

LIVING BY GRACE

STUDY ONE

A Flyover Glance at Guilt and Grace

Romans 5:18–21

Since we have been rescued through Christ at the cross, we now live in the realm of grace before our God.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

As the waltz begins, the ballroom comes alive. Men in tuxedos dance with elegantly dressed women whose flowing gowns whirl with every turn. The couples seem to float on air—their movements fluid and relaxed, their steps effortlessly timed to the 1-2-3 rhythm of the music.

These graceful dancers illustrate *living by grace*. They are relaxed, carefree, light, joyful. God created us to live this way—to feel secure in His favor, to move with freedom in His kingdom, and to respond easily to the guiding rhythm of His indwelling Spirit.

Many Christians, however, live by guilt, not by grace. They exist in a state of anxiety that their best efforts are not good enough and that God's gavel of judgment may come crashing down on them. They see themselves as slaves—like the storybook girl in the cinders who dreams of attending the ball but who can't escape her cruel masters. These Christians are anything but free or joyful, languishing under relentless demands, petty rules, and fault-finding criticism.

Has guilt shackled you to a burdensome lifestyle? Do you long to follow the lead of the Spirit and move easily to the rhythm of freedom in Christ? If so, this *Searching the Scriptures* series will help you live by grace. It is your invitation to the dance.



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MINISTRIES

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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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A Flyover Glance at Guilt and Grace

Romans 5:18–21



PREPARE YOUR HEART

These hopeful words of Jesus set the tone for our studies: “If the Son sets you free, you are truly free” (John 8:36). *You are truly free!* Not because you earned freedom but because Jesus granted you freedom. Pray in gratitude as you open God’s Word.

Father, thank You for sending Your Son to rescue me from sin and death and to free me to experience the life You intended. Open my eyes to understand Your truth, and open my heart to receive Your grace so that I can live truly free. In Jesus’ name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In the book of Romans, Paul laid the groundwork for how Jesus set us free. First, in Romans 1:18–3:20, Paul described our hopeless state of bondage, declaring, “All people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin” (Romans 3:9). Personal effort won’t free us because “No one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands” (3:20). Consequently, “the entire world is guilty before God” (3:19). We call this section of Romans—*Humanity’s Ruin*.

The next section, 3:21–5:11, is *Humanity’s Rescue*. Since people can’t achieve the righteousness God requires, they remain in their guilt. Jesus Christ, however, bore sin’s penalty on the cross, satisfying God’s judgment and opening the way to freedom through Him. “We are made right with God *by placing our faith in Jesus Christ*” (3:22, emphasis added).

Through faith in Christ, sinners receive what they don’t deserve—a righteousness from God that they couldn’t achieve on their own (4:1–25). *That’s grace!* God leads sinners out of guilt’s prison into a new realm where *Christ is Ruler* and *grace is the rule*—which Paul explained in Romans 6–8. We call this section of Romans the *Rulership of Grace*.

We’ll focus on Romans 6–8 throughout this series, but before we turn to those chapters, let’s reinforce our foundation by digging deeper into these three Rs of living by grace—Ruin, Rescue, and Rulership.



A Flyover Glance at Guilt and Grace

Romans 5:18–21



Searching the Scriptures Method and Resources

Searching the Scriptures is a four-step Bible-study method that includes observing the passage, interpreting the meaning, correlating with similar passages, and applying the principles. For helpful instruction, consult the Insight for Living Ministries online web page, “[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#).” There, you can also follow the [link to purchase a copy](#) of Pastor Chuck’s book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*.



Observation: The Three R’s of Living by Grace

In *Searching the Scriptures*, we begin with observation. Read [Romans 5:12–21](#) carefully and slowly, and then use your skills of observation to answer the questions below. Pick out the strong verbs, find the contrasts, and note key words. Take your time in the observation phase, which sets the stage for interpretation.

Humanity’s Ruin—Romans 5:12–14

According to [Romans 5:12–14](#), how did sin enter into God’s perfect creation? For background, read [Genesis 2:16–17](#); [3:6](#).

What were the consequences of the original sin?



A Flyover Glance at Guilt and Grace

Romans 5:18–21

We all have the same problem. We have this pollution called sin that began with Adam, and the sewage flows through the bloodstream of humanity. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Humanity’s Rescue—Romans 5:15–19

While Adam’s sin brought ruin, God’s gracious gift of His Son brought rescue. Read [Romans 5:15–19](#), and observe key words and phrases that Paul used to contrast Adam with Christ. Note your findings in the following chart.

Contrasts between Adam and Christ <i>Romans 5:15–19</i>	
Adam	Christ

Adam’s sin locked humanity in a prison of sin where death reigned. But Christ bore our guilt on the cross, and through His sacrifice, God offers the gift of righteousness—our key to freedom and a new life. “Even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive [God’s gift] will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:17).

Did you see the word, “greater”? Even greater than the drag of sin and its power over you is God’s wonderful grace. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A Flyover Glance at Guilt and Grace

Romans 5:18–21

Rulership of Grace—Romans 5:20–21

Paul wrapped up his teaching about our triumph over death in *Romans 5:20–21*. What did Paul conclude about sin and righteousness, guilt and grace?

Romans 5:20–21 forms a bridge, linking everything Paul taught so far in Romans with what he will teach in Romans 6–8. In interpretation, let's dig deeper into the meaning of these highly significant verses.

We now have a new ruler—His name is Jesus. He delivers us from the control of the old nature within us when we claim that triumph we have in Christ. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: From Death to Life

Feel free to use your Bible-study resources to answer the questions below, including *Insights on Romans* from Pastor Chuck Swindoll's New Testament commentary series or *Constable's Notes*, an online resource at netbible.org.

Review Romans 5:20–21 below and mark central phrases or words to define.

God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant. So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

“God's law” refers to the Torah, the first five books of the Bible that contain the instructions God gave the people of Israel through Moses. God gave the law (1) to reflect His holiness, (2) to expose our sinfulness, and (3) to show our need for His grace.



A Flyover Glance at Guilt and Grace

Romans 5:18–21

Under the law, people sinned more and more, but they couldn't out-sin God's grace! What did Paul mean, "God's wonderful grace became more abundant"? To aid your interpretation, read [Romans 5:20](#) in the *J. B. Phillips New Testament* and the *Amplified Bible*.

Verse 21 contrasts death under the rule of sin with life under the rule of grace. How do you define "death" and "life" in [5:21](#)? The *paraphrase* of this verse in *The Message* is helpful.

Just as Adam and Eve's sin removed them from the garden of Eden, our sin had separated us from God until He reconciled us to Himself through Christ ([Colossians 1:21–22](#)). By grace, we received *eternal life*—a completely new kind of life. Let's examine this concept in more detail.



Correlation: Grace and the New Life

God sent His Son to earth on a life-giving mission. Jesus said, "I came that they would have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10 NASB). *The Message* paraphrases Jesus' words: "I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of" (John 10:10 MSG).



A Flyover Glance at Guilt and Grace

Romans 5:18–21

What promise did Jesus give in *John 5:24*?

What truth did Paul teach about our standing in grace in *Romans 5:1–2*?

Correlate these verses about eternal life, peace with God, and standing in grace with 5:18: “Christ’s one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone.” What does “new life” mean?

