

The Golden Rule

by Tim Conway

This sermon emphasizes the importance of living out the Golden Rule as taught by Jesus in Matthew 7:12. It highlights the need to consider others before ourselves, to show compassion, and to treat others as we would want to be treated. The sermon also touches on the transformation that occurs when one is saved, leading to a new perspective on loving others and the freedom found in Christ's forgiveness.

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Scripture: Matthew 7:12, Ephesians 2:12, 1 Corinthians 10:24, 2 Corinthians 5:16, Luke 15:20, Galatians 5:13

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Description

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Transcript

Matthew chapter 7 verse 12 is the golden rule, as it's well known. Matthew chapter 7 verse 12, reading from the English Standard Version, it reads this way, so whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. For this is the law and the prophets.

Now, I want you to notice right here at the beginning, so. That's ESV language, so. I know if you have another translation, it may say therefore.

The therefore may be the first word, it may be the third or fourth word. I think if you've got the new American Standard. But, the reality is, we're confronted by this conjunction right here at the beginning.

So, or therefore. What does that automatically mean to us? It's not a new thought. There's a connection.

There's a connection with what's said before. This is not detached. And so, what was said before? Because we want to say, listen, anytime you're, what we don't want to do is dive into Scripture and have a therefore right at the beginning and pick up right there as though there's no context, as though there's no connection.

Because there is a connection, which means that Jesus is now saying something that is based on what he has already said. What did he say? Well, in verse 11, if you then who are evil know how to give good gifts

to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him? So, that is the thought right before. We're evil.

We know how to give to our children. How much more do we have this heavenly Father who gives good to those who ask Him? So, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. For this is the law and the prophets.

And you can see the connection. What Jesus is doing is he's calling us to consider others and certain things in their lives, but only after setting forth what God does for us. You can see that.

I mean, do you feel the force of this? If God has made himself a father to you, and remember what he said here, if you then be an evil, you know what? If God has made himself a father to you, a sinner like you are, and after the things that you've done, if he's done that, well, you see, you feel the force here. If he's heaped such good things on you, you feel the force. If he's heaped such good things upon you in spite of who you are, therefore, that's the connection here.

I mean, let that prompt you. Let that compel you. Let that provoke you to do for others the things that you would desire that others should do to you.

So, that's the connection. Now, look, I did a bit of searching. You can find this easy enough.

We live in a world that does not have a father. We live in a world that does not have a father. We live in a world that does not have a father.

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We live in a world that does not have a father. We live in a world that does not have a father. We live in a world that basically says, righteousness can be summed up in just leaving me alone.

You see, what do you mean? I mean, listen to this. Buddhism's Udaina Varga says this, hurt not, you see the negative? Hurt not others with that which pains yourself. That's Buddhism.

Now, hear Christ. Christ says, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. Hindu, the Mahabharata, this is the sum of duty.

Now, get that word, sum. It means you add it all up. This is what you're left with.

Do not to others which if done to thee would cause thee pain. Now, you saw the not in there. Again, negative.

Judaism's Rabbi Hillel, what is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow creature. That is the whole law. All else is explanation.

Now, isn't that interesting? Because you know what he does here? He says, he sums up that as being the whole law. You see, this is exactly what Jesus does. Jesus says to do unto others what you want them to do.

That is all the law in the prophets. This rabbi basically summed it up with the negative. Isn't it interesting? But brethren, there's a vast difference between not doing to somebody what you don't want them to do to you and doing to somebody what you do want them to do.

I mean, this is totally, totally different. Now look, I recognize that within doing to others, you're obviously not going to do certain things to them. I recognize that.

But it goes beyond that. Listen to Confucius. Do not to others what you would not wish done to yourself.

The Apocrypha says, do not do to anyone what you yourself would hate. Don't you find mankind wired like this? You've seen this. A parent.

We've got John back there with two children. Can you imagine if John says to his son, now was that nice? He saw him do something. And the child answers with, what? I didn't do anything.

You see, was that nice? When we start talking about doing something nice, immediately mankind wants to say, I didn't do anything. How often have we found that if we have sought to take the gospel to people, I've never murdered anybody, I've never raped anybody. That's so classic fundamentalism.

Ruby and I were just recently listening to biographical sketches that John Piper did. One of the ones that he did was of his own father. John Piper's father was a fundamentalist.

If you don't know what that is, well that's a certain breed of Christian in the United States. And they tend to be in the South, maybe not always, but these days. Basically Bob Jones University, very fundamentalist.

You know what their hallmark is? We don't dance, we don't drink, we don't... I remember one of these fundamentalist guys was on the radio out of Corpus Christi. And he preached against aspirin, of all things. But negative.

So often this is precisely how the world views Christianity. Negative. Christianity means, I can't do anything.

Thou shalt not. A lot of people think that. You know, you don't want to be a Christian, it cramps your style.

Have you ever noticed that those who faithfully follow Christ to the end, you know what they're going to hear? Well done, good and faithful servant. Did you hear that? Well done. He doesn't say, well congratulations, you didn't beat your wife too much.

He doesn't speak that way. You never find that. I'm so thankful you didn't scream profanities at your neighbor every morning.

