

# Expository Thoughts On Matthew - Matthew

## 7:12-20

by J.C. Ryle

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### Transcript

In this part of the Sermon on the Mount our Lord begins to draw His discourse to a conclusion. The lessons He here enforces on our notice, are broad, general, and full of the deepest wisdom.

He lays down a general principle for our guidance in all doubtful questions between man and man. We are "to do to others as we would have others do to us." We are not to deal with others as others deal with us: this is mere selfishness and heathenism. We are to deal with others as we would like others to deal with us: this is real Christianity.

This is a golden rule indeed! It does not merely forbid all petty malice and revenge, all cheating and overreaching: it does much more. It settles a hundred difficult points, which in a world like this are continually arising between man and man; it prevents the necessity of laying down endless little rules for our conduct in specific cases; it sweeps the whole debatable ground with one mighty principle; it shows us a balance and measure, by which every one may see at once what is his duty. Is there a thing we would not like our neighbour to do to us? Then let us always remember that this is the thing we ought not to do to him. Is there a thing we would like him to do to us? Then this is the very thing we ought to do to him. How many intricate questions would be decided at once if this rule were honestly used!

In the second place, our Lord gives us a general caution against the way of the many in religion. It is not enough to think as others think, and do as others do. It must not satisfy us to follow the fashion, and swim with the stream of those among whom we live. He tells us that the way that leads to everlasting life is "narrow," and "few" travel in it; He tells us that the way that leads to everlasting destruction is "broad," and full of travellers: "Many there be that go in thereat."

These are fearful truths! They ought to raise great searchings of heart in the minds of all who hear them. "Which way am I going? By what road am I traveling?" In one or other of the two ways here described, every one of us may be found. May God give us an honest, self-inquiring spirit, and show us what we are!

We may well tremble and be afraid, if our religion is that of the multitude. If we can say no more than this that "we go where others go, and worship where others worship, and hope we shall do as well as others at last," we are literally pronouncing our own condemnation. What is this but being in the "broad way"? What is this but being in the road whose end is "destruction"? Our religion at present is not saving religion.

We have no reason to be discouraged and cast down if the religion we profess is not popular and few agree with us. We must remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in this passage: "The gate is strait." Repentance, and faith in Christ, and holiness of life, have never been fashionable. The true flock of Christ has always been small. It must not move us to find that we are reckoned singular, and peculiar, and bigoted, and narrow minded. This is "the narrow way." Surely it is better to enter into life eternal with a few, than to go to "destruction" with a great company.

In the last place, the Lord Jesus gives us a general warning against false teachers in the church. We are to "beware of false prophets." The connection between this passage and the preceding one is striking. Would we keep clear of this "broad way"? We must beware of false prophets. They will arise: they began in the days of the apostles; even then the seeds of error were sown. They have appeared continually ever since. We must be prepared for them, and be on our guard.

This is a warning which is much needed. There are thousands who seem ready to believe anything in religion, if they hear it from an ordained minister. They forget that clergymen may err as much as laymen: they are not infallible. Their teaching must be weighed in the balance of Holy Scripture: they are to be followed and believed, so long as their doctrine agrees with the Bible, but not a minute longer. We are to try them "by their fruits." Sound doctrine and holy living are the marks of true prophets. Let us remember this. Our minister\

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