

## Greek Word Studies:

**Good (18) (agathos)** (click discussion of good deeds) means intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, useful, benefiting others, benevolent (marked by or disposed to doing good).

The meaning of kalos (2570) is also discussed in this topic. The basic meaning of kalos describes that which is inherently excellent or intrinsically good, providing some special or superior benefit. Kalos is good with emphasis (as discussed below) on that which is beautiful, handsome, excellent, surpassing, precious, commendable, admirable. Kalos describes that which is inherently excellent or intrinsically good and/or that which provides some special or superior benefit. In classical Greek kalos was originally used to describe that which outwardly beautiful. Other secular uses of kalos referred to the usefulness of something such as a fair haven, a fair wind or that which was auspicious such as sacrifices. Kalos referred to that which was "morally beautiful" or noble and hence virtue was called "the good" (to kalon). The New Testament uses of kalos are similar to the secular Greek -- outwardly fair, as the stones of the temple (Lk 21:5); well adapted to its purpose, as salt ("salt is good" Mk 9:50); competent for an office, as deacons ("good servant of Christ Jesus" 1Ti 4:6); a steward ("serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God", see note 1 Peter 4:10); a good soldier (note 2 Timothy 2:3); expedient, wholesome ("it is better for you to enter life crippled" Mk 9:43, 45, 47); morally good, noble, as works ("Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works" see note Matthew 5:16); conscience ("we are sure that we have a good conscience", see note Hebrews 13:18). The phrase it is good, i.e., a good or proper thing ("It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine", see note Romans 14:21). In the Septuagint (LXX) kalos is the most commonly used word for good as opposed to evil (e.g., see Ge 2:17; 24:50; Isaiah 5:20).

Agathos is used 102 times in 91v the NT (Mt 5:45; 7:11, 17f; 12:34f; 19:16f; 20:15; 22:10; 25:21, 23; Mark 3:4; 10:17f; Luke 1:53; 6:45; 8:8, 15; 10:42; 11:13; 12:18f; 16:25; 18:18f; 19:17; 23:50; John 1:46; 5:29; 7:12; Acts 9:36; 11:24; 23:1; Rom 2:7, 10; 3:8; 5:7; 7:12f, 18f; 8:28; 9:11; 10:15; 12:2, 9, 21; 13:3f; 14:16; 15:2; 16:19; 2 Cor 5:10; 9:8; Gal 6:6, 10; Eph 2:10; 4:28f; 6:8; Phil 1:6; Col 1:10; 1Th 3:6; 5:15; 2Th 2:16, 17; 1 Tim 1:5, 19; 2:10; 5:10; 2 Tim 2:21; 3:17; Titus 1:16; 2:5, 10; 3:1; Philemon 1:6, 14; Heb 9:11; 10:1; 13:21; Jas 1:17; 3:17; 1 Pet 2:18; 3:10f, 13, 16, 21; 3 John 1:11) and is translated generous, 1; good, 81; good man, 2; good thing, 6; good things, 6; goodness, 1; goods, 2; kind, 1; kindly, 1; kindness, 1

Kalos is used 102 times in 91v the NT (Matt 3:10; 5:16; 7:17, 18, 19; 12:33; 13:8, 23f, 27, 37f, 45, 48; 15:26; 17:4; 18:8f; 26:10, 24; Mark 4:8, 20; 7:27; 9:5, 42f, 45, 47, 50; 14:6, 21; Luke 3:9; 6:38, 43; 8:15; 9:33; 14:34; 21:5; John 2:10; 10:11, 14, 32f; Acts 25:10; 27:8; Rom 7:16, 18, 21; 12:17; 14:21; 1 Cor 5:6; 7:1, 8, 26; 9:15; 2 Cor 8:21; 13:7; Gal 4:18; 6:9; 1Thess 5:21; 1 Tim 1:8, 18; 2:3; 3:1, 7, 13; 4:4, 6; 5:10, 25; 6:12f, 18f; 2 Tim 1:14; 2:3; 4:7; Titus 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14; Heb 5:14; 6:5; 10:24; 13:9, 18; Jas 2:7; 3:13; 4:17; 1 Pet 2:12; 4:10) and is translated beautiful, 1; better, 2; commendable manner, 1; excellent, 1; fair, 1; fine, 2; good, 79; high, 1; honest, 1; honorable, 1; right thing, 1; sound, 1; treasure, 1; what is right, 2.

