

2 Peter 1:5
Hope in the Fight

Make Every Effort!

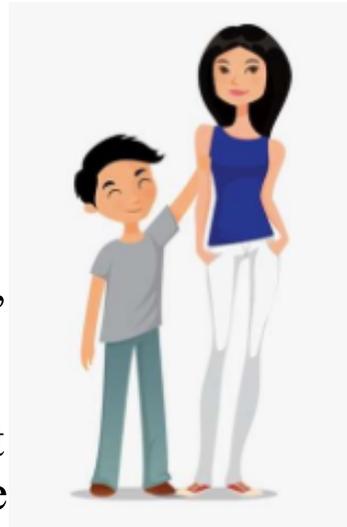


Vs. 5 - “*Make every effort to add to your faith goodness...*”

Goodness is generally a relational word that indicates that someone has a consistent pattern of doing the morally right thing by others. It also indicates a clean conscience – even with moral/ethical decisions that primarily effect ones own private life – you know,.. how we are when we think no one is looking. But true goodness is also a very humble thing. I have never known a person who was truly a good person who actually *thought they were* a good person! Good people are aware of their own flaws, deficiencies, and sins. Good people know that they are not really good, because even the best people are flawed somewhere in their character, and good people *know* their own flaws. People who THINK they are good don’t have the ability to look inside. I’ve heard that inability is due to lack of parental affirmation as a child or worse, from verbal abuse. Without the ability to protect themselves mentally/emotionally, they internalize that they have little value. It plays in the background of their mind. In the forefront, however, they are busy trying desperately to prove that they ARE valuable in any way that they can! Unfortunately, they can never get those negative voices out of their head. Wildly successful people, driven to fame or fortune, are often driven by these negative forces! But the problem is that they cannot criticize themselves! They cannot look inside. It hurts too much to take an honest look at their own flaws, deficiencies, mistakes, and sins, so they protect themselves with what looks like self-assurance, unshakeable confidence, even arrogance. [James 1:23]. You will seldom if ever hear them apologize, because they justify everything they do. They deflect blame by blaming others for their own bad behavior. “*It was **their** fault that I behaved badly because of what they said or did. It triggered me and I was justified!*” The head games that people play! It is really hard to figure out! But my point is that that is just plain bad behavior and there is not excuse for it. You cannot be truly “good” without the ability to take ownership of your own missteps! A person cannot even **grow and deepen** without the honesty and courage to face up to their own internal issues! 2



Goodness does not come from within. Some people are born with more pleasant natures. They seem to be genetically disposed toward optimism, toward smiling or laughing, toward kindness and peacefulness and hopefulness. I've known, actually, many people like that over the course of my life. I like being around people like that. But the longer I know them, the more I see their interactions and reaction under all different kinds of life's stressful situations, the more I see that under certain circumstances, everyone cracks and unexpected things come out of them – things that perhaps even THEY didn't know were there. *My sister was one of the sweetest people I have ever met, even to this day. As the baby of the family, she and I were the closest in age, with only five years between us. She was just always so kind to me. I remember her working with me in the back yard. I must have been 3 or 4 yrs old at the time, but remember well how she patiently taught me how to catch a ball, or tie my shoe! She laughed at me a lot, not in a malicious way, but because she genuinely got a kick out of me! She was truly one of my favorite people in the world! There didn't seem to be a mean bone in her body. She was a devoted Christ-follower and I respected and looked up to her on a spiritual level as well. Eventually she grew up to be a beautiful young woman, and when I was 11 or 12, she graduated from High School and 3 mos. later left home to attend Bible school. She would come home to visit, but not often, because it was just so far away, so I missed her terribly! In a year or two, she met a young man there at her school, they fell in love, and soon got married. He was an excellent athlete, and had received an athletic scholarship to a much larger school in Tennessee to play basketball for them. So he hauled my sister along down there while he played basketball and earned his free college degree. After he graduated, they moved back up north because he was then hired by the Bible school where he and my sister had met, to be that school's Athletic Director. By that time 5 years had passed and I had graduated high school and was a freshman student there at that same school. I was busy with my schoolwork and with my friends that year, but found the time occasionally to walk over to their house just to hang out. But one time, my brother in law was gone for the evening, and it was just me and my sister. She had never shared with *anyone* the struggles that they had encountered in their first five years of marriage. But that night she got real with me and confessed that it had not been easy for them at all. I remember that I was shocked – horrified actually! But I also remember that she did not blame her husband. She blamed herself. She said to me, "*Kurt, somehow being married has brought out the worst in me. I see dark things coming out of myself that I never even knew could possibly exist there! I did not know I was capable of such things!*" I remember being dumbstruck! She was the best person I had ever known, and even she was subject to character flaws!



