

and often to our shame.

1. Though often restricted (to their own) and also often done from imperfect motives, their lives are not barren of mercy, and it has its fruit.
 2. We have no reason to expect "others" to show mercy. But all who have received God's mercy have a supreme reason to be merciful and just.
 3. When the sons of darkness outshine the sons of light in this, something is wrong.
- C. The person who says the golden rule won't work betrays his ignorance, or selfishness, or both. Most admit Christ to be a great Teacher. But those who say the golden rule won't work say, in effect, that the heart of his teaching is impractical or wrong.
- D. "What do ye more than others" in this matter? In the home and neighborhood? Is it "might makes right?" In work, business, and play? Is it "Do him before he does you?" In the brotherhood? Is it "Throw your weight around?" "That ye may become sons of your Father.... ??"

III. ITS PRACTICAL BENEFITS.

- A. It is a principle which can settle all difficulties and bring genuine happiness between rich and poor, capital and labor, learned and unlearned, man and wife, parent and child, brother and sister; in religion, politics, and in business; in society, in the state, nation, world. Its practice would make earth a paradise.
- B. "If we could even almost put the golden rule into practice, we would have no mental health problems. But we do." -- Dr. Wm. C. Menninger.
- C. We need to practice the golden rule for many good reasons: One of them is that we never know when the situation will be reversed.

CONCLUSION —

- I. **THE LORD'S CONCLUSION:** "This is the Law and the Prophets." It is the basic principle underlying all moral regulation and summarizes the entire law.
- II. **THE GOLDEN RULE WILL WORK WHEREVER HONESTLY APPLIED.** But, like all rules, it may also be perverted and abused in sinful ways for selfish ends. Don't abuse it!

-- Charles E. Crouch

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT -- LESSON TWENTY-THREE

"The Golden Rule"

Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31

INTRODUCTION —

- I. The words of Jesus in Matthew 7:12 are universally called "the golden rule."
 - A. These words summarize the Lord's teaching in the preceding part of the sermon on the mount, and they have wide appeal.
 - B. They speak of the attitude which disciples of Jesus should manifest toward each other and toward all men.
 - C. They express one of the fundamental rules of life, and summarize the second greatest commandment (Matthew 22:35-40), which is expressed throughout the New Testament: Romans 13:8,10; 12:10; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8; etc.
- II. **OTHER RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND PHILOSOPHERS HAVE EXPRESSED SIMILAR PRINCIPLES, BUT NONE SO POSITIVELY OR COMPREHENSIVELY.**
 - A. Hillel: "What is hateful to yourself, do to no other."
 - B. Epictetus (a slave and cripple): "What you avoid suffering yourselves, seek not to inflict upon others."
 - C. Socrates: "What stirs your anger when done to you by others, that do not do to others."
 - D. Aristotle: "We should bear ourselves toward others as we would desire they should bear themselves toward us."
 - E. Confucius: "What you do not want done to yourself, do not to others."
 - F. Jesus: "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."
- III. **MANY LIVE BY LESSER RULES.**
 - A. The iron rule: "Might makes right;" the rule of Cain, hate, etc.
 - B. The brass rule: "Do unto others as they do unto you"-- Good for good; evil for evil; etc.
 - C. The silver rule: "Do nothing unto others that you would not have them do unto you." The negative rule; naught men; Zero.
 - D. The golden rule is the rule of compassion, "the royal law" of love.
- IV. The golden rule applies to all moral situations, and is of greatest practical benefit. Man must not only be devout: He must be

honest and honorable in his dealings. Otherwise, devotion is hypocrisy.

DISCUSSION —

I. THE RULE EMBRACES SOMETHING "GOOD" WHICH GOD REQUIRES. (Micah 6:8.)

- A. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good."
 - 1. If they did not know, it was their fault. God had made that knowledge known.
 - 2. Only God can show what is good. (Jeremiah 10:23; Psalm 119:105, 130.)
 - 3. The golden rule, if practiced, would settle all private, domestic, state, and national troubles; stop all gossip, slander, unjust criticism, make jails and prisons unnecessary, and banish riots and wars.
- B. Essential elements in doing "justly."
 - 1. A right concept of man's nature, worth, purpose, and destiny. (Psalm 8; cf. Acts 10:34.)
 - 2. Acceptance of the two great commandments as the guiding principles and motive power of life. (Matthew 22:35-40.)
 - 3. The ability and will to put one's self in the other person's place.
 - 4. This rule is the underlying and governing principle in true self control or temperance, causing one to act with forbearance, justice, and kindness toward others.
- C. It will cause us to keep all promises, always speak truth, do good unto all, be honest in business, give honest days work for a day's pay, etc.

II. A BROAD RULE: "ALL THINGS THEREFORE WHATSOEVER..."

- A. In thought: "Whatsoever things are just... think on these things."
 - 1. Ideas are power; thoughts the foundation of virtue.
 - a. Thoughts build habits, shape character, govern life, determine destiny. "Blessed are the pure in heart..." (Matthew 5:8.)
 - b. Evil thoughts "defile the man." (Mark 7:23; Matthew 15:11-20.)
 - 2. The just (righteous) is in contrast to the unfair, unjust-- and is the rule of honor, decency, and sportsmanship.
 - 3. To be truly just is to be right with God. God, Jesus, and the plan of salvation are fully just. (Isaiah 30:18; Romans

3:26.)

- B. In our judgments of others. (John 7:24; Matthew 7:1-5.)
 - 1. "Whatsoever ye would that men should think about you, even so think ye also about them." -- Frank L. Cox.
 - 2. Nicodemus, a friend of Jesus, was fair and kind each time mentioned. (John 3:2; 7:50-51; 19:39.)
 - 3. Barnabas is a good example of one who practiced the golden rule. (Acts 9:26-29.)
- C. In all our deeds.
 - 1. The Samaritan had compassion. (Luke 10:25-37; James 4:17; 1 John 3:17.)
 - a. He loved men more than his money. (1 Timothy 3:3.)
 - b. "Mine is thine, and, in your misfortune, I will share it."
 - c. Such men will use their time and invest their money to help strangers or enemies, because men mean more to them than money.
 - 2. This class is willing to "spend and be spent." (2 Corinthians 12:15.)
 - a. Like Jesus, they build. They are "good."
 - b. These bless the world: They are plus men.
 - c. This is the heavenly rule: "Go, and do likewise." (Luke 10:37.)
 - 3. Do parents deal with children according to this rule? Do children treat parents as they want their children to treat them? Do young men treat young women as they would have all young men treat their sisters? Do husbands and wives treat each other as they would like to be treated.

III. "WHAT DO YE MORE THAN OTHERS" IN LIVING BY THIS RULE? (Matthew 5:43-48.)

- A. "Ye" and "others" analyzed.
 - 1. "Ye" refers to disciples of Jesus, Christians, children of "your Father who is in heaven."
 - 2. "Others" -- Pharisees, publicans, gentiles, pagans, sinners, those in perverted religions, the deceived and misguided.
 - 3. This passage plainly teaches that sons of God are definitely expected to do more than the sons of men in matters which distinguish those who walk in the light from those who walk in darkness. (1 John 1:5-7.)
- B. Here is an area in which some "others" (sectarians, unbelievers, pagans) reveal their character to their advantage