Agathos is one whose goodness and works of goodness are transferred to others. Good and doing good is the idea. Agathos describes that which is beneficial in addition to being good.

Agathos is that which is good in its character, beneficial in its effects and/or useful in its action.

Agathos is used in the New Testament primarily of spiritual and moral excellence. Paul uses agathos to describe the gospel as the "glad tidings of good things" (see note Romans 10:15). The writer of Hebrews uses it in the same way, of "the good things to come" of which "Christ appeared as a high priest" (see note Hebrews 9:11) and of which the law was "only a shadow" (see note Hebrews 10:1).

The precise meaning of agathos can be difficult to appreciate and distinguish from kalos (2570) an adjective that is also translated good. An attempt is made in the following discussion to bring out the difference, but in some verses where both are used, this distinction can be difficult to appreciate.

Agathos describes that which is perfect, producing pleasure, satisfaction, and a sense of well-being, for example describing a good conscience in (1Ti 1:5).

But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good (agathos) conscience and a sincere faith.

A good (agathos) conscience is that which has been cleansed from guilt, through the blood of Christ, and as a

result of this, responds to the claims of the Lord to exercise love, as being the aim of the charge Paul gives to Timothy in this verse.

Agathos describes the believer's deeds that remain withstand being tested by fire at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1Cor 3:12, 13)

The words of saints are to be agathos (good for edification) (see note Ephesians 4:29)

Paul uses agathos in his prayer in second Thessalonians writing...

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, Who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good (agathos) hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word. (2Thes 2:16-17) (Comment: Here the hope is classified as intrinsically good because of its cheering and sustaining effect on the believer who cherishes it.)

In reference to God (as in Mt 19:16) agathos conveys the sense of perfect.

Agathos is distinguished from kalos in that while agathos is inherently, morally, or practically good, kalos takes that a step further and adds the idea of aesthetically good, beautiful, fair and appealing to the eye. Thus kalos is used to describe a qualification of an elder as

one who manages his own household well (kalos not agathos)" (1Ti 3:4).

In other words an elder must be one whose leadership in the home is not only intrinsically good (which it should be = agathos), but also visibly good (kalos = because he as leader will be watched closely by the sheep under him and by the pagan outside the flock). Agathos is good in the sense of useful, kalos good in the sense of beautiful, although the distinction is subtle.

This distinction between agathos and kalos is brought out to a degree in Romans 12:17 (note) where Paul instructs believers to...

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right (kalos) in the sight of all men. (Comment: Agathos refers to intrinsic goodness, and kalos here, to exterior goodness, or goodness that is seen on the exterior of a person, the outward expression of an inward goodness. When this outward expression conforms to the inward goodness, then that expression which a Christian gives of himself is an honest one, one conforming to the inner facts. The word could be translated in a connection like this by the word "seemly," seemly in that the expression is fitting. But if the Christian assumes an outward expression which is patterned after this age, that expression not representing what he is, a child of God, but giving the beholder the impression that he is a person of the world, that expression is a dishonest one. - from Wuest - Reference or Logos)

Agathos refers to intrinsic goodness, but in Romans 12:17 Paul uses kalos to describe exterior goodness, or goodness that is seen on the exterior of a person, the outward expression of an inward goodness. Such exterior goodness (which is beautiful, fair, virtuous) is necessary because what we do as Christians is observed by those around us, and it is important that our conduct, which is open to "the eyes of everybody," brings honor to our God and corresponds to our profession.

Vine notes that

The word kalos, "good," signifies the absolute worth of a thing, agathos denotes what is beneficial...kalos...describes that which is intrinsically good, that which is well adapted to the purpose intended; in 1Timothy 5:10, 25, 6:18 it describes that which is ethically good, right, noble, honorable; it is to be distinguished from agathos, good in character or constitution and beneficial in effect, as in 1Timothy 1:5, 19; 2:10; 5:10. (Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson or Logos)

And so we encounter both kalos and agathos in 1Timothy 5:10...

