

Seeking God'S Will (Part Five) : Goodness

Wisdom in What Is Good

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As I was learning the craft of writing when I was much younger, before the gray hairs set in, one of the tricks I learned in writing and having people look at it and tell me what they thought was that I should not use the same word more than once or twice in close proximity, especially if it is not a common word. People will notice if you use a word several times in very close proximity, and they think about the writer, “Well, doesn't he know another word that is like this? Have we reached the end of his abilities?”

For instance, you do not want to describe the chocolate brown couch the same way you would describe a chocolate lab (dog). In the same breath, it is not done. A good writer will find another word for a shade of brown that will make this other thing that you are describing unique. So, you would say that the leather was of a java color, or maybe it was earthy brown, or it reminded you of loam, or something like freshly turned earth. That is the way that it works. You try to be creative in how you describe things so that you do not use the same word over and over again, because it gets rather redundant.

However, when we speak, we do not tend to edit ourselves quite as well. We use the same word over and over again.

Now, one thing that bugs me to distraction (and you kids will hate me for this) is that I cannot stand it when kids use the word “like” 15 times in a sentence.

“You know, it was like, and I went here, like, and like it was 3 o'clock, and like you know it was my friends were there too, and like. . .”—like, like, like, like! My head is going to explode, like, you know, uh. . . a firecracker or something. I am just picky that way, I guess.

But, it has become a non-word insert. It has become the equivalent of “you know.” “I went to the store, you know, and I got a coke there, you know, and, you know, it was good. I think I'll go back there and get another one, you know.” It is just a filler. It does not mean a thing.

He is not asking you whether you know it or not. He is just filling in, you know (I just used it myself!)

In earlier days we use to use words like “um” or “uh,” and we still do that. We use them

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a lot. But, they are also filler words; filler sounds—they are not even real words. They are just sounds. They do not mean anything. These words such as “like” or “um,” “you know,” “uh,” mean nothing—absolutely nothing. They just fill the void in the flow as you go along saying what you are trying to say.

A person of refined speech, however, does not use fillers (much). He takes them out of his vocabulary, because, well, you know, um, like, uh, it sounds rather uneducated! Like. . .you. . .really. . .don't. . .know. . .what. . .you're. . .trying. . .to say! It. . .just. . .doesn't. . .sound. . .smart.

We have other words—extremely overused words—in our everyday speech that are descending toward meaninglessness. For instance (you may not have realized this), the word “nice” is pretty much meaninglessness. Even the word, “very”—it was very good; that is good; very good; it was very nice.

Also, the word “interesting” is descending toward meaningless because you ask, “Well, how did you like the play?” And the reply is something like, “It was interesting,” or “It was nice.” I mean, it really does not mean anything. What do you mean, “It was interesting”? Did one of the actors forget one of his lines? Or were you moved by the play at all? Did you learn anything from it? Did the playwright in the play happen to teach some moral thing? Was there a moral to the story? Is there something in there that you would not have done yourself?

That is kind of the reaction, you know, an educated person would want to be asked, “How was the play,” rather than just it was “interesting.” Okay, so it held your interest. That really does not tell me very much. One of these words still have meaning, and a discriminating person will use them carefully when they are called for, and only when they are called for. They will not just machine-gun them out because he has not thought very much further than, “nice,” or “interesting.”

Like I said before, we even try to spice these non-words, or these meaningless words, or more meaningless words up with the word, “very.” So, “It is very interesting, like there are levels of interesting—interesting, and very interesting, and not interesting.” And, that is about it. That is all of the description you will get.

And, I think that we use these words so often, because we are not thinking deeply enough to come up with a better word. We just fall back on these “words” as a crutch. And, you know, God wants us to be thoughtful people. He wants us to speak fitting words. And using something that is rather meaningless just does not cut it anymore.

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Think about a sunset: Would you call something that God created for our enjoyment simply “nice” or “interesting”? There are some sunsets that are glorious! Some that are radiant! Some that are picturesque! Some that are ruddy, while some others are more purple or pinkish, rather than red or orange. There are more words in the English language than “nice” or “interesting.”

I am getting a few things off my chest, here, if you have not noticed. But, I have a reason for doing it, because another word that is sliding toward meaninglessness is the word “good.” Everything is good. It would be interesting if we would for one day—I really mean it this time—to tally, and maybe even list all the times we use the word “good” in a day, because we use it all the time. If we do any amount of talking, or writing, we must surely use the word “good” dozens of times every day.

And this is the most frequent one, if someone asks us, “How are you doing?” We often say, “Good! I'm doing good!” Now, this is grammatically suspect, because traditional grammarians will tell us that we should say, “well,” and not “good” in such replies. It does not really convey a whole lot of meaning. It does not tell the other person really much of anything.

