

## INTRODUCTION

During this time of crisis, we seem to be encountering questions of right and wrong that take us out of our normal reckoning. In things we face day to day in normal times, we probably have enough experience to know how to apply God's law of love. We have a pretty good idea how to obey the commands of our Lord Jesus as to things we encounter in our normal routine. But when the situation changes, and we face a number of unfamiliar conditions, it may be difficult to tell what is right and wrong. We, the disciples of Jesus Christ, have been born again in the inner man. In that new birth, by the work of the Holy Spirit in us, we have been given a love for God's law, a desire to do what is right in God's eyes, a love for all our fellow men. But when unfamiliar questions of right and wrong come up in unusual situations, it can seem unclear where love for God's law leads us, what exactly is right in God's eyes, and what course of action truly displays love for our neighbors.

So today I open the bible with you to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, to hear His profound doctrine on righteousness, in what has come to be called "The Golden Rule," to help us know how to live in this time of crisis.

## TEXT

Matthew 7:12

This is only one verse, so I'll read it aloud in four different translations, from oldest to newest.

Geneva: Therefore whatsoever ye woulde that men should doe to you, euen so doe ye to them: for this is the Lawe and the Prophets.

KJV: Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

NKJV Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

ESV "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

## BODY

- I. We Christians, the Disciples of Jesus Christ in the New Covenant, Look to Follow the Same Moral Code As in the Old Testament, As in the Law and the Prophets
  - A. You may have heard people say that the commandments of the Old Testament do not apply to us in the New Testament
    1. sometimes people quote, “We are not under law, but under grace”
    2. sometimes people quote, “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life”
  - B. Certainly it is true that two kinds of Old Testament law do not apply to us in the New Testament
    1. the ceremonial laws, regarding such things as sacrifices, holy days, priests, and unclean foods, teach us about Jesus Christ, but are not commands for us to follow in the New Covenant
    2. the civil or judicial laws, for governing Israel as a country, teach us principles of justice, of general equity, but are not commands for us to follow now; we are not obliged to obey them as commandments
  - C. But a third kind of law, the moral law in the Old Testament, is for all men to obey everywhere
    1. the commands of moral law are such things as “Honor thy father and thy mother” and “Thou shalt not steal”
    2. such moral law applies to all men, both the Jews in the Old Covenant, and all people all over the world
  - D. And near the beginning of this Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5:17-20, the Lord Jesus assured us that He did not come to repeal any of the commandments of that moral law
    1. Mt 5:17 Jesus did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill them
    2. Mt 5:18 till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled
    3. Mt 5:19 whoever breaks the commandments of the moral law and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven
  - E. So, since the Law and the Prophets proclaim a righteousness that does not change with even with the change from Old Covenant to New Covenant; then we are to obey all the moral commandments in the law and the prophets

We Christians, the disciples of Jesus Christ, look to follow the same moral code as in the law and the prophets.

- II. Consider the Relationship of the Law and the Prophets with the Golden Rule: “This is the Law and the Prophets”
- A. “The law and the prophets” was a way of referring to the whole bible at the time, which we now call “The Old Testament”
  - B. Our Lord Jesus means by this that the righteousness expressed in the golden rule is the same righteousness expressed in the law and the prophets; what God teaches us about how we are to treat other people is the same in the golden rule as it is in all the Old Testament scriptures
    - 1. e.g. throughout the Old Testament scriptures is the message that it is wrong to murder your fellow man
      - a) the history of Cain and Abel tells of God’s displeasure at Cain killing his brother
      - b) the history of the great flood tells that God destroyed most of our race because they had filled the earth with violence, and that God ordained that murderers must receive the death penalty
      - c) the 10 Commandments say, “Thou shalt not kill.”
      - d) the Psalms call on God to bring His wrath upon violent men
      - e) the Proverbs warn that those who lay a trap for others will fall into the trap themselves
      - f) the prophecies against Jerusalem tell that God would destroy the city and exile the people because they had filled the streets with blood
    - 2. the golden rule expresses that same righteousness
      - a) clearly you would not have another person murder you
      - b) therefore you must not murder another person
      - c) and this extends past the outward actions to the inward thoughts
        - (1) see that the bible teaches us that in order to obey the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” you also must not be angry with your brother or hate him
        - (2) so also by the golden rule, of course you would not have your brother to hate and be angry at you, therefore you must not hate and be angry with your brother

We Christians, the disciples of Jesus Christ, look to follow the same righteousness commanded in the law and the prophets.