You can live without the shackles of guilt and shame because you’ve been rescued. You have triumph over these things through the death of Christ. He liberates us from the domination of sin. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A Flyover Glance at Guilt and Grace

Romans 5:18–21



Application: Accepting the Invitation to Living by Grace

How do we live by grace and experience new life? The first step is to affirm your faith. According to Paul, “We are made right with God *by placing our faith in Jesus Christ*” (Romans 3:22, emphasis added). Have you placed your faith in Jesus as the One who bore your sin on the cross? If you’re not certain, in the space below, in a prayer, tell God that you believe in Jesus as your Savior and receive His pardon for sins and eternal life.

Second, view yourself as God sees you in Christ. You are no longer a lost sinner but a saved saint, set apart for God’s purposes. Christ has rescued you from sin’s mastery, and His redemption has ushered you into “a right relationship with God and new life” (5:18).

Regarding your relationship to God, how do you see yourself? If your self-perception is uncertain, ask the Lord to reveal His view of you through His lens of grace.

We’ve crossed the Romans 5 bridge, and Romans 6 lies before us. In the next studies, we’ll take more steps to living by grace. It’s one thing to receive salvation by grace, but it’s another to learn a lifestyle of grace. God is inviting you to leave behind the guilt and shame of sin and experience the freedom of following Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Living by grace is the most wonderful way to live. The music has begun. *Come, join the dance.*



A Flyover Glance at Guilt and Grace

Romans 5:18–21



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I accept Your invitation to live by grace, not by guilt. I long to join the dance that You have made possible for me, to be free from the fear of condemnation, and to shed sin's mastery and follow the music of Your Spirit in me. Thank You for Your wonderful grace that's greater than my sin, and thank You for the hope I have of new life in Christ. In His name, amen.



LIVING BY GRACE

STUDY TWO

Since We've Died, Let's Really Live!

Romans 6:1–5

We have a power within us that is greater than the power of sin.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

DURING the US Civil War, hundreds of thousands of Americans lost their lives over the issue of slavery. It was the bloodiest conflict in United States history. Even as battles raged and soldiers died, President Abraham Lincoln declared freedom for the slaves in his Emancipation Proclamation on New Year's Day, 1863. When the smoke of war finally cleared in 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution was officially adopted, forever abolishing slavery in the United States.

Many years earlier, another battle for freedom was waged. Jesus Christ, our Great Emancipator, won our freedom from sin and death when He died on the cross and rose from the grave. Purchased by the blood of Christ, our liberty has value beyond measure: it cost God's Son His life. And yet, God freely offers liberty from sin and death to anyone who receives it by faith.

How tragic that many Christians remain enslaved to sin and shackled to shame, despite the precious blood Christ spilled to set them free and God's declaration, "You are free from your slavery to sin" (Romans 6:18).

Are you experiencing freedom from sin's mastery? Perhaps you think you can't live free or you don't know how. In this *Searching the Scriptures* study and the next two studies, we'll examine Romans 6 and discover God's plan for freeing us from sin's control.



Since We've Died, Let's Really Live!

Romans 6:1–5



PREPARE YOUR HEART

In prayer, thank the Lord that He has freed you from your former captor and express your deepest desire to serve Christ. Ask Him to reveal the “grace” way of living as you study His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Romans 6 is the Christian’s emancipation proclamation, the foundational document announcing our freedom from Satan’s power and sin’s domination. It’s where we learn how to live free from fear, guilt, shame, and defeat.

In Romans 6, Paul highlighted two groups of people. Those who say, “It’s too good to be true,” fail to claim their liberty, and they continue to live like slaves to sin (Romans 6:1–14); and those who say, “If we’re free, let’s sin and not hold back!” and turn their liberty into a freewheeling license to sin (6:15–23). The first group nullifies grace. The second group abuses grace. When both groups asked if grace permitted sin, Paul’s response was the same: “Of course not!” (6:2, 15).

Whether we surrender to sin in *defeat* or indulge in *debauchery*, we reattach the chains that Christ has broken and make sin our master again. Why do that? It’s irrational . . . and tragic. But can we be *certain* we are free? What assurance can we claim? That’s the subject of 6:1–5.



Since We've Died, Let's Really Live!

Romans 6:1–5



Observation: Our Union with Christ

The task of observation is to examine Scripture as if through a magnifying glass, carefully detecting every detail. Note key words, the thought progression, cause and effect, and figures of speech. In interpretation, you'll seek the meaning. For now, simply observe what the passage says.

Read *Romans 6:1–5*. Notice the theological tone of the verses. Paul wanted to build our freedom on a solid footing. The passage opens with a question he may have heard from a sin-defeated Christian. What assumption do you perceive was behind the question in *6:1*?

So stuck is the defeated Christian in a cycle of temptation, sin, and guilt that he or she can't even imagine stopping sinning. What was Paul's response in *6:2*? What key words stand out?

What key concepts did Paul add in *6:3–4* to elaborate "died to sin" in verse 2?



Since We've Died, Let's Really Live!

Romans 6:1–5

What conclusion did Paul make in *Romans 6:5*?

Joined with Christ . . . baptism . . . died to sin . . . new life. These vital theological concepts guarantee our freedom. Let's discover what they mean.

Satan doesn't want you to believe you are free. He wants you to believe you are still a helpless victim of your old nature and when temptation comes, you're going to fall again. That's not true! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Joined with Christ in His Death, Burial, and Resurrection

In interpretation, we seek to understand what Paul intended his readers to understand. How would they have defined these key words? How did Paul teach them in other contexts? To find out, you may need to consult your Bible-study tools, Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Insights on Romans*. *Constable's Notes* at netbible.org is a reliable online resource.

“Joined with Christ Jesus in Baptism” —Romans 6:3

Consider the phrase, “joined with Christ Jesus in baptism” (Romans 6:3). Paul addressed those who had placed their faith in Jesus for their salvation. Not only had God “counted [them] as righteous . . . because of their faith” (Romans 4:5), but also God had joined them with Christ through spiritual baptism.



Since We've Died, Let's Really Live!

Romans 6:1–5

What does *baptism* mean in this context?

When you came to Christ, you were positionally dipped into His life, and your identity was changed to be like Christ. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

“We Died and Were Buried with Christ” —Romans 6:4

Paul's readers would have understood baptism to imply a change in identity, just as a garment changes its color when it is dipped, or “baptized,” into dye. Our spiritual baptism into Christ linked us to Him so that His experience became our experience and changed our identity from slave to free.

What spiritually transpired when we were joined with Christ, according to [Romans 6:4](#)? What spiritual benefits followed?

We have died to the power of sin and the authority of Satan. He doesn't want you to know that! Satan doesn't want you to know you're free and that you don't have to be afraid of him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Since We've Died, Let's Really Live!

Romans 6:1–5

“Just as Christ Was Raised . . . We Also May Live New Lives” —Romans 6:4

Water baptism is a physical symbol of the spiritual reality of our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ. When Christ died, we died. When Christ was buried, we were buried. When Christ was raised, we were raised to “live new lives” (Romans 6:4).

What does new life in Christ mean in this context?

You don't have to sin. You don't have to be under the authority of the enemy, Satan. Because you are identified with Christ, you have a resurrected life at work within you.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: No Longer a Slave but God's Own Child

In correlation, we explore other passages on the same themes. What did Paul say about our new identity in Christ in the following verses?