Most of us just say, automatically, “How are you doing?” “Good!”

And, that is it. We just kinda pass it off, like, “How do you do?” You know, “fine.” “Good.”

And, we do not really put a whole lot of thought into the answer. In fact, we are even willing to lie.

“How are you doing?” “Good!” And this is when we are not feeling good at all! We are not doing well at all; the whole day has been terrible, but they respond automatically, “Good.” You are doing good, when really you are doing horribly. Why do you not fess up to it? But, we do not. We just automatically say, “Good.”

Then we think, “Well, it would've taken a while if I really told him what I feel like. For starters, I've a mild headache; my joints feel a little stiff; I pulled a muscle in my leg this morning getting out of bed; a spider bit me last night, and it itches; it's been bothering me all day; my hair didn't go very well today; as you can tell, I'm having a bad hair day; the traffic was maddening; you were stopped on the freeway; it was like a parking lot; it seemed like hours before we got to work; I got here to work, finally, and the coffee pot was burnt; somebody had eaten all the doughnuts; the boss piled ten times more files on my desk, and wants them done today (Get out of my face! I need to do this!); I'm worried about making our next mortgage payment; the car needs oil, and brakes, and

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maybe the shocks are going; the kids need braces; I think the air conditioner is going bad at the house; we'll need to replace that soon; my wife told me the in-laws are coming to town; and my goldfish died.”

I understand the short reply, because you just do not want to burden someone with all the things that actually are going on. But, “good” is not the right and true answer. And, we do it anyway, all the while the “grammar police” should pull you over and cite you for using it wrongly. But, that is just me. I am an editor.

“Good” has become fairly meaningless in other ways as well. If you were to consult a dictionary, you would probably find that it has a few dozen meanings. But, that depends on which dictionary you go to. If you go to a junior dictionary, you are only going to get a few, but if you go to something like *Oxford's Dictionary* you will get a whole list of definitions of “good.” Most of them break it down into a half dozen or so major meanings. I looked on *miriamwebster.com* last night just to see how many they had on there. And that is what they did—they broke it down into seven or eight major meanings for the word “good.” But then, they proceeded to break it down further into about 30 meanings for the word “good;” all the little nuances of it. And so, after 30 definitions you are beginning to feel like this word can mean anything, because it is so broadly used.

Then, you click on the thesaurus button on the dictionary's website, and it literally gives you *hundreds and hundreds* of words that could be used in place of “good.”

So, it can be defined so broadly that it has very little meaning.

Now, at its base, “good” implies something positive—well done, helpful, or pleasing. If you were going to give it the most general meaning of all, you would say it is, “Positivity—something that is good; positive.” All of the other definitions tend to just pile on these things and ideas of positivity. It is like there is a scale, and on this side there it is positive, while on the other side it is negative. And when it is good, it is on this positive side, and not on the negative side. So, that is the general understanding.

But, even this is being eroded in our language, and the way we use our language. If you would go to Sears, or your local hardware store, or actually any kind of store, maybe even a grocery store, they sell products of varying qualities.

Let us use a vacuum cleaner for an example. They will have a “good” vacuum cleaner, as well as a “better” vacuum cleaner. And then they will have their “best” vacuum cleaner. And, the prices rise proportionally. But, you know that if you buy the good vacuum cleaner, you are actually getting the one of lowest quality! So, in that sense,

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“good” means “bad.”

I do not know if you have bought any of these good things, thinking you are saving money, but you have actually bought something that is just barely above the basic baseline of working. It is likely to be a piece of junk. And so you usually say, “Well, I don't want to spend the big money for the best, so I'll get the better one.” So it is a bit better than the good one, but the good one is bad! It is junk. So, how good is the better one if the good one is bad?

Do you see how this understanding of what is “good” has been eroded into something that is not good. So now, good actually means the opposite of good. It means bad. It means that it will not last, it will not do the job, it is not beneficial, and it is not positive in the end. Good is bad.

So, what is “good?”

My father-in-law describes what has happened, here, concerning the word “good,” and many other things because he is a language nut, too, like I am. He says this is language in the hands of the masses. Or, as I like to mentally correct him, language in the mouths of the masses, or the minds of the masses.

Everything is devolving as we go through time.

Anyway, as you have probably figured out, this is the fifth installment in my series of sermons on, “Seeking God’s Will.” These things are based on Ephesians 5:17, which says, “Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

My aim in all of these sermons is to present one of God’s character traits in each sermon, so that by seeing it in Him, and in the Scriptures, we can better determine what His will is just about any situation, since He does all things according to His will. So, if we see Him in action, we know He acted according to His will. We can then apply these to us in our own situations, and learn how to act and react like He does in our dealings with people, especially with one another. This is my goal, here.

