

9. The Greek word that describes this person is **ἄγνοια** (**áгноia**): ignorance characteristic of heathendom leading to mistaken conduct and a state that renders salvation necessary. (Ephesians 4:18, “ignorance.”)
10. To reveal the man’s confusion, the Lord responds with His own question:  
**Matthew 19:17** - And Jesus said to him, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One Who is good; but if you wish to enter into eternal life, keep the commandments.”
11. The question is designed for the man to commit to Jesus as the Person Who is qualified to identify what is good of intrinsic value. Therefore, why do you ask Me this question?
12. The fact the man asked about doing something to acquire eternal life means he is an unbeliever and does not know how to be saved.
13. Next, Jesus points out that “There is only One Who is good,” refereeing to the integrity of God. He preexists all creation. He is the source of truth. He is the definition of perfection.
14. Man is fallen and hopeless to resolve the problem. Man cannot, from his own devices, erase the sinfulness that possesses him. However, good works have become the human-viewpoint motivation to give it a go.
15. Salvation by works is doomed for failure which in the process worsens the problem before the integrity of God. The more one rejects grace in favor of human efforts to appropriate salvation the farther he retreats from it.  
**Romans 3:20** - ... by works of the Law no flesh will be justified in God’s sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.
16. The Lord continues by imploring the young man to keep the commandments to enter into eternal life.

17. Why would the Lord lead this man to believe he might acquire eternal life by keeping the Law? Because he knows the man is an unbeliever. The only way an unbeliever may acquire eternal life in that way is to do so perfectly which he cannot do.
18. We noted in our study of Cosmic Two's first category, the sin nature, how Paul discovered from the Tenth Commandment that he possessed a sin nature. It is beneficial to review that passage here:

**Romans 7:7** - I was not cognizant of the sin nature, except through the Law. For instance, I did not understand the lust pattern, except the Law kept saying, you will not lust [ **Exodus 20:17** ].

**v. 8** - But the sin nature [ ἁμαρτία (*hamartía*) ], having taken the opportunity through the tenth commandment, produced in me the knowledge of every category of lust [ ἐπιτηυμία (*epithumía*) ]. For apart from the Law the sin nature keeps on being dead to my awareness of it.

**v. 9** - At one time, I lived apart from the Law [ **physically alive but spiritually dead** ]; but when the tenth commandment came, the sin nature became alive and I died [ **sin was activated as a known presence and Paul realized his spiritual death** ];

**v. 10** - and that tenth commandment which points to eternal life [ **compliance with the Decalogue is assumed to result in salvation** ], was discovered by me pointing to spiritual death;

**v. 11** - for the sin nature, having seized the opportunity through the tenth commandment, deceived and cheated me [ ἐξαπατάω (*exapatáō*): through the deception to lust Paul is cheated out of blessings ] and through the same killed me [ **condemnation of spiritual death** ].

19. What Paul realized from the Tenth Commandment, the rich young ruler remained ignorant and continued his efforts of keep the Law for eternal life. The Lord has set a trap that will expose the error of the man's judgment.

**Matthew 19:18** - Then the young man said to Jesus, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not commit murder [#6]; you shall not commit adultery [#7]; you shall not steal [#8]; you shall not bear false witness [#9];

**v. 19** - honor your father and mother [#5]; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself [PSD #8].”

20. The trap is set by the Lord’s statement in verse 17, “if you wish to enter into eternal life, keep the commandments.”
21. The subject of the two men’s discussion is “the good,” the singular noun *ἀγαθός* (*agathós*) which here refers to an abstract thing: “the good,” which refers to integrity, virtue love, and intrinsic value.
22. This singular meaning refers to God and the “good things” refer to those divine standards man must execute in order to display the character of God.
23. The young ruler is asking for a specific thing that he could produce that would result in guaranteeing his eternal life.
24. The young man is desirous of doing a good act that would result in eternal life. The Lord is telling him that he needs to be internally good in order to produce a good acts.
25. He then recites five of the Ten Commandments plus problem-solving device #8 as examples of “the good.”
26. The Ten Commandments are categorized as follows: (1) spiritual, #1–4, (2) hinge, #5, (3) establishment, #6–9), and (4) social order, #10.
27. The young man has ignored the first four, he has not honored his parents, and he is functioning in various categories of the cosmic systems of arrogance and hatred.

28. From this cosmic inventory he now boasts about how well he is keeping the establishment mandates:

**Matthew 19:20** - The young man said to Jesus, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?"

29. "Liar! Liar! Pants on fire!" Although the Lord did not say this, He was much more sophisticated and stayed with the truth.

30. It is revealed in Matthew 15 that the Oral Law, or Talmud, as interpreted by some Pharisees and scribes, allowed the Fifth Commandment to be ignored if they directed their financial support away from their needy parents to the religious establishment. The Lord summed up their violation of the commandment in:

**Matthew 15:7** - "You hypocrites [ some Pharisees and scribes, v. 1 ], rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you [ Isaiah 29:13 ]:

**v. 8** - 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me.

**v. 9** - 'But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'

31. With this event in mind, the Lord sprung His trap:

**Matthew 19:21** - Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

32. The word "complete" is a very important word for the understanding of this verse. The full phrase looks like this in Greek: **Εἰ θέλεις τέλειος (Ei théleis téleios)** and introduces a first class condition: "If you wish to be complete and you do."

33. The word "complete" is the predicate adjective *téleios* and it is better translated "perfect."

34. The Lord's use of it in this context sets up an imperative mood that follows requiring the man to "go and "sell" your possessions!"

**Téleios.** God's perfection is absolute; man's is relative. The *téleios* is one who has attained moral maturity, the goal for which he was intended, namely, to be a man obedient in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

35. The Lord gives the man a plan to complete his advance to "perfection."
36. The last thing the Lord cited for the rich man to do in verse 19 was, "you shall love your fellow citizens as yourself." This man certainly loved himself. But, would he be willing to "sell his material possessions," which he also loved, and "give all its proceeds to the poor?"
37. The Lord told the man that if he would make such a sacrifice, then he would have "treasure in heaven."
38. The challenge given to the rich man is designed to force self-analysis, to abandon earthly prosperity for heavenly gain and eternal life.
39. The man's initial question to Jesus was, "What good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" This query was centered on learning what specific human work would produce life everlasting.
40. The "good thing" left for him to do would be to get his mind off himself and his stuff. To do these things, he would need to believe in Jesus for eternal life.
41. Jesus is challenging him to make a series of decisions to determine if he is willing to place his faith in Christ as his security and not his earthly possessions.

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<sup>1</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, gen. ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1991), 1372.