2 Corinthians 5:17



Since We've Died, Let's Really Live!

Romans 6:1–5

Galatians 4:4–7

Colossians 3:1–4

Our identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection puts our past behind us. We're no longer slaves, so we can live without fear, guilt, shame, and defeat. We're not victims of sin, we're victors.

You can live without the shackles of guilt and shame because you've been rescued. You have triumph over these things through the death of Christ. He liberates us from the domination of sin. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Application: Now That You Know

To live by grace, we must fully embrace our new identity *in Christ*—a concept Bible teachers refer to as “positional truth.” Christ redeemed us from slavery by paying the penalty of our sin through His death, burial, and resurrection. Consequently, in Christ, we occupy a *position* of freedom.

Satan has no authority over Christ, so he has no authority over us since we're in Christ. And since we're in Christ, sin has no power to separate us from God or control our lives.



Since We've Died, Let's Really Live!

Romans 6:1–5

What does it mean to you personally to know these truths?

What truth can you declare when thoughts of fear, guilt, shame, and defeat attack you?

Knowing the truth about our position in Christ is just the beginning of walking in freedom. In the next section of Romans 6, Paul explained further steps, which we'll examine in the next *Searching the Scriptures* study. Until then, go through the day considering this thought: "In Christ, I am dead to sin and alive to God. Sin has no control over me." When tempted, remember your position in Christ. You're free!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for coming to my rescue by sending Your Son to die in my place. In the mystery of Your will, You joined me to Him so that His death is my death. His burial is my burial. His resurrection is my resurrection. Oh, how glorious is this truth! May I revel in it today and always give You praise. In Jesus' name, amen.

LIVING BY GRACE

STUDY THREE

Needed Changes When Living by Grace

Romans 6:5–14

We're not only saved by grace, we're able to walk by grace and to be free to live a new kind of life.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHEN Christians sin, the remedy is 1 John 1:9:

If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

God is faithful even when we aren't. When we confess, He forgives and cleanses. What a relief! First John 1:9 is like a clinic built at the bottom of a ravine along a mountain highway. If we swerve off the road of right living, we can count on the doctor in the clinic to patch us up and get us going again. Confession is the corrective approach to sin.

“But,” according to Pastor Chuck Swindoll, “it’s not the best alternative.” He continues,

Romans 6, on the other hand, is preventative counsel, providing the signs: “No need to crash . . . slow down . . . danger ahead.”¹

Prevention makes more sense, doesn't it? It's better to drive safely than speed around the curves, skid over the cliff, and depend on God to pick up the pieces. Living by grace is about prevention—going God's way and heeding His warning signs to live free from sin. Let's find out more in Romans 6:5–14.



Needed Changes When Living by Grace

Romans 6:5–14



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Until now, you may have thought that sinning was unavoidable, and confession was the only method to manage sin. Ask the Lord to guide you to a better way.

Father, help me to see myself in a new light—not as a victim of forces beyond my control but as a changed person. Spark in me the hope that I can truly live free from “the sin that so easily trips us up” (Hebrews 12:1). My heart is open to Your truth. In Jesus’ name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

“Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?” (Romans 6:2). Paul’s rhetorical question challenges our assumptions. Yes, grace covers our sin, but it does not give us cover to sin. Just the opposite, it frees us *not* to sin.

Paul explained how to live free from sin in [Romans 6:5–14](#). Read the passage in the New Living Translation and The Message. Pick out three lines from these verses that stand out to you and write them in the spaces below.

- _____
- _____
- _____



Observation: Know, Consider, Present

Observation considers what a biblical passage is saying. Finding the key words helps us perceive the author’s main points. Note the words *know*, *consider*, and *give* (or *present* in the New American Standard Bible), and you’ll see the outline of the passage.

Truths We Must Know—Romans 6:5–10

When we trusted in Christ for eternal life, we were baptized into His death and resurrection ([Romans 6:3–4](#)), and we changed from sin’s slaves to God’s children ([Galatians 4:5–7](#)). We didn’t necessarily see the change, hear it, or feel it, but our identity changed nevertheless.



Needed Changes When Living by Grace

Romans 6:5–14

What did Paul say are the implications of this truth, according to *Romans 6:5–7*?

Christ broke the curse of sin that shrouds humanity in death. How did Christ do this, according to *Romans 6:8–10*? What are the benefits for those united with Him?

Victory over sin begins with *knowing* about our union with Christ, our new identity in Him, and the implications of this truth. Then, knowing must lead to a change in the way we think.

There is no sin that can overpower you any more than it could have overpowered Christ, unless you yield to its authority. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

A Reality We Must Consider—Romans 6:11–12

Find the word *consider* in *Romans 6:11*. Because of Christ's victory over death, what should we consider ourselves to be?



Needed Changes When Living by Grace

Romans 6:5–14

Why do you think this command, “consider,” is essential for experiencing victory over sin?

Paul culminates his points about knowing and considering with what two commands in *Romans 6:12*?

On the flip side of these negative “do not’s” is the positive “do” in *Romans 6:13*—the action step in Paul’s path to freedom.

I no longer must yield to the temptation to say ugly things about someone else, or react in anger, or to hold a grudge. I can forgive because the power of Christ is in me. It’s a new way to think. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Needed Changes When Living by Grace

Romans 6:5–14

An Action We Should Take—Romans 6:13–14

The first step was *theological*; the second step was *intellectual*; now this third step is *volitional*. Find the word *present* in the New American Standard Bible version of *Romans 6:13*. The Greek word is *paristemi*. How does the New Living Translation render *6:13* to express this concept? Put the ideas from this verse into your own words, as if Paul were writing them to you personally.

Paul wrapped his teaching with a ribbon of grace in *6:14*. What did Paul say?

Before coming to Christ, we didn't have the power to stop sinning. But now we live under the rulership of grace. We can say with confidence, "Sin is no longer my master."

Christ's power resides in you. Let Him speak through you. Let Him decide through you. Let Him react through you. Let Him forgive through you. Let Him have His way through you. You're a channel through which He works. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: The Outcome of Our Freedom

Paul used the Greek word *paristemi* to communicate the outcome of our freedom. God freed us so that we can stop *paristemi*-ing our bodies to sin and, instead, *paristemi* our bodies to God (*6:13*). It's repentance in a nutshell—turning from sin to God.



Needed Changes When Living by Grace

Romans 6:5–14

Look up *paristemi* using Bill Mounce’s Greek lexicon available at billmounce.com. What definitions do you find?

How do these definitions help you understand the goal of your freedom in Christ?

Presenting yourself to God means you “use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God” (6:13). How is your body an instrument? How does that change your view of your body?

Our freedom from sin is freedom to obey God. In theological terms, *God saved us to sanctify us*—a theme Paul picked up later in Romans 12.

Today, Lord, I’m Yours from the moment I put my feet on the floor. I’m Yours when I leave my house and drive to work. I’m Yours when I’m in the shop or working with the team. I’m completely Yours. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Needed Changes When Living by Grace

Romans 6:5–14



Correlation: Change the Way You Think

How does Romans 6:13 resemble Paul’s teaching in 12:1–2? Use the following chart to compare the similar phrases and concepts.

<i>Romans 6:13</i>	<i>Romans 12:1–2</i>

Paul stated plainly in 12:2 the key to sanctification. You can stop serving sin and start serving God by “the renewing of your mind” (NASB) or, in other words, by *changing the way you think* about sin, your identity in Christ, your purpose, and how you relate with God. Let’s work out this principle in application.