Learn what God is, learn His qualities, take them into our minds, and make them come out in our relationships with one another. So, as you probably figured out, today’s sermon is on God’s goodness.

Now, the Bible does not contain what I would call a definition scripture for good or goodness. I love definition scriptures because they are nice and succinct. They tell us

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the Bible's basic understanding of those subjects. There are several around. You might want to jot these down if you do not already have them committed to memory.

The definition of faith is found in Hebrews 11:1. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." That is a good one. That is a very good definition of faith. It is not the full definition of faith, but it gets us going, and it puts in a lot of things we need to look for in our understanding of faith.

And then, there is I John 5:3. What is love? The love of God is keeping His commandments.

I John 3:4 is, "Sin is the transgression of the law," or "lawlessness" as the newer versions typically have it.

We have in Romans 1:16 the definition of the gospel. "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation." Again, that is not the full understanding of the gospel, but it is a very good place to start.

You also have the work of God found in John 6:29. The work of God is to believe Him.

Of course, maybe the most famous definition scripture in the churches of God is found in John 17:3: It is to know God and His Son Jesus Christ.

There you have a handful of definition scriptures. But, there is no definition scripture of "goodness" in the Bible. Even these definition scriptures that I gave you are not the last word on these topics, because the Bible elucidates on these things, "Here a little, there a little." We have to dig in a little further. But, they make a good foundation for our study.

So, once there is not a definition scripture to start with, it is often good to look at the words that are translated into our English word "good" or "goodness." The Hebrew and Greek words for them can be helpful. I will spend a quite a bit of time in this sermon discussing them. But, they are not perhaps helpful enough without a great deal of explanation.

The Hebrew word for good is "tob," which means, "pleasing, valuable, suitable, or morally righteous." And, these are the basic meanings of our English word "good," too. So, we have not progressed very far, yet. I should also add that it, too, like our word, has both physical and spiritual connotations, and it is used very broadly in the Old Testament many, many times. We are left with not much to go on there.

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The three Greek words, though, that are used for good, or goodness are, “agathos,” “chrestos,” and “calos.” These are much more helpful.

Agathos is physically or morally beneficial in effect. This is an important connotation, a little nuance that we need. We could also say that it is perfect for its purpose.

Chrestos implies kind, pleasant, or benign. That is why it is often translated as “kind.” There is another related term, chrestotes, meaning kindness.

Calos literally means, beautiful. This gives us a pretty good base for understanding the word. Calos is used in the sense of excellence or having intrinsic value. And that is the important thing to understand here between agathos and calos. Agathos is beneficial in effect, whereas calos means excellent intrinsically. It has intrinsic value. There is something good in it by itself.

We are not going to be talking [much] about chrestos today. We will for the most part ignore it. However, there will be a small section at the end where it comes in. Mostly we are interested in agathos and calos, and the difference between them.

Please turn to Matthew 7. We will begin with agathos in the New Testament and show how it is used. We will go to calos a bit later. Finally we will touch on another word that is related to agathos, so that we can get the idea of how the Bible wants us to look at these terms.

This passage comes from the Sermon on the Mount where He is talking about knowing false prophets by their fruits.

Matthew 7:17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

Good in both of these instances—the good tree and the good fruit—is the word agathos. What Jesus is trying to get across to us here is that the tree is good, because it fulfills its purpose. It is doing what it was designed to do. A good tree does what God created it to do. He designed a tree to grow and flourish, but mostly He designed it to produce good fruit, fruit that is nourishing, for the benefit of a person who might partake of it or an animal even. Or, it is also good for itself in that it drops its fruit on the ground, and good seeds will then spring up and produce another tree. So, it is performing the things that it was designed to do. And, it is doing it well, as God intended.

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So, it is good because it produces a benefit which is alongside its purpose; it is doing what it was designed to do. A thing is good—such as a tree or fruit—when it does what it was designed to do. This is the main point to remember.

Also in Matthew 25, I am going to read a few verses here. (We are still concerned with agathos, here.) This is part of the Parable of the Talents.

Matthew 25:19-21 "After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'"

Again, good, as in “good and faithful servant,” is agathos. And here, a man—not a tree, or piece of fruit—is being called good. So a man could be good in the sense of agathos as well. Here, he is a good and faithful servant. He is good because he fulfilled the tasks that his master had given him to do. His master had said, “I want you to take these talents, and I want you to use them.” And, he would have an accounting when he returned. This particular servant took him seriously; he went about his business; he did it properly the way that he had been instructed to do it; and when the master came back and asked him the accounting of it, he showed him that he had actually done what had been required of him. He had been required to produce more from what he had, and he had done so. He had doubled it. And now, his five talents had been increased to ten.