And the golden rule commands the same righteousness as that commanded in the law and the prophets

### III. Therefore We Obey the Golden Rule As Obeying the Law and the Prophets

- A. If Jesus says we are to obey the Law and the Prophets, then we are also to obey any rule that expresses the same righteousness expressed in the law and the prophets
- B. the golden rule is equal to the law and the prophets
- C. “therefore” we are to obey the golden rule

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Therefore we obey the golden rule as we obey the law and the prophets.

### IV. How, Then, Does Our Lord Jesus Help Us in This Present Crisis Through The Golden Rule?

- A. He gives us this general rule to guide us when we don't know what specific one applies to some situation in this crisis
  - 1. No matter how thick the bible were, it could not cover every circumstance with a specific rule.
  - 2. This is a help to you when you are trying to do right---absent a directly-applicable commandment, you have license from the Lord Jesus to judge on this basis.
  - 3. This is a help to you when sorely tempted to do wrong---your conscience cannot excuse sinful behavior by noting the absence of a direct commandment.
- B. He enriches our prayers for God's help in this crisis
  - 1. we know to pray “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”
  - 2. if this golden rule is the sum of all of God's will for our dealings with other people, then we pray, “Our Father, which art in heaven, grant that I do unto others as I would have them do unto me.”
  - 3. we pray this for ourselves, for each other, for those who govern us, and for all men
- C. He shows us to go to the Law and the Prophets to strengthen our judgment and our determination
  - 1. Malachi 2:10 Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another...?

## V. How Does the Golden Rule Point Us to Jesus Christ?

### A. It gives us a glimpse of the excellence of Jesus of Nazareth

1. He lived in this same world we live in, with all the same temptations
2. yet he always followed this rule, fully, perfectly, without any exceptions
3. what a glorious, perfect man He was, and is forever
4. He is worthy of all devotion, of all allegiance

### B. It shows us our need for salvation

1. it might be somewhat difficult to grasp all the ways in which the law and the prophets reveal us to be sinners, deserving of God's wrath
2. but it is all too easy to grasp how far we fall short of obeying this one simple rule
  - a) no, I have not lived this way
  - b) most of the time, I haven't even thought of living this way
3. our sin, when seen in the light of this golden rule, seems very foul
  - a) other people are just as human as I am; they have just the same rights
  - b) yet I have very rarely thought of them as equal in importance to myself
4. and if all the threatenings in the law and the prophets apply to me, I am doomed to hell if I am not saved from it somehow

### C. It gives us understanding of what Jesus Christ has done for sinners

1. the law and the prophets proclaim a code of righteousness, the same as summarized in the golden rule
2. they also proclaim a Savior who would come and take on Himself the punishment for those who break that law
3. He was not in need of saving, because He had never broken the golden rule. But He took the blows, the thorns, the stripes, the nails, and the spear to save me, because I had broken it a million times, and I justly would have gone to hell for it. In the great love of God for sinners, He took my punishment Himself. Now I am forgiven; I am freed; I am accepted.

## CONCLUSION

We don't know how long the present crisis will last, or whether it will get much worse before it gets better. And we don't know what moral questions will arise that we are not used to answering during normal times. But our Lord Jesus has given us a great deal of help in His golden rule:

Matthew 7:12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

4. the Lord Jesus said that all the moral commandments in the Old Testament hang on two rules:
  - a) You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind
  - b) You shall love your neighbor as yourself”
5. Jesus did not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, so we must obey them; and those two rules sum up all the law; there we must obey those two rules

6. now that the New Testament also has been written, the same holds true for it as for the Old Testament: the golden rule is the law and the prophets and indeed the whole bible