It’s in the mind. You don’t track sin. You don’t play with it. It is a radical transformation in how you think. It’s a matter of self-talk. It’s what you tell yourself.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: First Thoughts

Do you lie awake at night recalling all your sins—sins in your thoughts, sins in your words, sins in what you did, sins in what you didn’t do? The list is endless, and what hope do you have that you won’t commit the same sins tomorrow?

In his book, *The Grace Awakening*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll points out the bondage this thinking brings.

The shame and self-imposed guilt this brings is enormous, to say nothing of the “I’m defeated” message it reinforces. We begin the day afraid of sin. We live ashamed. We go to bed with a long list, ready to confess. If it isn’t very long, we fear we’ve overlooked several “hidden sins.”²



Needed Changes When Living by Grace

Romans 6:5–14

He urges us to shift our mental gears to a grace mind-set.

God says to every one of us, “Where sin abounded, grace superabounded. You were once enslaved to a passion, yes, but no longer . . . Now you’re free from that. You can live above it.” Grace awakens, enlivens, and empowers our ability to conquer sin.³

Would you like to change your thinking today and conquer sin? What first thoughts would you like to have in the morning? Use the following phrases to shape your thinking based on Romans 6.

Lord, I know . . .

I consider myself to be . . .

I present each part of myself . . .



Needed Changes When Living by Grace

Romans 6:5–14

Use this prayer each morning. When tempted, say the prayer again. Call upon God's truth and indwelling power to win your battles with sin.

As you close this study, meditate on Romans 6:12–14 from *The Message*, and use personal pronouns to make it yours as a declaration of your intent.

[I will] not give sin a vote in the way [I] conduct [my life]. [I won't] give it the time of day. [I won't] even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life. [I throw myself] wholeheartedly and full-time—remember, [I've] been raised from the dead!—into God's way of doing things. Sin can't tell [me] how to live. After all, [I'm] not living under that old tyranny any longer. [I'm] living in the freedom of God.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You have the power. I don't. You have authority. I don't. Because Your Holy Spirit lives in me, I ask You to answer the door when sin knocks. I ask You to take charge of my life right now to keep me from sin. I give myself completely to You, and I give to You the members of my body as instruments of righteousness to use as You will. In the victorious name of Jesus, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2003), 111.
2. Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening*, 99.
3. Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening*, 99.



LIVING BY GRACE

STUDY FOUR

Whose Slave Are You?

Romans 6:15–23

Grace frees us, but not to do as we please. We are freed to please Christ.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

PASTOR Chuck Swindoll recalls the time his mentor, Ray Stedman, had an unforgettable encounter with a man while walking the streets of downtown Los Angeles.

An eccentric man with long, tangled hair, a scraggly beard, and filthy clothes walked toward him wearing a sandwich board. Written on the front in bold letters—no doubt by the man himself—were the words “I am a slave of Jesus Christ.” The scruffy prophet held Ray’s eyes in a steady gaze until he passed by, and as he continued up the sidewalk, Ray turned to read the back side of the sandwich board. It read, “Whose slave are you?”¹

The man’s question confronted passersby with a reality most would rather not face. We all serve someone or something. People can become slaves to their career or to their possessions. Their drive to please others may enslave them to people’s opinions. Self is the master of those who think only of themselves. Sin is the master of those who can’t say no to their desires.

Christ, however, has set us free from all these masters. By choosing Him as our Master, we experience *real* freedom—which is a paradox, isn’t it? Only by serving Christ can we be truly free.



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INSIGHT FOR LIVING
MINISTRIES

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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

S04
1

Whose Slave Are You?

Romans 6:15–23



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take a quiet moment to meditate on the following declarations of your freedom in Christ.

Jesus replied . . . “If the Son sets you free, you are truly free.” (John 8:34, 36)

Because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. (Romans 8:2)

For you have been called to live in freedom. (Galatians 5:13)

Write a brief prayer asking the Lord to help you understand what it means to be free, to open your heart to the truth in His Word, and to empower you to fulfill your divine calling.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In Romans 6, Paul addressed two types of Christians living under sin’s bondage. First, as we previously studied, some *nullified* the freeing power of grace by failing to leave their old master of sin. Paul taught them how to live in Christ’s freedom in Romans 6:1–14. Paul then wrote 6:15–23 to address a second group. These Christians *abused* grace by sinning as much as they pleased since they were no longer under the law.

The first group in their defeated state sinned because they believed they had no choice but to sin. The second group sinned *by choice*. They figured that, with no law to stop them, they could rev up their sinful desires and race through life under the green flag of grace.

Reckless liberty, however, leads to a wrecked life. In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we’ll correct this libertine extreme and learn how to live by grace as Christ intended.



Whose Slave Are You?

Romans 6:15–23



Observation: Careful Warnings to All Who Are Free

Read *Romans 6:15–23* to get an overview of the passage. As you read, make mental notes of the series of contrasts between our old way of life serving sin (“you were” 6:17, 20) and our new way of life serving Christ (“now” 6:17–19, 22).

The Question and the Central Principle

What question in *Romans 6:15* launched this section of Paul’s teaching on grace?

These libertines thought, *We can sin all we want under grace. We’re free!* Paul shook his head in response, “Of course not!” And then, with equal emphasis, he declared the big idea of the passage, writing his letters as if in all caps: “DON’T YOU REALIZE . . . ?” (6:16).

What central principle did Paul state in *6:16*?



Whose Slave Are You?

Romans 6:15–23

Why do you think Paul was so adamant? What was at stake?

Past Identity versus Present Identity

Building on his main idea, Paul contrasted our past identity as slaves to sin with our present identity in Christ in Romans 6:17–23. Fill in the contrasting points in the chart below. The first one is filled in for you.

Verses	Past Identity	Present Identity
<i>Romans 6:17</i>	“Once you were slaves of sin”	“but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you”
<i>Romans 6:18</i>		
<i>Romans 6:19</i>		
<i>Romans 6:20–23</i>		



Whose Slave Are You?

Romans 6:15–23

Paul's central principle leads to his central command: "Now you must *give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living* so that you will become holy" (Romans 6:19, emphasis added). Step-by-step, Paul guided his readers in how to live by grace. We can summarize Paul's progression of thought like this:

1. When I was lost, I was enslaved to sin ("Once you were slaves of sin," [6:17]).
2. My slavery to sin only grew worse ("ever deeper into sin" [6:19]).
3. Christ freed me from slavery to sin ("now you are free" [6:22]).
4. I have a new Master ("have become slaves to God" [6:22]).
5. I have a new calling ("do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life" [6:22]).

I choose to obey Christ, and in a sense, I am a slave of Jesus Christ. If Jesus says it, I want to do it. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Living Out Our Freedom over Sin

Grace allows you to choose your master. "You can be a slave to sin . . . or you can choose to obey God" (Romans 6:16). It's absolutely vital to take seriously the consequences of our choice. Read [6:20–23](#) and write down what Paul wrote about *life* and *death*.

We often use [6:23](#) as an invitation to a non-Christian to receive the free gift of salvation, and that's a valid application. However, look again at the verse in its context. Paul was addressing carnal Christians who thought they could choose sin and not suffer the consequences because they were under grace.



