

Pursue Radical Goodness, part 2 of From Election to Perfection
October 12, 2014

We would like to encourage you to memorize the scripture passage that we are working through in this sermon series. Let's read it together.

2 Peter 1:5-8 (NIV)"Make every effort to add to your faith, goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I want to be effective and productive in my knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. I want my life to make a difference for the kingdom of God. I want to prove the genuineness of my conversion. I want all of you to be effective and productive Christians too.

Peter is writing this letter to Christians. He assumes they are saved, that they have faith. So he doesn't say to get faith or add faith. We start with faith. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the Savior God sent to provide redemption from sin, that Jesus was raised from the dead, ascended up to heaven, and is returning one day to gather all Christians to Himself. We have faith.

Now we are to grow in Christian virtues that prove our faith. So he boldly tells us...

2 Peter 1:5 (NIV) ... make every effort to add to your faith **goodness**;

It is easy to skip over this characteristic. Everyone here is a good person. In fact you may even be above average good. But Peter, and God, is calling for much more than above average goodness. This is calling for radical goodness. This is calling us to excel at goodness. Let me explain.

In the New Testament there are two Greek words that are usually translated with the English words "good, goodness, or goodly". One appears 100 times and the other 102 times.

(***kah-lōhs* = 100 occurrences in NT; *a-gah-thōhs* = 102 in NT; *air-eh-tay* = 3 in NT)**

The Greek word in our passage is a different Greek word. Some translations use the word "excellence" here instead of "goodness". They are trying to get across the idea that this is more than simple goodness. The Greek word here, *air-eh-tay*, appears only three times in the Bible. It appears in our passage and two others. Therefore it would help us grasp its unique meaning by looking at the other two passages in which it appears. The first is in Philippians.

Philippians 4:8 (NIV) Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is **excellent** or praiseworthy--think about such things.

Here we are encouraged to focus our minds, and thus our spirits, on the highest things. Be thinking about true things like the truth of salvation. Be thinking of noble things, like

the noble sacrifice of Jesus. Be thinking of what is right, which concerns justice. Think about pure things, focused, holy, clean. Think about what is lovely, like kindness and mercy. Think about what is admirable, like a good character. Then he sums all these up by describing them as excellent or praiseworthy. That word excellent is our word. It is speaking of radical goodness. It stands for the person with the highest morality. It refers to someone who is blameless, faultless. Comparing some people to others we might even call such a person perfect.

Indeed, this is how it is used in the next instance that we come across it in the Bible. It is, in fact, the opening of our 2 Peter passage.

2 Peter 1:3 (NIV) His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and **goodness**.

This is God's goodness. This is radical goodness. This is the same word that appears in verse 5. Make every effort to add to your faith THIS kind of goodness. Pursue the kind and level of goodness of God.

God's goodness is moral perfection. God is totally and completely moral, good, honest, faithful, trustworthy, true, etc. And while we might assume that such a thing is impossible for us to attain, look at the next verse.

2 Peter 1:4 (NIV) Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them **you may participate in the divine nature** and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

We can become like God in all of the ways mentioned in verses 5-7. All seven of those virtues are true of God and can become true of us. If we are truly Christians, they SHOULD become true of us.

So, this is not simple goodness, or even above average goodness. This is radical goodness. This is moral excellence that we are to add to our faith. Strive to be people of the highest moral character. Be COMPLETELY honest, COMPLETELY faithful, COMPLETELY trustworthy, COMPLETELY chaste, COMPLETELY true, etc. Average goodness is mostly honest, mostly faithful, mostly trustworthy, mostly chaste, and mostly true. Don't settle for average goodness. Don't settle for above average goodness. Go for radical goodness.

Is that truly possible? Yes it is. Otherwise, God would not have Peter to tell us to do so. Moreover, we see examples of it in the Bible.

Job 1:1 (NIV) In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless (complete) and upright (straight, not crooked) ; he feared God and shunned evil.

Noah too is described as a blameless man. But what does that look like in practical day-to-day living? Job tells us. He tells us because his old friends are accusing him of sin. So he reminds them of the kind of man he has been.

Job 29:11-17 (NIV) Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me, because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him.

The man who was dying blessed me; I made the widow's heart sing. I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger. I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth.

Job 30:25 (NIV) Have I not wept for those in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor?

Job was a man of good deeds, of kindness, benevolence, and justice.

He goes on to say that he has always been truthful and faithful in his commitments. He has not plotted against his neighbors, or sought what belonged to his neighbor. He has treated his servants fairly and well. Although he is the richest man around he has not trusted in his money for security but has trusted in God. He does not rejoice in any one's misfortune, even that of his enemy. (Job 31:5-34) Job was a man of faithful character, faithful to God, his wife, and his community.

That is radical goodness. That is what God wants of us. We should want this for each other, just as Paul writes to the Christians in the city of Philippi.

Philippians 1:9-11 (NIV) And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and **blameless** until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God.

There are a list of such passages in your outline for further study.

(Genesis 6:9; Psalm 15:1-5; Proverbs 11:20; 28:6; Ephesians 1:4; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Timothy 3:2-3; Titus 1:7-8; 2 Peter 3:14)

Some English translations of these passages use the word "perfect" instead of "blameless". Both words mean without fault, guiltless, innocent, above reproach. They mean that no one has any basis for claiming you did something wrong. Your character is exemplary. This shows in your words and behavior. And if God declares you blameless, He knows that goes for your heart as well. There is no fault to be found in your character.

