

Whatever Happened to the Gospel?

BEYOND CULTURE WARS BY MICHAEL S. HORTON

What a title...or open question: “whatever happened to the Gospel?”!

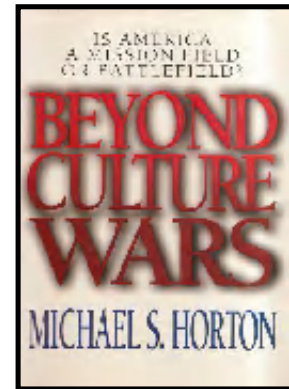
To begin the answer the question is to first consider “the staggering moral crisis of our society”; second, to consider how Christians (or the church) may respond to this moral crisis.

In his search for the answer, Michael offers some reminders of the Law (the Law of God); in short, that God’s expectation for adherence to the Law has not exception or limitations among the believers; or in other words, that **“He requires the original righteousness with which we were created.”** If this be true, how can any human be accountable to perfection or complete “original righteousness”?

Well, the answer is the Gospel...

Mr. Horton explains:

If by trusting exclusively in the perfect obedience and satisfaction of Christ’s life, death and resurrection, I am clothed in the very righteousness of Christ Himself, even God cannot find a spot or blemish in me. Thus, **we are justified not by the Holy Spirit within us, in our heart, but by Christ working for us nearly 2,000 years...** a gift given through faith alone on account of Christ alone.



The risk of misunderstanding the Gospel occurs in the treatment or response to the Law. Michael concludes: **“We have softened the Law** and, consequently, trivialized the Gospel to the point where the distinction is rarely made in preaching and teaching.

Stepping back in time to the great moral crusades in our country, the author sets the backdrop for a tendency to be “caught up in the cause of civil righteousness” with such fervor and conviction so as to miss the mission of the church – to reach the lost and bring them to worship God.

One example he uses in this “cause” is the push for prayer in public schools – where the risk or strong possibility becomes a government-sponsored program with all its trappings. In his insight on this “cause” or objective, Michael comments:

The danger in hitching the Gospel wagon to the shooting stars of economic, political, social, religious, or national custom lies not in choosing the *correct* secular path to take for the Gospel’s success, but in choosing to take any of the alternative paths at the fork in the road.

H. Kirk Rainer

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Okay, what does he mean by alternatives...”the fork in the road”? **Should the Gospel be attached to the “cause” for social reform** – the push to reform America...or is there another choice at this juncture or fork? Should all believers be Republican or, by *some miracle*, can a Democrat be a Christian too?

Whereas the social gospel – and its deviations – brings obvious division among the populace, the Gospel does not; no, the Gospel puts everyone *on the same playing field* – a place where on faith can mean the difference between depravity and righteousness. Michael maintains:

The cross, not cultural victory, has at last brought us together, we who are so hostile to one another. **This is the vision God has of building His kingdom** – through the proclamation of the Gospel, not through the rhetoric and actions of war.

He continues by explaining some confusion (among Christians):

We have confused civil righteousness (righteousness before our neighbor) with spiritual righteousness (righteousness before God) by confusing moral and political crusades with the advance of Christ’s Gospel and kingdom.

In this confusion is the notion that a national revival is essential to the Gospel – and though the Gospel is dependent on a countries’ reformation rather than the sovereign work of God in individual lives, souls. In this “strategy of works-righteousness” is what called Michael calls a ‘disaster’.