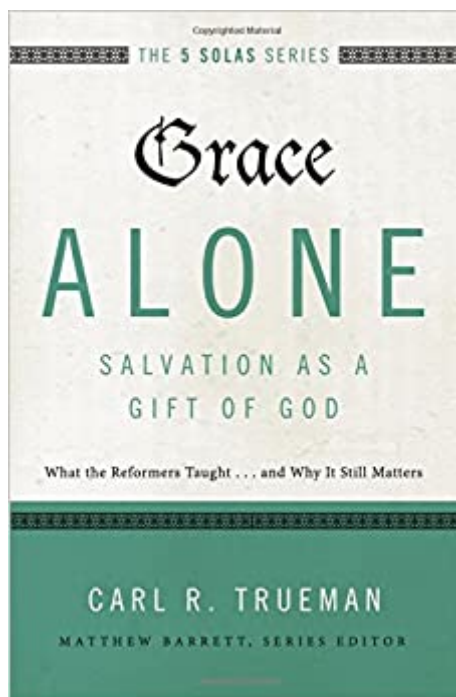


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Grace Alone---Salvation As A Gift Of God: What The Reformers Taught...and Why It Still Matters (The Five Solas Series)



Synopsis

Historians and theologians alike have long recognized that at the heart of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation were the five solas: sola scriptura, solus Christus, sola gratia, sola fide, and soli Deo gloria. These five solas do not merely summarize what the Reformation was all about but have served to distinguish Protestantism ever since. They set Protestants apart in a unique way as those who place ultimate and final authority in the Scriptures, acknowledge the work of Christ alone as sufficient for redemption, recognize that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, and seek to not only give God all of the glory but to do all things vocationally for his glory. 2017 will mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. And yet, even in the twenty-first century we need the Reformation more than ever. As James Montgomery Boice said not long ago, while the Puritans sought to carry on the Reformation, today “we barely have one to carry on, and many have even forgotten what that great spiritual revolution was all about.” Therefore, we “need to go back and start again at the very beginning. We need another Reformation.” [1] In short, it is crucial not only to remember what the solas of the Reformation were all about, but also to apply these solas in a fresh way in light of many contemporary challenges. [1] James Montgomery Boice, “Preface,” in *Here We Stand: A Call from Confessing Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 12.

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Customer Reviews

Trueman takes complex biblical and theological ideas and makes them easy to understand. The key message is that God's grace, healing our sinful neediness, is at the heart of true biblical piety. Trueman develops this theme with relation to the Church, preaching, sacraments, and prayer. As a Catholic, I resonated deeply with Trueman's portrait of biblical piety, and I found much else to treasure--including his emphasis on the priority of God's action and his stirring account of the ministry of preaching. This is a book that will instruct everyone who loves the gracious Lord Jesus Christ. -- Matthew Levering, James N. and Mary D. Perry Jr. Chair of Theology, Mundelein Seminary

Grace is a word so common in our day and age as to border on the cliché. Yet prizing the gospel means treasuring grace. Carl Trueman does us all the service, then, of helping to make connections that are crucial: between grace and the active presence of the triune God, between the promises of the Old Testament and the intervention recounted in the New, between the ancient faith of the early fathers and later Protestant reforms, and between a rich theology of grace and its necessary implications for piety and worship. This book brings remarkable biblical, historical, and pastoral perspective to an oftentimes ambiguous but genuinely amazing reality. -- Michael Allen, Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, FL

This is an outstanding book on an extraordinary subject. It clearly explains the biblical foundations of grace, and navigates the historical debates in a way that is both highly engaging and deeply informed. Perhaps even more importantly, the practical applications of grace -- both for individuals and for churches -- are sharply driven home. I am grateful this book was written, and I highly commend it to any and all who are interested in learning more about the matchless grace of the Triune God. -- Jonathan L. Master, Professor of Theology and Dean of the School of Divinity, Cairn University