(widows) having a reputation for good (kalos) works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good (agathos) work.

Vine commenting on the use of both kalos and agathos in 1Timothy 5:10 writes that...

Some would regard these adjectives as merely interchangeable in this connection. Kalos, however, directs attention to that which is fair, noble, honorable or beautiful, outwardly and visibly, agathos to that which, being good in character or constitution, is beneficial in effect. The distinctive meanings are well exemplified here: in the first case the word lays stress upon that which, being noble and honorable, bears a favorable report (not that it is not at the same time beneficial); in the second case the stress is on the beneficial character of the work. (Ibid or Logos)

In 1 Timothy 6:18 good occurs twice, once as agathos and once as kalos...

Instruct them to do good, (agathoergeo - from agathos) to be rich in good (kalos) works, to be generous and ready to share. (Comment: Here Paul teaches that the liberal use of one's means, while beneficent in effect (agathos), is intrinsically honorable, fair, beautiful (kalos).

In Romans 7:18 (note) Paul uses both agathos and kalos writing...

For I know that nothing good (agathos - here referring to nothing capable of accomplishing good. It is incapable of acting in a beneficial way) dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good (kalos - that which is wholly admirable, fair) is not.

Comment: Denney says that kalos suggests the moral beauty of the law, agathos its beneficial purpose.

As Vine emphasizes that

while the difference between the words (agathos, kalos) may be thus generally stated, they are not always readily distinguishable (Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson or Logos)

Barclay writes that...

There are two Greek words for good. Agathos simply describes a thing as good. Kalos means that a thing is not only good but looks good; it has a winsome attractiveness about it. Real Christianity is a lovely thing. There are so many people who are good but with their goodness possess a streak of unlovely hardness. (note on Acts 3:1)...Now in Greek, there are two words for good. There is agathos which simply describes the moral quality of a thing; there is kalos which means that in the goodness there is a quality of winsomeness which makes it lovely. When Jesus is described as the good shepherd, the word is kalos. In him there is more than efficiency and more than fidelity; there is loveliness. Sometimes in a village or town people speak about the good doctor. They are not thinking only of the doctor's efficiency and skill as a physician; they are thinking of the sympathy and the kindness and the graciousness which he brought with him and which made him the friend of all. In the picture of Jesus as the Good Shepherd there is loveliness as well as strength and power. (note on John 10:16)... In Greek there are two words for good. There is agathos which describes a thing which is morally good; and there is kalos which describes a thing which is not only good but lovely. A thing might be agathos, and yet be hard, stern, austere, unattractive. But a thing which is kalos is winsome and lovely, with a certain bloom of charm upon it. (note on Mark 14:10) (Barclay, W: The Daily Study Bible Series. The Westminster Press or Logos)

Richards writes that...

There are two basic words for "good" found in the NT: agathos and kalos. Agathos indicates the good as useful and came to have a strong ethical and religious emphasis. On the other hand, the other word meaning "good," kalos, stresses the aesthetic. The person or thing that is kalos is beautiful, fine, noble, and praiseworthy. As a thing of beauty, such a person or object is pleasing to God and to his people and is a source of joy. This happy tone in kalos is captured in Jesus' words about the woman called Mary who washed his feet and anointed him just before he was betrayed: "She has done a beautiful thing to me," he said (Mt 26:10; Mark 14:6).

Because of their link with the good, kalos and agathos are often used synonymously and usually both are translated "good." Thus the aspect of beauty found in goodness and revealed in the Greek language is often lost in our English translations.

Agathos views the good as useful or profitable and is the word chosen when moral goodness is being considered. Kalos tends to stress the aesthetic aspect of good. Good is not only beneficial but also beautiful. (Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency)

MacArthur commenting on the fruit of the Spirit which includes goodness writes that the word is agathos which...

has to do with moral and spiritual excellence that is known by its sweetness and active kindness. Paul helped define this virtue when he observed that "no one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die" (see note Romans 5:7). A Christian can be morally upright but still not manifest the grace of goodness. He may be admired and respected for his high moral standards and might even have a friend who would risk his life for him. But the upright person who also has goodness is much more likely to have self-sacrificing friends...(Agathos) is the internal goodness produced by the Spirit in the hearts of obedient believers, which then finds expression in external goodness spoken by his mouth and performed by his hands. It is also good that is unqualified and unrestricted, to be shown all men, including unbelievers (see Gal 6:10) (MacArthur, J. Galatians. Chicago: Moody Press or Logos)

In Mark 10:17 (also Luke 18:18 describing a certain ruler) we read of the man who came to Jesus...

