

"As Ye Would That Men Should Do Unto You..."

"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them; for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12).

Just as John 3:16 is called the "golden text of the Bible" so Matthew 7:12 is called "the golden rule." Gold is perceived to be of great worth and while it is not to be compared with the precious blood of Christ in redemptive power; it is of great worth. Tested and proven faith is likened unto gold which has gone through refiners' fire. (1 Pet. 1:18f; 7) Through the ages men have struggled with what constitutes right behavior toward a fellow human. J.W. McGarvey wrote: "the great sages, Socrates, Buddha, Confucius and Hillel each groped after this truth but they stated it thus, 'do not do to others what you would not have them do to you' thus making it a rule of not doing rather than of doing" (Fourfold Gospel, p 265f). Even so, it was a vast improvement over the spirit of conquest and plunder which then seemed to rule the world. Negativism is contrasted with the golden rule in the "Parable of the Good Samaritan" (Luke 10). There, while neither the Levite nor priest did injury to the injured man, (an improvement over the deeds of the robbers), their actions fell short. The Samaritan put into positive practice the "golden rule," doing to the injured man what he would have wished that man to have done to him.

Of this principle Jesus said, "...this is the law and the prophets." Jesus did not mean that the law and the prophets actually recorded these words: they do not. Still the spirit of the law implied such. The Law's edict, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," implies doing to others what we would wish them to do to us. The Parable of the Good Samaritan was given in response to a lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbor?" (Lk. 10:29). The prophets implied the same, see Isaiah 1:19.

How essential it is that we incorporate this principle into our own lives. Consider three pertinent matters. First, we will deal honestly and fairly with others. A merchant must have profit to buy necessities for his own needs. Yet, it is one thing to make a fair and equitable profit in commerce, quite another to gouge and overprice his wares. This is contrary to the principle Jesus gave. Prudence and caution requests that we guard our words, certainly to those whom we know may misuse them, but to lie is something else. Who wants someone to cheat or lie to him? None. Then

we should not cheat or lie to others.

Second, in disputed matters, we should give others the "benefit of the doubt." We should not put the worst possible construction on the actions of others; we must be free from evil surmising (1 Cor. 13:5d; 1 Tim. 6:4). When the daughters of Israel greeted Saul's returning army from their successful engagement with the Philistines after David had slain Goliath, they honored both Saul and David when they sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam. 18:7). Yet this honor caused Saul to eye David "from that day and forward" (1 Sam. 18:9). He put an evil construction on everything David said or did, although many times David proved his motives were pure.

Many in Jesus' nation listened to him with wrong motives. They "hung on his words" that they might either ensnare him in his speech or have something which they might accuse him of (Mt. 22:15). How sad that in controversy among brethren, contention frequently digresses to the point that both parties consider the other an adversary rather than a brother, and view suspiciously each word or deed which originates from the other. In such circumstances, unless all involved return to this vital principle from Jesus, peace and understanding will never exist. If we do not wish others to falsely accuse our intentions, we should not be guilty of trying to read their hearts, God alone can do that.

Finally, we must always be willing to help others who need our help. The following is Luke's record of Jesus' "golden rule," "...as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. And if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for even sinners love those that love them. And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same. And if ye lend to them of who ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much. But love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing: and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil" (Luke 6:31-35).

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