In the same way that the tree was good in that it did what it was designed to do, here a man is called good because he did what had been asked of him. His actions were beneficial to growth, and so he was a good man in the sense of being obedient to his master’s commands and instructions.

His works, we could say, were in compliance with what was expected of him. They were pleasing to his master, and that made him good in his master’s sight. So, we have agathos implying that it is beneficial in effect; what is produced is good; it is perfect for the instruction the person was to do.

Now we understand here that Jesus wants us to get a moral and spiritual lesson out of this. It is not just the fact that he had been given money or talents, and he was supposed to work with it until the master returned. He wants us to understand the idea that He has given us many things—many graces, many gifts—not necessarily money.

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But that He has given to us His Spirit; He has given us opportunities; He has given us all these things, and He has told us to work with these things until He comes. And so, we are supposed to be good and pleasing in His sight—good and faithful servants of His—by fulfilling the required tasks that He had set us to do.

And so, when He returns, hopefully He will say to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant! Because you have taken what I have given you and increased it”—meaning you have grown and overcome; you have produced the fruit that He wants to see in you.

There is, obviously, an overlap between the physical goodness and the moral goodness (Or you could say that the physical and moral implications or connotations of agathos). It is not just being physically good, but spiritually good as well. They both suggest successfully fulfilling a beneficial purpose.

He gives us something good to do, and it is our job to be good Christians and do it.

However, we are not done with agathos yet, because there is one other person in the universe who is also called good—not just things, not just men, but God Himself is also called good. Please turn back to Matthew 19, about the rich young ruler.

Matthew 19:16 Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

And Jesus' response is what we want, here.

Matthew 19:17 So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

This is how he and we can be good. This is the task that had been given, and he could, then, himself, be a good person, a good man, in God's sight by keeping the commandments.

We are focusing on the fact that Jesus said that God is good. And in truth, *only* God is good. Men can be good in certain narrow parameters, but God is good all the time. So, God has no parameters, as it were, on His goodness. He is effulgently good. He is abundantly good. There is nothing evil in Him. It is all good. He is the only One that is truly, fully, good. Everybody else, even though we may be good here and there, we

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have our problems. But, God has no problems like this. He is good through and through.

So, everything He does is perfectly beneficial in every way. That is what He is trying to tell us here. All of God's instructions, all of God's actions, everything that God does is perfectly beneficial. There is never any hint or sniff of evil in anything that He does. God is totally and irrevocably good. It is hard for us to understand. But, this is the way that it is.

The rich young ruler should have taken a lesson from that when Jesus told him to keep the commandments. The young man replies, "I have done all these things," and Jesus replies to that, "Okay, go ahead and sell what you have, and give to the poor." Well, he should have understood that Jesus was giving him instruction, perfect and beneficial instruction, so that he could trust that if he actually did that, then he would indeed enter into life. But he did not take the clue, as it were. He did not take the hint that what Jesus was telling him was the absolute truth and totally good in its application to him.

All of God's words, all of God's actions, always produce their desired positive effects. That is "agathos" as it is applied to God. So, whenever God does something, whenever He says something, it always produces the good that He intends. From start to finish, from His motives all the way to the finished products, God is perfectly beneficial.

And this is important. Even if a command or an act of God does not seem from our perspective to be desirous or helpful, if it comes from God, then it will ultimately produce a positive end. And that is what we have here in the story of the rich young ruler. The rich young ruler did not see Christ's command to go and sell what you have as positive, desirous, or helpful. But, in the end it would have been, had he taken up Jesus' command as a personal quest to do this, to go and sell what he had; it would have produced the good and beneficial results not only to the ones he helped, but also to himself spiritually. He would have been able to get rid of all that was holding him back, and he could have surged forward in his relationship with God. But, he did not.

He did not see that God's actions in this particular point, meaning Jesus' command to go and sell what you have, was good. He did not see it that way at all. He saw it as a negative. He saw it as evil, which is why he refused to do it. "That's a bad thing! Why should I sell what I have? Why should I give away all of my substance? Won't that leave me impoverished? I'll have to beg on the street!" But Jesus saw in His perfect wisdom that this was exactly what that man needed at that time.

And though it seemed evil to him at first, it would have ultimately been good.

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Even if a command or an act of God does not seem—"seem" is the important word here—from our perspective to be desirous or helpful, if it comes from Him, it will ultimately produce a positive end.

Think of this in terms of your own life, and the things that you go through. Think of the things we are taught from the Bible. He tells us time and again to take up our cross—that is not a good thing from our point of view—it hurts to take up your cross and live with your daily dying, because of the things that you are going through. Think about sufferings. Think about sacrificing. Think about all those things—the trials and losses—we have gone through that have been directed by God. These are all "evil" on the surface. Because they hurt, they cause suffering; they make us doubt sometimes and challenge our faith. But, God says that in the end that is the kind of thing that produces sterling, godly character. And, ultimately perfection!

