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R. C. SPROUL

What Is the Gospel?

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LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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Chapter One

The Gospel of God

What is the gospel? There is perhaps no more important question for us to answer, because the answer we give will help to determine our eternal destiny. Unfortunately, there appears to be widespread ignorance today among professing evangelicals about what the gospel is. What is its content? What is the good news, why is it good news, and what does it mean to believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ? We must understand not only the origin of the gospel but the meaning of the gospel. It is urgent that

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we Christians get the gospel right, because if we don't, we're not going to get much at all right in the understanding of the fullness of our faith in Christ.

The gospel tells us how we can be saved from our sin. If we get it wrong, we are cursed, as Paul says in Galatians 1:6–9. But if we get it right, then we can have hope. It is therefore crucial that we search the Scriptures carefully in order to clearly articulate what God tells us about how we may be saved.

That was the goal of a gathering of evangelical leaders in Washington, D.C., in February 1998. The participants at this meeting agreed that there were some serious problems in the evangelical world that reflected a disintegration of a unity that had been forged as far back as the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century—a unity that had remained solid for 450 years. And even though evangelical churches have had differences in theology on many points, they always maintained a sense of unity when it came to the central affirmation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, which was regarded historically by evangelicals as essential to the New Testament gospel.

Around this time, the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals met in Philadelphia to consider the most pressing

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theological issue of our day. This group agreed that the most important issue theologically was the gospel itself. As a result of the Philadelphia and Washington meetings, a unified statement of faith was drafted in order to restore unity among evangelicals, particularly in our understanding of justification.

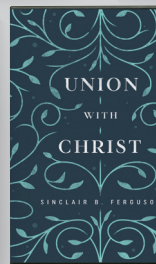
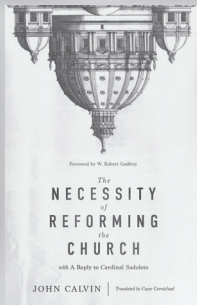
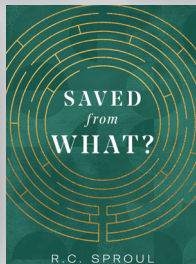
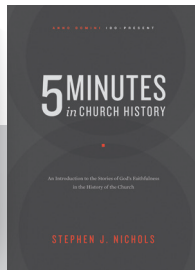
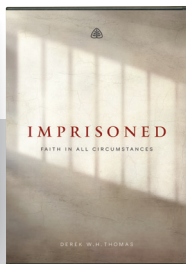
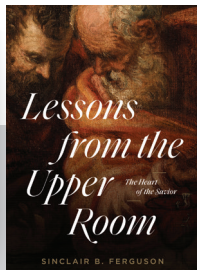
The document is called “The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration,” and it is divided into two parts. The first part is a summation of the key points that were affirmed. It explains the gospel in the language of the laity, avoiding technical theological statements. The second part provides a statement in more precise theological language, following the format of affirmations and denials. This book will explore the affirmations and denials in order to provide a clear articulation of the message of the gospel.*

With that as our background, let’s turn our attention to the statement. Affirmation 1 states:

We affirm that the Gospel entrusted to the church is, in the first instance, God’s Gospel (Mark 1:14;

* The full statement can be found at <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/gospel-jesus-christ-evangelical-celebration>.

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