Whose Slave Are You?

Romans 6:15–23

Read *Romans 6:20–23* again. What did he mean by “death” as wages? In contrast, what kind of “life” did Jesus freely offer? What warning and invitation was Paul giving to Christians?

Eternal life is not something out there that we reach when we die. We enter into it when we believe in the Savior. We begin an eternal kind of living the moment we believe. The wages of sin, however, is a death-like existence. Christ delivers us from the wages of sin.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Paul’s Teaching in Galatians

Paul mirrored Romans 6 in his letter to the Gentile believers in Galatia who had fallen prey to Jewish legalists. What similar principles on the subject of freedom do you find in the following verses from Galatians?

3:22: _____

5:1: _____

5:13–14: _____

6:7–8: _____



Whose Slave Are You?

Romans 6:15–23

In the space below, put in your own words Paul's instructions and warnings to the Galatian church. What vital role does the Holy Spirit play in our living by grace in freedom? (Note: we'll explore more of the Spirit's vital role in living by grace when we study Romans 8.)

We're not free to do whatever we wish, whenever we wish to do it. We certainly are free to choose. But we're not free to choose the consequences if we choose wrong. Invariably, if we do what's wrong, there will be a price to pay. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Choices and Consequences

Grace guides us to a crossroads, doesn't it? At this junction, we are free to choose whether to obey sin or God. But, as Paul made it clear, we're not free to choose the consequences of our choice. Paul knew what was at stake. With the heart of a father who dearly loves his children, he appealed to Christians . . . *use your freedom wisely.*

As we conclude, let's tie a couple of strings around our finger as reminders of Paul's teaching.

1. *It's possible to be free from sin yet choose to be enslaved.* This describes the defeated Christians. Sin dulls your spiritual taste buds to the sweetness of God. It causes you to live joyless lives instead of the abundant life God offers.
2. *It's possible to be enslaved yet think you are free.* This described the libertines. Once you realize your bondage, however, grace motivates you to choose a righteous lifestyle in the power of the Spirit. Christ gives you the grace you need to do what you can't do in your own strength.



Whose Slave Are You?

Romans 6:15–23

If you followed the wrong master in the past, what consequences did you experience?

Are you still enduring consequences? Are you struggling to change masters? Perhaps you can talk to a trusted friend about your desire to change and ask him or her to help guide you to freedom. Perhaps you can meet with your pastor or Christian counselor for guidance. What ideas do you have?

Finally, what about the loved ones you know who are racing through life at a reckless clip, running past stop signs, and not caring about the consequences? Based on our study of Romans 6:15–23, what can you share with your loved ones to encourage them to true freedom?



Whose Slave Are You?

Romans 6:15–23

Paul spoke in strongest terms to the grace-abusers who were scattering the pearls of heaven before the swine of their own sinful desires. God did not free people by sacrificing His Son so they could return to their old master and ruin their lives. That would be the saddest tragedy of all.

Conclude Romans 6 with a personal commitment to live by grace, free from sin, under the authority of our new Master.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You sent Your Son to give me life in abundance. The kind of life I'll fully enjoy in heaven someday is the kind of life I can taste today as I live in Your kingdom, surrendered to Your authority as my Master. Forgive my lapses into sin when I lose sight of Your grace. Thank You for settling the issue of my forgiveness at the cross where Jesus died for me. Help me love others with the same grace which You love me. Help those I love to know the joy and freedom of serving You. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Romans*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 6 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2015), 149.



LIVING BY GRACE

STUDY FIVE

We've Met the Wretch: He Is Us!

Romans 7:1–25

You need to know that, even though you are saved, in the core of your being is an old nature that wants you to live like you used to live.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WET paint. Do not touch!” “Keep off the grass.” “No U-turn.” “Stay on the trail.”

We've all seen signs like these. The sign-makers posted them for good reasons—to caution, to safeguard, to preserve. And yet, even though people see the good in the rules, they tend to break them anyway. Despite the warnings, they still touch, tromp, turn, and take shortcuts. Why?

All people—Christians included—have a propensity to do the opposite of what they know is right. In fact, just seeing a “Do not touch” sign tempts us to touch. If the sign wasn't there, we might have walked right by, but the sign triggers our curiosity. Now we touch just to see whether the paint is still wet!

Paul taught in Romans 6 that, under grace, we “are free from the power of sin,” and now, we can “do those things that lead to holiness” (Romans 6:22). And yet, as we'll learn in Romans 7, we have what Paul termed, the “flesh,” the degeneracy of our nature that inclines us to do the opposite. Our longing to do right struggles with our impulse to do wrong in a back-and-forth battle of good and bad desires.

We can try to keep God's laws by sheer willpower, but we won't progress very far down the road of right living. Just as we needed God's grace for salvation, we also need God's grace for holy living—which is the point Paul emphatically illustrates in Romans 7.



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S05
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We've Met the Wretch: He Is Us!

Romans 7:1–25



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Paul confessed his frustration to keep God's law by exclaiming, "Wretched man that I am!" and expressed his desperate need for Christ (Romans 7:24 NASB). Voice your same need at the outset of your study.

Father, I depend completely on Christ and His mercy today. I lean on Him alone as my true and faithful Friend. May Your Spirit help me comprehend Your Word and empower me to follow Your will. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Who doesn't see the good in God's laws? Imagine a world in which everyone obeyed the Ten Commandments. Killing, cheating, stealing, lying, and coveting would cease, and people would love one another and worship God in unity. Under God's law, humanity could experience real peace and goodwill.

And yet, no one except Christ can keep the law without failing. We know God's law is good, but we have no power to obey it. So, instead of signposts guiding us to blessing, God's laws are glaring spotlights exposing our sin and guilt.

Thankfully, according to Paul, Christ released us from the law's condemning hold—which Paul elaborates in the first half of Romans 7. In the second half, Paul paints a grim self-portrait of his failed attempts to keep the law in his own strength. Let's take a closer look at this intriguing passage.



Observation: Here's Where We Stand, Here's Why We Struggle

Observation opens Scripture to our senses so we can not only see what the author says but also feel the author's heartbeat. Paul expresses deep emotions in Romans 7, and so, as you read, imagine being with Paul, seeing his tears and sensing the ache in his soul.



We've Met the Wretch: He Is Us!

Romans 7:1–25

Here's Where We Stand—Romans 7:1–13

Romans 7 adds to the list of benefits of our union with Christ from Romans 6. Just as, in Christ, we died to the power of sin (Romans 6:2), so also, in Christ, we “died to the power of the law” (Romans 7:4).

Paul used a slave metaphor in Romans 6 to teach our death to sin's mastery. What metaphor did Paul use to illustrate our death to the law in 7:1–3?

Trace Paul's explanation of this metaphor in 7:4–6 by filling in the following blanks.

1. When you died with Christ, you died to _____ (7:4).
2. By being raised with Christ, you can _____ (7:4).
3. Before Christ, you were controlled by _____ (7:5).
4. The law aroused sinful desires to produce _____ (7:5).
5. Released from the law, you can now _____ (7:6).

In 7:7–13, we learn that sin is the reason for our trouble, not the law. What good does the law accomplish, according to 7:7?



We've Met the Wretch: He Is Us!

Romans 7:1–25

List the negative effects of sin in *Romans 7:8–13*.