Read Hebrews 5, because He did not give His Son anything different than He tells us to go through. He did good (by His Son) by doing things that many people would consider to be evil. He made Him into a man! He made Him become a servant! He made Him into a lowly person! He was glorified, but He made Him go through the paces by making Him first a sperm cell; and then an embryo, fetus, and then a baby who could not take care of Himself. He had to go through childhood and adolescence, and teenage years, including zits, and all those things that just seem so degrading to us. But there was a purpose for it.

Hebrews 5:7-9 [Jesus] who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.

So, God put His own Son through these paces—He gave Him trials; allowed Satan to tempt Him; who knows what other temptations He had throughout His life. We know from Matthew 4 and Luke 4 that His trials went from hunger through to trials of power, money, or prestige; as well as the daily trials and temptations we have like the pretty girl walking down the street (who knows what it might have been). But God said it is good for Him to go through these tests and trials, and privations. It is good for Him to be spat upon, kicked, beaten, hit with the whip, nailed up on a stake, and die—all of these things we do not consider to be "good." But, their fitting and perfect end makes them good.

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They were good. It was good that He went through those things.

We usually do not look at good in this manner because we normally look at things that happen to us as they happen to us. But, God says that agathos in His Word implies not just that they are good now—and they may not be; they may not seem that way—but that they have a beneficial purpose in the end. It is a long range way of looking at good. It is beneficial in effect. And, you do not often see the effects until quite a while later.

Now, let us take a look at “calos.” The other word that we are going to specifically look at this afternoon.

I am going to do this the same way I did with the word “agathos.” I am going to first go to a thing that is good, and then we will turn to God and His goodness.

I Timothy 4:4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving.

This is the one that Protestants and Catholics and other so-called Christians get tripped up on, because they do not understand what Paul was getting at, here. And if they would study the word “calos,” that is used here—“every creature of God is ‘calos’”—then they would understand that Paul was not meaning “clean.” Paul is talking about calos, which means, if you will remember, “intrinsically good.” This means that there is something excellent, something beautiful, something of value that is innate within that thing. It is in it because of itself for some reason, whatever that may be.

Here, we have that creatures, meant for food, are good. In this case, Paul is referring back to Genesis 1. Remember what happened in Genesis 1? In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And then we go down, and we have God created this thing, and that thing, and this other thing. We go through the entire chapter and after every day, we see that God saw that is was good; and the evening and the morning was (whichever) day. So, as God created everything, as He saw and He put His tools down for the day and looked upon what He had done, He said, “Hey! This is good! What I have done here is good.”

When you get to the end of this chapter, He not only says that it is good, but He looks at all the things that He had made, and said, “It was very good.” And so, when God makes a thing, He makes it intrinsically valuable. There is something about this thing that He has created that is worth something—there is a quality there that He specifically put into that particular thing.

So, in the creatures He made for food, one of the intrinsic good qualities that He put in there, is that it would be good for us to eat—for the human body. The body could take nourishment from it; get various nutrients from it, and to be able to use it without getting sick, among other things. Again, one of the good qualities that He put into clean animals was their ability to nourish us, and so this is a good thing.

This is what Paul was talking about here. He is saying that each creature that God made has good in themselves under His design in His creation. So, God made everything to the highest quality; each thing He has made has value. If He made a thing to be eaten, it is a high quality food for us—it is good for man.

However, if God did not make a thing to be eaten, and we eat it anyway, that is not good, because God did not put into that thing the intrinsic value of being food for mankind. That is evil, actually, because it is going against His design. We are actually harming ourselves, because He did not design that thing for food for us. It could very well be, if we talk about the things that swim in the sea that are unclean, that those things are fine for the things that He made them to be eaten by. But, not for us. He only made certain things for us to eat. And when He put it within that thing, it was good for us and His purpose. But if we eat something that is called unclean in the Bible, something that He did not make to be eaten by us, then we have done something against God's design, and we will pay the price eventually.

When it comes down to it, Paul is saying that we should not refuse to eat a food that God designed for eating. Clean foods—whatever its source happens to be. He is talking, here, about meat offered to idols. He says that even though that meat was offered to an idol, it is still clean meat that God made for eating; there is really no taint in that meat. It is just something that in someone's mind has put on that meat because of its source, and so it is okay if someone feeds you meat offered to an idol; do not refuse it. Accept it, especially, he says here, if we receive it with thanksgiving, because God created it to be eaten.

