

Aristotle defines *éleos* as “a pain following upon the sight of a destructive or painful evil that strikes a person who does not deserve it and that one might expect to suffer oneself or see one’s own dear ones suffer.”⁶

The phrase, “full of mercy,” refers to the status quo of wisdom in the soul of a mature believer which in this case exemplifies the power maximum doctrine produces in opposition to the various verbal sins vilified by James in James 3:1–16.

When a believer’s wisdom is so cultivated that no matter what the circumstance, he is able to respond with divine viewpoint. Consequently, when a believer applies principles of divine viewpoint to difficult situations common to human life, he is displaying the virtues of mercy, sympathy, commiseration, and **compassion**.

The sequence continues with the application of this compassion:

5. The **fifth** phrase, “good fruits,” is a way to describe the volitional decision to execute the mental attitude of compassion which results in divine good.

First is the adjective **ἀγαθός (*agathós*)**: “good,” which is both beneficial and benevolent and describes the resultant production of “good works.”

These good works are mentioned next by the plural noun **καρπός (*karpós*)**: “the metaphorical use of the term to describe the production of the believer enabled by “the Holy Spirit.”

In this context, the **production of divine good** is made functional by the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit’s enabling power combined with application from a doctrinal inventory results in putting grace into action.

Divine Good may be defined as those Christian works and Christian service which are acceptable to God and His standards. They must originate from the grace of God under the filling of the Holy Spirit and spiritual growth.

Here are some pertinent principles on the believer’s production of divine good:

Principles on Divine Good Compared with Human Good

1. The Greek word for “good” is **ἀγαθός (*agathós*)** and in Scripture it has two prevalent applications, divine good and human good.

⁶ Ibid., “ἐλεος,” 1:471–472.



2. Divine good finds its source in God while human good is associated with the personal works of mankind. Motivated by principles found in Scripture, believers are enabled to produce divine good under the mentorship of the Holy Spirit.
3. Human good is accomplished by multiple resources that vary with different cultures and are frequently inspired by the religions that define them.
4. Divine good is the production of biblically stimulated decisions that apply biblical principles to life and circumstances. As a result, these efforts are rewardable at the Evaluation Tribunal of Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:10 cp., Revelation 2–3)
5. Therefore, divine good is based on the eternal standards and doctrines of Scripture that are retained in the souls of the believer.
6. When he volitionally recalls and applies these divine ideas, he has produced divine good. Human good is based on standards concocted from the cosmic systems and corrupted by human viewpoint.
7. Divine good performed by the believer is the result of the grace provisions of God: **(1)** the filling of the Holy Spirit, **(2)** problem-solving devices, **(3)** promises, **(4)** doctrines, and **(5)** application of these assets.
8. Summary: Unless the steps noted in point 7 are followed, no divinely approved works will result.
9. The “work” produced is by means of grace. The impact of the work is based on divine policies learned, facilitated, and applied by the ministries of the Holy Spirit.
10. The false doctrine that salvation is attainable only by performing “good works” means the power to acquire salvation is dependent upon the efforts of an unbeliever.
11. The works for salvation were accomplished by Jesus Christ on the cross: **(1)** He confirmed the power of submitting totally to divine guidance from the Holy Spirit, **(2)** He rejected all temptations to do otherwise, and **(3)** He willingly did the work of being judged for the sins of the human race up to the point he proclaimed, “It is finished” (John 19:30).
12. Jesus Christ did the work; the unbeliever benefits by placing his personal faith in Jesus Christ for salvation and eternal life:



John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes [πιστεύω (*pisteúō*): a transitive verb that demands an object] in Him [αὐτός (*autós*): Jesus Christ Who is the working object)] shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (NASB)

13. The person to whom Jesus made His remarks was Nicodemus, a Pharisee and during that period of his life was an unbeliever. As such, he was unable to discern spiritual concepts.
14. Because of this deficiency, Nicodemus came to the Lord with this question:

John 3:2 “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do the things that You do unless God is with Him.”

15. To this Jesus responded with a comment which was totally confusing to the soul of Nicodemus, nevertheless, the Lord began His comments by affirming the accuracy of what He was about to say:

John 3:3 “Truly, truly [Ἀμήν, ἀμήν (*Amēn*, *amēn*): “I am telling you the truth”], I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.”

16. Nicodemus was incapable of discerning the Lord’s statement indicated by his response in:

John 3:4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?”

17. Obviously not, if the conversation is to be interpreted literally. What the Lord is saying is indeed a literal statement. It must be interpreted not from logical, human rationales, but rather from the viewpoint of divine absolutes. The Lord’s answer was oriented to the latter in:

John 3:5 “I am telling you the truth; I say to you, unless one is born of water [physical birth] and the Spirit [spiritual birth] he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

18. Nicodemus ultimately came around to the Lord’s way of thinking. This category of thinking required Nicodemus to focus his thinking on spiritual principles rather than those of an earthly variety.



19. Following the Lord's physical death on the cross, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, both members of the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish court in Jerusalem, collaborated in orchestrating the Lord's burial.

