

R.C. SPROUL

THE SON OF MAN

CAME TO

SEEK AND TO SAVE

THE LOST

LUKE

LUKE: AN EXPOSITIONAL COMMENTARY

“R.C. Sproul,’ someone said to me in the 1970s, ‘is the finest communicator in the Reformed world.’ Now, four decades later, his skills honed by long practice, his understanding deepened by years of prayer, meditation, and testing (as Martin Luther counseled), R.C. shares the fruit of what became perhaps his greatest love: feeding and nourishing his own congregation at St. Andrew’s from the Word of God and building them up in faith and fellowship and in Christian living and serving. Dr. Sproul’s expositional commentaries have all R.C.’s hallmarks: clarity and liveliness, humor and pathos, always expressed in application to the mind, will, and affections. R.C.’s ability to focus on ‘the big picture,’ his genius of never saying too much, leaving his hearers satisfied yet wanting more, never making the Word dull, are all present in these expositions. They are his gift to the wider church. May they nourish God’s people well and serve as models of the kind of ministry for which we continue to hunger.”

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President emeritus and professor of church history emeritus
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First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, South Carolina

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—Dr. Joel R. Beeke
President and professor of systematic theology and homiletics
Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan

LUKE

AN EXPOSITIONAL COMMENTARY

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R.C. SPROUL



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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SERIES PREFACE

When God called me into full-time Christian ministry, He called me to the academy. I was trained and ordained to a ministry of teaching, and the majority of my adult life has been devoted to preparing young men for the Christian ministry and to trying to bridge the gap between seminary and Sunday school through various means under the aegis of Ligonier Ministries.

Then, in 1997, God did something I never anticipated: He placed me in the position of preaching weekly as a leader of a congregation of His people—St. Andrew’s in Sanford, Florida. Over the past twelve years, as I have opened the Word of God on a weekly basis for these dear saints, I have come to love the task of the local minister. Though my role as a teacher continues, I am eternally grateful to God that He saw fit to place me in this new ministry, the ministry of a preacher.

Very early in my tenure with St. Andrew’s, I determined that I should adopt the ancient Christian practice of *lectio continua*, “continuous expositions,” in my preaching. This method of preaching verse-by-verse through books of the Bible (rather than choosing a new topic each week) has been attested throughout church history as the one approach that ensures believers hear the full counsel of God. Therefore, I began preaching lengthy series of messages at St. Andrew’s, eventually working my way through several biblical books in a practice that continues to the present day.

Previously, I had taught through books of the Bible in various settings, including Sunday school classes, Bible studies, and audio and video teaching series for Ligonier Ministries. But now I found myself appealing not so much to the minds of my hearers but to both their minds and their hearts. I knew that I was responsible as a preacher to clearly explain God’s Word *and* to show how we ought to live in light of it. I sought to fulfill both tasks as I ascended the St. Andrew’s pulpit each week.

What you hold in your hand, then, is a written record of my preaching labors amidst my beloved Sanford congregation. The dear saints who sit under

my preaching encouraged me to give my sermons a broader hearing. To that end, the chapters that follow were adapted from a sermon series I preached at St. Andrew's.

Please be aware that this book is part of a broader series of books containing adaptations of my St. Andrew's sermons. This book, like all the others in the series, will *not* give you the fullest possible insight into each and every verse in this biblical book. Though I sought to at least touch on each verse, I focused on the key themes and ideas that comprised the "big picture" of each passage I covered. Therefore, I urge you to use this book as an overview and introduction.

I pray that you will be as blessed in reading this material as I was in preaching it.

—R.C. Sproul
Lake Mary, Florida
April 2009

1

AN ORDERLY ACCOUNT

Luke 1:1–4



Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

Luke is mentioned in several places in the New Testament, not the least of which is in his own book of Acts where he served as a companion to the Apostle Paul in his missionary journeys. Luke was not only a doctor but also a missionary, a medical missionary who was a close companion and friend of the Apostle to the Gentiles, Saul of Tarsus. Luke was born and raised in Antioch, was of Gentile descent, and died in his eighties in a peaceful manner, unlike most of the other writers of the biblical narratives and epistles.

When I was last in Rome, we made a special visit to the Mamertine Prison where the Apostle Paul endured his second and final Roman imprisonment before his execution under that emperor, Nero, whose nickname was “the Beast.” The holding cell was situated across the street from the Roman forum. It was not a large prison but simply a large cistern that had been cut out of the rock

and originally had been used to keep a supply of water for the Romans. But, as history would have it, it was emptied of water and turned into a cell for those who were about to be executed. It was a moving experience to go down the stairs into that cistern, that dank, dark, cold, wet place where the great Apostle was held, and presumably there wrote his final letter to Timothy, whom he had left behind in Ephesus. In that epistle, Paul writes these final words:

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. (4:6–13)

He goes on to say in verses 17–18:

But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The last admonition to Timothy, in the New King James Version, is “Do your utmost to come before winter” (2 Tim. 4:21). In 2 Timothy 4, Paul essentially tells Timothy, “Come before winter, bring the parchments, bring my coat, and bring Mark because I am alone except for the Lord and for the beloved physician Luke.”

