

The
B E A U T Y
of Divine
G R A C E



GABRIEL N.E. FLUHRER

Endorsements

“We never truly move beyond the gospel nor graduate from the school of Christ. Every person, no matter their years in Christ, has but begun to understand the beauty of His person and work. Here is a book that helpfully sets before us the gospel in all its simple yet profound glory. Pastoral in tone, rich in theology, and an engaging read are a few thoughts that came to mind when reading Dr. Fluhrer’s recent book, *The Beauty of Divine Grace*. If you are a student of Christ, reading this book is time well spent.”

—REV. JASON HELOPOULOS

Senior pastor

University Reformed Church, East Lansing, Mich.

“There is a growing interest in the Reformed faith in our times. Thousands of people from different religious backgrounds have come to the Reformed churches everywhere, hungry for the Word of God. We have felt the need for works by Reformed authors that explain simply and clearly what the central points of the Protestant Reformation are and how they differ from what other traditions teach. This work by Dr. Fluhrer perfectly meets this need. It explains in a clear and succinct way what is at the heart of Reformed soteriology summarized in the five *solas*. Every one of them is explained carefully and the most common mistakes about them are cleared. With a pastoral spirit, Dr. Fluhrer draws in every chapter practical implications of each *sola* for daily life. This is a highly relevant book for our times. I hope it will be translated into Portuguese as soon as possible.”

—DR. AUGUSTUS NICODEMUS LOPES

Vice president of the General Assembly

of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil

Assistant pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Recife, Brazil

The Beauty of Divine Grace

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GABRIEL N.E. FLUHRER



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The Beauty of Divine Grace

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To Bob and Priss Jones, Tom and Tami Wall,
and Robbie and Pam Cole,
and the congregation of Trinity Presbyterian Church,
Travelers Rest, S.C.

Who first taught me to love the doctrines of grace
by precept and example,
with profound gratitude.

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Foreword

Derek W.H. Thomas

The formal and formulaic taxonomy of the five *solas* of the Reformation is a recent phenomenon (mid-twentieth century), but the existence of the *solas* in some form or another is apparent as far back as the early church fathers. Spelled out, they insist on five specific truths:

1. The final authority in all matters of faith and practice lies in what Scripture *alone* (*sola Scriptura*) teaches, apart from any pronouncements of creeds, councils, or the pope (speaking *ex cathedra*).
2. Salvation is by grace *alone* (*sola gratia*), apart from any consideration of human effort (works), achievement, or cooperation on our part.
3. Further, salvation is by grace *alone* through the instrumentality of faith *alone* (*sola fide*), faith understood as a noncontributory means, and itself a gift of God.
4. Salvation is in Christ *alone* (*solus Christus*); He alone provides the necessary substitutionary obedience to the law and its penalty that divine justice requires without

any additional merit from us, the medieval sacramental treadmill, deceased saints, or the mediation of Mary.

5. And by way of a general but equally important truth, all the praise for our salvation is ascribed to the glory of God *alone* (*soli Deo gloria*).

In the thinking of the early Reformers of the sixteenth century, these five restrictive statements were set firmly at odds with medieval Roman Catholicism. Subsequent generations took them up with equal force in the seventeenth century to address the errors of Arminianism. Free will, for example, was viewed as the same generic error as good works or sacramental compliance in Roman Catholicism. If salvation is dependent on our “decision,” freely made without the giving of a God-enabled ability (through regeneration and the renewal of the will from its inherent bondage to sin), then faith is a “work” that we contribute, and salvation cannot therefore be by faith *alone* or by grace *alone*. Nor, in the last analysis, can it be to the glory of God *alone*. The five *solas* thus took on a greater importance in the defense of the groundwork of Reformed and biblical theology.

Set ablaze in the Reformation and post-Reformation era, these truths have deep historical roots. Take “grace alone” (*sola gratia*), for example. This truth is highlighted in the fifth century in the remarkable conversion of Augustine, recounted in his *Confessions*. It drew the ire of Pelagius, which occasioned Augustine’s *Anti-Pelagian Writings*. *Sola gratia* surfaced again in the experience of Martin Luther as he wrestled with the crippling theology of the medieval church. Justification, he came to understand, must be by grace alone, through faith alone, and as he so painfully confirmed, faith must be given sovereignly by God, for he had tried and failed to accomplish it himself.