You didn't run a brothel, you didn't punch your grandmother in the arm. I mean, he doesn't talk like that. When Jesus brings all humanity before him, he intently takes notice of the good that people did.

I mean, you know, he might have said to those... You remember, he divides everybody. Sheep and the goats. Right and the left.

He might have said to those on his right, I showed up at your door and thank you, you didn't murder me. But you know, the ones on the left, they'd be saying, we didn't murder you either. And that's exactly right.

We didn't do that. We never cursed you, we never hit you, we never threw rotten eggs at your home. We didn't steal from you, we didn't kick you in the shin.

And you know what he's going to say? That's precisely the point. You didn't do anything to me. You basically were indifferent.

You've heard me say this before. Sister Rebecca, one time she said, hatred. She said the opposite of love.

So often we think hatred. She said the opposite of love is indifference. You can just walk through the world, and you can watch people being slaughtered in Myanmar, and not care, and not even pray.

You can see people's needs, and you can drive by them. You know, the people on the left, he doesn't say, you were murderers, you were rapers, you pillaged, you did mean things to old ladies. He doesn't say that.

He says, you just were indifferent. When I was hungry, you didn't murder me, but you didn't give me the time of day. You see, this is all this is.

You never did anything. You just avoided me. You ignored me.

Just indifference. You acted like I didn't exist. You didn't help me.

And brethren, I'll tell you this. We can get to the place where people just stand in the line at the supermarket, and they're just an obstruction to me getting to pay for and get out the door. You drive up and down the streets, and you drive by cars, and it's just a blob, it's just a blur of a person sitting in there.

We don't even think about what's happening around us. You can see people, and it doesn't register. Brethren, we've got to see Christianity for what it is.

It's not a religion of negatives. Do you recognize who we are followers of? We are followers of Him who's actually said He's a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Do you know why they call Him a friend of tax collectors and sinners? Because He helped them.

He actually did things. Scripture sums it up. Scripture sums it up very clearly.

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and He went about doing good and healing all those who were oppressed by the devil for God was with Him. Brethren, is God with us? I mean, that's a really legitimate question. Listen, if He's with us, we're expected to walk in this same path.

We need to be going about doing good just like He did. Listen, the golden rule. We can talk about, oh, the golden rule, how that shines so much brighter than what Confucius said, what they have in Buddhism, what they have in Hinduism, what Rabbi Hillel said, what the Apocrypha says.

This is glowing. This is the golden rule. This is so positive.

We can say, oh yes, that's a wonderful thing. We can quote it to each other. We can praise it.

We call it the golden rule. Doesn't that sound good? I mean, how wonderful. Yet, you know what? We can actually get to the place where we fail to practice.

You have to hear the Lord. He says, everyone then who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not

do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

And I just ask this question, how wise are we? How wise? Brethren, I'll tell you this. It ought not to surprise us that when Jesus, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, says, many are going to say to Me on that day, Lord, Lord, we did many mighty works in Your name. We did these different things.

We cast out demons. We prophesied. We did these things.

And He's going to say, depart from me. You do recognize what's happening there. That's not all mankind.

That's not the irreligious multitudes. That's not Hindus and Muslims. That's not them.

You know who's there? People who did those things in His name. People who identified with Christ. Do you know what He's saying? He's saying, many of the people that identify with Me, I am going to tell them to depart in that day.

You know why? Because they were foolish. Because they played religion. Brethren, it is not being a good Christian because you show up on time.

It's good to be on time for the Sunday service. But just because you show up on time to hear that, listen brethren, you recognize. Jesus is saying there are wise people and there are foolish people.

He's not saying that this whole multitude of foolish people are people out there who never hear. Out there who sit under the teachings of Islam. Out there who sit in China.

That's not who He's talking about. He says the foolish person is the person that hears His words. They hear them.

They come. They actually sit under the preaching and they don't do them. Brethren, we need to take this to heart.

As I was talking about earlier, we need to do spiritual inventory. You know one of the things that's so easy? We do spiritual inventory and we're looking for a clear conscience. And we can be so driven by the things that we ought not to do.

And we're not even left convicted about the fact that perhaps we're not doing the things that Christ did. And using our life that way. Pursuing those goals.

How wise? How foolish are we? That's the question. And you know what He says here? He says, for this is the Law and the Prophets. What does our Lord mean by that? This is the Law and the Prophets.

Well, as we looked at when we were back in chapter 5, the Law and the Prophets is basically a way to say the Old Testament. We went through and we proved that. We looked at a number of scriptures.

But basically the Law is the first. And we're talking about the first five books of the Bible. We're talking about Moses.

We're talking about the Prophets. Basically the Law and the Prophets is a good way to sum up the Old Testament. Now of course, at that time when Jesus was talking, they didn't yet have a New Testament.

It would have registered right away in people's minds. He's talking about God's Word. He's basically saying this.

You know God's Word has a lot of rules. It has a lot of statutes. It has commandments.

613 somebody has counted. Just in the Mosaic Law itself. So what Jesus is saying is this.

