

## Chapter 3

### Rule #3: “All Means All, and That is All, All Means”

I was going to call this chapter “Study your Bible Seriously”. I was then going to make all eight rules different words after the phrase “Study Your Bible...”. The problem was I’m not clever enough to come up with different words to complete that pattern, so I am sticking with Rule #3 just as it is written. While the phrase “Study your Bible Seriously” is a similar concept to this rule as printed, it doesn’t quite grasp the scope of the rule. I’ll come back to this at the end of the chapter.

I have to admit this is my favorite rule. It is not the most important and that is why it is not first. It is just my favorite because the principal behind this rule keeps my focus on God.

Let me define the word “all”. Webster’s® Dictionary first defines the word “all” meaning “the whole amount or quantity of (something)”. The definition goes on from there. Personally, I prefer the description of “all” as listed in Rule #3 even though I am using the word “all” within the definition. I think it gets the point across the better.

One of the biggest problems Christians make is to limit our understanding of what God can do. If God is perfect, he can do anything he desires. Many people have trouble accepting some of the facts of the Bible. For example, many people when reading the story of Noah’s ark believe it was only some local flood, and it did not cover the whole earth. The problem with that view is that it is contrary to what the Bible text says. Genesis 7:17 says that all the high mountains of the earth were covered with water. Besides, if the flood didn’t cover the whole earth, why would God tell Noah to put the animals on the ark? The animals could have survived by seeking higher ground. Remember Rule #3: “All means all, and that is all, all means”. “ That means the all of the earth was covered with water during the flood, not just part of the earth.

The Bible opens in most English translations with: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” If you can handle that first sentence of the Bible, you can handle the rest of the Bible. If you ask, “How can God flood the whole earth? Remember the first sentence of the Bible. If you ask, how could Jesus raise people from the dead? Remember the first sentence of the Bible. Just because we cannot grasp the power of God doesn’t mean God isn’t big enough to accomplish what is said in the Bible.

“Every time I try to think about how big God is, all I do is get a headache.”  
Dr. David Hocking

It is hard for us to grasp such concepts as “How can God hear millions of prayers at once?” or “How can God bring the dead back to life?” or “Who created God in the first place”. Such questions are beyond our capacity to understand. A God that is worth worshipping is a God that is bigger than our comprehension.

Whenever I meet people who want to limit the Bible, it usually comes down to the reason that they refuse to want to accept the Bible at face value. To accept the Bible at it is written, means they have to change their core beliefs, and worse, they have to change their lifestyle. Because

they don't want to change their lifestyle, they must limit their interpretation of the Bible to be less than what it can possibly be. Some people don't want to be accountable to God; therefore, they rationalize their doubts by putting limitations upon God and what the Bible says.

Which leads us back to Rule #3: "All means all, and that is all, all means." There are many places in the Bible where the word "all" is used. When you come to that word, remember Rule #3. Let me give you an example:

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28, NIV)

Notice the word "all". This means that all the things happening in your life God is working out for your good. That is a great thing to remember during the difficult times. I cannot say it enough: "All means all, and that is all, all means."

Our problem is the lack of acceptance of the word "all". We can somehow grasp the concept of the flood covering the whole world, or that God can hear all of our prayers simultaneously, but now, we are asked to accept something pragmatic. Here I am, suffering through some terrible hardship and pain, and you expect me to believe that "all" things work out good like it says in Romans 8:28? Again, all means all.

Here is another popular example from the Bible:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1st John 1:9, NIV)

There is that word "all" again. This verse is saying that if we put our trust in Jesus, and ask him to forgive us of our sins he will purify us (make us "clean" in God's eyes) from all unrighteousness acts. "All means all, and that is all, all means." That means no matter how bad you mess up, God will forgive you of that act if you confess it as wrong. You still may have to pay the consequences of that act here on earth, but as far as your eternal destiny is concerned, the "all" covers everything. Some people refuse to accept this because they think of a crime or a sin as being beyond help. In those cases, we are personally limiting the capacity of God in our own minds. A perfect God can do anything. He can even forgive perfectly. Our hurt and anger may not want to forgive someone of a sin (including ourselves) but forgiveness can only come from the person being hurt. All sin "hurts" God in the sense he demands perfection to spend eternity with him. It is God's right to forgive or not forgive us if he chooses. This passage is about asking forgiveness (confessing) of God. The "all" of this verse says there is no sin beyond His capacity or desire to forgive. The only unforgivable sin in listed in the Bible is the continual and habitual denial of Jesus as Lord and Savior. (Reference Matthew 12:31-32, et.al.)

Most adults will tell you those painful moments shape their lives greater than the routine times or when all is going well. Often God will use that pain to help you comfort others going through the same difficulty. Remember that purpose of living the Christian life is to bring glory to God. God never promises us joy and prosperity all the time. If he did, people would become Christians for the material benefits and not out of unconditional love for God. Getting back to

the difficulty of accepting “all things work out for good” during the tough times is to trust that God has a plan and a reason for that trial of your life. A great prayer during those times is to say “Lord, I don’t know why I am going through this, but help me to learn whatever lesson you want me to learn from this situation as to bring you glory”. It may not ease the situation any for the moment, but it will help you to have perspective on the problem.

