

Wednesday, October 23, 2013 – The Golden Rule

Matthew 7:12 - 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.

This principle is called the Golden Rule. Jesus is the first one to express this principle positively. Many people before Jesus had expressed this principle negatively. The Iron Rule is to do unto others before they do it to you. This is ruthless and many live by the iron rule. The Silver Rule is to do unto others as they do to you. If others are kind to you, you are to be kind to them. If others treat you badly, you treat them badly. Neither of these is compatible with what Jesus taught. The Golden Rule is "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you." This rule is one of action. It teaches the Christian how he should live with his fellow man. He should treat others the way he would like to be treated. He is to act this way because of who he is. He is to act this way regardless how the other person acts. He is to act this way regardless the circumstances involved. This is what makes the teachings of Jesus unique. The disciple of Jesus treats the other person kindly and lovingly because he is a Christian regardless how the other person responds. He does this because it is right in the sight of God. This would include the negative aspect of doing the other person no harm; however, the emphasis is upon the positive. The emphasis is upon the action of doing.

I am constantly amazed at the number of people who believe Matthew 7:12 is a suggestion or a "good rule of thumb." There is no doubt it is a command!

In spite of the obvious, why should you follow the golden rule? I would submit two reasons:

1. It is the practice of Love toward our fellow man.
 - 1.1. Consider the following passages
 - 1.1.1. Matt.22:39 – "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
 - 1.1.2. Mark 12:31 - "And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."
 - 1.1.3. Rom.13:9 - "...are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
 - 1.1.4. Gal.5:14 - For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
 - 1.1.5. Jam.2:8 - If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well
 - 1.1.6. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
 - 1.2. Would I want this to be done to me if someone else were doing this to me?

- 1.3. The golden rule causes us to think about how our actions toward others would affect ourselves.
2. It is a Reflection of the Love of God for man.
 - 2.1. God does not deal with us as we deserve (Psalm 103:8-18).
 - 2.2. Even though we were God's enemies, God acted toward us as we would have wanted Him to act toward us (Romans 5:6-10).
 - 2.3. God expects his children to be like Him (Matthew 5:44, 45).
 - 2.4. Hence we must practice the golden rule.

The application to the church in our era should be clear. The greatest problem the church is facing in the twenty-first century may not be denominationalism, secularism or postmodernism. It may very well be that the greatest struggle for us is our tendency to settle for something other than love in our interactions within the church. When disagreements—even substantial ones—are characterized by bitterness, sarcasm, lawsuits and anger, we have neglected to obey one of the Lord's oft repeated and most important commandments.

Jesus modifies his command to love one another with a clause that describes the extent to which this command should be obeyed: "love one another as I have loved you" (John 12:15, emphasis added). He then attaches a statement that foreshadows his own sacrificial act to be consummated the next day: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends" (v. 16). Christ's sacrificial expression of love is what should motivate us to love one another. Earlier, he had urged the disciples, "just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (John 13:34). Paul wrote for Christians to "walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:2). Notice how John uses God's giving his Son as the primary motivation for our brotherly love: "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:10-11). In the way we treat "weak" Christians, Paul writes, "We should refuse to hurt one for whom Christ died" (Rom. 14:15; emphasis added). In other words, if Christ died for your brother or sister, why would you take advantage of your Christian liberty and put a stumbling block in his or her path? Christ's death demands that we love and respect one another.

Those with the high ethic of a love for mankind will pray constantly that they be void of offence, that the words of their mouths will be pleasing to God and to all people (Psa. 19:14).

At its core, Christianity has several components that can never be compromised, and one of those things is love for one another. A congregation that neglects it shuns the

very impetus for its salvation. A Christian who fails to understand its importance withers away spiritually and never realizes the great blessings associated with fellowship in God's family, the church. "Love one another as I have loved you," Jesus said on the night before he died. Over two thousand years later, these words still need continual reflection and consideration.