If you take all the commandments, all the rules, all the statutes in the Old Testament that have to do with our relationship with one another. Obviously there are commandments there that have to do with our relationship with God. That's not what He's talking about specifically right here.

He's talking about that basically if you take all the commandments that have to do with our interaction with one another, He said basically the sum and substance of that can be boiled down to this one statement. Sometimes there is just such glorious simplicity. Do you recognize how many ten thousand of questions that this answers when you're thinking about how to deal with somebody else? See, oftentimes we want this list of very exact rules.

Lord, tell us. We need to know more detail. We need to know how to do this.

What Jesus is saying is if you basically want to know how to act in any given situation that involves you and another human being, well just turn the table. Just spin the thing 180 degrees and put yourself in their place and ask yourself, if things were reversed, how would you want to be dealt with? I mean, it's a very simple principle. You think of the commandments in the Old Testament.

You do recognize that if you had an ox that was a bit ugly and tended to gore people, well, you were told to pen the thing up and if you didn't pen it up and it got out and it hurt somebody, it was going to come back on your head. I mean, think about that. Jesus is basically saying the sum and substance of that is if you've got an animal that's vicious and it's likely going to hurt somebody, well, you don't want it tearing up your kids, so why would you put it in a place where it would hurt somebody else's? He says when you build a house, you put a parapet or a railing on top.

Well, of course. If you've got a roof where people can walk out, you don't want your grandmother falling off the edge. Do unto others what you want done unto you.

I mean, you dig a pit. We had a horrible story in San Antonio just recently about somebody that didn't cover a pit and it cost somebody their life. Brethren, these things are how we interact.

You look at the Old Testament. What do you find? You find if your brother becomes poor and your brother becomes in bondage to, say, foreigners, you're supposed to buy him back. This is how you would love one.

If you've got a brother and your brother dies and he doesn't have any children, well, the brother is supposed to raise up children to him so that his name not be forgotten in Israel. You see, these things are just dealing with one another based on this principle that we want to do to others the thing that we would have done to us. And Jesus said at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, He says don't think that I've come to abolish the law and the prophets.

He said I have not come to abolish it. I've come to fulfill it. And this is precisely what He means.

He did not mean I came to fulfill it so that you don't have to. That's not what He was talking about. Of course we believe in justification.

We believe in imputed righteousness. But that's not what He meant. The whole Sermon on the Mount is based on practical righteousness.

Not imputed righteousness. Not Jesus working out righteousness for us. Now He did that, but that's not what the Sermon on the Mount is about.

The Sermon on the Mount is about your righteousness exceeding that of the scribes and Pharisees. And He says if your righteousness does not exceed theirs, you don't inherit the kingdom. That's the sum and substance of the Old Testament.

Listen brethren, we have to recognize this about the law. The law of God. Do you see its true intent and character? Do you recognize God did not just think, well they need some rules.

They're just too free. I better think some up. Just randomly.

That He needed to burden us down with some kind of rigid restrictions. That's not it. He didn't give us just some commandments that we could detach, impersonal rules, that we could just coldly carry out, go down our checklist.

I mean brethren, the law isn't something that we just mechanically keep. What He's saying is the very heart and soul of the law and the prophets and the Old Testament and how God wanted us to treat each other. He said the very heart of that has to do with caring for one another.

For actually dealing with one another the way that we want to be dealt with. This isn't something we just do coldly and matter of factly. Do the bare minimum to just get by with.

You know, that's what the scribes and the Pharisees did. They were always trying to whittle the law down to the bare minimum that they could get by with and still think that they kept it. Even though they would gladly drain the funds from a widow.

Though they would put burdens on people and not help in the least with them. But oh, they were meticulous. You see, Jesus said this, you guys, you hypocrites, you'll gladly tithe your anise, your mint, and your cumin.

But see what they did was they missed the very heart of it. And what was the heart of it? Justice, mercy, faithfulness. This is what He told them.

Brethren, listen, this is for us. This isn't just although they were bad guys. Brethren, we're just like them.

If our religion just stacks up to I own a Bible. Yeah, so did they. I go to the synagogue or the church building.

Yeah, so did they. I sit under the sound of the Word. Yep, so did they.

They could recite it just as well as anybody here. But you see, in the end, they weren't doers. They neglected the weightier aspects.

Brethren, we really have to do inventory on our lives as followers of Christ as to exactly what it is that He's calling for. You can see clearly the heart and the soul. Folks, we don't want to simply be those that can quote this golden rule or admire it.

We need to be people that implement it. We need to really be thinking all the time. What can I do with my life? How can I help other people? I mean, if tables are turned here, how do I want other people to interact with me? What do I want them to do to me? And the question is this.

How do we implement it? Obviously. How do we do this? Well, obviously, this requires thinking so much of the Christian life. All of the Christian life.

It demands thinking. Jesus' assumption here is that other people are wired just like me. You see that assumption.

When He says, do to others what you want the others to do to you, His basic assumption is that we're all wired the same. That the basic things that we like other people to do to us, they like us to do to them. That's His assumption here.

I mean, look. I recognize we're different in certain ways. We have different personalities.