Did that make her *not* a good person? No, of course not. She was still as kind, generous, accepting, and just plain good, as she had always been. But when the Bible says that “*All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*”, it dawned on me that this meant her and good people like her also! It drove home the point to me that only Jesus was perfectly good – that only his judgment is without error and His responses without unjust omissions, or bias, or self-centeredness, or irregularities of any kind. His behavior was always filled with **grace** at the appropriate times, for instance, deflecting the guilt of the woman caught in adultery. But then his **condemnation** burst forth when confronted with the hypocrisy of the religious establishment – “*Woe to you, hypocrites, you painted tombs... On the outside they are beautiful, but on the inside are filled with dead men’s bones and everything unclean!*” Christ practically gave those men stokes as their blood pressure went through the roof in their indignation and anger! They had NEVER been talked to like that before! But confrontation was the only possible way to break through their tough self-protective layers. It was the right thing to do, and Jesus did not hesitate doing the right thing – that which was appropriate and ultimately good!



Do you believe that judgment can be good?! Nowadays, in our weird culture, exercising judgment and condemnation is seen by most to be bad! We don’t want to hurt anyone’s feelings. But it is only **judgmentalism** that is bad – that weird but very human preoccupation with *other people’s* flaws, mistakes, and sins. This “*ism*” **IS** a bad thing! But assessing that someone’s behavior, attitude, lifestyle, choices, are blatantly or obviously wrong is absolutely essential to our walk with God, and even our walk with God together in the church! Goodness is not the suspension of good moral judgement and/or condemnation of bad behavior! In fact, it is a necessary functioning element of goodness. On a cautionary note however, being that we are not Jesus, and we do not know all things, or have all the facts – and may not even have an accurate grasp of the facts that we think we have,.. it is important for us to be very careful and reluctant to condemn others. So we generally exercise this part of goodness only when it is blatantly obvious and when the arrogance of not-repentance is involved! And then, too, only regarding that which pertains to fellow Christians! Only they are under the rule of Christ and we should be able to expect them to behave in a particular manner! But in most instances, we have no business condemning the bad behavior of those outside of Christ, for they do not know any better. It is pure foolishness to hold them to a higher standard. We are only offensive in such cases and give needless and relationship-destroying offense!

We need to bring people to saving faith in Jesus, not condemn them for not being there yet! And if we do condemn them it will certainly make it harder to *EVER* bring them to saving faith in Christ! So let's write this down so that we can eyeball it and better put it into memory. What is goodness?

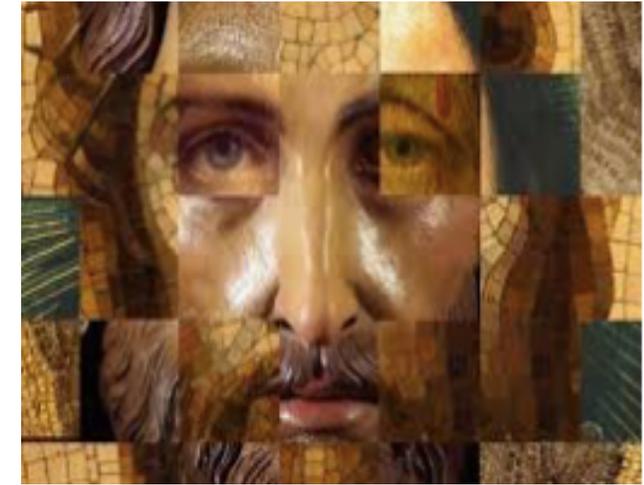
~ Making the right ethical/moral decisions that guide one's behavior and drive one's attitude. It effects how we treat others and how we manage ourselves.