And so, if it is sanctified by the Word of God, as it says in the next verse, meaning that God has set it apart as clean, and if we ask God's blessing on it, it should be just fine. But, our word is good, "calos," that we are talking about, and what we need to understand from this particular usage of the word, is that this thing—the creature we are talking about—is good, because God made it to be eaten. It was part of His design. It had intrinsic good, intrinsic value as food. This is how a thing can be calos—good—it has good in itself, because of whatever reason, because God put it there.

In Titus 2, we will see another use of the word calos. This one is found in the phrase,

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“good works.” And, *calos* is usually the word that is used in this phrase. If the works are good works, it means that there is something intrinsically good in these works. There is something about these works that are good in whatever situation. So we have here:

Titus 2:6-7 Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility.

Here, we have a command by Paul that these young men, like Timothy and Titus, should be an example—model, pattern—of doing good things. These things that he tells them to do are intrinsically, innately good; they are things that God would want us to do.

I do not want to go on as to what is meant, but it means that these things are ethically and morally good, right, noble, and honorable things to do—things that everyone would see is a good thing. We could go to the normal ones like feeding the hungry and helping the poor, in whatever. Those are ethically good things—helpful, beneficial things. They are things that everybody understands are intrinsically good and helpful.

God’s works, of course, are always good, as we mentioned before, because everything that He does is loving and kind, and then it is ultimately beautiful in what it produces in the end. So, the things that He does are good—His good works are especially good.

Remember how we talked about *agathos* means something can be good even when it does not seem good at first, but has beneficial effects? Well, *calos* can be used in the same way. But, in itself, by itself, it is not often used this way. It often has to be juxtaposed against something opposite it. We will see this in the next passage in Romans 11. Here, he has just been talking about the fact that Israel has been cut off from God, while God has called the Gentiles in, and has grafted them into the tree.

Romans 11:22-23 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell [Israel], severity; but toward you [Gentiles], goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief [that they repent], will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

Goodness, here, in every place that we just read it, is *calos* in its noun form. This shows that once again we are talking about a situation in which we see something at its beginning. We see things in the present, and we are not looking at the end, but we

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should be. Here in Romans 11, in the end, both His goodness, and His severity have beneficial ends. They are both good. His goodness gives advantages to one party—the Gentiles—at the present time. And, His severity imposes punishments upon Israel—He cuts them off.

But, as we saw in verse 23, His intention with His severity is to bring them around to repentance so that they could have salvation. And if we would have read down to verse 26, we would have found out that all Israel will be saved. God has every confidence that His goodness will bring good things to the Gentiles, and His severity will bring good things for Israel, ultimately.

Calos has this idea, too, of something that is maybe beneficial now, and in the future, but here we have it opposed to something that is not too good right now, in the present, but it will be good in the future as things work out according to God's plan.

So, the severity is also good, and the goodness is good. But, it is just in the particular moment we are talking about. At the beginning, right now in the present, goodness toward the Gentiles is absolutely good and will end good. But right now, the severity toward Israel does not look good, but it will be good in the end.

Here we have these ideas once again juxtaposed, not just agathos, but calos also.

And so, we have the confirmation of what Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 3:11 that He, God, has made everything beautiful in its time. And remember, that calos literally means, "beautiful." So, something toward the Gentiles is beautiful now, but the severity toward Israel will be beautiful in its time in the end.

Please turn back to Luke 8, and we will see that calos is also used about men. This is the conclusion of the explanation of the Parable of the Sower. I came to this one specifically because I want to show calos and agathos in the same scripture. Maybe in this example we can see the difference between the two.

Luke 8:15 "But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

The two words we want, here, are noble and good. Maybe in your Bible it says honest and good. I believe the King James Version uses honest. I also think the English Standard Version uses honest as well. But, these two words are used together, and

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here are rendered noble and good.

Calos is noble. It could also be honest like we have seen; it could be virtuous; it could be upright; and it could be true. I have seen each one of these words in various translations. So, noble, honest, virtuous, upright, and true. What this implies is that the person has a fundamentally right and proper attitude toward God. This means that within himself he had a good attitude or a good perspective on God. He was good in terms of being upright and noble inside. His character was good.

The word good, here, is agathos; and this implies generous, or beneficial, or helpful and positive toward others.

So, what we are seeing in Jesus' explanation of the Parable of the Sower, is that the one who fell on the fertile ground not only has a good inside—a good heart, his heart is changing because of the work of God's Spirit, and the work of God's Word in his life—but he is then taking what he has learned, and going outward with his goodness, and doing good things for others. So, he is not only learning what is good, he is doing what is good. He is not only being good, but he is acting and conducting himself in a good and right way.

