trusted in Him” (Eph. 1:12), being “a kind of first-fruits of His creatures” (James 1:11).

Just a few words as to your remark on “whosoever.” Acknowledging there may at first be difficulty in understanding the bearing of the word “all” in the portion we have been considering, I entirely fail to see how any ambiguity of meaning can be attached to “whosoever.” Suppose a class of twelve boys, and I said to them one day when they were all together, “I am going to have a Bible reading on Monday at my house. Whosoever of you would like to come will be welcome.” Surely nobody could say that the invitation was addressed more to one than the other, although all might not come. And again I might know beforehand that there were some shy boys in the class who would not come. But who could, with any truth, say that these shy ones were not asked? And who could, judging by the invitation, doubt their welcome?

“Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). Is there anyone, whosoever, whatsoever, wheresoever he be, who has the desire, the will, to take the water of life? Then let him take it freely. How simple God's words are to those of humble heart! May we have

the simple mind that takes God at His word. Men who wait to prove God's word before they believe it, must remain in the dark until they, take things in their right order, first believing and then proving. Before I conclude I would again beg of you, dear friend, to “cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils.” You seem very prone to two things: to have your faith shaken by what some men say or do; and, again, to seek to have your faith strengthened by what others say or do. You remember that the foolish virgins wanted the wise to give them of their oil (Matt. 25:8-9). Note what the wise said, “Go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves.” Take their advice; and if the idea of buying such be new to you, let the word direct you: “Ho! every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price” (Isa. 55:1). Christ Jesus paid the ransom (1 Peter 1:18-19). So we are invited to buy without money and without price. D. T.

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