

Do To Others

Robert F. Turner

The Lord gave me a yardstick by which to measure every relationship in my life. It is easy to understand, and easy to apply if I have the will to do so. It involves no complicated formula; it is with me every wakeful hour. Its strength is in direct proportion to my weakness; binding me with cords of my own weaving, or freeing me as I free my own heart. It comprehends my whole duty to man.

While yet a child I learned it as: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you;” but later I found it is properly stated: “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). “All things” is very broad. This includes my driving on the highway, selling a rifle, working for an employer, living with my wife, writing to my brethren, or about them. “Whatsoever ye would” is not “whatsoever they do.” This rule does not depend on the other fellow — it is determined in my own heart. How would I like to be treated? The rule is so reasonable, so unquestionably just, that it defies objection. It asks no pound of flesh, because its regulator would give none. It prescribes fair, honest treatment, because the party of the first part desires such. Self-interest, which so often blinds me to my duty to others, becomes the very indicator of those duties. God made the rule, but I am left to apply it — with the intensity gendered by man’s most powerful inner force, self-love. “No man ever yet hateth his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it...” (Ephesians 5:29).

“Do ye even so...” Lenski comments: “what we would like to have men do to us, whether they do that to us or not, we are to keep doing (*poieite*, durative) to them.” Till seven times? Nay, but until seventy times seven. This regulates conduct, but it is far more than a law of “doing” — it is a basic principle of attitude, of under-lying motive, which demonstrates itself in what we do. “The law and the prophets,” Jesus said; making it clear that this is no new rule, but one inherent in God’s will for man in all times. Further, this clearly relates the rule to the giver of law, emphasizing the external authority of God. Those who seek to limit the “whole duty of man” to humanitarian obligations seem to miss this all-important point. 1 John 3:14 and following clearly relates our love for our fellow man with our prior love for God. Because He laid down His life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (vs. 16). “And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment” (vs. 23).

Christians are in a position to understand and apply the “Golden Rule”, as are none others. But the sad fact is that many so-called Christians make little practical application of this rule in their life, and seem a bit embarrassed if the preacher uses it as a text. Until we learn well the “second table of the law” (Matthew 22:39) we preach the “gospel” (?) in vain.