I recognize we have different tastes. Somebody might say, well, if you're going to do to me what I would have done to... I mean, I'd like that dress right there. Somebody else says, I don't like that one.

But see, that's not the issue. That's not really where He's going. A criminal might say, well, you know, I'd really like the judge to let me off.

You do recognize that this has to do with truth. This has to do with justice. This has to do with mercy.

Jesus is talking about having other people do to us and us doing to them the things that if we really understood all truth, we understood things like God understands them, that we would want. But look, this is not... We can bring this down to just basic simplicities of life. You know, you don't want people talking evil about you.

But at the same time, given in the light of all reality, if we knew things the way the Lord knows things, we may not like it if somebody goes over there talking about me, but these things are true about me and they're actually talking about these things. I wish they weren't talking about these, but they're doing it because they intend to help me. Now see, that's different.

And seeing everything in the light of reality and the way God sees things and according to truth, then that's not bad that they would be talking about me. We should hope that there would be, say, leaders in the church that would talk about certain individuals if they see sin there. We should hope that that would happen.

But you understand, brethren, we all desire certain things. I mean, look, we desire encouragement. Nobody desires to be alone.

People don't desire to be forgotten. None of you do. We don't desire to... Well, don't.

See, when I talk that way, now I'm making it negative. And Jesus is speaking very positively here. But let's put it in the positive.

You know what? We all desire to be treated kindly. We desire certain things. We desire people to acknowledge our existence, not just to walk by us like we don't exist.

We desire that people take notice of it. We desire that people take an interest in our life. We desire that people want to help us, especially when we need help.

That people will notice where something is lacking in our lives and we need somebody to come alongside us. Jesus calls us to look at ourselves. You see, we have to think here.

What He's asking us to do is, on a regular basis, think. What do I like? What do I want done to me? How do I want to be treated? How do I want to be interacted with? And come up with a list. And then spin the thing around.

And say, well, if I like that, you know what? I'm going to make an effort to do that. Listen, if you like people to acknowledge your existence, if you like people to call you and check up on you, you know one of the things I find in a church that is really discouraging is oftentimes over the last 25 years that I've been leading God's people in different scenarios, I find that the people who tend to complain the loudest in the church that other people don't do and you fill in the blank to them. Typically what I will do when I'm confronted by that person who has that dilemma, that problem, is I spin the thing around just like this.

And I ask them, how often do you do that to others? Very interesting. Very interesting. You know something? The people that come into the church and they suddenly see needs and they begin to address them, I rarely find that person has any complaints.

Because you know what? The thing is, if you're pouring yourself out for other people, what I have found is God will more than make up for... I mean, He will be there to make sure that you're no loser for that. He brings joy. He brings His own presence.

I mean, there's all sorts of things. Have you ever read this? Remember those who are in prison as though imprisoned with them. You know that comes out of Hebrews.

Remember those who are in prison as though imprisoned with them. Now you know what? We may not know any brethren right now that are in prison. But I thought often about the pastor over there in Canada when he was in prison.

Do you recognize what this is calling us to? Do you recognize what the Lord wants? I mean, think about this. Remember those who are in prison as though... as though... Put yourself right there as though you were in their shoes. You see how much you need to spin this around? Now this takes thought.

This doesn't just happen with an empty head. This doesn't just happen when you get up in the morning and all you do is think about you and think about your needs and think about yourself. It doesn't happen that way.

You see, you have to actually get out of yourself. You have to think about others. You have to put yourself in that position.

What do you think it means to put yourself in a position as though you were in jail with somebody? I mean, think about it. You've got to think about what it's like. You have to imagine yourself suffering the deprivations that somebody would suffer in prison.

Think about whether... Think about if you got hauled off here as a Christian. Maybe you didn't actually commit a crime. Not by God's standard, but you were hauled off to jail.

And you know who you're going to be with? You're going to be with people that are criminal. You're going to be around unsavory folks. Oftentimes in the prisons back in these days, you didn't eat.

You know, when Adoniram Judson was in Burma and he was in prison, he wouldn't have eaten if his wife hadn't brought him food. A lot of countries, they don't feed you in prison. If you don't have family or friends, you're going to die of starvation in prison.

It can be cold. You can be lacking proper clothing. Do you think that if you were in prison, you would want somebody to come visit you? Somebody to send you a blanket? Somebody to bring you a Bible? Somebody that would write to you on a regular basis? Somebody that you knew was thinking about you all the time? I'll tell you, the last thing you would want if you were in prison is to be forgotten.

You know, one of the things that it's really important for the churches at home to do is to find out about those who are faithful, laboring out there on the mission field. And one of the things is to constantly put ourselves in their position. I've been out there.

It's good to go visit another country. It's good to see how things are. It's good to put yourself in the shoes of other people and imagine.

I often imagine my brother Prem Wagmeier laboring in the very heartland of India. And he talks about the temperature. And sometimes that temperature is like 45 degrees.

And I think of him and mosquitoes. I could tell you a story. But you put yourself in the position.

And what would you want? I'll tell you this. I would not want to be sent out of a church. When God saved me, I had a burden for missions.

