

Bereshith: He Saw It Was Good

Genesis 1:31

"Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

In the first chapter of Genesis, God looked upon His creation six times, and each time it says that He *saw* that it was good. The seventh time He looked upon the entirety of His creation and declared that it was all very good. Each of the six days, God completed different aspects of creation, and each part would eventually fit into the grand scheme of creation. By the end of the sixth day, He saw that all of the parts fit and worked together in harmony and called it very good. Amongst English speakers, the word *good* is so overused that it really bears no significance or singular meaning. The Hebrew word for good is *tob*, and it carries a variety of connotations, including pleasant and agreeable to the senses; good and excellent of its kind; good, rich, and valuable in estimation. So, what does it mean when God sees creation and uses the word *tob* (good)? Every tree, flower, and shrub was created to be perfectly pleasant and agreeable to the senses, excellent of its kind, and valuable in estimation. In other words, each aspect of creation, when God was finished with it, was perfect. Every ocean, every flower, every creature, and every blade of grass was perfect in form and function. At the end the sixth day, God saw all parts of creation working together in harmony and declared that it was very good—exactly as it should be, functioning in accordance with its exact purpose.

This was creation in its perfect state. This was creation before mankind introduced corruption. In the upcoming chapters, we find that creation became corrupted when man and woman looked upon it and THEY "*saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate*" (**Genesis 3:6**). In other words, the perfect state of creation was quickly altered when man and woman determined, by their own estimation, what tree was *good* for themselves. With the help of Satan, they considered this goodness only in light of how it served their own purposes. This has been the struggle of man since then—we have wrestled with God over what is *good*. God, the Author and Speaker of all that is good, tells us what is good, yet it is in our nature to reason for ourselves, to lean on selfish desire, or to entertain the voice of the enemy. Satan was not mistaken when he told Eve that she would be given the capacity to know good and evil, nor was he mistaken when he mentioned that Adam and Eve were destined to be like God. There was a measure of truth in his words, but Satan is the master at presenting truth and either lacing it with lies or editing key details. In both cases, He pursues this one purpose: to turn humanity against their Maker. Through Adam and Eve, humanity obtained the knowledge of good and evil, but there is a wide chasm that separates knowing from discerning. In other words, one can be given the knowledge of good and evil, but have little to no capacity (wisdom and strength) to discern between good and evil. God—and Satan as well—knew that once our eyes were opened we would die, because we possess neither the inherent wisdom to discern between good and evil, nor do we bear the strength to choose good and resist evil. Paul emphasizes this truth in his letter to the Romans: "*For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice*" (**Romans 7:19**).

Having crossed the line, humanity now possess the knowledge of good and evil, but we lack the capacity to discern what is truly good for ourselves, for others, and for creation as a whole. What appears good or what we deem as good in the moment more often than not turns out to be destructive down the road. Even more, our nature has become increasingly carnal, which means we have less willpower to do what is good and are more inclined to grab hold of and approve of what is evil. This has not only wreaked havoc throughout history, it continues to feed the enmity we hold toward our Creator. It cannot be understated that the crux of our enmity against God is that, deep down, we believe and are convinced that we have a better grasp of what is *good* than God does. Again, Paul drives this point home when he says, "*the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God*" (**Romans 8:7**). In other words, our carnal minds--minds governed by carnal desires, carnal impulses, carnal reasoning--is at war with God because the word of God, and everything about God is an offense, a threat to the mind's well-being. Why? Because the only remedy to our condition is God and His truth, and He, along with His truth, often stand in the way of what we desire, what we believe, and what we will to do.

The moment Satan opened his mouth and Eve listened, he set her--and all of us--at war against God. Before she bit into the apple and "knew" good and evil, she already began determining (through his deception) what was good for herself: "*the woman saw that the tree was **good** for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and tree desirable to make one wise*" (**Genesis 3:6**). How did she know that it was good before eating it? She already made the judgment that the tree was *good*, but she did not make that judgment based on the words of God. God already told Adam that they were not to eat of the this tree. Had she heeded the word of God, then she would have perhaps realized that, yes, the tree was *good* and *pleasing*, but *not good* for her to eat of it. God was asking her to have faith, to trust that His version of good is THE version of good. From the beginning until now, God has been asking us to have faith in this as well. Eve acted as if she already had the knowledge of good and evil and was capable of discerning good from evil for herself. When we take a closer look, we realize her entire decision making process was based on two things: the deceitful words of the enemy and the desire of her flesh. What her decision was not founded on was the word of God. This word, which was given to protect her, preserve life, and help her discern, had now become death for her and her husband. In this moment sin was introduced and so was confusion.