And as He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and began asking Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Mark and Luke both use agathos for good, which implies that the questioner saw the Lord as good in nature and in essence. The writers would have used the word kalos if the questioner's intent was to denote strictly external goodness or good form. In saying "good teacher" the questioner was not just calling Jesus a capable teacher but was affirming belief in the Lord's essential (agathos) goodness.

Wuest adds that...

agathos which speaks of intrinsic goodness, and kalos which speaks of goodness as it is seen from without. The word kalos has also the idea of "beautiful." It was used by the Greeks of anything so distinguished in form, excellence, goodness, usefulness, as to be pleasing. Hence, it can refer to anything which is handsome, useful, excellent, suitable, commendable, excellent in its nature and characteristics, and therefore well adapted to its ends...Kalos (is) a goodness seen on the outside as it strikes the eye, a beautiful, pleasing goodness. It was a work that as Swete says, possessed true moral beauty....Agathos always includes a corresponding beneficent relation of the subject of it to another subject...Kalos speaks of goodness as seen from the outside by a spectator. (Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans or Logos)

Saints are made adequate and equipped for good (agathos) works by God's Word...

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good (agathos) work." (see notes 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Consider the fruit tree. It is not "conscious" of the bearing process. We are to be like the fruit tree for it is God Who is causing fruit be borne in good works which blossom and ripen as we are walk obedient to His revealed will.

Vine comments that every good work

"signifies every kind of activity undertaken for the name of Christ; everything so undertaken is a means of fruitfulness, and the operating power is the indwelling Holy Spirit, upon whom the believer is entirely dependent." (Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson )

One way to think of this is as a process, so that in salvation God does work for us, in sanctification He does work in us and in service He does work through us and bears fruit that remains. God builds character before He calls to service. He must work in us before He can work through us. God spent 25 years working in Abraham before He gave him the promised son Isaac. Remember too that although we are not saved by good works, we are saved unto good works.

Theologian John Calvin wrote,

"It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone."

We are not saved by faith plus good works, but by a faith that works. Any declaration of faith that does not result in a changed life and good works is a false declaration. True saving faith can never be by itself for it always brings life, and life produces good works. The person with dead faith has only an intellectual experience. In his mind, he knows the doctrines of salvation, but he has never submitted himself to God and trusted Christ for salvation. He knows the right words, but he does not back up his words with his works. Faith in Christ brings eternal life right now (John 3:16), and where there is life there must be growth and fruit. (cf James 2:17)

Are you bearing fruit in every good work? Dearly beloved, be encouraged for Paul wrote that

"we are (God's) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (see note Ephesians 2:10)

Many believers minimize the place of good works in the Christian life reasoning that because we are not saved by good works, then good works are something to be shunned. But our Lord reminds us that our incredible privilege is to

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven." (see note Matthew 5:16)

It is not only by words that we give testimony to the greatness of God, but also by our works. Our good works in fact pave the way for witness with good words. If our walk contradicts our words, we lose our testimony. Our "walk" and our "talk" must agree. Good works and good words must come from the same yielded heart. Too many believers today emphasize guarding the truth, but downplay living the truth. One of the best ways to guard the truth is to put it into practice. It is good to be defenders of the faith, but we must not forget to be demonstrators of the faith by letting them see our good works!

You are writing a Gospel,  
A chapter each day,  
By the deeds that you do  
And the words that you say.  
Men read what you write,  
Whether faithful or true:  
Just what is the Gospel  
According to you?  
--- Author unknown

When doing good works, also remember that the following question is irrelevant "Does this person deserve my good works?" We are to "abound to every good work" (NIV, 2Cor 9:8).