One of the things I determined in pastoring the church back in San Antonio was that if we sent out missionaries, we were going to remember them. They were going to be in our prayers all the time. They were going to know from our financial support.

They were going to know from the visitations. We were going to send people there. We were going to seek to encourage them.

If there's anything that I wanted to make sure happened, it's that the missionaries that are out there on the foreign mission field would not be forgotten. And that they would have a good sense that the church at home remembered them. The worst thing that can happen is somebody gets sent to the foreign mission field by a church that forgets they're even out there.

And they put their little picture up on some place. And nobody ever talks about them. Nobody ever prays for them.

The prayer meetings hardly exist. Or nobody shows up. And if they're not showing up, they're not remembering.

You know what you need? You need pastors that are constantly putting these needs forth. Why? So that people can put themselves in the place of the people wherever they are. Whether they're in prison,

whether they're in Myanmar, in civil war situations, whether they're out on the foreign mission field, or whether they're, you know, our brother who is, say, you know, going... Dale.

Maybe we don't talk enough about what Dale's doing up in Cumbria. And he's been persecuted in his work and out on the streets. And, you know, we need to put ourselves in these positions.

That's what's involved in this. As though in prison with them. And here's what's interesting.

Earlier in the Hebrew letter, we read this. Recall the former days when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with suffering, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, sometimes being partners with those so treated, for you had compassion on those in prison. Now, that's in Hebrews 10, where the author of Hebrews recognizes that they had compassion on those in prison.

So why now three chapters later does he say, remember? Listen to this. It says you had compassion on those in prison. You may want to notice.

And you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property. You say, what's all that about? You know what happens? If Christians are being persecuted so badly that they're being put in prison, and then you go show up at the prison and you're bringing food. And they suddenly recognize, well, they must be Christians too.

And it was resulting in these people being persecuted and having their stuff plundered. I mean, can you imagine? You're so putting yourself in the place of these people and you're showing up there at the prison and you're bringing them food and you're bringing them the scrolls that Paul desires to have and maybe some clothes to keep him warm. And these guards over there say, there's more of them.

You know what? We're going to pay that guy a visit because we're going to plunder his stuff. And nobody's going to protect him. We're going to be able to get away with that.

We'll be able to steal that guy's furniture and nobody's going to say anything because they're a Christian. That's the kind of thing that was happening. They were getting their stuff plundered.

But again, back to my question. Why at the end of the letter does the author encourage these folks to remember those in prison when the fact is that they have had compassion on those that were in prison? Why? Because the verb is past tense. They had compassion.

You say, what do you mean? Brethren, we're forgetful. Because just when you say, yep, I'm going to remember, we get forgetful. We become so self-absorbed and so consumed with our own problems.

It is a very rare Christian that can go through their own problems, even deep problems, and remember the problems of others at the same time. It is an exceptional person, although it seems normative Christianity, when you can actually esteem your own problems small and those of others greater. Which is actually what we're pressed to do.

Brethren, you know what happens. Out of sight, out of mind. That's one of the reasons why when the church gathers together, we need to constantly keep each other in remembrance of the needs in the world.

And I know we don't do it enough. We need to do it more. But we've got to put ourselves in the place of others.

And if you're going to do that, then you've got to think. You've got to think about what kind of conditions they're in. You've got to think where they're at.

Think, think, think, think. Hear Paul. If one member suffers, all suffer together.

If one member is honored, all rejoice together. You see what that is? That's putting yourself in the place of others. Somebody suffers, I suffer with them.

You'll never suffer with somebody else if you're not putting yourself in their position and feeling what they feel. It'll never happen. How do you do this? Well, you've got to think about what others are going through.

Paul takes this even higher when he says in Philippians, do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than yourselves. See, I said he makes it sound like this is kind of normative Christianity. And yet, that's pretty exceptional.

1 Corinthians 10.24 Let no one seek his own good but the good of his neighbor. And I recognize both of these passages. They have a certain context.

And we have to be thinking about others when it comes to our liberties. And I know what he's talking about there. But brethren, you see, Paul wants us minded to think about other people.

So there it is. If mankind would simply implement this rule of life, think about it. There'd practically be heaven on earth.

No? Not quite. Because even if we implemented this and we each treated each other this way, we'd still have a problem with God. And there's still death.

And there's still the devil. But you know what? If we all implemented this golden rule and we lived by it, just think about it. Think about if we treated each other according to this rule, this principle.

There'd be no more war. I mean, if all mankind treated each other, there'd be no disputes, there'd be no quarreling, there'd be no murder, no abortion, no jealousy, no envy, no backbiting, there'd be no divorce, no infidelity. It'd all be gone.

No one would steal from one another. Nobody would harbor resentment or bitterness or unforgiveness. No one would hate.

They'd rape, steal, slander, gossip, dishonor. No insults. I mean, our schools wouldn't teach our children trash.

In fact, our children would not be in danger to walk down the street in the middle of the night if somebody found them. They'd just bring them home. Why? Because everybody's doing unto others what they would have done unto them.

It'd be like Sandra getting lost when she was a little girl and just riding off. And that was a country where a lot of people did live by that rule. And you know what happened? Nobody murdered her.