This is a good point to bring up a question that Paul raises in the book of Romans. He asks, "*Has what is **good** become death to me?*" (**Romans 7:13**). When Paul uses the word *good* here, he is referring to the law of God. In the passage preceding this one, he states that "*the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and **good***" (**Romans 7:12**). Immediately after saying this, he poses the question: Has what is *good* become death to me? In other words, is it the law that is responsible for my death? Was it the *good* command of God that brought death to Adam and Eve? Paul says certainly not. In fact, in verse 10, he says, "*the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.*" This is important because it is not the *good* word of God that brings death, but it is the transgression of what is *good* (the law) that brings death. In other words, we bring death when we hear the word of God--which tells us what is good and what leads to life--yet, like Eve, we act contrary to the command because we determine for ourselves what is *good*. Paul continues in verse 11, saying, "*For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.*" This is exactly the road that we see Eve go down. She clearly

understood the commandment, because she even recalled it when Satan confronted her: "*We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die'*" (**Genesis 3:2-3**). The moment she brought up the commandment, sin (and Satan) used the occasion to present alternatives, seemingly better alternatives. Satan also suggested a quicker way to obtain what she thought she desired. This is how sin presents itself, as a better, less restrictive, and more expedient option. It presents what is good (the law) as evil and restrictive. This is why Paul asks the question, because this is the attitude that is in us; we end up thinking it is the law that kills us. Satan also took the opportunity to persuade Eve into believing that God--through the commandment--was actually limiting her, stealing from her, restraining her true divinity, and holding back her from attaining what she now believed was *good*. This is all Satan needed to do was plant the question and the possibility that God might actually be cheating her instead of protecting her. Because she believed and acted on the lie, the commandment that was supposed to preserve her life, brought death.

Here, then, is the conclusion that Paul comes to: "*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing **good** dwells; for to will is present within me, but how to perform what is good I do not find... For I delight in the law according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members"* (**Romans 7:22-23**). Paul uses the word good again, only this time in reference to himself. Before, he emphasizes that the commandment of God is the definition of *good*, because it comes from the Source of *good*, from the One who sees and declares goodness. Here, he reminds us that in him, and us, nothing *good* dwells. As we come before the Almighty, this is our starting point: admitting that within us, within our flesh, there is nothing good. Nothing. The will to do *good* may be slightly present, but knowing how to perform the *good* and actually choosing the *good* is not always present. On the surface, many believers may nod their heads in agreement with all of this, but if we truly examine our lives in light of God's word, which is holy, just, and *good*, then we will find there are many areas of our lives that we are either resistant to surrender or fighting to control because deep down, like Eve, we are holding fast to what we believe is *good* over what God has already defined as *good*. Many resolve this by selectively choosing which of God's commands are applicable and which ones are not. Consequently, we have become more deprived and confused, and the words of the prophet Isaiah are just as true of us as they were the people he was addressing:

Isaiah 5:20-21, 24

"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!... Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will ascend like dust; because they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel."

The greatest danger does not come from those who blatantly reject good. It is those who claim to possess the good, yet are walking in the dark. These are the ones who claim to follow God, yet stubbornly reject His truth. We all fall into this camp when we determine for ourselves which commands are good, while discarding the rest as unnecessary. We take a little of what God says,

then assume He won't mind if we hang onto some of what we consider good. Following part of what is *good* is still not *good*. When Jesus Christ created the heavens and the earth and called it *very good*, it wasn't because it was 50% good or 99.9% good. It was ALL good because it ALL functioned according to every jot and tittle of His word. When Jesus Christ presents us before Himself, He will expect nothing less than perfect, "*not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish*" (**Ephesians 5:26-27**). This is a difficult truth: God does not and will compromise what is good just because it is inconvenient, difficult, or distasteful to us. He doesn't care that we have a better way. Only He understands and defines what is good. Every word that He spoke during creation produced perfection. Every word He speaks to us is intended to do the same: restore us back to perfection. This is why He calls us to "be holy as I am holy," and to "be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."