

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS

XLV. The Sermon On The Mount: False And True Righteousness

K. Christ's Instruction To Those Who Enter His Kingdom

2. Christ's Unique "Golden Rule"

(Matthew 7:12)

I. Introduction

- A. After critiquing the Pharisees' false righteousness, Christ addressed those who desired to enter His Kingdom in Matthew 7:7-29 (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 186).
- B. Matthew 7:12 is part of that address, what constitutes the Golden Rule. This rule has been taught in many forms, but Christ's approach is unique, so we view this verse for insight, application and blessing:

II. Christ's Unique "Golden Rule," Matthew 7:12.

- A. The Golden Rule of Matthew 7:12 appears in all of the world's major religions, but it is stated in those religions in the negative sense and in the passive form. For example, Judaism's Rabbi Hillel (Hillel. B. Sab. 31a) taught, "'What is hateful to thee, do it not unto thy neighbor. This is the whole Law and the rest is the interpretation thereof.'" (Bill Wilson, compiler, The Best of Josh McDowell: A Ready Defense, 1991, p. 206)
- B. In striking contrast, Christ's version of the Golden Rule is given in the **positive sense** and in the **active form**:
 1. In the **positive sense**, Jesus said that in everything, that which we would want others to do unto us, we should do to them, for this is the summation of the Law and the Prophets, the teaching of Scripture.
 2. In the **active form**, Jesus went beyond directing His hearers not defensively to do what they did not want done to them, but to take the initiative of doing unto others what they would want others to do unto them.
- C. God's surpassing, perfect righteousness is therein displayed in Christ's unique approach to the Golden Rule:
 1. Sin has the tendency to create a self-centered viewpoint that leads to a **defensive posturing**:
 - a. When God created the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden, they were unclothed, Genesis 2:20-25.
 - b. However, when Adam and Eve sinned by eating of the forbidden tree, they discerned good from evil, and sensing evil in themselves and in one another, they mistrusted one another and were alienated from each other and from God. They thus sewed fig leaves together to create aprons for themselves and hid from God when He came calling for them in the garden, Genesis 3:1-8; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 32.
 2. Sin also has the tendency to create a self-centered viewpoint that leads to the **harm of others**:
 - a. When God created Eve and brought her to Adam, he named her "Woman" because she had been taken from Adam as a part of his own body, Genesis 2:22-23. This set the standard for the bond of loving, intimate unity between a man and a woman in marriage, Genesis 2:24.
 - b. However, when Adam and Eve sinned, each of them sought to pass the blame and hence God's judgment for their condition over to another entity – Adam blaming **both God and Eve** for the woman whom God had given him for leading him into sin, and Eve in blaming the serpent for deceiving her, Genesis 3:11-13.
 3. However, Christ's Golden Rule **counters** self-centered defensiveness and harm done unto others:
 - a. Opposite self-centered defensiveness, Christ directed that truly righteous believers actively initiated actions toward others what they would want to be done unto them, Matthew 7:12.
 - b. Opposite self-centeredness that harms others, Christ directed that truly righteous believers do what is good unto others as they would want others to do good unto them, Matthew 7:12.
- D. The righteousness that Christ then upheld was God's righteousness that is provided by salvation in Christ:
 1. Since man is hopelessly unrighteous in himself, God's righteousness for him is available by faith in Christ to all who believe in Him and are pronounced righteous by God as a gift of His grace, Rom. 3:20, 21-24.
 2. Such a justification is made possibly only through the substitutionary death of Christ for man's sin, which death satisfied the righteous demands of God and appeased His wrath against man's sin, Romans 3:25-26.
 3. As a believer who has been justified by faith in Christ then relies on the indwelling Holy Spirit, he lives out the righteousness of God (Romans 8:3-4) that enables him to take the initiative of doing what is edifying unto others as he would want others to do unto him, Matthew 7:12.

Lesson: *Christ's Golden Rule, unlike the Golden Rule in lost man's religions, is not self-centered in being either defensive or leading to the harm of others, but it is affirmative, taking the initiative to do what is good to others as one would want others to do to oneself. This righteousness is available only by salvation by faith in Christ.*

Application: *May we partake of Christ's salvation and live by the Holy Spirit's power to keep Christ's Golden Rule.*