Luke the Historian

The last statement of the Apostle Paul speaks volumes about his companion who went with him on his missionary journeys and stood next to Paul in all the trials and tribulations that are recorded in the book of Acts. Most significantly, Luke stood side by side with Paul in that dreadful, dank prison cell. All the rest

had departed or fled. Luke, we know, was a physician and a missionary. But most importantly, Luke has emerged as one of the most important, if not the most important, historians of the ancient world.

As we look back at how he begins his Gospel, he acknowledges at the outset that others had taken time to give a narrative account of the things they knew of the person and work of Jesus. We have, survived to this day, the inspired writings of Matthew, Mark, and John. But, presumably besides those Gospel writers, there were others in the first century who tried their hand at writing a summary of the history of Jesus.

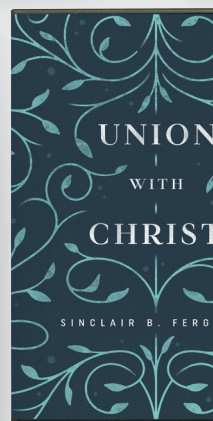
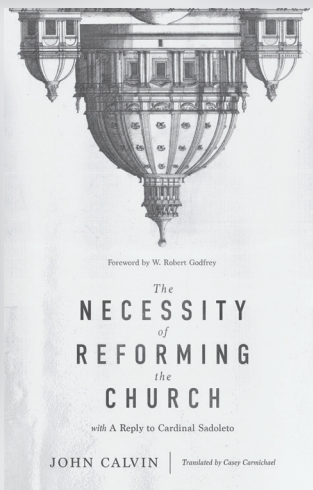
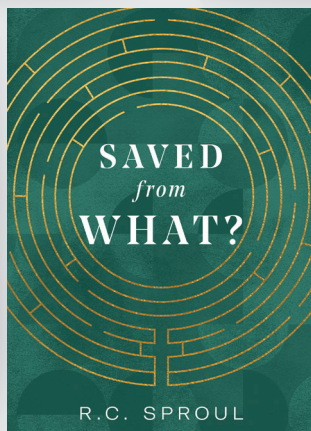
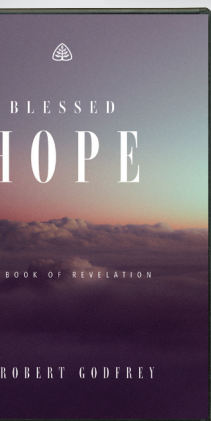
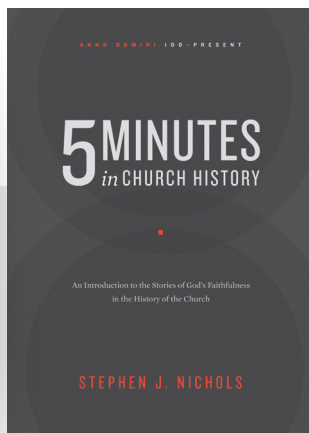
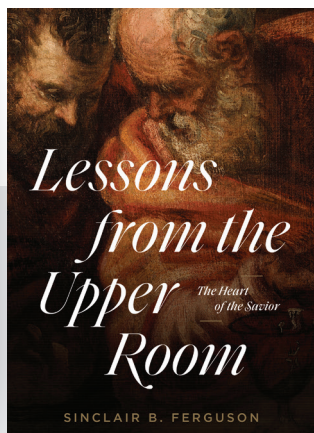
Luke acknowledges that at the beginning and makes it clear that he is aware that others have gone before him in this venture of providing a history. And so he says, **Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us** (vv. 1–2). Of course, Matthew and John were disciples. Mark was not one of the Twelve, but he was considered to be the amanuensis, or the secretary, of the Apostle Peter. Also, Luke was not a disciple, but he had been converted by the Apostles and had come under the tutelage of the great Apostle Paul.

So much of what Luke knows he gains from his association with Paul as well as with the others who were among the first disciples. This is those who, from the beginning, were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word. Luke is saying, “I am not an eyewitness, but I am a historian, and as a historian, I check the sources.” Luke gives us more information about the birth of Jesus than anybody else, and it’s with almost total certainty that we know Luke had the privilege of interviewing Mary, the mother of Christ. Luke said, “After we have received these from the eyewitnesses, it seemed good to me also, having had a complete understanding of all the things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus.”

There is a lot of conjecture about the one who is addressed here and also in the book of Acts. The name Theophilus means “friend or lover of God.” Some argue that the person who is mentioned here represents, in a certain way, “Christian everyman,” that there was no actual Theophilus. It seems, however, that Luke is addressing and dedicating this volume, as was commonplace in the ancient world, to a person of noble position. He is devoting or dedicating this to a man by the name of Theophilus because he calls him **most excellent Theophilus** (v. 3), which was a title given not to symbolic characters but rather to real historical persons.

Luke goes on to say the reason he’s writing is **that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught** (v. 4). That was his burden, and

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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