

THE GOLDEN RULE

(Matt. 7:12)

INTRODUCTION: In this lesson, we shall study "The Golden Rule". Truly, it is golden! In *The Pulpit Commentary*, we find these words exalting the Golden Rule, "...this is the sum and this the substance of all that has ever been said to guide men to right conduct." (*Vol. 15, p. 308*) William Barclay, praises this statement of Jesus, by writing, "This saying is the topmost peak of social ethics, and the Everest of all ethical teaching." (*The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. 1, p. 277*)

Man is so created that rules and regulations are necessary in all relationships of life. This rule teaches us how to put into practice the second greatest commandment for it tells us what we should do on behalf of others. Jesus said, "And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (*Matt. 22:39; Gal. 5:14*) If you are practicing this rule, you are loving your neighbor as yourself.

There are at least four different rules of life, or philosophies, that we may choose to direct our lives. What rule we choose to follow is of the greatest importance! The faithful Christian will follow the rule Jesus has given.

I. THE IRON RULE – "MIGHT MAKES RIGHT"; "WHAT IS THINE IS MINE IF I AM STRONGER THAN YOU"

- A. Those, who are mean and hostile toward others, follow this rule (Example: Hitler; Stalin; etc.)
 - 1. Bullies, criminals, tyrants live by this rule (Example: Because someone is stronger, he takes what doesn't belong to him; he uses his position of authority over others to abuse and mistreat them)
 - 2. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the thieves followed this rule (Lk. 10:30)
- B. Those, who follow this rule, think only of themselves (III John 9,10)
- C. This philosophy is responsible for a lot of grief, misery, and heartache
- D. You will not be invited to live in heaven if you follow this manner of life (Rev. 21:8; I Cor. 6:9-10)

II. THE BRASS RULE – "DO UNTO OTHERS AS THEY DO UNTO YOU"

- A. Many people love those that love them and hate those that hate them, but Christians are to live by a much higher and nobler rule (Lk. 6:27-36)
- B. This rule is a way of life that retaliates, or reciprocates, and God forbids us to follow it (Rom. 12:17-21; Lk. 14:12-14)
- C. This rule allows others to determine my manner of conduct toward them (Matt. 5:38-39)
- D. It produces either kindness or hatred

III. THE SILVER RULE – "DO NOTHING TO OTHERS THAT YOU WOULD NOT HAVE DONE TO YOU"

- A. This rule was taught by many philosophers
 - 1. Hillel, a great Jewish teacher, is reported to have said, "*What is hateful to yourself, do to no other; that is the whole Law, and the rest is commentary.*" (*Ibid.*)
 - 2. "Confucius said, 'What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.'" (*Ibid., p. 278*)
- B. This is a negative rule which will not allow you to set a torch to a man's house, but neither are you under obligation to help him put out the fire in his house
 - 1. This is a do nothing rule which forbids much, but does not demand anything

2. One can let the suffering suffer and the perishing die, and never violate this rule
 3. At funerals, the deceased is often praised for what he, or she, didn't do. What good did they do?
- C. This view of life produces indifference for it causes one to feel that what is mine is mine and what is yours is yours
1. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the priest and Levite followed this rule (Lk. 10: 31-32)
 2. The Christian must not only refrain from harming others, but also must do good things for them (Acts 10:38; Gal. 6:10; Phil. 2:3-5; Titus 3:1)
 3. (Read *Ibid.*, p. 279-280)

IV. THE GOLDEN RULE – "DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU IF YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES AND THEIRS WERE REVERSED"; "THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF"; "MINE IS THINE IF YOU NEED IT"

- A. This rule embraces "all things" which includes everything in your relationship with your fellowman. "Let all (emphatic) your dealings with men be conducted in the same spirit in which you would desire them to deal with you." (*The Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 15, p. 282*)
- B. "Jesus connects the Golden Rule with the word 'therefore'. We are to practice the Golden Rule because God's divine judgment teaches forbearance, and his goodness teaches kindness. This precept is fitly called the Golden Rule, for it embraces in its few words the underlying and governing principle of all morality. It contains all the precepts of the law with regard to man, and all the amplifications of those precepts given by the prophets. It teaches us to put ourselves in our neighbor's place, and then direct our conduct accordingly. It assumes, of course, that when we put ourselves in our neighbor's place, we are wise enough not to make any foolish wishes, and good enough not to make any evil ones. 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 done to you;' thus making it a rule of not doing rather than of doing." (*The Fourfold Gospel, J. W. McGarvey, pp. 265, 266*)
- C. (Read from *The Gospel of Matthew, by William Barclay, Vol. 1, p. 281*)
- D. If all would conduct themselves in complete accord with this rule of life, then the following sins would be eliminated: gossip; slander; being a false witness; deceiving by words or actions; harsh, unmerciful judgments; hurting the feelings of others by mocking their appearance or actions; putting others down when they lose a contest; stealing; murder; extortion; causing others to be filled with fear; etc.
- E. If all would conduct themselves in complete accord with this rule, then the following righteous acts would abound: speaking the truth to, and about, another; merciful deeds and words; helping those in need as we joyfully share (Acts 9:36-41); comforting those in sorrow; encouraging those who are discouraged; teaching those who are lost that they may know the salvation in Christ; making effort to restore unfaithful Christians; forgiveness; longsuffering; considerate of the feelings of others; etc.
- F. The Good Samaritan lived by this rule (Lk. 10:33-35)
- G. Ask yourself, "Am I treating others like I want to be treated?"; "Do I love my neighbor as myself?" (Illustration: home, society; work; church)
- H. Are you treating God like you want Him to treat you? (Give examples)

CONCLUSION: What a wonderful world this would be if all lived by the Golden Rule for it pro-

duces love! Jesus lived in perfect accord with the Golden Rule! (Matt. 20:28) Will you walk in His footsteps? Don't you see the great joy of living by the words of Jesus? Will you be baptized into Him so His blood can wash away your sins? (Gal. 3:26-27; Matt. 26:28; Acts 22:16)

~ Don Hastings ~