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R. C. SPROUL

How Can I Be Right with God?

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Chapter One

After Darkness, Light

In the old city of Geneva, Switzerland, there is a large park on the grounds of the University of Geneva that commemorates the Reformation. That park is adorned with a huge wall, called the International Monument to the Reformation or simply the Reformation Wall. In statues and bas-reliefs, the wall depicts figures from the Reformation including John Calvin, John Knox, William Farel, and Theodore Beza. Surrounding these and other statues, the

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motto of the Reformation is inscribed on each side: *post tenebras lux*—after darkness, light.

This phrase refers not only to the unveiling and liberation of the Scriptures—which were made available to the common people during the Reformation—but also to the loss and recovery of the most important biblical doctrine there is: the doctrine of justification by faith alone. This was the primary and central issue of the Protestant Reformation. During the dispute between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics, both sides saw that justification was so important that no compromise was possible. Both sides were convinced that what was at stake in the doctrine of justification was the very essence of the biblical gospel. When the gospel is at stake, everything is at stake, because the gospel tells us how we can be right with God.

In Galatians 1:6–9, Paul writes about the importance of getting the gospel right:

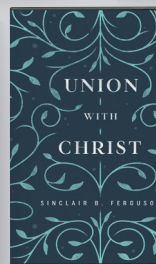
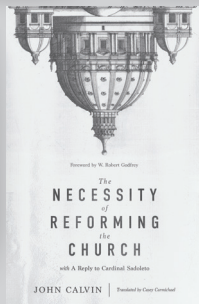
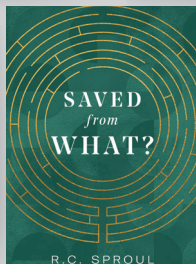
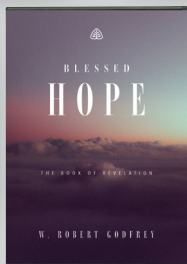
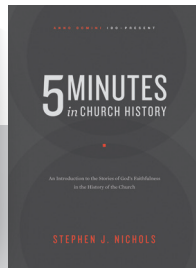
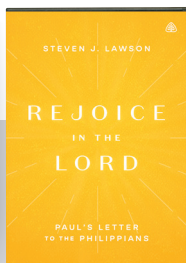
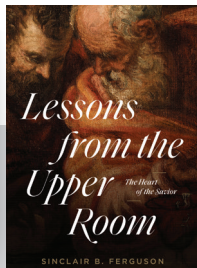
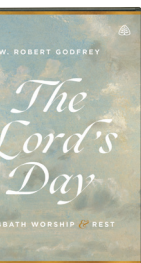
I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even

if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

This Apostle was a man who was constantly extolling the virtues of patience, gentleness, meekness, charity, and tolerance; who, conversely, constantly rebuked the sins of contentiousness, divisiveness, quarrelsome spirits, belligerence, and so on. This man said that we ought to strive as much as we possibly can to live at peace with all men; he was known as the Apostle of peace and unity. Yet suddenly he came to a point over a doctrine where he said, “There can be no toleration here. To tolerate the distortion of the gospel into another gospel is to tolerate the intolerable.”

The first thing that Paul did was express his amazement—not that the people had left the gospel that he had preached to them, but that they had done it so quickly. He was hardly gone from their midst before they wanted to listen to the teachings of the Judaizers, who insisted that one

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