Trueman, a master of the art of making historical texts of the Christian tradition relevant and applicable for use in our time, effectively presents the ways in which Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin put the foundational biblical concept of grace to work in their day. This serves him well as a basis for a lively exploration of how God's grace functions in the church today through the proclaimed Word of God, the sacraments, and believers' prayer. This volume demonstrates how grace, as the lively disposition of God in Christ, frames God's dealing with a sinful world as Trueman confesses its significance for the twenty-first century. -- Robert Kolb, Professor of Systematic Theology emeritus, Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis

Where is grace? What is grace? Who is grace? And how is it conferred to us? I resonate with Trueman's lament that grace has become an empty sentiment in much of contemporary Christian literature. What does the Reformation cry "grace alone" really mean? And why is it so important today? To answer these questions, Trueman gives us both a history and a theology of grace. He shows the reader that

grace is confrontational, that one can't have a proper understanding of grace without a proper understanding of sin. Read this book to learn what a grace alone church takes seriously. --
Aimee Byrd, Director of Women's Initiatives at The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals
Carl Trueman is always worth reading. I am especially eager to recommend this excellent volume on the Protestant battle cry "Grace Alone." It is obvious that it comes from one who is both a scholar and a churchman. It at once challenges the mind and warms the heart with the grand theme of God's gracious salvation. This is a book to be savored. --
Todd Pruitt, Pastor, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Harrisonburg, VA

Carl Trueman is professor of Historical Theology and Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary. He is the author of numerous books, including *The Creedal imperative: Histories and Fallacies*; *Goods Rush in Where Monkeys Fear to Tread*; *Republocat: Confessions of a Liberal Conservative*; *Reformation Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*; *John Owen: Reformed, Catholic, Renaissance Man*, *Minority Report*; and *The Wages of Spin*. Trueman is also a contributor to *Reformation21* where he writes from a Reformed vantage point. Matthew Barrett is Tutor of Systematic Theology and Church History at Oak Hill Theological College in London. He is the executive editor of *Credo Magazine*, as well as the author and editor of several books, including *Salvation by Grace*, *Four Views on the Historical Adam*, and *Owen on the Christian Life*.

Very helpful book. Literally shaped my understand of Luther in light of Augustine.

We are quickly approaching the 500-year anniversary of the event that people often date the Reformation back to – Martin Luther's nailing of his 95 thesis to the doors of Wittenberg. As we approach this anniversary, there are certain to be many books and articles written on the importance of and reflections about the Reformation and its impact on our theology today. And rightfully so. One such book comes to us as the fifth, and final volume, in a series from Zondervan. The series is called "The 5 Solas Series: What the Reformers Taught and Why It Still Matters." I reviewed the four previous volumes in this series [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). Now, allow me to introduce to you the fifth and final volume in the series, written by WTS professor and pastor, Carl Trueman – *Grace Alone: Salvation As A Gift of God*. In the introduction to this volume, Trueman sums up the primacy of grace in the Christian's life and his hope for this book: "Grace is the heart of the Christian gospel. It is a doctrine that touches the very depths of human existence because it not only reveals

to us the very heart of God but draws us back into that precious communion with him that was so tragically lost at the fall. It is my hope that this little book will help guide you not only into a better doctrinal understanding of the issue but also give you a more glorious vision of the God whom you worship" (19). The Necessity of Clarity Grace is one of those things that everyone is willing and eager to talk about, but often with very different definitions and understandings. As long as we keep the concept of grace in the abstract, almost all people and all religions will jump on board. However, when we define grace biblically — God's favor shown to us through the sacrificial life, death, and resurrection of Jesus on our behalf — now that's a different story. In this book, Carl Trueman does anything but keep the concept of grace in the abstract. In fact, he says in the introduction: "To talk about grace is to talk about Christ" (18). Biblically and theologically defined and understood, you cannot have one without the other. The Reformers understood this, and therefore flew the banner of sola gratia (by grace alone) as one of their five solas of the Reformation. The truth that salvation comes to us by grace alone was no small matter to the Reformers 500 years ago, and it should be no small matter to us today. The Structure In order to help us better understand what the Reformers taught by sola gratia, and why that matters for us today, Carl Trueman has written this new book, which is composed of two parts. In the first part, he looks at the biblical understanding of grace, in the Old and New Testaments, followed by a brief look at the historical development of understanding grace from Augustine through the Reformation. After giving a brief biblical theology of grace in chapter 1, the next two chapters focus on Augustine's understanding of grace, including his debates with Pelagius. In chapter 4, we are introduced to "an unexpected ally" in Thomas Aquinas, demonstrating that a robustly biblical understanding of grace was alive and well even in the middle ages. The final two chapters of this first part look at how two of the most influential Reformers — Luther and Calvin — understood grace. Regarding the pervasiveness of the word and concept of grace in Scripture, Trueman notes: "No theology that credibly claims to be biblical can avoid addressing it. From the fall of Adam and Eve and God's decision to spare them from immediate destruction, the story of God's relationship to human beings is the story of grace. It relates the historical outworking of his unmerited favor toward humanity as he restrains evil and actively works to save his people from consequences of their sinful rebellion" (48). In the second part of the book, Trueman looks at the practical implications of a Reformation understanding of grace. In chapter 7, he looks at the church itself as a means of grace towards us. Then, in chapter 8 he deals with God's Word preached as a means of grace to His people, and in chapter 9 he looks at the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper as another means of grace. Finally, in chapter 10, he explains why prayer should

