

Golden moments

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

How many of us were taught some version of this “golden rule” during our childhood training? Perhaps we didn’t all learn it in the context of the law and the prophets, but it would have been an admonition as we began to deal with the intricacies of interpersonal relationships, starting maybe around the age of two or three. Its principle appeals to our common sense when we are faced with its simple logic, yet it has no appeal to our human nature. This rule is much more easily acknowledged with the mind than followed through the practice of the will. Even in the acknowledgment, we would in many cases turn it around and interpret it as not harming others because we would not want them to harm us. But this is not the emphasis. Jesus states it in the positive sense, in the context of treating others as the Heavenly Father does. This could easily lead us to conclude with the apostle Paul, “O wretched man that I am!” (Romans 7:24)

The truth is that no person can ultimately follow the golden rule without the work and aid of the Spirit of God. While we may make some successful attempts now and then, these are usually in the “easier” category; for example, to support a charity, help the destitute, make a loan to a friend, visit the sick, etc. The bigger challenges come when our internal spirit is provoked. In the context where Luke records the golden rule (Luke 6:31), Jesus goes on to say that to help our friend is trivial, but what He’s really talking about is loving our enemies. However, some cases may not even be that challenging. The test may come when our friend’s word “strikes a nerve” or a worn area in our spirit, and we react in retaliatory words, instead of considering their context and responding with edifying words. So Jesus rightly said that our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, because we desperately need the mind of the Spirit to overcome such selfish behavior. As the world about us becomes more antagonistic, let us plead for the Holy Spirit of God to fill our hearts and minds with golden motives and ways, that we may reflect Him in every moment.