When the law appears with its rules and regulations, we're made aware of sin because the law defines sin. That's the role of the law. When I became acquainted with it, I learned all the things I shouldn't do. Suddenly, aroused within me was the old sin nature.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Here's Why We Struggle

Paul diagnosed the source of our ailment in *Romans 7:14*:

The trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin.

In the next verses, Paul labels our sin problem as the “flesh”—which the New Living Translation translates, “old nature” and “sinful nature” (*Romans 7:5, 18*). We'll look closer at this concept in the interpretation section, but for now, read [7:14–23](#) and feel the intense emotion Paul expresses as he describes his inner conflict.

On the one hand, Paul declared, “I love God's law with all my heart” (*7:22*). Out of his love for the law, Paul expressed his heart's longing with the phrase, “I want.” Observe each time Paul uses the word, *want*, and write down what Paul wants ([7:15, 18–21](#)).



We've Met the Wretch: He Is Us!

Romans 7:1–25

On the other hand, Paul's sinful passions opposed his heart's longing. He used the words, *do* or *don't*, to describe the results. Write down what Paul *did* that fought against what he wanted, according to *Romans 7:15–21*.

Paul summed up the conflict between his wanting and his doing: “the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not” (7:18 NASB). He described his inner conflict as a “war” (7:23). What did Paul exclaim in desperation in *7:22–24*?

What was Paul's hope in *7:25*?

We have within us that old nature. Even though we've been liberated, there it is ready to pounce. Paul had been lost but found. He had been justified. He had been liberated. But he confessed in all honesty to the dark reality that sin is ever there. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



We've Met the Wretch: He Is Us!

Romans 7:1–25



Interpretation: The Sin That Dwells Within

In his commentary on Romans, Pastor Chuck Swindoll defines the flesh.

Paul used the term “flesh” symbolically to represent humanity in its fallen state. The flesh is programmed to think like the world system, which is a perverted version of God’s original created order, and it continues to oppose His will.¹

How does Paul describe in *Romans 7:5* our fallen state before we believed in Jesus as our Savior?

Before Christ, we were “in the flesh” (7:5 NASB), enslaved to the sinful desires that the law aroused. God commanded, “Do not,” but, in rebellion, our flesh urged us, “Do,” and we had no power to resist.

Write your definition of the flesh as Paul used the term. The online *Encyclopedia of the Bible* has a helpful explanation of the three ways “*flesh*” is used in the New Testament, including Paul’s particular usage.

Obedying the law *in the flesh* is as futile as trying to fly by flapping our arms. Thankfully, as believers, we are no longer in the flesh but *in Christ*, and we can live in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, not in the flesh.



We've Met the Wretch: He Is Us!

Romans 7:1–25

Explain how “the new way of living in the Spirit” is better than “the old way of obeying the letter of the law” in *Romans 7:6*.

Our new nature allows us to live in the power of the Spirit and “produce a harvest of good deeds for God” (7:4). We’re not in the flesh; however, we still have the flesh, and it wages war against the Spirit. Our flesh wants to pull us back to the way we lived before Christ. We saw how Paul described this conflict in himself. Let’s examine this conflict in the life of another believer, Peter.



Correlation: Peter’s Failure of the Flesh

No doubt, Peter would have agreed with Paul that “the willing is present in me but the doing of the good is not” (Romans 7:18 NASB). What did Peter say when Jesus foretold Peter’s denial, according to *Matthew 26:33–35*?

How did Peter’s flesh show itself in *26:69–75*? What feelings followed?



We've Met the Wretch: He Is Us!

Romans 7:1–25

To whom did Peter turn in his wretchedness? To the same Savior as Paul turned, Jesus Christ.

Now don't think you have to work harder to live cleaner. You're missing the grace of God. God, by His grace, comes to our rescue and says, "Trust Me." You don't have to yield to sin. You can choose not to. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Amazing Grace That Saved a Wretch Like Me

Our Savior's arms are open wide to receive us when we struggle with sin. Two reminders conclude our study.

First, *refuse to live in defeat*. We need not dwell in our shame, nor should we consider ourselves victims. We can turn to Christ to take over our lives so our inclination to sin won't dominate us.

Second, *rely on the Holy Spirit moment by moment to give victory*. This is what Romans 8 is all about. In the next chapter, Paul moved from portraying himself as a wretched man to casting a vision of victory over sin through the power of the Spirit.

Can you identify with Paul's struggle with sin in Romans 7? How so?

What hope do you find in Paul's answer to his struggle? What words of hope might Christ be saying to you today through the Spirit and His Word?



We've Met the Wretch: He Is Us!

Romans 7:1–25

Close with the lyrics of “Amazing Grace.” Let the sweet sound of grace bring you hope today and set your heart to singing.

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!²



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I love You and I love Your commands. Like Paul and Peter, I want to stay true to the way You have marked out in Your Word, but my wandering nature leads me off Your good path. I would be lost were it not for Christ. Thank You for Your grace that guides me back and restores my soul. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Romans*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 6 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2015), 162.
2. John Newton, “Amazing Grace,” *The Celebration Hymnal: Songs and Hymns for Worship* (n.p.: Word Music/Integrity Music, 1997), hymn 343.



LIVING BY GRACE

STUDY SIX

Living Above the Drag of Defeat

Romans 8:1–14

When you trusted in Christ, the Spirit of God made your life His residence. His Spirit is in you to empower you, to give you self-control, restraint, and enlightenment.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

MANY Christians feel stuck in a recurring loop of sin, guilt, and shame. Pastor Chuck Swindoll recalls his own spiritual struggles.

I felt trapped by my inability to live in a manner that God would find pleasing, a mode of life I genuinely desired. I labored under the weight of condemnation, which is perhaps the most demoralizing feeling a Christian can endure. There's nothing that will drag you to a halt and pull you toward sin like shame.¹

In those days, his Bible teachers preached salvation, but they stopped there. Left to wrestle against sin on their own, many Christians echoed Paul's frustration at the end of Romans 7:

What a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?
(Romans 7:24)



Living Above the Drag of Defeat

Romans 8:1–14

Pastor Chuck tells how he finally found hope:

After reaching my own wretched state, I surrendered to the fact that I am not able to live the Christian life. Only then—having come to the end of myself and not a day sooner—only *then* was I ready to accept the truth of Paul’s stunning declaration at the beginning of Romans 8. . . . “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). . . . This is the truth on which we stand, by which we live, and through which we ultimately achieve victory.²

Romans 8 waves a banner of hope to all believers yearning to live above the drag of defeat. Let’s follow Paul’s way of grace in this inspirational passage.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

If you’ve struggled with sin cycles, Paul offers a better plan than simply trying harder. Invite the Lord to show you His way.

Father, open my eyes to Your truth through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Teach me Your ways and enable me to walk “in the paths of righteousness” so I may bring honor to Your name (Psalm 23:3). In Jesus’ name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Romans 8 is a pinnacle chapter. It begins with the word *therefore*, which looks back over the ground Paul covered in chapters 1–7. Let’s take a quick survey.

Paul opened Romans with a bleak picture of humanity’s lost condition. All people stand guilty before God because of sin and unbelief. God requires righteousness, but “no one is righteous” (Romans 3:10), so people are without hope. Jesus, however, bore the judgment for sin, and “We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ” (3:22). By His grace, God counts us as righteous because of our faith in Christ (4:24).



