

Digging Deeper :

Four of the Articles of the doctrine of the Church of England deal with the matter of good works. In the autumn or early next year we will look at these at our evening services.

Article 11 on Justification states what we saw from Ephesians 2, that works cannot save us. The article says '*that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine*'.

Yet many people seem to find it hard, or impossible, to accept that our works do not contribute to our salvation. Why do you think this is?

Article 12 asserts that whilst good works '*cannot put away our sins*' they are '*pleasing and acceptable to God, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith*'.

People seem to have accused Paul of teaching that because we are saved by faith, good works do not matter. Paul was scandalised by this accusation and James also wrote against the error. Do you the danger still exists of people people thinking that because we are saved by faith what we then do isn't very important?

Are good works done by unbelievers pleasing to God?

Article 13 states.

Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School-authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.

Article 14 is on 'works of supererogation'. You are welcome to look at this, or you can wait with bated breath until we reach this in the evening services.

David Phillips, May 2012

The Fruit of the Spirit is ... goodness ...

Bible Study 6 on Gal 5.22-23



The name Agatha means good, coming from the Greek *agathos*. Our fruit is *agathōsune* - goodness. As in English the words have a wide range of meaning. Psalm 101.1 & 118.8 are identical - 'Oh give thanks to the LORD for He is good' but an early Greek translation uses *chrestos* (see last study) for one and *agathos* for the other. Another Greek word, *kalos*, is also usually translated as good.

The word goodness (*agathōsune*) is not found in ancient Greek literature except the Bible and related writings. It occurs 4 times in the New Testament but none of these help explain what it means so we will focus on the word 'good'.

None good - Read Matthew ch 19 vv 16-17.

Why do you think Jesus responded to the young man in the way he did?

If God is good what does this suggest to you about what 'good' means in this context? What do you think it means to say that God is good?

If God alone is good, what does this suggest about our ability to fully cultivate the fruit of goodness? (Although later in the study we will look at people who are described as 'good'.)

Very good - Read Genesis ch 1 v 31

The word good is used after each day. If the creation was "very good", what has gone wrong? Why is this relevant to our own ability, or inability, to truly do good?

If God alone is good, and all creation is marred by sin, we are going to find it hard work to grow the fruit of goodness.

The war to do good - Read Romans ch 7 vv 7-25.

(Agathos occurs in vv 12, 13 (twice), 18 & 19 whilst kalos occurs in v14, 18 & 2. There seems to be little difference and both are usually translated as 'good' in this chapter.)

What does Paul say is good in verses 12 and 13?

What does Paul say here about our ability to do good?

Some 20th century commentators on the Bible were unwilling to believe that Paul was talking about himself in these verses. In what ways is what Paul writes here true to your own experience?

Does your failure to do good and to combat sin sometimes get you down? Does Paul's cry of despair in verse 24 resonate with what you have felt on these occasions?

How does Paul's assertion in verse 25 help us not to be overcome by a sense of sin and failure?

God's commands are good, but we are sinful and unable to live up to them. However, having been rescued by Christ, and given the Holy Spirit we are to see to do good and grow the spiritual fruit of goodness.

Do good

Look up one or both of the following - **Acts ch 9 v 36 & Acts ch 11 vv 22-24**. Despite what Jesus said about God alone being good the word is here applied to two disciples.

Are there clues in the passage as to why they are called good?

If you called someone a good man or a good woman what would you mean by this?

Read Ephesians ch 2 vv 8-10

In thinking about doing good it important to remember what Paul writes here.

Can we be saved good works?

Why are we still to do good works?

If God has prepared good works for you to do are they something you do reluctantly and hope to avoid, or are you on the lookout for them?

Do you ever ask God to show you the good works he has prepared for you to do?

Read Colossians ch 1 vv 9-10.

I what ways do you think we need spiritual wisdom and understanding in order to do good works?

What does Paul say is God's response to our good works?

You may like to use these two verses to pray for the members of your study group before you meet. Or perhaps adapt it as a prayer for one another at the end.

If you have time then read Luke ch 6 vv 27-36 and then vv 44-45.

Who should we do good to?

What do these things mean in practical ways?