The principal of “All means all, and that is all, all means” doesn’t just apply to the word “all” itself. The principal is about taking your bible seriously. God says what he means and means what he says. Here is another biblically famous quote:

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”  
(Romans 8:1, NIV)

The key word is “no”. You could change Rule #3 to read: “No means no, and no is all no means”. When Paul says in the quote above is that there is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. When Paul says no condemnation, he means none, period. This verse, along with the surrounding verses teaches that as long as you are trusting in Jesus, you can’t be condemned to hell. Scholars debate over the issue of whether you can lose your salvation by renouncing your faith, but that is beside the point. The point here is that no matter how much you mess up, as long as you are trusting in Jesus for your salvation and not your ability to please God on your own efforts, you can’t mess up no matter how much you try.

What I am trying to do with this rule is teach you to take your bible seriously. All-inclusive words like “all”, “everyone” and “none” apply. Our problem is we limit what God wants to do in our lives because we limit what we think God is capable of doing.

It is important here to stop and stress things God cannot do by definition. First God cannot lie (See Titus 1:2). If God were capable of lying, we cannot trust the Bible. Second God cannot learn (See Isaiah 46:9-10). If God is perfect, he cannot learn anything by definition. Therefore if God knows all things and can only tell the truth, when God says “all”, he means “all”. The word “some” is used hundreds of times in the Old and New Testament. If God wanted to say “some” instead of “all”, he is more than capable of doing so.

Another word to understand is “until”. You could take Rule #3 and say, “Until means until, and that until won’t happen until the “until” finally happens! Trying saying that fast five times. There are a good number of “until’s” in the Bible and most, if not all of them have serious implications behind that word.

Jesus said, “For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” (Matthew 23:37, NIV)

This verse has tremendous implications if you take the word “until” seriously. Jesus is speaking about the Nation of Israel. He is declaring that they will not see Him again until they say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” One can read this verse one of two ways. The first is that an individual Jew cannot see Jesus a second time until that person declares Jesus as his Lord and Savior, and thus he will see Jesus again at his resurrection. Personally, I prefer a second interpretation that I believe fits better with the text. Jesus is talking

about the nation of Israel. God made unconditional promises that a Messiah (i.e., king) would rule from Jerusalem over the earth. (References: 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 7:12-14, Luke 1:32, et.al.) Literally, that has not happened yet. Jesus came to pay the price for our sins, but has not literally ruled from the earth. Consider the possibility that when Jesus said “until” in this verse, he meant that one day the Christian Jews will petition for Jesus to come back and then Jesus rules from earth. That view is common in evangelical Christianity but not in some other denominations. The whole point of this illustration is to take the word “until” seriously. When the Bible says “until”, it means whatever is happening will continue to happen, or continue not to happen until the “until” occurs.

Before I finish, I should talk about metaphors in the Bible. I’ll discuss this more under Rule #6 (“If The Plain Text Makes Perfect Sense, Seek No Other Sense”). There are places in the Bible where poetic language is used and in those cases, the Bible is not meant to be taken literally. I will give examples in Chapter 6. Rule #6 talks about when one is to take the Bible literally and when one is to take it figuratively. What I want you to see in context of “All means all, and that is all, all means” is simply to take your bible seriously as it is written. It does not always mean to always take it literally, but it usually does.

What I want you to grasp by Rule #3 (“All means all, and that is all, all means”) is to not limit what God is capable of doing in your life. God loves you perfectly and God is all-powerful. A loving God wants to mature you the same way a loving parent wants to see you grow up and mature well. We mature in our faith in God by learning to trust Him more and more. A mistake we make in reading the Bible is to limit the “all’s” to “some’s”. We think for example, “God can only forgive some sins, not all sins”. We think, “God isn’t all powerful, for if he was he would fix all of my problems whenever I want them fixed. (You are now putting yourself in charge, and not God. Being a Christian means trusting God’s timing, not your own.) Rule #3 is all about not limiting your faith in God in what He is capable of doing.

I have found in practicality that sometimes Rule #3 requires “baby steps”. When we are really hurting over an issue, we need to walk like a baby first learning to walk, and take baby steps. There are times when we are emotionally hurt or angry so we limit our capacity to trust God. We are limiting the “all’s” of the Bible because we can’t get past an emotional hurt of the moment. Sometimes a prayer like, “God I believe your Word is true. I believe when you say “all” (as in all-powerful, or all-forgiving) that are not only capable of fixing this situation but you want to do so. Help me moment-by-moment, taking one step at a time; trust you more and more in this situation. I understand from reading my bible that you want the best for my life and you want to take over the situation. I am having trouble letting go as I want to fix it myself. Help me to let it go and let you work in my life. I am not sure how you are going to work. I am not sure what steps to take next, but like a baby learning to walk, I am just going to take small steps and watch you work. Amen.”

The “all’s” of the Bible mean that God is all-powerful. It means that in our unbelief we limit the all’s. It means that God is all-loving and all-forgiving when we confess our faults to him. It means he is all-helpful in helping us to understand and grow in our faith. The “all’s” of the Bible should be a comfort to us that God is bigger than our capacity to understand and is more than willing to intervene in our life for our happiness and maturity as a believer. The greatest joy one can have in life is living for God and not for yourself. That is one of the great messages

of reading the Bible. Every know and then, we need to get our own ego's out of the way just to remember that the "all's" really do mean all.