~ Being humble enough to have a clear look inside ourselves, judge ourselves, find our own flaws and hypocrisies, and admit when and where we have been wrong and to seek forgiveness and make amends with God and people! This is a huge part of "goodness"!

~ Finally, goodness has to do with using good judgment without judgementalism. It is not dodging the responsibility to call a spade a spade – in other words – to speak truthfully, being frank and direct about the matter - even if it is not popular or if it is considered impolite to do so. But on a cautionary note, I've known people who are insufferable with their honesty. Most people can hardly stand to be around them! We need to judge others and to voice our judgement of their words or acts *very sparingly indeed*, and, really, ONLY when there is no other option!

Our pattern is God. God is our judge, but the scriptures clearly reveal that He would much rather exercise His love and grace upon us than His judgment. and wrath! The good are quick to judge simply because we know what good and bad is - especially in the obvious things. In the not-so-obvious things we are *not* quick to judge! We must take our time, investigate, ruminate, pray for wisdom. But there is also the fact that people who practice goodness - being well aware of their own sins, deficiencies, and hypocrisies – are slow to voice their condemnation for fear of playing the hypocrite!

~One more thing - we also need to do our due diligence to hear two sides of the story or maybe three sides or more, before making a judgment. Justice requires it, and justice is a huge part of goodness. The good are just and the good are fair!



Finally, the text says to add to our goodness, **knowledge**. I have spoken to this issue a number of times of late because the text really emphasizes the importance and value of the knowledge of God in the mind and life of the Christ-follower! The information we possess about God (information contained ONLY in the scriptures) is our foundation for everything else – namely the fruit of the Spirit! This section says that the knowledge of God is given by God’s own glory and goodness. He has called people to Himself at the cross of Jesus, and to those that have responded in faith and trust, He has entrusted to His people the essential pieces of Himself that we need to follow Christ (“**life and godliness**”). He has revealed His character in His word by what He has done, and insists that we live in a way that shadows His character. He is God, and as God He is a certain way, and He wants us to be that way also – to be like Him! We were created “**in the image of God**”, if you remember. Our first forefather and mother made a terrible decision to make the human race in our OWN image! Our sorry, sordid, and slimy human history tells us that was a most horrific decision! God wants to put us back on track to being fashioned in **His** image. When we come over to His side, He gives us His Holy Spirit to augment His desire to bring us back to Himself and to serve His purpose to accomplish a lot more of that! The Spirit, as I said last week, makes living the life of God possible. God has made the Spirit a NECESSITY! The Spirit is our advantage, and without Him *being* like Jesus and *living* like Jesus is not even close to being possible! But **with** Him speaking to us from the inside - and with Him reminding us of the will of God as it is revealed in the scriptures – and with Him lending us power to conquer sin, and with Him lending us courage and boldness to fearlessly pursue the lost and retrieve them and bring them to Jesus – God has come alongside and made it possible! But not without **dependence** upon Him. It is the opposite of *independence*! Independence, living in our own image is what got us in such a mess in the first place. God, therefore, requires **dependence** if we would follow Jesus and enter into the changed and transformed life! Every day, cast yourself upon Him from the minute you get up in the morning until you lay your head upon the pillow at night! Get over yourself and let **Him** do what He wants with you. **THAT** is “**godliness**”!



And then, finally, it says to “**make every effort to add to your faith,..**” This is a miracle of God in which we are expected to participate and exercise our self-discipline to hold ourselves in check and to cooperate with the Spirit!