So, you have the internal and the external, here, by these two words. Calos is the internal word, while agathos is the external—as it is used here. And, it is a good way to keep them separate. Calos talks about innate goodness—what is inside—while agathos is more of the external goodness in the things that you do and say. This might be too simplistic, but sometimes simplistic is good as a baseline. Calos is internal, while agathos is external—how we do things for others.

This is where we are going to get to that other word, which is related to agathos. This word is agathosune. This is translated as goodness in most cases, and it actually signifies what we think of as goodness—the moral quality of goodness, the character trait of goodness. So, it incorporates all of these ideas that we have been taking from both calos and agathos, and even chrestos.

But, not so much chrestos, because that has an interesting difference with agathosune. Remember that we mentioned chrestos earlier? Maybe it was even chrestotes? This is associated with kindness, or kind. It is also associated with gentleness. Sometimes it is translated both ways.

Chrestotes means goodness with kindness and gentleness. This is a very important distinction. Chrestotes implies kindness along with goodness, or gentleness along with

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goodness.

Now, agathosune is related. It is a synonym with a major difference. That difference is that it simply means moral goodness, without the connotations of kindness and gentleness. So, it can mean doing good without being kind. That is the difference.

Chrestotes means goodness with kindness and gentleness. Agathosune means goodness. This makes a very big difference.

Agathosune can include kindness, but it is not limited to kind acts. In fact, there are times when God has acted sternly and harshly, but He still did good. He never does evil. All of His acts are good, even when they seem very harsh. For instance, God is employing agathosune goodness when He shakes us out of complacency and punishes us for sin. We do not like it because it hurts. In the Old Testament the earth would rumble, things would fall down, and people would die. That is how He expressed His wrath for sin, and that will happen in the future too, because His wrath is coming. And that will be agathosune wrath. It is done in goodness. But, it is not kind or gentle. When God shakes us to our very foundations, gives us some great trial, makes us experience some great loss, and makes us sacrifice more than we think we could give, it is hurtful and not kind; but it is good.

It is the same as He did for His Son as mentioned in Hebrews 5. That is how God's goodness comes out sometimes. He is always good. He does not always have to be kind.

So, agathosune is action taken with pure motives for another's good, but it does not matter how kindly it appears to be done. It can be done kindly, but it does not have to be. His wrath, when it comes, is good despite the destruction that it causes, because God is good. He is trying to get rid of evil and cause repentance. So, it is a good thing, but it is not necessarily kind and gentle.

Let us see Jesus doing these things in one context. In Luke 7 is Christ's goodness in action. This is the sinful woman who comes and washes Christ's feet. See if you can pick out the chrestotes, and the agathosune.

Luke 7:36-50 Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears,

and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it. There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Did you pick out the word *chrestotes*? This one is actually easier to see, here. The *chrestotes* goodness that Jesus did was toward the woman. It was done in kindness. He forgave her sins, He commended her faith. He offered her salvation and wished her peace. He said specifically that, "Your faith has saved you." This woman was well on her way to conversion. And He had done all this in kindness to her.

But to Simon, He used the *agathosune* goodness. He candidly criticized him for not being a good host, for having no love for Him—remember, he said he who is forgiven little, loves little—that he had ulterior motives, that perhaps he had Jesus there just to impress his friends. Who knows? He had not shown Him any love or any kindness at all, and He strongly implied that Simon's sins are not forgiven and will not be forgiven until his attitude toward Christ changes.

In bringing these lapses to Simon's attention Jesus was doing him good, although I am sure that Simon did not see it that way. It probably hurt to be criticized like that in front of all his buddies and Pharisees. So, here in the same situation, Christ is shown using *chrestotes* and *agathosune* goodnesses.

In Matthew 21:12-14 you will find another occasion where we would see both of these in action. This was when Christ drove the money-changers out of the Temple. He was doing it for good, but He did not do it with a warm smile and an “if you please.” “Would you please head toward the exits.” He did not say that. He drove them out with a whip of cords. He did it very sternly and harshly. Yet, the very next verse says that the lame and the sick came to Him, and He healed them. So, He did good for them in a chrestotes manner—kindly and gently—but with those money-changers, He did them good but very harshly.

Please jot down Psalm 31:19. This tells us that God’s goodness is so unfathomable, so abundant. He is so willing to give it to us, being good toward us, if we would just fear Him and trust in Him. His goodness is there for us to take advantage of, and He wants to do it. But, we have to fear Him—to respect Him, lay ourselves down before Him, saying, “Your will be done, Lord.” Then trust Him that it will come to pass. And He will do it.

Also, Proverbs 3:27 is Solomon’s admonition not to withhold good to those who deserve it. If you find it within your might and authority to do good with what you have, do not withhold it to those who deserve it, because this is how God lives. He makes His sun to shine upon the good and the bad—the just and the unjust. He does good to all. If you can do good for somebody, do it because that is how God is.