also be considered a means of grace. Trueman says: "Prayer, like the church, is not something that is first of all 'done' by us. It is done by God and given to us as a means of realizing God's purposes in our lives" (234). For some readers, the inclusion of these final 4 chapters seems a bit odd in a book focusing on the Reformation understanding of grace. Trueman comments: "The reader might be surprised to find the culmination of this volume to be chapters on the church, on preaching, on the sacraments, and on prayer. But this makes perfect sense, for these are the means by which God acts in the here and now in grace toward us, and these are things in and through which we encounter God's grace and by which God's grace should seize hold of us. To think of grace is not to think of the theological equivalent of a quadratic equation or a chemical formula. To think of grace is to be personally confronted with God, and thus no account of grace can omit discussion of the place, ways, and means of that confrontation" (157).

Conclusion This series by Zondervan has been an excellent look at the Reformation's understanding of the five solas and why those are still important for us as believers today. And Carl Trueman's volume ending the series on grace is an excellent capstone to this important series. In this volume, as in the other four, you will walk away with a much more thorough biblical, systematic, and historic understanding of the doctrine of grace and its vital importance to the local church. I am thankful for this volume, and this series, and would wholeheartedly encourage you to buy a copy for yourself. In accordance with FTC regulations, I would like to thank Zondervan publishers for providing me with a review copy of this book in exchange for a fair and honest review.

It should be no surprise, at this point in 2017, that this year is the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. The year that Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses on the door of the Wittenberg Chapel, the act that sparked the Reformation. During the Reformation there was a resurgence in theological understanding summarized in the teachings of the Five Solas. These Five Solas are by scripture Alone, by faith alone, by grace alone, by Christ alone, to the Glory of God Alone. These pillars of the Reformation are still alive today, but they need to be re-established as the centrality of what Christians believe. To that end Zondervan has produced a new series of books called, The Five Solas Series. Each book in the series examines one of the Five Solas. The one under review today is that of, *Grace Alone: Salvation as a Gift of God: What the Reformers Taught... And Why it Still Matters*, by Carl R. Trueman. Trueman is a noted scholar at Westminster Theological Seminary and is very well-versed in this topic. *Grace Alone*, is divided into two parts. The first part studies by grace alone in the context of scripture and history while the second part studies by grace alone in the context of the church. Each of these chapters is

jam-packed full of exemplary exegesis and application to the modern reader. This book is unique in the sense that it bridges the gap between scholastic and popular level study. Furthermore this book may be the best treatments on the topic of how salvation is by grace alone ever to be produced in short form. Therefore I highly recommend it to every Christian who desires to grow in their faith, be it Pastor, Bible student, Sunday school, or Congregant who was looking to grow in their faith as they study the importance of how God's love demonstrated by his grace in the work of Jesus Christ is the only way for salvation from our sin. This book was provided to me free of charge from Zondervan in exchange for an unbiased, honest review.

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