

(Matt. 7:12) - *“THEREFORE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE EVEN SO TO THEM:”*— This is what many call the “golden rule.” It is also written in Luke 6:31. Some state it as, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” This is a Biblical principle for which all truth believers ought to aim. *“FOR THIS IS THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS,”* reveals that this is another way of showing the perfect standard of righteousness required by God’s law as expressed by the Lord Himself in the summation of the law - *“love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength:”* and *“love thy neighbor as thyself”* (Mark 12:29-31). Like every manifestation of God’s law, this perfect law of love exposes our sinfulness, depravity, and weakness to work righteousness for ourselves, and our need of Christ’s righteousness to justify us and give us spiritual and eternal life (Rom. 3:10-20). Christ is the only one who fulfilled the “Golden Rule” perfectly, and He is the Lord our Righteousness (Rom. 10:4). The Gospel truth of salvation by God’s grace in Christ is also taught *“the law and the prophets”* (cf. Rom. 3:21-25).

(Matt. 7:13-14) - *“ENTER YE IN AT THE STRAIT GATE: FOR WIDE IS THE GATE, AND BROAD IS THE WAY, THAT LEADETH TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY THERE BE WHICH GO IN THEREAT: BECAUSE STRAIT IS THE GATE, AND NARROW IS THE WAY”* - The “strait gate” is a metaphor for the one and only true Gospel way of salvation that God has freely provided for His people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. It allows for no other way except Christ crucified and based on His righteousness alone (John 14:6; Acts 4:10-12). It is the way of God’s free and sovereign grace by the meritorious work of Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people and will not allow for the works of man to be brought in as the cause, ground, or condition of salvation (Rom. 11:5-6; Eph. 2:8-10). There is no room for any glory for sinners in this strait gate and narrow way. There is only room for the glory of God in Christ (Gal. 6:14). *“WHICH LEADETH UNTO LIFE”* - This way leads to eternal life because it leads sinners (who have earned and deserve nothing but death) to Christ Who is life and Whose righteousness imputed demands spiritual and eternal life for all who are brought by God this way.

“FEW THERE BE THAT FIND IT” - The reason so few find this one way of salvation is because the natural (unregenerate) man prefers the *“WIDE”* and *“BROAD”* way which is a metaphor all false ways of salvation. This broad way is more popular because it gives men room to glory in their own pretended goodness, works, and will. It lets men boast that they made the difference between saved and lost and not God’s grace in Christ alone. This broad way *“LEADETH TO DESTRUCTION.”* It makes man rather than God the captain of his own salvation. This is why *“MANY THERE BE WHICH GO IN THEREAT.”* This shows how fallen, sinful man is deceived by his own heart (Jer. 17:9) and by Satan (2 Cor. 4:3-4) into believing a lie and thinking that the broad way leads to life. But it leads to eternal damnation and death.

(Matt. 7:15) - *“BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS,”* those who seek to lead sinners on the broad way that leads to destruction. The most dangerous false prophets are those who *“COME TO YOU IN SHEEP’S CLOTHING, BUT INWARDLY THEY ARE RAVENING WOLVES,”* claiming to be “Christians” and claiming to preach Christ and the way of eternal life. They work hard to appear righteous unto men (Matt. 23:28) and to appear as what the natural, unregenerate man would judge to be “Christian,” but unbelievers have no knowledge of what it means to be a true follower of Christ. They, therefore, are easily deceived (1 John 3:1). They are

called “*ravening wolves*” because they are ravenously seeking salvation and glory for themselves and not the glory of God. And just as their followers are deceived, they themselves are deceived by ignorance, self-righteousness, and religious pride. Christ said of the Pharisees that they were “*blind leaders of the blind,*” and they would all “*fall into the ditch*” together (Matt. 15:12-14). The reason false preachers preach a false gospel is that they do not have spiritual eyes or ears to see and hear the true Gospel (Matt. 13:10-17). These false preachers abuse and misuse the Word of God, and they boast of their own works, as the Lord points out later (Matt. 7:21-23). One very popular false preacher, when challenged on his doctrine, boasted, “I have baptized 57,000 believers. I am not aware of any other church that has accomplished such a feat.” This leads us to the following statements.

(Matt. 7:16) - One of the most important issues of righteous judgment is this - “How can we know the difference between God’s true preachers and false preachers?” We are commanded to test preachers by the Word of God (1 John 4:1-2). The Lord says here, “***YE SHALL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS.***” Many believe these fruits are the preacher’s own personal works in the way of human morality, sincerity, dedication, and charity. Others believe this is referring to the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). The problem with this is that such things cannot be known by outward appearance, and Satan can counterfeit these things so as to deceive people. It is certainly true that true preachers are to live lives consistent with the Word of God, but false preachers can mimic this behavior. The fruits here refer to the results of their preaching in the testimonies of those who believe what they preach. Do those who are converted under their preaching believe and testify of the true Gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in Christ Jesus, or do they believe and testify of a false gospel of salvation conditioned on sinners? The true Gospel always drives sinners to look to and rest in Christ for all salvation. False gospels always drive sinners to look elsewhere for salvation. Christ uses a metaphor - ***DO MEN GATHER GRAPES OF THORNS, OR FIGS OF THISTLES?***” The answer is, obviously, ‘No!’”

(Matt. 7:17-18) - The point is this - God the Holy Spirit only gives spiritual life and the fruit of faith and repentance under the preaching of the “***GOOD TREE,***” which is Christ, the only tree of life, as He is presented in the true Gospel of God’s grace based on His righteousness alone. “***GOOD FRUIT,***” then, is sinners saved by His grace, justified in Him, given life, faith, and repentance by Him as evidenced by their testimony of truth from God’s Word. Such good fruit CANNOT be brought forth by a “***CORRUPT TREE,***” which is a false Christ presented by a false preacher preaching a false gospel. It is the true Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit of truth that God brings His people, the “good fruit,” into His kingdom (John 6:44-45; Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Thess. 2:13-14). The preaching of Christ, crucified, and risen from the dead (the power of His blood and righteousness imputed) “***CANNOT BRING FORTH EVIL FRUIT.***” The preaching of a false christ and salvation conditioned on sinners cannot “***BRING FORTH GOOD FRUIT.***”

(Matt. 7:19-20) - All who persists and continue unto death to walk on the broad road leading to destruction, who are instrumental in bringing forth evil fruit will be cut down and destroyed by the fire of God’s wrath. All who persists and continue to be instruments of God Who brings forth good fruit and who die in the faith shall be saved (John 3:36). The next verses will show us the vast difference between the evil fruit of false christs and false gospels and the good fruit of the true Christ and the true Gospel.