Nobody took her off. Nobody kidnapped her. Somebody brought her home.

Well, see, that's how it'd be everywhere. We wouldn't have to worry about any of this. There'd be no families putting grandma or grandpa in the nursing home.

None of that. Children wouldn't make fun of each other. They wouldn't mock each other.

They wouldn't be cruel. We wouldn't see what we see when we look out our window into the playground in the school over there and we see kids being mean to each other and you get a little chunky kid and he's overweight and he's standing in the corner and you'd see he's all by himself and we're over there looking out the window and we're feeling bad for them and somebody comes up and pushes somebody in the head. There would be none of that.

None of that at all. Nobody would be in a lab somewhere in Wuhan making up some new virus to kill a bunch of people with. And nobody would be creating vaccines that was only for their monetary gain without giving consideration whether it actually really did help people or not.

I'm not saying I know. I'm just saying, listen, pharmaceuticals do all sorts of things. We wouldn't have any of that.

You wouldn't have people just trying to make money at whatever cost. You wouldn't have people modifying our food though they care not for the health benefits of it. They just care about the end dollar, pound, how much is in their pocket.

Nobody would cheat. Nobody would embezzle. Nobody would do any of these things.

So the question is, I mean, look, the whole world's been confronted by this golden rule for 2,000 years. If this is such a glorious standard to live by and it fixed so much of what's wrong in the world, why aren't men and women and boys and girls lining up to do it? Why isn't it the universal law? James perhaps gives us as good an answer as we find anywhere. For where jealousy and selfish ambition, the New King James says self-seeking.

The KJV says strife. This is a very interesting word, strife. We think of quarreling.

But actually this is a word that has to do with just selfish ambition. Self-seeking. It says where there is jealousy and self-seeking, where they exist, there will be disorder in every vile practice.

There it is. You got selfish people, you're not going to end up with golden rule keepers. You're going to end up with every vile practice.

Even more graphic terms. Listen, you know these words. Paul says we ourselves were once passing our days in malice, envy, hated by others, and hating one another.

And you know, that doesn't mean that lost people can't be at least moderately kind. But you know it's all for self-serving purposes. It's for reputation.

It's for what I can get out of. I don't want to be disliked. I don't want to be thought negatively of.

Brethren, we are users in our lost state. We use people. You know what's happened.

The whole thing can be brought down to self. Selfish. Self-consumed.

It's self-deification. It's really. Our Lord would have us love our neighbor as our own self.

But you know what the problem is? I don't care about my neighbor. He didn't even tell me to love my neighbor all day long and love him as I love myself. But I don't care about him.

Bottom line, that's the issue. They're nothing special. I am God.

That's really it. There's no room for anyone else on this throne. Now listen, the devil came along in the very beginning and said, you eat that fruit.

You'll be like God. And you know what man said? Yeah. I want to be like God.

And he's wanted to be God ever since. And he thinks of himself as God. And he treats others as though they need to bow to him.

He treats everybody else as though he's entitled. Entitlement. Everybody... You know the idea of treating others like I myself want to be treated? I don't think so.

That's the very thing I have zero disposition to do in my lost state. He didn't tell me all day long. Oh yeah, I'll be kind to others.

That's only because I want to be liked. And if that guy that I'm wanting to be friends with, if he all of a sudden turns on me, well, enough of him. I'll go somewhere else.

I mean, we'll be kind to others to a degree, so long as it serves our purpose. Well, that's my father. Yeah, but see, it's your father.

And you identify with him. And so the very fact you identify with him, you'll stand up and you'll protect his honor in front of somebody else. You don't like when somebody says something bad about your dad.

But you'll hate your dad and fight with your dad. And you and your dad will have a rift between you forever so long. I mean, that kind of stuff happens all the time.

We are great as long as something serves our interests and it makes us look good. But by nature, we have no capacity to do to others that which we desire to have done to us. Why? Because the whole time we're thinking constantly about ourself, our own pleasure, our own likes, our own wants, our own reputation, our own applause.

This is what sin has done to mankind. It's precisely that. You know, something interesting happened to me when I got saved.

There was a nursing home that I went to university, Western Michigan University. My hometown was about 20 miles away. And I lived up there at campus.

And there were times I lived at home and drove back and forth. And there were times that I just lived there and I had a lot of buddies back there and family was back there. Anyway, I made that trip back and forth from Kalamazoo, Michigan to Paw Paw, Michigan often.

And you know, one of the roads, one of the primary roads that I would take, I'd come up to an intersection. It was a T. And on the other side, there was a nursing home. And when the Lord saved me, I suddenly noticed that nursing home.

And I would sit there at that stop sign and I would look at that nursing home and I began to think about all the people in there. And you just start thinking, they're old, they're lonely, no family, probably hate to be in there. I thought, I need to go visit those people.

Do you know something? I probably drove past that place in the thousands, I don't know if it would be tens of thousands, but thousands of times probably, I drove by that nursing home when I was lost. I never thought about it one time. It was probably within the scope of my vision.