This is what God wants in us. This is what we can help each other strive for. This is what we look for in our leaders. One of the qualifications for leaders in the church is that they be blameless, above reproach.

If you would prove your conversion in Jesus as genuine, then pursue radical goodness.

After getting a clearer picture of the word "goodness" in our 2 Peter 1 passage, you might need to adjust your self-evaluation from last week in the area of goodness.

To do that you need to **Establish personal protocols of goodness.**

The Ebola virus has been much in the news this week. I was watching a news report about American health workers being trained to go to West Africa to help. One health worker was being interviewed. The reporter asked if he was afraid. He said he trusts in the protocol and works to do each step each time, not cutting corners, not hurrying. He was saying he was not afraid. He trusts in the process and will be diligent to do what keeps himself and others safe. Their protocols are steps of safe procedures. And they need to pursue radical adherence to those steps.

Some of you work in secure places, keeping national secrets or proprietary company secrets. You have security procedures to follow to keep such information secure. It is only as secure as you following the protocols.

We need to establish personal protocols of actions that will keep us safe and uphold behaviors of radical goodness.

Let me give you an example of a personal protocol.

Job 31:1 (NIV) I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.

Job established for himself how he would control his thinking and looking around young women. To pursue radical goodness we need to establish such protocols of thinking, speaking, and behavior for ourselves and be diligent in keeping them, not cutting corners, not taking short cuts, not stretching them, or letting them slide.

Have you ever worked somewhere that they put up a sign saying, "**Our company has had 37 days since our last accident/injury**"? It means they are not perfect. There have been accidents. There have been injuries. However, they are highlighting a continuing focus on preventing further ones. The sign is meant to remind you to be diligent and careful, to follow procedures and protocols.

You might do the same for your life.

- ___ days since I told a lie
- ___ days of total honesty
- ___ days without lusting
- ___ days of starting my day with Jesus
- ___ days of showing someone kindness

To some of you that seems silly. However, it may be just what some of you need in order to help you pursue radical goodness.

We need to establish habits that will become a blameless character in us. When you are home alone, what protocols will you follow to avoid temptation? One member told me just this week of losing control to ice cream if it is in the house. This person will eat a half gallon in two days. Therefore, this person's personal protocol for this temptation is not to buy it in the first place.

When you spend the night alone in a hotel room, what protocols will you follow? I read of one Christian man who battled the temptation to watch R rated movies when he was traveling. Therefore, he asked his best friend to hold him accountable after the trip by

asking him what he watched in the hotel room. Knowing his friend was going to ask him and that he would not lie to his best friend was the strength he needed to avoid temptation.

When you are sick or irritable, what procedures will you follow to stay treat your family members lovingly? When you are out with friends, what protocols will you follow to guard yourself from negative peer pressure? When you are watching TV or surfing the web, what protocols will guard you from temptation to go where you should not?

The church insurance company sent us an email for Fire Safety month. The article had a checklist of fire danger areas. Reading the article served as a good reminder of fire danger areas and practices. A good next step is to make a physical inspection of the building looking for possible problems. The radical step then is to take steps to prevent a possible problem. We do not want to wait until there is an obvious problem.

Do the same in your life. Do not wait until someone accuses you of lying to work on your honesty. Do not wait until you dabble with sexual sin to work on that. Do not wait until someone accuses you of compromising your integrity before you take sin seriously.

Be proactive. Establish personal protocols for your life.

In this way, you will pursue radical goodness. Don't just be good. Don't just be better than average. Be good like God is good. Be moral like God is moral. Be blameless like God is blameless. Build such a reputation as that kind of person.

Sure, you are not blameless now. But like the company sign about how many days since the last accident, give yourself a fresh start. When you fall, pray it to God and start again. But don't stop counting. Don't stop pursuing radical goodness.

Jesus said to return good for evil. If someone seeks your harm, seek his health. If someone wants war with you, seek peace with her. If someone threatens you, offer to help. Charles Spurgeon wrote that someone threatened to write lies about a friend of his, publish the lies in a pamphlet, and then pass them around the community. Spurgeon's friend told the man that he should not have to go to such expense for something concerning someone else. He offered to pay for the pamphlet. The man was shocked, refused the help, and backed down from his threat. Jesus says to pursue radical goodness, returning good for evil.

Thus, when we pursue radical goodness we are becoming like Jesus.

Pursue radical goodness to reflect Jesus to those around you.

Pursue radical goodness to prove your faith as genuine.

Do not talk yourself out of it. Do not tell yourself that you cannot get any better, so why try. God would not tell you to do something that is impossible. Make every effort to add to your faith radical goodness and so prove your faith to be genuine.

Pursue radical goodness to affect those around you.

People are watching you. Your parents are watching you. Your children are watching you. Your friends are watching you. Your coworkers are watching you. Radical goodness gets noticed. They may not like it. They may not agree with it. But it gets

noticed. It draws attention to you. You can use this to draw attention to Jesus. So pursue radical goodness. It will affect those around you.

You do not want to be ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, do you?

You see that becoming a Christian is not a matter of just thinking differently. Becoming a Christian is not just a matter of believing certain things to be true about Jesus. Becoming a Christian is to embark on a journey. Jesus will lead you on a life journey towards being a different kind of person than you are today.

First, He will give you a new heart. Second, He will forgive you of your sins. Third, He will write your name in the book of life enabling you to inherit heaven. Fourth, He will lead you toward becoming a new person, a person who resembles Himself in character. You will share in His divine nature.

However, it cannot happen until you admit your sin and received Jesus as Savior and Lord. Won't you do that today?