Living Above the Drag of Defeat

Romans 8:1–14

In chapter 5, Paul culminated his teaching about the grace that *justifies* us (declares us righteous) and transitioned to chapter 6, which is about the grace that *sanctifies* us (makes us holy) through our union with Christ.

Our flesh, however, fights against righteous living, which Paul illustrated in chapter 7 with his own struggles. Who can free us from “this life that is dominated by sin?” Paul asked (Romans 7:24). The answer is *Jesus Christ*. The One who saved us from sin’s judgment can deliver us from sin’s control. How? Through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, since all this is true, *therefore*

Observation: Assurance and Enablement

Read slowly *Romans 8:1–14* from the *J. B. Phillips New Testament* as you take your first glimpse of the marvels of grace through the power of the Holy Spirit. And then, answer the questions below, which fall into two main categories: assurances in Christ and enablement of the Spirit over the flesh.

Assurances in Christ—Romans 8:1–4

Since it is true that God has joined us to Christ, satisfied the law’s demands, and declared us righteous, what assurances did Paul offer us in *Romans 8:1–4*?

These assurances are ours *now*, not someday when we reach heaven. Security, freedom, and the blessings of grace through Christ are ours. On this solid ground, we walk in the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

You as a child of God will never face condemnation. Ever. You are eternally secure in Christ. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Living Above the Drag of Defeat

Romans 8:1–14

Enablement of the Spirit over the Flesh—Romans 8:5–14

According to Paul, we can know we’re living in the Spirit by our *mind-set*. Read [Romans 8:5–7](#) and use the following chart to contrast those who set their minds on the Spirit and those who set their minds on the flesh.

Minds Set on the Flesh <i>Romans 8:5a, 6a, 7</i>	Minds Set on the Spirit <i>Romans 8:5b, 6b</i>

Even Christians can behave like non-Christians when they view life through a worldly frame of mind. What did Paul remind his readers regarding the essential difference between Christians and non-Christians in 8:8–9?



Living Above the Drag of Defeat

Romans 8:1–14

Then Paul addressed the Spirit’s power regarding our *bodies* in *Romans 8:10–11*. What truths did Paul convey?

Finally, Paul addressed our *actions*. When we were slaves to sin, we “were free from the obligation to do right” (6:20). But now, in the Spirit, we “have no obligation to do what [our] sinful nature urges [us] to do” (8:12). What did Paul say about the flesh and the Spirit in regard to our deeds in *8:12–14*?

We’ve observed the differences between living by the flesh and by the Spirit. In interpretation, let’s look closer at how to live by the Spirit.

When you walk in the flesh, you’re carnal. You compete. You’re envious. You compare. But when you’re spiritual, you don’t do that. God puts you on another plane. When you’re under the control of the Spirit, it’s marvelous! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Living Above the Drag of Defeat

Romans 8:1–14



Interpretation: A “Spirit” Frame of Mind

The Holy Spirit ministers to our whole being, but the starting point is our mind-set. The Greek word translated “mind” in *Romans 8:6–7* is the noun, *phronema*, which Paul used only here and in *8:27*. It refers to not just what we think about but to our frame of mind. It refers to our whole outlook—the way we view the world.

The New English Translation uses the word *outlook* to capture the meaning of *phronema* in *8:6–7*.

For the outlook of the flesh is death, but the outlook of the Spirit is life and peace, because the outlook of the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to the law of God, nor is it able to do so.

How would you define the “outlook of the flesh” (*Romans 8:6*)? What makes the fleshly way of viewing the world hostile to God?

How would you define the “outlook of the Spirit” (*8:6*)? What makes the Spirit-view of the world superior to the flesh-view?



Living Above the Drag of Defeat

Romans 8:1–14

Illustrate these two opposing outlooks with examples from your experience. Think of a time you were in a stressful moment, and you were with people who had a fleshly outlook. What was their attitude? What did they say? What were their actions?

In contrast, think of a time you were in a stressful moment, and you were with people who had the outlook of the Spirit. What was their attitude? What did they say? What were their actions?

Prayer helps to shift your outlook from that of the flesh to that of the Spirit: “Lord, give me the mind of the Holy Spirit in this stressful circumstance.” Also, make it a daily practice to dwell on Scripture and listen to spiritual songs. “The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you” (Romans 8:11). He can help you see the world as He sees it, change your outlook from fear to trust, and enable you to walk in the way of “life and peace” (8:6). Pause right now and ask the Lord to give you the mind of the Spirit.



Living Above the Drag of Defeat

Romans 8:1–14

Don't be surprised when you hear people from the world make a statement that is diametrically opposed to spiritual things. That's their lifestyle. That's the way they think. That's their frame of reference. But the Spirit gives life. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: When We Are Weak

We look forward to the day when God, who resurrected Jesus, “will give life to [our] mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within [us]” (Romans 8:11). According to Paul, “the Holy Spirit within us [is] a foretaste of future glory” (8:23), but, until then, our bodies bear the effects of sin and suffering.

When we are weak, what does the Holy Spirit do for us, according to [Romans 8:26–28](#)?

What do you think the Spirit prays for when you are weak? What difference does it make knowing the Spirit is praying for you?

Living by grace in the power of the Spirit calms your mind. It helps reduce the stress in your body, and it gives you peace even in times of panic. It can make a remarkable difference in your daily life. But the decision to draw upon the Spirit's power is yours.

The things of God are known by the Spirit of God, and He makes them known to those who are spiritual. As we spend time in His Word and in prayer, seeking His will, we sense direction from God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Living Above the Drag of Defeat

Romans 8:1–14



Application: The Choice Is Yours

As children of God, we have a choice. We can say no to the Spirit of God and operate according to the flesh. If we do, we'll function in a panic, acting as if everything we do depends on our effort and ingenuity.

Or we can choose to operate according to the Spirit. Our circumstances may not change, but our mind-set is of the Spirit and our actions are under His control.

What is your frame of mind today?

What does your situation look like from the Holy Spirit's frame of mind?

What does it mean to you that, in Christ, you are no longer under condemnation and that the Spirit has freed you “from the power of sin” (Romans 8:1)? How does this assurance change your outlook?



Living Above the Drag of Defeat

Romans 8:1–14

Pastor Chuck had to surrender to the fact that he couldn't live his life in his own strength. He had to come to the end of himself to fully depend on the Spirit's power. Are you at that place in your spiritual journey? If so, in the following section, share with the Lord your desire to fully depend on the Spirit's power. Invite the Spirit to give you His mind-set and fill you with the grace to do God's will.



A FINAL PRAYER

Write your prayer here:

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Romans*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 6 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014), 169.
2. Swindoll, *Insights on Romans*, 169–70.



LIVING BY GRACE

STUDY SEVEN

Extending Grace to Let Others Be

Selections from Romans 14

One of the most beautiful people to be around is a Christian who's easy to live with.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

GOD did not stamp all of us out of the same mold. He delights in variety and encourages us to be the individuals He created—unique in personality, interests, gifts, appearance, and style. Shouldn't we encourage variety too? If we live by grace, then we will.

Some Christians, however, require that we all be alike—not just united in the essential doctrines of the faith but also uniform in the nonessentials. They use *comparison* to measure everyone by a singular standard of godliness and *control* to manipulate people through fear, threats, and criticism. They tolerate only one style of music or fashion, one way to manage money, one way to rear children, one way to worship, and one list of dos and don'ts for what to eat, where to go, and what to do.

