



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Special Study:

THE UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLE OF A RIGHTEOUS LIFE Matthew 7:12

This is the most sublime condensation of the moral law. Thoughtfully considered, it guides us in all our relationships. This grandeur precept begins with the word "**therefore**." The word therefore, connects the verse to the previous verse. Earthly fathers in their normal and best state of being give good things to their children, "**therefore all things whatsoever ye** (in your normal and best state of being) **would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them**". The word, "**therefore**" is based on the best of relationships - the Father/child relationship. Your heavenly Father will give good things to His children - His true children who ask Him; "**therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them**." Natural affection or divine love in the heart must be established in the application of this precept which has been referred to as the golden rule.

This word therefore prevents the verse from being isolated from verse eleven. The closing phrase also protects this divine precept from being misused by sinners. "**For this is the law and the prophets**." This is the summary and the summit of the teaching of the Lord and the doctrine of God's faithful prophets calling men to righteousness. Suppose an offender should be arrested by a man in authority. Suppose the criminal should ask the officer whether he would like to be arrested if he were in his position. Assuming the answer is no, he then says: 'Do as you would be done to'. That application will contradict "**the law and the prophets**." The first word, "**therefore**" and the concluding phrase "**for this is the law and the prophets**" rescue this 'universal principle of true righteousness' from the hands of depraved men and women who are motivated by selfishness, self-centredness and sinful propensities.

THE STANDARD FOR A GODLY, UNSELFISH LIFE

Matthew 7:12; Proverbs 24:29; Genesis 21:23; 26:29; 50:18-21; Romans 14:17-19; Galatians 5:13,14,22-26; 6:1,2; Ephesians 4:28-32; Colossians 3:12-17.

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

What a standard! Only the Lord in His supreme, supernatural wisdom could summarise the commandments of God in one simple sentence. In all situations and circumstances of normal relationship, in all things as we relate with others - parents and children, husbands and wives, neighbours and friends, employers and employees, sellers and buyers, professionals and clients, teachers and learners, leaders and followers, citizens and strangers, lenders and borrowers, landlords and tenants, rich and poor, privileged and less-privileged people - whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye even so to them.

This is a precept of great value. One may forget the details of many of the commandments of God but this is easy to remember. It calls us to a gracious, godly life. It draws us from a life of selfishness to a life of Christlikeness. It teaches us not to act from selfish or unjust motives but to put ourselves in the place of the other person and ask what we would expect of him towards us. This would make us impartial, kind, considerate, just, gentle and tender.

This standard for human behaviour, if applied fairly and faithfully would banish cruelty, unkindness, theft, adultery, murder, abortion, treachery, deception, envy, covetousness - sinfulness in general. This precept will prevent unrighteousness among men. If everyone would practise this the church would be a glorious church and the world would be a better place to live, work and prepare for eternity.

THE SUMMARY OF GOD'S UNCHANGEABLE LAW

Matthew 7:12; Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14; 1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7,13; Hebrews 1:1,2; John 8:28,29; Colossians 3:12-14; Matthew 22:37-40; James 2:8-12.

"For this is the law and the prophets." This is the sum or substance of the Old Testament. And this is kernel of the result of the gospel of grace. It is a summary expression of all the moral law required. This incomparable summary is our duty to our neighbour in a nutshell. It is also called **"the royal law"**.

Our Lord teaches us that it is not enough to learn or to believe, we must also do. In giving us this golden rule, the royal law or this principle of true righteousness, He emphasizes that faith or grace does not cancel the moral law. Faith or grace does not make the moral law unnecessary. Faith in Christ brings salvation and salvation makes us to deny ungodliness and lusts, leading us to live righteously and justly.

This can be referred to as **"the law of Christ."** Here is the Old Testament and the New Testament. What the Old Testament commands, the New Testament gives the grace to obey. Righteousness was required in the Old Testament but the depravity in the human heart did not allow the majority of men to do as God expected. Christ has come to cleanse and transform our hearts. With the work of grace done in the heart, the required godliness is now possible. And the guiding principle of this righteousness is: **"all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them"**.

THE SUMMIT OF GRACIOUS UNDENIABLE LOVE

Matthew 7:12; John 13:34,35; 15:12,13; Romans 12:9-21; 2 Corinthians 12:15; Ephesians 5:25-33; Hebrews 13:1-4; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8-12; 1 John 3:16-18; 4:7-21; Luke 10:27-37.

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Galatians 5:14). All the commandments are **"briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"** (Romans 13:9). **"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well"** (James 2:8).

"God is love" (1 John 4:8) and the purpose of Christ's redemption and salvation is to bring us to God. His **mission** is to plant the love of God in us. His **message** is to teach all men that the love of God offers to save men from their sins. His **miracle** is to transform Gentile stones (with hearts of stone having no tender feeling for other creatures of God) to children of God with His nature of love. The beneficiaries of His mission, the recipients of His message who experience the miracle of His grace have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts. In gratitude to God who gave His only Son to save them, they desire to love God supremely. If we had given such great gift to save someone, we would expect him to show his gratitude in a very practical, un mistakeable way. In deep appreciation of Christ who has sacrificed His very life to save him (the sinner) from sin and its eternal consequences, he (the saved soul) consecrates himself to love His Saviour above everyone and everything on earth. If we had paid such great price to save anyone from such great danger and damnation, we would expect him to reciprocate with visible, undeniable, uninterrupted love. In demonstrating his love towards God, he will want to convince all who know him that he loves God and anyone related with God and anything associated with God. He will love all the children and all the creatures of God. He will love his neighbour as himself. Graciously and willingly, he will live by the golden rule, the royal law: **"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"** (Matthew 7:12).

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