



The R.C. Sproul Signature Classics

The R.C. Sproul Signature Classics

Volume I

THE HOLINESS OF GOD
CHOSEN BY GOD

R.C. SPROUL



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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Chosen by God

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THE HOLINESS OF GOD

For Kaki and Ryan
and to their generation,
that they may live during
a new reformation

Acknowledgments

My special thanks go to Wendell Hawley for his warm and kind encouragement on this project. If the book has any clarity, the credit must go to my wife, Vesta, who is my most ruthless and loving editor.

The Holy Grail

*Gaily bedight, a gallant knight
In sunshine and in shadow;
Riding along, singing a song,
In search of El Dorado.*

EDGAR ALLAN POE

I was compelled to leave the room. A deep, undeniable summons disturbed my sleep; something holy called me. The only sound was the rhythmic ticking of the clock on my desk. It seemed vague and unreal, as if it were in a chamber, submerged under fathoms of water. I had reached the beginning edge of slumber, where the line between consciousness and unconsciousness is blurred. I was suspended in that moment when one hangs precariously on the edge, a moment when sounds from the outside world still intrude on the quietness of one's brain, that moment just before surrender to the night occurs. Asleep, but not yet asleep. Awake, but not alert. Still vulnerable to the inner summons that said, "Get up. Get out of this room."

The summons became stronger, more urgent, impossible to ignore. A burst of wakefulness made me jerk upright and swing my legs over the side of the bed and onto the floor. Sleep vanished in an instant, and my body sprang into resolute action. Within seconds, I was dressed and on the way out of my college dormitory. A quick glance at the clock registered the time in my mind. Ten minutes before midnight.

The night air was cold, turning the snow of the morning to a hard-crust

blanket. I felt the crunch under my feet as I walked toward the center of campus. The moon cast a ghostly pall on the college buildings, whose gutters were adorned with giant icicles—dripping water arrested in space, solid daggers of ice that resembled frozen fangs. No human architect could design these gargoyles of nature.

The gears of the clock atop Old Main Tower began to grind, and the arms met and embraced vertically. I heard the dull groan of the machinery a split second before the chimes began to ring. Four musical tones signaled the full hour. They were followed by the steady, sonorous striking of twelve. I counted them in my mind, as I always did, checking for a possible error in their number. But they never missed. Exactly twelve strokes pealed from the tower like an angry judge's gavel banging on metal.

The chapel lay in the shadow of Old Main Tower. The door was made of heavy oak with a Gothic arch. I swung it open and entered the narthex. The door fell shut behind me with a clanging sound that reverberated from the stone walls of the nave.

The echo startled me. It was a strange contrast to the sounds of daily chapel services, where the opening and closing of the doors were muffled by the sounds of students shuffling to their assigned places. Now, the sound of the door was amplified into the void of midnight.

I waited for a moment in the narthex, allowing my eyes a few seconds to adjust to the darkness. The faint glow of the moon seeped through the muted stained-glass windows. I could make out the outline of the pews and the center aisle that led to the chancel steps. I felt a majestic sense of space, accented by the vaulted arches of the ceiling. They seemed to draw my soul upward, a sense of height that evoked a feeling of a giant hand reaching down to pick me up.

I moved slowly and deliberately toward the chancel steps. The sound of my shoes against the stone floor evoked terror-filled images of German soldiers marching in hobnailed boots along cobblestone streets. Each step resounded down the center aisle as I reached the carpet-covered chancel.

There I sank to my knees. I had reached my destination. I was ready to meet the source of the summons that had disturbed my rest.

I was in a posture of prayer, but I had nothing to say. I knelt there quietly, allowing the sense of the presence of a holy God to fill me. The beat of my

heart was telltale, a *thump-thump* against my chest. An icy chill started at the base of my spine and crept up my neck. Fear swept over me. I fought the impulse to run from the foreboding presence that gripped me.

The terror passed, but soon it was followed by another wave. This wave was different. It flooded my soul with unspeakable peace, a peace that brought instant rest and repose to my troubled spirit. At once I was comfortable. I wanted to linger there. To say nothing. To do nothing. Simply to bask in the presence of God.

That moment was life transforming. Something deep in my spirit was being settled once for all. From this moment there could be no turning back; there could be no erasure of the indelible imprint of its power. I was alone with God. A holy God. An awesome God. A God who could fill me with terror in one second and with peace in the next. I knew in that hour that I had tasted of the Holy Grail. Within me was born a new thirst that could never be fully satisfied in this world. I resolved to learn more, to pursue this God who lived in dark Gothic cathedrals and who invaded my dormitory room to rouse me from complacent slumber.

