

***The Gospel-Driven Life (Being Good News People in a Bad News World)*** by Michael Horton, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2009 (6 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

## **Introduction**

### **1. The Church receives life from God.**

It is not merely that there is a gospel and then a community made up of people who believe it; the gospel creates the kind of community that is even now an imperfect preview of the kingdom's marriage feast that awaits us. The church is its own culture, not only with its distinct story and doctrine, but with its own "politics" and means. Consistent with the message that it proclaims, the church is *receiving* its life, identity, growth, and expansion from above rather than *creating* these for itself and from its own resources.

Distinguished from all religions, spiritualities, and philosophies of life, the Christian faith is, at its heart, a *gospel* (meaning "Good News"). The church originates, flourishes, and fulfills its mission as that part of God's world that has been redeemed and redefined by this strange announcement that seems foolish and powerless to the rest of the world. In other words, every believer – and the church corporately – has passed from death to life by being made a recipient of God's activity. [Page 11]

### **Chapter 1. The Front-Page God – Checking the headlines.**

#### **2. Christ's Resurrection is a Historical Fact.**

Unique among all religious claims, the gospel is an announcement about certain historical events. At its heart, then, Christianity is not a resource for spirituality, religion, and morality, but a dramatic story at the heart of which is the claim that during the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Jesus was crucified for our sins and, after three days, was raised bodily from the dead. As we will see, the arguments for his resurrection are eminently reasonable – more reasonable, in fact, than alternative explanations. The apostle Paul told the Corinthians that if Christ was not raised, then we are not saved. No other religion makes its validity wholly dependent on a historical fact. [Page 19]

#### **3. The Gospel Corrects Our Spiritual Infirmities.**

Paul and his fellow apostles knew that they were by nature – like the rest of us – bent in on themselves. And picking up on a phrase from Augustine, the Protestant Reformers said that as fallen sinners we are all "curved in on ourselves." Born with a severe case of spiritual scoliosis, our spines are twisted so that all we can see are our own immediate felt needs, desires, wants, and momentary gratifications. But the gospel

makes us stand erect, looking up to God in faith and out to the world and our neighbors in love and service. Not every piece of news can do that, but gospel can. [Page 20]

#### **4. The Good News Saves us from Ourselves.**

The heart of most religions is good advice, good techniques, good programs, good ideas, and good support systems. These drive us deeper into ourselves, to find our inner light, inner goodness, inner voice, or inner resources. Nothing *new* can be found inside of us. There is no inner rescuer deep down in my soul; I just hear echoes of my own voice telling me all sorts of crazy things to numb my sense of fear, anxiety, and boredom, the origins of which I cannot truly identify. But the heart of Christianity is *Good News*. It comes not as a task for us to fulfill, a mission for us to accomplish, a game plan for us to follow with the help of life coaches, but as a report that someone else has already fulfilled, accomplished, followed, and achieved everything for us. Good advice may *help* us in daily direction; the Good News concerning Jesus Christ *saves* us from sin's quilt and tyranny over our lives and the fear of death. It's Good News because it does not depend on us. It is about God and his faithfulness to his own purposes and promises. [Page 20]

#### **5. Loving God and Our Neighbor Is the Not the Gospel.**

However, as crucial as the law remains as the revelation of God's *moral* will, it is different from the revelation of God's *saving* will. We are called to love God and neighbor, but that is not the *gospel*. Christ need not have died on a cross for us to know that we should be better people. It is not that moral exhortations are wrong, but they do not have any power to bring about the kind of world that they command. These exhortations and directions may be good. If they come from the Word of God, they are in fact *perfect*. But they are not the gospel. [page 21]

#### **6. God's Law Guides Us.**

In fact, once the gospel reconfigures our whole take on reality, it even opens us up to God's law again as the concrete expression of God's moral will for our relationship to him and to each other. No longer condemning us, it guides us. Thus, even the law itself is given its due when we strip it of our cleverly devised additions and no longer rely on our own obedience. *Trusting in Christ* as he is clothed in his gospel, we are *guided by the law* without any fear of our failures provoking its judgment. Religious programs and outreach strategies might create a genuine "cross-cultural" community that gathers the generations, races, rich and poor around Christ and his feast of grace. [page 22]

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