We have to imitate His goodness. He wants us to learn to be beneficial and helpful to everyone who comes across our path, whether that would benefit them now or later. And we do this in giving kind and fitting words and loving service, expecting nothing in return and having no ulterior motives. We just want good for them and to give them what they need as we are able.

It is a shame I do not have more time for this, but on the other hand I think it is a good thing, because perhaps it will make you think which is what should carry us into the next week, and the next service, and the next time we come before God.

This passage is Paul’s concluding words to the Roman church. He praises them, but he also warns them in this one particular verse.

Romans 16:19 For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple [meaning unmixed, not becoming involved] concerning evil.

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What I want to focus on is the fact that he said that he wants them to be wise in what is good.

You would think that he would not have to tell them this. But, he does. And I think that there is a very good reason for it. We saw in the beginning of the verse that he commends their obedience, meaning that what Christ had said, what the Old Testament had said, what Paul had said, they were trying to do. They were doing so well that word of this had spread about throughout the whole Mediterranean area, and the church at Rome was known by those people as a really faithful, good, obedient church. They were doing what was required of them. In that case, they were good in the agathos sense, doing what they had been given to do. Remember the Parable of the Talents? They had been given these instructions, and they had fulfilled them.

This is fine. This is wonderful. It is wonderful to obey God's laws and word. But, he says at this point, he wanted them to learn to be wise in what is good.

Now, wisdom means making choices—taking what you know and what you understand, combined with experience, thereby making good choices. And he says to be wise in what is good. This means that the things that we may think are good, may not be good. And the things that we think may be evil, may not actually be evil. Remember what I said when we look at something right now, it may seem one way, but it is actually the other in effect? He is telling them, "Look! You've done well. You have grown to the point where you are obedient. And that's great. But, you need to go further, because Christianity isn't just obeying a bunch of rules."

You cannot live like that for very long, because you end up like the Pharisees who would not ever stray outside their very strict tight cocoon that they made with all their laws to constrict themselves so they would not break God's law. Paul says, "No." Christianity is more than that. Christianity is a thinking man's religion, where you have to be wise in what is good.

I thought this was very interesting. What he is trying to do is help them move on to the next step in their spiritual growth. It is very easy for us to say, "The law says to do this, or that," and then we do something in our relationship with somebody else, and it blows up in our face, because what we are doing is not good. We may be able to point out the law, but we may be actually be interfering with something that God is doing. And instead of helping, we are actually hurting the situation.

Paul has primarily in mind that there were false teachers who would try to deceive them. He was going away. He had to go to another church. He had to be away from them, so

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they had to be able to discern what was good and be wise about it, and also they had to not get mixed up in the evil. So, he was telling them to think about what was coming, what was going on. He was saying to them, "Look! There might be a minister who comes through here who sounds so wonderful, and he seems to be so on the ball, but he may not be good. He may actually be evil. He may be working for the other side."

On the other hand, there might be someone who comes in and seems like a real clod-buster, having nothing apparently going for him; he is also a minister, who is rough around the edges, but he may actually be the one with the truth of God and is preaching it the right way, whereas one may tend to follow the other guy who is not good ultimately.

So, he says we have to be wise in what is good and unmixed with evil. He is telling us that we have to have godly discernment. Some evil seems good. Some good seems evil from our perspective at the moment. We have to be able to see things from God's perspective to know which is which and to do the good and reject the evil.

What he is telling them is, "You have a great foundation of obedience. So now you have to start making the hard choices—between what may seem good and what may seem evil."

If I may bring it down to our level, what I think Paul is saying, through my own way of expressing it, is that we need to refrain from jumping in where angels fear to tread. And, I am bringing this in terms of our relationships with one another. We often do this in terms of other people's problems. We jump in thinking we are doing good, but we are actually making a mess of things. That is where we have to be wise in what is good.

When is it good to say something about somebody else's problem? When is it right to do something for another person about something they are struggling with? We can do a lot of harm by trying to do what we think is good, but we may in fact be disrupting the good that God is doing in that person's life.

We may see somebody who seems to be embroiled in a sin and nothing seems to be happening. But, do you not think that God knows about that sin, and that He is working with that person already? Is it our place to jump in and create a barrel full of snakes or monkeys, because now we are involved in something that is actually being worked out?

Wisdom, Paul is saying—be wise in what is good, because this is where the rubber meets the road in our relationships with one another. This should cause us to pause in trying to solve a brother's problem for him. Be very careful. This is what causes divisions

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in churches.

We need to be very careful; we need to be very prayerful; we need to make sure that what we do is actually wise and not just a reaction to somebody else's problem.

So, let us bear in mind what Paul says in I Thessalonians 5:15, "Always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all."