Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Golden Rule
Scripture: Luke 6
Code: BQ9811

Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. (Luke 6:31)

Versions of this, the so-called Golden Rule, existed in the rabbinic writings, Greek philosophy, and in Hinduism and Buddhism. Those formulations, however, cast the rule in a negative sense; they advocate not doing to others what you would not want them to do to you.

The Greek philosopher Isocrates wrote, “Do not do to others that which angers you when they do it to you” (Nicocles, 3.60). In his Analects, Confucius counseled, “Never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself” (XV.24). The apocryphal book of Tobit commands, “Do that to no man which thou hatest” (4:15). The famous Jewish rabbi Hillel summed up the Torah in the statement, “What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbor” (Talmud; Shabbat 31a).

There is a subtle but significant difference in the way the Lord phrased this principle. The negative versions of the Golden Rule are the epitome of human ethics. Yet they are little more than self-serving expressions of self-love, concerned primarily with obtaining good treatment for oneself in return. Jesus, however, calls for selfless love, love that focuses solely on the well-being of its object. The love He commands seeks to treat others the way it would want to be treated by them—even if they do not love that way in return. That is how God loves, and that supernatural love is impossible on the human level. Only Christians are capable of it, “because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom. 5:5).

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