- a) Jesus Christ, the Son of God, when He came, said that “Thou shalt not kill” also means you shall not be angry with your brother
- b) Peter preached that the people must repent because they had killed the Son of God
- c) Paul wrote to the church at Rome, quoting the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill”
- d) John wrote that whoever hates his brother is a murderer who does not have eternal life
- e) The book of Revelation says that murderers have no place in the New Jerusalem, but have their place in the lake of fire that burns forever

## INTRODUCTION

In the time when our Lord Jesus came, the dominant ideas about righteousness in Israel were based on the highly corrupt form of religion that prevailed among the Jews. The popular religion of that time had been built up over the previous century by men whom the bible calls “the scribes and Pharisees,” men whose pretense of righteousness was based on a great show of obedience to God’s commandments. Their false religion pretended devotion to the bible, which they often referred to as “the law and the prophets.” But under cover of their attention to the scriptures, the leaders of this man-made religion practiced a morality that defied the true morality God had delivered in the law and the prophets. Yet their outward show of obedience to the law and the prophets had become the standard of righteousness that the people thought was acceptable to God. They had come to think that when Messiah, Christ, came, His kingdom would be characterized by this kind of righteousness.

When Christ came, however, preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, rather than endorsing the idea of righteousness practiced by the scribes and Pharisees, He condemned it, going so far as to call these men “hypocrites,” and the “brood of vipers.” Yet the scribes and Pharisees claimed to obey the law and the prophets, and to be the disciples of Moses. So, when Jesus went about destroying their corrupt religion with its sham righteousness, it could seem to the people that He was trying to destroy the commandments of God given in the law and the prophets.

In the Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in Matthew chapters 5 through 7, our Lord Jesus Christ made clear that He was not tearing down the righteousness commanded by God in the law and the prophets, but instead was tearing down the corruption of it, as taught and practiced by the scribes and Pharisees, that the true righteousness expressed in the law and the prophets could be known and practiced by the subjects of the kingdom of heaven.

Our Lord Jesus would have us understand this true righteousness in one simple line; in one profound rule.

## TEXT



Matthew 5:17-20 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. (18) For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. (19) Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (20) For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

## BODY

- I. The Righteousness of the Kingdom of Heaven Is the Righteousness Commanded in the Law and the Prophets
  - A. The commands in the bible come from three types of law
    1. moral - right and wrong for Israel in the Old Covenant, and the same for all men everywhere
    2. ceremonial - pertaining to worship for Israel in the Old Covenant
    3. civil or judicial - pertaining to government for Israel in the Old Covenant
  - B. The Lord Jesus came to end the Old Covenant, and establish the New Covenant
  - C. Since the ceremonial law and the civil or judicial law in the law and the prophets pertained to Israel under the Old Covenant, the commands of those types were abrogated, ended, set aside when the Lord Jesus died on the cross
  - D. But the commandments of God that are of the moral law apply to all men everywhere, whether in the time of the Old Covenant or of the New Covenant
    1. they were God's law before He spoke to Israel by the law and the prophets
    2. they remain God's law since He has spoken to us through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ
  - E. No one should think that Jesus proclaims a kingdom in which the righteousness commanded in the law and the prophets is not upheld

## II.

## CONCLUSION

- I. The Word “Therefore” Shows Us This Is a Conclusion Based on What Went Before
  - A. The place of this verse in The Sermon On the Mount; Mt. 5-7
    1. the structure of The Sermon On the Mount likened to an essay, as you learned in school
      - a) Matthew 5:1-20 introduction
        - (1) Matthew 5:17-20 thesis
      - b) Matthew 5:21 - 7:11 body
      - c) Matthew 7:12-27 conclusion
        - (1) Matthew 7:12 thesis
    2. so, today’s verse, Matthew 7:12, is the beginning of the conclusion, where the thesis stated in the introduction is re-visited
  - B. The word “therefore” shows us that something was stated as the thesis in the introduction, was supported in the body of the sermon, and is now being re-stated in the conclusion

1. there is a reason why you should do to others what you would have them do to you

II.