



SAVED  
*from*  
WHAT?

R.C. SPROUL

Saved from What?



S A V E D  
*from*  
W H A T ?

R . C . S P R O U L



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

*Saved from What?*

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For Dave and Maureen Buchman  
Friends, co-laborers, and kinsmen in the faith



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Part I

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SAVED  
*from*  
WHAT?



# SAVED *from* WHAT?

“Are you saved?”

I recall vividly a time more than three decades ago, in 1969, when I was asked this question.

These were the volatile days of the sixties—the era of the cultural revolution in America. I was a professor of theology at the Conwell School of Theology on the campus of Temple University in Philadelphia. The days were anything but halcyon. They were turbulent, marked by demonstrations against the war in Vietnam. Paroxysms of rage punctuated student protests and sit-ins. The academic world was in a state of unprecedented turmoil and upheaval. I recall trying to lecture above the din of bullhorns outside the classroom windows as I competed with the S.D.S. (Students for a Democratic Society) for my students’ attention.

On one such day, I sought an hour’s solace and quietude from this cacophony in the faculty dining room. I stretched my lunch hour to the limit in order to squeeze out every moment of peace I could enjoy.

## SAVED *from* WHAT?

As the noon hour ended, I deposited my lunch tray in the bin and began my trek across the plaza to my classroom. I was walking briskly to avoid being late. I was alone, minding my own business. Suddenly, apparently out of nowhere, a gentleman appeared in front of me, blocking my forward progress. He looked me in the eye and asked directly, “Are you saved?”

I wasn’t quite sure how to respond to this intrusion. I uttered in response the first words that came into my mind: “Saved from what?” What I was thinking, but had the grace not to say, was, “I’m certainly not saved from strangers buttonholing me, and asking me questions like yours.” But when I said, “Saved from what?” I think the man who stopped me that day was as surprised by my question as I had been by his. He began to stammer and stutter. Obviously, he wasn’t quite sure how to respond.

“Saved from what? Well, you know what I mean. You know, do you know Jesus?” Then he tried to give me a brief summary of the gospel.

This serendipitous encounter left an impression on me. I experienced real ambivalence. On the one hand, I was delighted in my soul that someone cared enough about me, even though I was a stranger, to stop me and ask about my salvation. But it was clear that, though this man had a zeal for salvation, he had little understanding of what salvation is. He was using Christian jargon. The words fell from his lips without being processed by his mind. As a result, his words were empty of content. Clearly, the man had a love for Christ and a concern for people. Few Christians have the courage to engage perfect strangers in evangelistic discussion. But sadly, he had little understanding of what he was so zealously trying to communicate.

## Do Evangelicals Understand the Gospel?

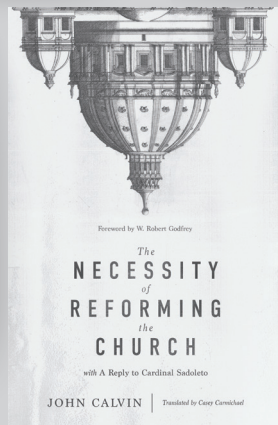
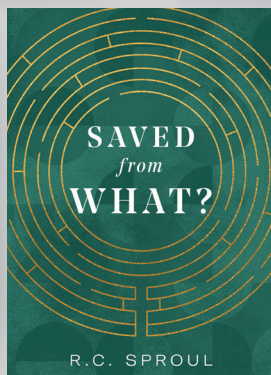
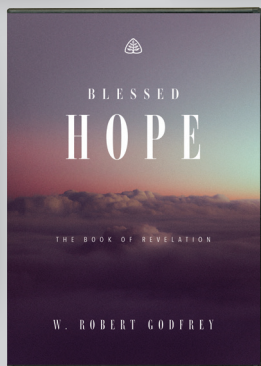
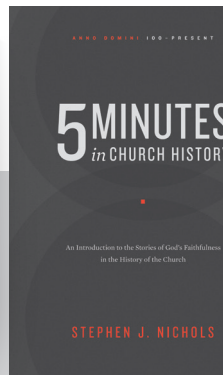
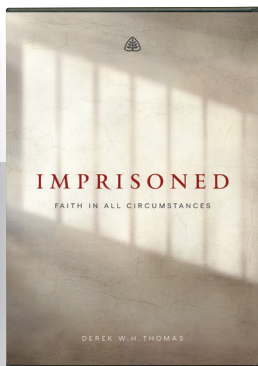
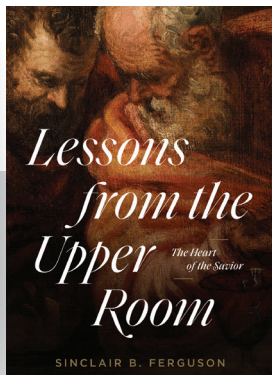
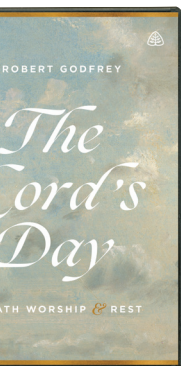
But what about the church today? Do evangelical Christians today have any clearer understanding of the gospel, of what it means to be saved? Sadly, again, there often seems to be little understanding even among those who are most active in evangelical circles.

Take, for example, a survey conducted by Christians United for Reformation (CURE) among the delegates to the annual convention of the Christian Booksellers Association some years ago. Since the delegates are composed mostly of Christians, we would think that they would have a basic grasp of the essential truths of the gospel. But when CURE staff asked one hundred delegates at random, the staff found that only one of those who were polled gave an “adequate” definition of the gospel. Most of the answers were something like, “The gospel is having a personal relationship with Jesus,” or, “It means asking Jesus into your heart.” Absent from these definitions were any affirmations of the person and work of Christ and the appropriation of His work to the individual by faith alone.

The sampling in the poll was small—only one hundred from over five thousand. Perhaps the answers were skewed by how the question was asked. But after talking with the pollsters, I was left shocked by the apparent ignorance of the most elementary article of Christianity.

As it turned out, I was asked to preach at the Sunday morning worship service for the next Christian Booksellers Convention, a year later. With the results of the CURE survey still in mind, I decided to speak on the theme of salvation, asking the question, “What is salvation?” I was nervous about the selection of this topic. I had two fears. I feared that asking such a basic question

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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