I didn't think about it. I didn't care about it. And if you could basically see what I was thinking about, every other time that I passed that nursing home, you would have found I was thinking about my pleasure, my life, my tests coming up, absorbed with my problems, absorbed with my life.

But something strange happened when God saved me. Suddenly, it's like the eyes are opened. I'm no longer entirely preoccupied.

You know what? It's very interesting when we think about the depravity of man, the lost state. You know, God looked down, before He sent that flood on the earth, He looked down there at mankind, He said, the Lord saw that the wickedness was great in the earth and He said that every imagination, every thought of the imagination of their hearts was only evil continuously. And, you know, we hardly think that could be true.

But because we are so blinded by pride and by selfishness, that it is true. It is true. Every intention of the thought of our hearts is only evil continuously in our lost state.

We are selfish. We are self-occupied. We're incapable, incapable of putting ourselves in somebody else's shoes.

We're incapable of transferring our love for ourself to another. There's a self-obsession with us. And you know what happens? We get saved and still, a measure of that, probably too much of a measure of that, is still true of us.

So you need verses like this. Paul says, I say to everyone among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. Obviously he's dealing with spiritual gifts right there.

But brethren, that is a truth that can be applied across the board. Not just to spiritual gifts, but to every aspect of our life. Because you know, we still are way too preoccupied with self.

We still think way too highly of ourself. Instinctively, we expect from others what we often are in no way willing to do for others. We want them to do, we're hypersensitive when it has to do with us.

We are so, we are so skilled at judging by two scales. We've got two measuring devices, two rulers. One we measure things on how it affects us, and the other is how it affects other people.

And we measure by two different scales. And then what we're being told, what Jesus is saying is, no, no, no, no, no, no. Same scale.

Use the same scale. You gotta spin this thing around. In fact, Paul even says, consider them even more highly than yourself.

Even use a better scale on them than you use for yourself. Brethren, this is what we're confronted with. And you know, one of the problems when we're lost, is the whole time we're exalting self, we don't really much like the God of Scripture.

Because that God of Scripture is a God who dreadfully interferes with my self-importance. That God of Scripture threatens me. For somebody that's self-absorbed, they don't like a God like that.

But then what happens? What happens? Somebody gets saved. The Gospel comes in. The Spirit of God convicts.

What's the first thing that happens when the Spirit of God begins to convict? Well, what does He convict of? He begins to convict of sin. And you know what happens? Jesus said, it's not for those that are well. They don't need a doctor.

He said those that are sick. He never came to call the righteous. He came to call sinners.

And you know what happens? The Gospel begins to affect somebody. What's one of the first things that begins to happen? They recognize their self that they have worshipped is not such a great guy or such a great gal. They begin to recognize they're not such a good person that they thought they were.

They're pretty defective. They begin to see their own sin. One of the great evidences of the Gospel is beginning to yield fruit in a person's life.

They realize themselves as sinner. A person's eyes, they get open. They begin to not just see, but to bemoan their selfishness.

They begin to think about the things they've done in their life. It can cause tears and mourning. Blessed are those who mourn.

Blessed are those who are poor in spirit. And a supernatural wonder takes place. What happens? Well, according to His great mercy, He causes us to be born again.

That's what happens to a living hope through this resurrection of Jesus Christ. We get born again. We become new creations in Christ.

And old things are passed away. And suddenly, all things become new. Suddenly, you can start looking at a nursing home and it registers on your radar.

Wow, there are actually people over there that are lonely. That are old. That are forgotten.

Families put their family members in nursing homes and they forget them. Let alone... I mean, you think about people that are laboring off in other places or people who are in prison. You think about the North Koreans that are in these camps.

We hardly even think. Brethren, we can become so forgetful, but what happens is suddenly we become these new creations. And you know what we find? He bore our sins in His own body on that tree, and He did it for a reason.

He did it so that we might be freed from unrighteousness. We might be given to righteousness. We might be given to people that actually are people of His own possession and zealous of good works.

We're those kind of people. And we read in Scripture what we love because He first loved us. And see, something happens.

The Spirit of God begins to produce this fruit in our life, which starts with love. Suddenly we begin to notice, what is love? We begin to notice other people. We begin to notice other people's problems, other people's needs.

Our eyes are suddenly opened. We actually begin to look around at the world and suddenly, one of the big things that happens when a person is generally converted, their eyes are opened. They actually start looking around at their family, friends, co-workers, and they recognize they're all lost.

Unless you happen to come from some kind of Christian family, but a lot of us haven't. Suddenly your eyes are opened to the fact that the vast amount of the world is going to hell. They're perishing.

Suddenly you begin to view people, and you know what happens. We begin to view people not according to the flesh. Isn't that what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5? He says, we no longer view people according to the flesh.

Suddenly, you know what, we start viewing people according to their relationship with God. We start viewing people with regards to eternity. Suddenly our eyes are opened.

The guy standing in front of you in the supermarket line, it's no longer just this blurry blob in front of you that you take hardly no notice of, but you begin to recognize in a hundred years, that guy is probably going to be in hell. I mean, the reality is if you there be that find it, and it's not very likely this guy in front of me is probably a Christian, not based on statistics, it's very likely this man is going to perish in his sin. You've got to look at people and you know what, love allows us to suddenly open our eyes and begin to behold people like this.

