Hebrews 12:14

We need holiness…

1 Corinthians 1:30 - God has united you with Christ Jesus.

For our benefit, God made him to be wisdom itself.

We (the world, your church, your job, you home/family) benefits every time a sinner repents and is made right with God.

Purity, holiness, and freedom from sin is what our world needs more of, not less …

The question is, why do some believers (like these at Corinth) still seem to struggle with being free from sin, since Christ made them, pure, holy and set them free from sin?

Now… Before we begin judging…

It really boils down to what & why one believes.

Either Jesus is has redeemed us, or He has not! Amen?

Either Jesus has paid the ultimate price with His life on the Cross to buy us back from sin, second death, hell & the grave, or He has not.

What’s the key to getting it right and getting off of the treadmill of sin?

Romans 12:1 - I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

The writer (Paul) is telling us that the proper response to God’s mercy that He has shown, is to devote yourself entirely to God and live a holy life that He accepts (just like Paul). That is true spiritual worship.

What a different world it would be if more Christians devoted themselves to God as Paul did…

But in reality it’s God who is actually making this appeal to believers…

“In light of the incredible mercies that I have shown you… offer yourself as a living sacrifice.” One that is Holy and acceptable to the Lord.

Dee & I had received Christ as our Savior and gave ourselves and our family to be discipled through a “Free Will Baptist Church”.

This gave a healthy “spine” and “backbone” to our “born again” life in Christ.

The Lord moved us on and we spent a few years teaching/discipling others in a Southern Baptist church…

But it wasn’t until we walked into a Church of the Nazarene in 2003 and asked the pastor for their “Articles of Faith”, and to summarize the beliefs of the Church of the Nazarene.

That’s when we were finally able to connect the dots Spiritually.

* We needed holiness.
* We needed God, thru Christ, by the power of His Spirit and the eternal Word… help us understand what it means to live a pure and holy life, free from sins power, purpose & presence.
* And some Christians still struggle with that today; what does the “new person” look like that the Holy Spirit produces?
* Love self?
* Obey self?
* Please self?
* Provide for self?
* Protect self at all costs?

That sounds a lot like what Jesus came to die and save us from?

My mom had an old saying that she used on me occasionally…

“Act your age, not your shoe size!” I might have been a size 5 at the time… Now I take an 11!

But still acting like an 11 year old (or whatever your size is), at your age is not a good idea…

But that’s what can happen when Christians don’t sacrifice to give themselves to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, who grows us up Spiritually.

Another wise old saying that I’ve heard is: wisdom doesn’t always come with age, sometimes age shows up all by itself…

Getting older physically brings with it no guarantee of Spiritual maturity or Spiritual wisdom… But both are signs of a “born again”, Holy life in Christ.

Read - Hebrews 5:11-6:1

God, through the inspired writer is saying…

1. A Holy Faith - Produces

* Greater Spiritual understanding V11
* Teaches others V12
* Maturity in God’s Word is visible V13-14
* The ability to distinguish between “good & evil”. V14

Not right and wrong because those definitions are changing rapidly with every generation.

Good is Godly, beneficial for God’s Kingdom.

Evil is that which benefits the enemy of God.

* Going deeper Spiritually – advancing from the need to be coddled by the milk of God’s Word and moving on to the meat of living. 6:1

If you are blessed by God’s love in the Scripture (as all of His children should be).

A HOLY faith produces Spiritual eyes to:

* See God is preparing you.
* Preparing you for divine appointments every day to be God’s love and to share God’s love within your sphere of influence and beyond. Not just living, but living for Christ.

Let’s drill that down a little more…

How many here this morning might admit to being raised up in a “legalistic” faith environment?

I’ve had a couple of people ask me last week about legalism, so I thought it would be helpful to address it publicly in this message.

The definition of legalism is dependence on moral law rather than a personal relationship with Jesus/faith.

Stress obedience apart from faith and you produce legalism".

That is not living for Jesus…

Man’s way… produces something that repels people from Jesus.

God’s way… produces something beautiful, something good, something that blesses the world.

* God’s way (as Jesus said in John 14:15) is to devote oneself to God because they love Him… in light of the tremendous love, mercy, grace and forgiveness He has shown.
* He is the only God to sacrifice His life for you.
* Dee and I have been doing our morning devotions in Psalm 91. Every day we walk away encouraged, blessed and highly favored, because of the protection, provision and purpose that God promises.
* We can look back on our life and see where God has been there for us every step of the way. And He makes the same promise to every believer.
* He is the only one worthy of such obedient love.
* Mankind’s legalistic way produces forced obedience to God’s Word as a means of Salvation.
* Thereby disrespecting God and His Son. That’s not love…

We are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone! Ephesians 2:8-9

When I was 14, I attended a legalistic church with my friend and his family.

After that service I swore that I would never step foot in another church again… And didn’t until Dee and I got married.

Then God saved me and made me a pastor…

As the old saying goes, if you want to make God laugh… tell Him your plans.

Man’s idea of holiness produces negative responses like anger, resentment, hostility…

If you see them in your life, repent, and seek God for a soul saving, life changing relationship, thru the Son, Jesus Christ.

Another important question that is was asked last week that we need to explore was…, what is sin?

The Church of the Nazarene answer is: A willful violation of the written (known) Word of God.

The Baptist definition is: Doing something that God’s Word says not to, or not doing something It says to do (omission/commission).

My personal definition is sort of a combination of the two: Since Jesus summed up the Law with the “Great Commandment” to love God & neighbor as we love ourselves…

If it hurts Jesus, it will hurt others (those He died for), and eventually it will yourself, it is sin.

When what we say/do aligns with Scripture contextually, and Jesus is blessed… all three will be blessed.

Holy faith produces a concern for how our choices will impact Jesus, others and ourselves.

And we act accordingly…

Dr. God has a prescription in His Word for everything and every situation to keep us making better and better life choices that wind up “make life better”.

Following God as He intended will allow Him to produce a much greater impact on our world than we are currently seeing.

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Will close today with an illustration from a class that I’m going to be taking soon.

This statement was made by Aristides (an ancient Athenian Statesmen) in 137 AD, was asked to explain to the emperor, who the Christians were that he kept hearing about.

In doing so, he outlined a vision of how Christians should be known in their families, their neighborhoods, their churches, their work place, etc…

“It is the Christians, oh emperor, who have sought and found the truth, for they acknowledge God.

* They do not keep for themselves the goods entrusted to them.
* They do not covet what belongs to others.
* They show love to their neighbors.
* They do not do to another what they would not wish to have done to themselves.

They speak gently to those who oppress them, and in this way they make them their friends.

* It has become their passion to do good to their enemies.
* They live in the awareness of their smallness.
* Every one of them who has anything, gives ungrudgingly to the one who has nothing.
* If they see a traveling stranger, they bring him under their roof.
* They rejoice over him as over a real brother, for they do not call one another brothers after the flesh, but they know they are brothers in the spirit and in God.
* If they hear that one of them is imprisoned or oppressed for the sake of Christ, they take care of all of his needs.
* If possible they set him free.
* If anyone among them is poor or comes into want while they themselves have nothing to spare, they fast for two or three days so the poor man can have food to eat.

This, oh emperor, is the rule of life for the Christians, and this is their manner of life.”

Now… We live in a very difficult, very different postmodern,

post- Christian context.

And by no means am I saying that we get it right all of the time, but when we love God, rely on the power of His Holy Spirit and His word…

We leave a trail of faithfulness and hope that others will see… and see the value in following…

Perhaps one day people around us… will say similar words about us and New Beginnings Church of the Nazarene.

Do you possess a Holy Faith that produces…?

Closing Song