Paul reminded Titus (and us) that Jesus

"gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous (afire, ardent, fervent, eager, enthusiastic) for good deeds." (see note Titus 2:14)

The writer of Hebrews exhorts believers "do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased" (Heb 13:16 - note) so that good works are actually "spiritual sacrifices" that we offer to God!

Please do not misunderstand. Believers do not manufacture these good works but instead they are the fruit of God's Spirit working in our heart for as Paul reminds us in (see note Philippians 2:13)

it is God Who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Paul acknowledges that the key to his good works was the grace of God which made him adding that God's "grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me." (1Cor 15:10). Peter writes "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation." (see note 1 Peter 2:12). Thus our good works serve as testimonies to the lost and even win us the right to be heard.

In sum, all of these truths about good works indicate that God has a plan for our lives and that we should walk



in His will and fulfill His plan. If you'd like some additional study on the topic of "good works (deeds)" click the following links for all of the 24 passages on (good works, good deeds).

**INCREASING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD:** kai auxanomenoi (PPMPN) te epignosei tou theou: (1Pe 2:2, 2Pet 3:18, Col 2:19; Isaiah 53:11; Da 12:4; Hab 2:14; Jn 17:3; 2Cor 2:14; 4:6; 9:8; Eph 1:17; 4:13; 2Pet 1:2,3; 1Jn 5:20)

The Amplified version emphasizes that the growth is in (the sphere of) and by (the instrumentality of) the full and true knowledge of God (in contrast to the knowledge of the false philosophies which "stunt" growth and even lead to "death" if persisted therein).

Spurgeon writes...

“Fruitful in every good work—what then?—increasing in the knowledge of God. Look at that. It seems, then, that holiness is the road to knowledge.

God has made it so. If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine. If you read and study, and cannot make out the meaning of Scripture, get up and do something, and it may be, in the doing of it, you shall discover the secret.

Holiness of heart  
shall increase the illumination of your mind.

Will you kindly observe that this knowledge rises in tone? for Paul first prayed that they might be filled with the knowledge of God’s will; but now he implores for them an increase in the knowledge of God Himself. Oh, blessed growth, first to know the law, and then to know the Lawgiver! first to know the precept, and then to know the mouth from which it comes! This is the height of knowledge, to see Christ and know the Father, and learn how to say from the heart,

“Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

I would call your willing attention to another thought. The apostle, if he is to be judged according to his outward language, often utters impossible things, and yet his every sentence is not only full of deep meaning, but is strictly correct. Notice his language here: in the ninth verse he says,

“that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will.”

Can anything go beyond this? The vessel is filled right up to the brim, what can it have more? Yet the apostle says,

“increasing in the knowledge of God.”

What can that mean? If the mind is full to the brim, how can it receive more? If the man is full of knowledge, how can his knowledge increase? Can there be any increase after that? I propose to you the riddle.

Here is the answer of it: Make the vessel larger, and then there can be an increase. This solution of the difficulty requires no great wit to discover it. So that Paul plainly teaches us here that, if we have so increased in knowledge as to be full, he would have us increased in capacity to know yet more; he would have our manhood enlarged, our powers of reception increased, that we might grow from being children to be young men, and from young men to be fathers, and so may be filled—filled, always filled with all the fullness of God!

The Lord grant unto us to perceive with humility, that if we are already full of knowledge, we can still advance, for we “have not yet attained.” Let no man think that he can go no further.

“There is,” says Augustine, “a certain perfection according to the measure of this life, and it belongs to that perfection that such a perfect man should know that he is not yet perfect.”

To that I heartily subscribe. There is a certain fullness to be found in this life according to the measure of a man, and it belongs to that fullness that the man should know that he can yet increase in knowledge. Holy Bernard says

“he is not good at all who doth not desire to be better.”

**Good (18) agathos**

I also subscribe to that saying. Some might become good if they were not puffed up with the fancy of their own perfection. Others are somewhat commendable, but will never grow because they judge themselves to be full-grown already. I would have you filled, and yet have room for more: filled with all knowledge, filled with all holiness, filled with the indwelling Spirit, filled with God, and yet increasing in knowledge, in holiness, in likeness to God, and in all good things evermore to His glory. The Lord add His blessing for Jesus'™ sake. Amen. (See the full sermon - Spiritual Knowledge: It's Practical Results)