And what happens? You know what happens? Our eyes get opened to the saved, and what do we see there? Somebody else that Christ died for. Somebody else that's in the family. As much as we're supposed to do good to all men, especially to those that are of the household of faith, we suddenly look at these people.

They're our brothers and sisters. These are people that the Father dearly, dearly loves. Loves so much that He sent His own Son to die for.

We find we have this family bond with them that's closer than even in our physical relationships. Suddenly the people in the church, we recognize we're going to dwell together with these people forever. These Christians are deeply loved by God.

I mean, that's what happens. We suddenly see, well, we're going to take care of these. We're going to take care of these people.

I mean, our goods are going to be at their disposal. That's why all of a sudden those early disciples, they began to go sell their lands. Yeah, but that land was your grandfather's land.

Well, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. I've got brothers and sisters in the church.

Have you ever seen? It's the only animated thing I've ever shed a tear over. Perpetua. Perpetua.

Have any of you seen the torch lighters? Perpetua. Some of these guards break in when they're having a meeting. And here are these slaves.

And she says, she is my sister. Brethren, that's how you feel once you get saved. It doesn't matter what color their skin is.

It doesn't matter what their background is. These are my people. That's what happens.

And then the lost. Now we all of a sudden have our eyes to see them for what they are. They're now what we used to be.

We see they're dupes of the devil. They don't know what they do. Father, forgive them.

They don't know what they do. They don't know what they do when they go down there and they rant and rave against our preachers. Brethren, God, help us to not see people as just these impersonal objects.

We see them for what they are. They're slaves of sin. They're ignorant.

They're blind. They're just like we were. And what does that produce? It produces pity.

Brethren, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the law and the prophets. If you were sitting in the Congo, or you were sitting in Haiti, or you were sitting in Afghanistan, or in Manchester city center, not even realizing that there was a gospel, you knew there was religion, but you really had no idea. Your thought was, basically all false religion.

I need to be a good guy, but I'm not a good guy. You have no idea that Christ came for bad people. That He came to take our sins upon Himself and as a gift.

You're sitting there in the dark. There are those that sat in darkness. You're in that darkness.

There you sit. You don't know. You don't know just how badly you're in trouble.

You're in your sin. You know what it said? You remember what it said. Ephesians chapter 2. You're separated from Christ.

You're alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. You're strangers to the covenants of promise. You have no hope.

You are without God, and you are in the world, and your days are few, and hell is coming, and you don't know. What would you want somebody to do unto you? Brethren, do you know John G. Payton? I believe that he's the one that had this said to him. John G. Payton was a Scotsman, 1800s.

He sailed from this United Kingdom, and he went down to the New Hebrides Islands, 1850s, and he took the gospel to cannibals on those islands. Two Englishmen by the name of Williams and Harris that went before him, they no more than arrived on the beach, and they were clubbed in Eden. He goes to these islands with the gospel.

Do you know he began to preach that gospel? He began to preach that gospel. He preached that gospel. Eventually, there was a revival there.

The second island that he ministered on, it's thought that almost the entire island was converted. Do you know what they asked him after they were converted? Does anybody know? How long have you had that gospel? 1800 years. And you're only sending somebody to us now? There's a therefore.

Jesus wants you to think, your heavenly Father, you being evil, what has your heavenly Father done? I'll tell you what He did. He saw you, and He ran, and He embraced you, and He put the best robe on you, and He put sandals on your feet, and He killed the fatted calf, and He put rings on your finger. Therefore, brethren, therefore, do you have a sense of this? All your sins have been laid on Christ, and He was punished in your place.

Do you know what He did? He made you a free man. You say, what do you mean? I mean, you are free. You're no longer under the law.

You're no longer under sin. You're no longer under the devil. You are free.

Do you realize in your worst day, when you get up and you're grumpy, and you say some bad thing to your roommate, or your spouse, or whoever it is, and you feel ugly, and you feel whatever. On your worst day, do you recognize you have an advocate with the Father, and there is no sin held against you, and they are cast as far as the east as from the west? You're a free man. Because on your worst day, you are absolutely freely forgiven.

You are absolutely freely accepted, and you have a right to access God. You will never have to pay for a single one of your sins. You can confess them.

He is faithful and just to forgive. You see, brethren, we are free to love. And if you trip up in the midst of trying to love other people, you're a free man.

You're not like Catholics under this bondage where you have to go say all your Hail Marys. You're free. Christ has paid it.

Brethren, we are free. And Paul says, just don't use your freedom for the flesh. But we're free to love.

We're free. We're free. Jesus says this, whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

And there we are. Whatever you want others to do to you, do that. And I guarantee you this, if you are sitting in your darkness and in your filth, just unknowingly running to perdition, I know what you'd want.

I know what you'd want done to you. You'd want somebody to bring you the light of the Gospel. Father, I pray, help us to be people that live out this reality.

Not just to be hearers, but to be doers. I pray, Lord, make us a people. Conform us to the image of this golden rule.

I pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. You are dismissed.

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