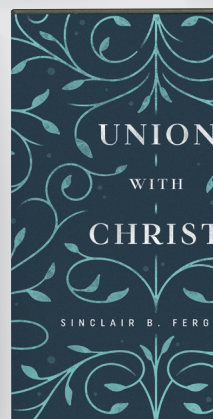
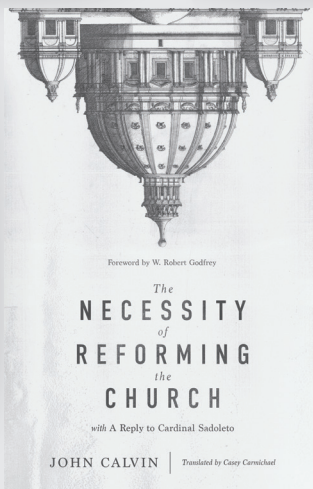
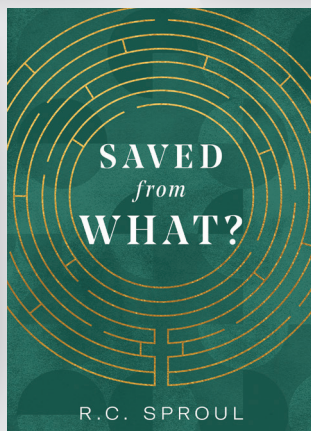
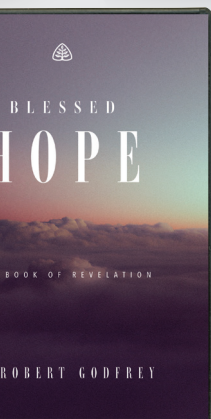
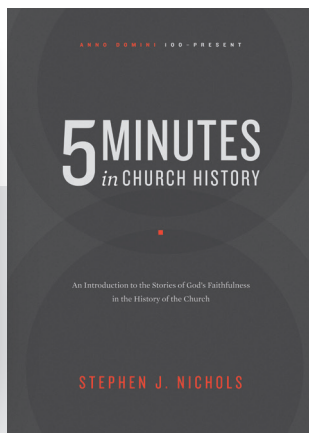
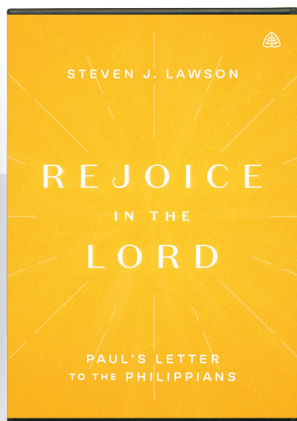
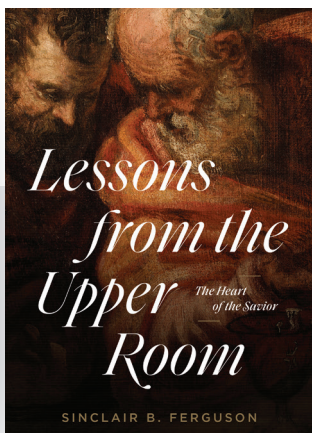
What makes a college student seek the presence of God in the late hours? Something happened in a classroom that afternoon that drove me to the chapel. I was a new Christian. My conversion had been sudden and dramatic, a replica for me of the Damascus Road. My life had been turned upside down, and I was filled with zeal for the sweetness of Christ. I was consumed with a new passion. To study Scripture. To learn how to pray. To conquer the vices that assaulted my character. To grow in grace. I wanted desperately to make my life count for Christ. My soul was singing, "Lord, I want to be a Christian."

But something was missing in my early Christian life. I had abundant zeal, but it was marked by a shallowness, a kind of simplicity that was making me a one-dimensional person. I was a Unitarian of sorts, a Unitarian of the second person of the Trinity. I knew who Jesus was, but God the Father was shrouded in mystery. He was hidden, an enigma to my mind and a stranger to my soul. A dark veil covered His face.

My philosophy class changed that.

It was a course that had held little interest for me. I could hardly wait to get the tedious requirement behind me. I had chosen to major in Bible

We want to see men and women around the world connect the deep truths of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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