FOREWORD

These five truths are especially relevant in our Western culture where the prevailing religion has been identified as *moral therapeutic deism*. This phrase aptly describes folk who believe that our greatest need is to be happy, live decent enough lives, and rest in the idea that everyone is going to “heaven.” For this religion, a sovereign God is not needed. If he exists, he is absent from the day-to-day concerns of human existence. Furthermore, belief, for example, in an inerrant, authoritative Bible has continued to wane, even in the most conservative seminaries. Worship is frequently offered in churches with hardly a reference to Scripture. What our morally and spiritually declining culture needs is a reminder of the source of religious authority (*Scripture alone*) and the source and guarantee of salvation itself—a sovereign, divine, and monergistic intervention in the life of a sinner. Justification—being in a right standing with God—is by *grace alone* through *faith alone* in *Jesus Christ alone*. Our justification, whereby Christ’s righteousness is imputed (reckoned, not infused) to our account and our demerit is imputed to Christ’s account, does not rest on any contribution of our own. Without such justification there is no possibility of eternal salvation. This understanding of justification alone secures the idea that all the glory of our salvation is God’s. All of it! This is biblical Christianity, and the sooner the modern church gets back to proclaiming it loud and clear the better.

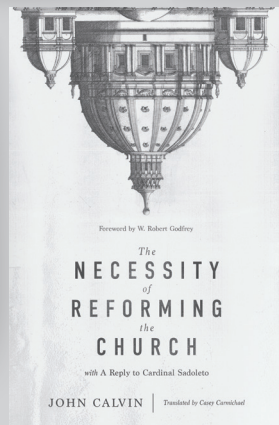
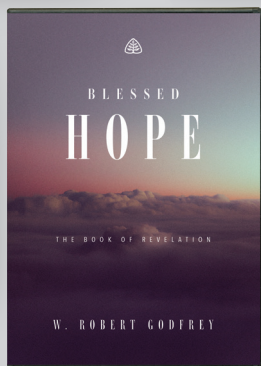
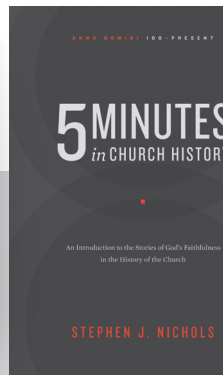
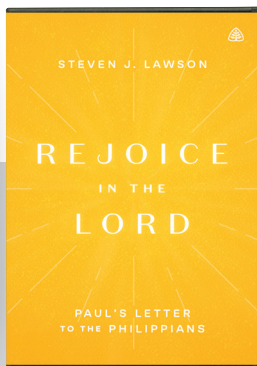
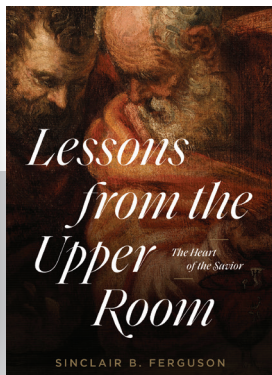
Dr. Fluhrer’s expansions and elaborations on these five truths provide you with a sure and careful guide. They will lead you to a greater understanding of salvation and of God. I know this man, and I would trust him with my life. I am delighted to call him a friend. He has the measure of both the truths he expounds and the pastoral and theological concerns you may have. He is resolute in defense of the truth while at the same time winsome in its application. *The Beauty*

THE BEAUTY OF DIVINE GRACE

of Divine Grace will perhaps challenge you here and there, perhaps even confound you, but in the end it will bless you. Truth, said the Apostle Paul, leads to godliness (Titus 1:1), and it is my prayer that as you read this book, you will be driven to the truth of the Scriptures and will behold the majesty of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ. And, by turns, you will mirror the beauty of our Savior, Jesus Christ, in yourself. Yes, this little book is capable, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, of doing that.

Now, enough from me. Turn the page and start reading.

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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