Nicodemus was the brother of Josephus the historian. This Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin and was counted one of the three richest men of Jerusalem.

Perhaps encouraged by the example of Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus assisted at the burial of Jesus. He brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds' weight, to anoint the body, and he assisted in its embalming and burial (John:19:39–42).⁷

Joseph: Of Arimathea, “a prominent member of the Council [Sanhedrin],⁸ who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God,” and was a secret disciple of Jesus. The crucifixion seems to have wrought in him positive convictions, for, upon learning of the death of our Lord, he “gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.” Pilate, having learned from the centurion who had charge of the execution that Jesus was actually dead, gave the body to Joseph, who took it down from the cross. After it had been embalmed at the cost of Nicodemus, another secret disciple, Joseph had the body wrapped in linen and deposited it in a new tomb belonging to himself and located in a garden “in the place where he was crucified” (Matthew 27:58–60; Mark 14:43–46; Luke 23:50–53; John 19:38–42).⁹

(End JAS3-96. See JAS3-97 for continuation of study at p. 421.)

⁷ Merrill F. Unger, “Nicodemus,” in *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed., ed. R. K. Harrison (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1988), 921.

⁸ “Sanhedrin [סַנְהֶדְרִין] (*Sanhedrin*); Συνέδριον (*Sunédrión*): The supreme Jewish Court of Justice in Jerusalem in which the process against Our Lord was carried on, and before which the apostles had to justify themselves. The term “Sanhedrin,” “meeting place,” in Jerusalem of 71 members, was most powerful, the internal government of the country being practically in its hands, and it was religiously recognized even among the Diaspora” (Paul Levertoff, “Sanhedrin,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, gen. ed. James Orr [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956], 4:2689).

⁹ Merrill F. Unger, “Joseph of Arimathea,” in *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, ed. R. K. Harrison (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1988), 710par.9.



Luke describes Joseph as “a good and righteous man” and adds that “he had not consented to their plan and action,” i.e., of the Jewish authorities. From this remark it seems to be evident that he was a member of the Sanhedrin.¹

20. Two formally heathen Jews, who placed their personal faith in the Lord for their salvation, produced the divine good of orchestrating the burial of our Lord.
21. The record of their involvement in the Lord’s burial is noted in Scripture, Nicodemus in John 19:39 while Joseph’s participation is recorded in all four Gospel accounts: Matthew 27:57–60; Mark 15:42–46; Luke 23:50–53; and John 19:38–42.

The Standards of Human Good

1. Human good can only be defined in the context of what the individual perceives is good. Whatever his standards happen to be, then that is what he assumes is good.
2. What one person regards is a good thing to think, say, or do, may be quite different for another. Everyone is free to have his own opinion about what is good.
3. These opinions may or may not line up with cultural standards of society which themselves change over time. We are presently engaged in a national seminar about what ought to be perceived as good or bad.
4. The argument for some is the desire to impose on others their opinions of what is good; some of this ilk have the political power to impose their ideas on the commonwealth, but without the requisite power to do so.
5. Others orient to establishment standards that have been the ones accepted by the Founders and their progeny over the centuries but are now called into question by those who align themselves with personal opinions rather than the standards of past generations.
6. The debate does not move the conversation forward if one side argues for their personal opinions while others stand fast for establishment standards that have prevailed for millennia.
7. The Founders understood the pursuit of happiness to be the result of collectively agreed upon principles that reflect the experiences of the ages.

¹ Merrill F. Unger, “Joseph of Arimathea,” in *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*. rev. ed., ed. R. K. Harrison (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1988), 710.



8. The Declaration's opening Statement established the foundational principle for how a free and functional society ought to order itself which requires a rational appeal to the intellect:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal ...

9. The egalitarians of our present day are prone to cite this sentence fragment by imputing a period after the word "equal." They do so without reading further, but rather leave the phrase, "created equal," to stand alone as if the entire document rests upon that nebulous statement.
10. However, the sentence does not stop there; instead, following the comma, it stipulates what "these truths" happen to be and with which all members of the nation may engage and enjoy:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

11. What are the "self-evident truths" to which "all Men," who are "created equally," may "pursue"? The first is "Life," the privilege from "their Creator" to live their own lives as they see fit while doing so within the environment of "Liberty."
12. This refers to the Law of Liberty which allows everyone "equally" to "pursue their happiness" restrained only by the laws of the land.
13. "Equality" allows all citizens to function within the environment of "Liberty" in pursuit of those endeavors they trust will result in their "general happiness." Some choose to pursue one path while others pursue another.
14. Those who take advantage of their "Liberty" remain free to make the "pursuit." Some make good choices others not so much. However, this freedom allows each person to make good choices from a position of strength or, sadly, for others, to make poor choices from a position of weakness.
15. We are all equally responsible for our own decisions whether good or bad.
16. Finally, and most importantly, on what are these principles founded? The Statement clearly indicates that "all Men are created equal." But by means of what resource?
17. The next phrase clearly states, "they are endowed by their Creator." This clause reveals the Source of the endowment to be Jesus Christ Who is identified as our Creator in Colossians 1:16–17.

