

NBC Devotional
January 19, 2022
“God's Grace Through Us”

NBC's statement of mission is about preparing adults to Evangelize, Disciple, and Minister in their setting. This is front and center for NBC.

Paul, in Ephesians 2:1-9, tells us that we are saved by faith. In the Church of the Nazarene, we have identified three core values. Paul is getting at our first core value, and that is, that we are a Christian people. We receive by faith what God has done for us.

Much of American Christianity will say that this is the Gospel message. This is what God did for us. We receive salvation by faith. God counts us as righteous, and we are good to go. Of course, there are some things in the scripture that we need to do as Christians. But the real essence of the Gospel is found in what God has done for us, by His love, by His grace, and we are in. That is how it was first explained to me in High School from some good Christian friends.

What sets us apart as Nazarene's, though, is that we don't believe that this is all there is to salvation. We don't believe that is all there is to the Gospel. God has done something for us, but He does not stop there. Look at what Paul says next, *“For we are God's handiwork”* - *“We are God's masterpiece.”* (Ephesians 2:10a). We become God's glorious example of His grace, showing off what good work He has done in us - A shining example in the heavenlies - His work is demonstrated in us.

In the Church of the Nazarene, we don't just believe that God has done something for us, by His love, by His grace, but He wants to do something in us by His love, by His grace, that we never could do for ourselves. We are a Christian people believing what God has done for us. And we are a holiness people that believes in saying yes to what God wants to do in us. Wouldn't it be a tragedy if the Gospel only said that God did something for us and then left us unchanged? In essence, leaving us like we were before He did that great thing for us. We don't believe that Jesus died on the cross, rose again, and ascended into heaven, so that we could just go on being what we have always been - a Gospel that changes our eternal destination but doesn't change our character and the quality of our life.

Holiness is not an additional add-on, like leather seats in a car. There is no difference in getting me to my destination if I have leather seats or not. Leather seats are an add-on. Some treat holiness like leather seats, optional add-on equipment to the Christian life. Holiness of heart and life is essential to the Gospel. This sets us apart from the majority of American Christianity. Everyone who believes in God and walks with Him, will be led by His Holy Spirit into all the good He has for us, as we say yes to Him - Saying yes to what He does for us and what He does in us.

Paul goes on to say, *“...created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”* (Ephesians 2:10) First Paul hammers that we are not saved by works; we are saved by grace. But then He says, we are saved FOR good works. We say we are a Christian people who believe in what God has done for us; we are a Holiness people that God wants to

work in us; and we also are Missional people that God wants to work through us. It is by His grace that we can't do this for ourselves, and we don't deserve to be on His team. This is critical to who we are as Nazarene's.

We are Christian, Holiness, and Missional. Let's set those over here and then think about Nazarene Bible College's mission statement that we are Evangelism, Discipleship, and Ministry. That is pretty good symmetry. That puts us in the heart of where our denomination was founded to be. We prepare people for evangelism, to share the story of what God has done for us. We also equip people in a journey of discipleship to experience the holiness of God in their lives. They become an embodiment of His holiness in this world. And you can't be filled by the presence of God without being moved by the mission of God. We say yes to what God has done for us; we say yes to what God has done in us; and we say yes to what God wants to do through us.

It is essential that we continue to say yes and exercise faith in Him. This takes effort. However, effort does not equal earning. An example of this, is receiving a free gift given to you. You still have to unwrap it, assemble it, read the instructions on how to use it, and use it. Does this mean you worked for this gift? No, it was free, but you had to put effort into knowing how to use it. We have to cooperate with the gift giver. It doesn't mean that we deserved it.

That is what we believe we do with God in what He wants to do in us and through us. We believe all the yeses are essential to the Gospel; And yes, it takes effort to be in relationship with God, to get up in the morning and read His Word, to put a prayer list together and pray, to engage with people in Christian fellowship, and to be in Christian discipleship, to disciple others and to worship and prepare for worship. We are not earning anything by doing this, just cooperating with the gift giver.

This is why our school exists to prepare people for evangelism, discipleship and ministry. Effort does not equal earning. To be on mission in our organization and in our personal life, we need to cooperate with Him in the gifts He has given us.

Dr. Scott J. Sherwood, NBC President