

# How Can I Be Right with God?

Crucial Questions

**R. C. SPROUL**



How Can I Be Right with God?

Crucial Questions booklets provide a quick introduction to definitive Christian truths. This expanding collection includes titles such as:

Who Is Jesus?

Can I Trust the Bible?

Does Prayer Change Things?

Can I Know God's Will?

How Should I Live in This World?

What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?

Can I Be Sure I'm Saved?

What Is Faith?

What Can I Do with My Guilt?

What Is the Trinity?

TO BROWSE THE REST OF THE SERIES,  
PLEASE VISIT: **[REFORMATIONTRUST.COM/CQ](https://www.reformationtrust.com/cq)**

CQ

# How Can I Be Right with God?

R. C. SPROUL

*How Can I Be Right with God?*

© 2017 by R.C. Sproul

Published by Reformation Trust Publishing

A division of Ligonier Ministries

421 Ligonier Court, Sanford, FL 32771

Ligonier.org    ReformationTrust.com

Printed in China

RR Donnelley

0001018

First edition, third printing

ISBN 978-1-64289-061-7 (Paperback)

ISBN 978-1-64289-089-1 (ePub)

ISBN 978-1-64289-117-1 (Kindle)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the publisher, Reformation Trust Publishing. The only exception is brief quotations in published reviews.

Cover design: Ligonier Creative

Interior typeset: Katherine Lloyd, The DESK

All Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Sproul, R.C. (Robert Charles), 1939-2017 author.

Title: How can I be right with God? / by R.C. Sproul.

Description: Orlando, FL : Reformation Trust Publishing, 2017. | Series:

Crucial questions ; No. 26 | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017023438 | ISBN 9781567698374

Subjects: LCSH: Justification (Christian theology) | Salvation--Christianity.  
| Assurance (Theology)

Classification: LCC BT764.3 .S6695 2017 | DDC 234/.7--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017023438>

## Contents

<b>One</b>	After Darkness, Light . . . . .	1
<b>Two</b>	Luther's Discovery . . . . .	7
<b>Three</b>	God's Legal Declaration . . . . .	15
<b>Four</b>	The Great Exchange . . . . .	23
<b>Five</b>	The Means of Salvation . . . . .	33
<b>Six</b>	By Christ Alone . . . . .	41
<b>Seven</b>	The Essentials of Biblical Faith . . . . .	47
<b>Eight</b>	The Remission of Sins . . . . .	55
<b>Nine</b>	Peace with God . . . . .	63





## 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

## How Can I Be Right with God?

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

## How Can I Be Right with God?

cannot be saved by faith in Christ alone but must also have good works and obedience to the law in order to be saved. This “other gospel” was no gospel at all—there is only one gospel, the gospel of God, revealed in and through Christ and proclaimed and expounded by the Apostles. The stakes are so high when it comes to this point that Paul pronounced a curse on anyone who teaches otherwise. The Greek work translated “accursed” is *anathema*—damned.

The Apostle understood that the issue of justification was no mere academic issue, but one that touches every person’s life ultimately. It can be summed up in one question: How are we saved? It is a life-and-death matter, an eternal life matter. The New Testament makes it clear that each of us will be called into account before God, and that God is righteous while we’re not. The doctrine of justification addresses the solution to that problem, declaring how we, as unjust people, can be reconciled to a just and holy God. So if there’s anything in the essence of the Christian faith, of the good news of the gospel, it’s this doctrine.

Martin Luther, building on Paul’s assessment, called the doctrine of justification the article on which the church stands or falls. Luther understood that theology is systematic, and that a distortion of the gospel will influence and

affect everything else that we believe in the Christian faith. John Calvin said something very similar: “We must so discuss [justification by faith] as to bear in mind that this is the main hinge on which religion turns, so that we devote the greater attention and care to it. For unless you first of all grasp what your relationship to God is, and the nature of his judgment concerning you, you have neither a foundation on which to establish your salvation nor one on which to build piety toward God.”\*

Do you think it’s important to know how you can be saved? Does it matter to you what is the basis upon which your own salvation rests? I can’t think of anything that matters more. We must all ask, with the Philippian jailer, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30).

---

\* *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 3.11.1.

We publish books that proclaim the historic Christian faith to new generations.

*These are books you can trust.*



Order your copy of this title, download the ebook version, or browse our entire collection at [ReformationTrust.com](https://www.ReformationTrust.com).

# Can God forgive someone like me?

God is holy, and we are sinful. God cannot stand to look upon sin. But the gospel of Jesus Christ reveals how sinful people can be right with God.

In this booklet, Dr. R.C. Sproul delves into Scripture and church history to explore the doctrine of justification by faith alone. In so doing, he explains that by faith alone in Christ alone, sinful men and women can be justified and stand forgiven before a holy God.

The Crucial Questions booklet series by Dr. R.C. Sproul offers succinct answers to important questions often asked by Christians and thoughtful inquirers.

**Dr. R.C. Sproul** was founder of Ligonier Ministries, founding pastor of Saint Andrew's Chapel in Sanford, Fla., and first president of Reformation Bible College. He was author of more than one hundred books, including *The Holiness of God*.



ReformationTrust.com

ISBN 978-1-64289-061-7



9 781642 890617

RELIGION / Christian Theology / Soteriology