How do we avoid these legalistic pitfalls? Grace. We've been learning to live by grace as we serve God in the power of the Spirit. In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we'll shift from the vertical to horizontal, from our relationship with God to our relationships with people. God poured His grace *into* us to flow *out* of us as we extend His grace to others. Paul's teaching in Romans 14 offers guidelines on how to do just that.



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S07
1

Extending Grace to Let Others Be

Selections from Romans 14



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Grace goes both ways. If you expect others to show you grace, then you should show grace in return. In prayer, ask for God's wisdom to live free from others' opinions and to free others from yours.

Father, thank You for freeing me from condemnation through Christ. Now, free me from the condemnation others might impose on me. Give me wisdom through my study of Your Word to know how to treat others with the grace you have so lavishly shown me. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Romans 14 concerns the tension between Jewish and gentile Christians in the early church. Although Jesus had declared all foods "acceptable in God's sight" (Mark 7:19), converted Jews may have felt uneasy eating non-kosher gentile food—particularly meat from animals sacrificed to idols. Likewise, gentile Christians who gave up pagan festivals may have looked sideways at the Jewish Christians who continued celebrating Jewish holy days.

Conflicts over *diet* and *days* divided the Roman church, and so Paul showed the church members how to ease the friction in their relationships by applying a dab of grace.



Observation: Putting Grace into Action

Read *Romans 14* slowly and thoughtfully, observing carefully the flow of thought. Reading a passage aloud helps to focus your thoughts and tune out distractions. Use the following questions to help you observe the details of Paul's teaching.



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Conflicts Over Diet and Days—Romans 14:1–9

What are the two commands in *Romans 14:1*?

How did Paul describe the two types of Christians in *14:2*?

In *14:3*, in addition to accepting, Paul commanded the meat-eaters to “not look down on” the meat-abstainers. Reversing the roles, how should those who didn’t eat meat show grace toward those who did? What basis did Paul give for this command, according to *14:4*?



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The subject shifts from which foods to eat to which days to worship. Some claimed, “one day is more holy than another,” while others shrugged, “every day is alike” (Romans 14:5). Rather than squabbling over days, what did Paul say was most important, according to *Romans 14:5–6*?

Although the Christians differed on food to eat and days to worship, they were aligned at the heart level. What deeply held beliefs united these opposing Christians in *14:7–9*?

God alone is qualified to judge. He’s equipped to do what we’re not equipped to do.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Condemnation and Contempt—Romans 14:10–13

What a mess it must have been. The rule-keepers condemned those with liberty, and those with liberty showed contempt to the rule-keepers. Condemnation and contempt didn’t exactly promote harmony in the church! How did Paul correct the believers in *Romans 14:10–13*?



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We nullify grace when we put people into categories and then, of all things, break our friendship with them if they continue to do those things we don't agree with.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Way of Grace—Romans 14:14–23

Paul told his readers to repent, essentially—to “stop condemning each other” and start living “in such a way that you will not cause another believer to stumble and fall” (Romans 14:13).

What lesson in grace did Paul give in *Romans 14:14–16*?

What characteristics of life in the kingdom of God should guide all our interactions, according to *14:17–19*?

According to *14:20–22*, when should those who are strong in faith curb their liberty?



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Finally, what general principle did Paul give all believers in *Romans 14:23*?

Don't flaunt your liberty. If you care about others, you won't needlessly offend them.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Some Biblical Guidelines That Magnify Grace

These matters Paul addressed in Romans 14 fall into the broader category of grey areas—morally neutral behaviors that God has not declared right or wrong. In these areas, God liberates us to follow the leading of the Spirit in our walk with Him, and yet, sometimes, we must limit our liberty for the sake of love. What principles can we draw from Romans 14 to help us extend grace to one another in our new life in the Spirit? Write down the principles you discover in the following verses.

Principle One: Accept

The problem in the Roman church was not a food problem. It was a love problem, an acceptance problem—which still exists in churches today. Reread *Romans 14:1–4*, then write down a principle you discover.

Without grace in relationships, a heated reaction can erupt over any grey-area issue: music styles, makeup, jewelry, movies, dancing, food, drink, houses, clothes, spiritual practices, and the list goes on. Accepting Christians who don't act like we act or think like we think is basic to letting them be themselves as they follow the leading of the Spirit.



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Principle Two: Follow

Write down a second principle based on *Romans 14:5–8*. Focus on how Paul allowed freedom for the Lord to guide.

“We belong to the Lord,” Paul stated (*Romans 14:8*). Give people freedom to grow at the pace God leads them, to fail sometimes, and to learn from their own mistakes.

Principle Three: Refuse

What principle about not judging others do you discover in *Romans 14:9–12*?

Freeing others means that we never assume a position we’re not qualified to fill, namely, that of judge. We have blind spots. We don’t know all the facts. We can’t perceive people’s true motives. And we certainly don’t know God’s will for someone else’s life.



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Principle Four: Express

What overarching principle about limiting our freedom for the sake of love can you find in *Romans 14:13–23*?

We should have unity in the essentials. But in nonessential areas where Scripture does not declare something to be wrong, we are to give room for people to believe as they wish and act as they feel comfortable. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Similar Issues in the Corinthian Church

Correlating Scripture validates the truth we've discovered in one passage using a text from another passage. What similar instruction did Paul deliver to the Corinthian believers in *1 Corinthians 8:1–13*?

In Corinth, the “weak” former idol-worshippers were in danger of stumbling if they saw strong believers “eating in the temple of an idol” (8:10). It was a different situation in Rome, but Paul’s guidelines were the same there as in Corinth. Extend grace to one another in love—especially on morally neutral issues in which Christians honor God in different ways.

In the family of God, love must rule. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Application: Actions That Promote Grace

In summary, we magnify grace in our relationships when we accept one another, let the Lord direct others' lives, refuse to judge others, and express liberty wisely—all governed by the rule of love.

Let's consider a few actions that will put these guidelines into practice.

- *Concentrate on things that encourage peace and assist others' growth.* As Paul said in Romans 14:19, "Let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up."
- *Remember that sabotaging saints hurts the work of God.* When we tear down our fellow believers, we "tear apart the work of God" (Romans 14:20).
- *Determine where you stand, and then follow your convictions.* "Don't feel guilty for doing something [you] have decided is right" (14:22). Follow the leading of the Spirit with confidence.

What is the Lord revealing to you about grace and love in your relationships? Through which of these biblical principles and guidelines may He be speaking to you regarding a need in your life?

How can you apply the principle to a particular relationship today?



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Imagine if all your relationships were characterized by acceptance, allowing God to direct people, refusing to judge, and expressing liberty in love. You and those around you would have freedom to be the unique individuals whom God designed, moving to the rhythm of the Spirit—relaxed, carefree, light, joyful—delighting in the dance of grace.

Close your time opening your heart to God. He loves you as no other person can. Breathe in His acceptance and grace so you can live out acceptance and grace toward the people in your life.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for Your care, which is constant and overflowing, totally free of comparison and control. Thank You for Your kindness that frees me from those who intend to trap me under restrictions and control me with shame. I am Yours today, released to follow Your will and be the person You created—free to dance in Your arms of grace. In Jesus' name, amen.

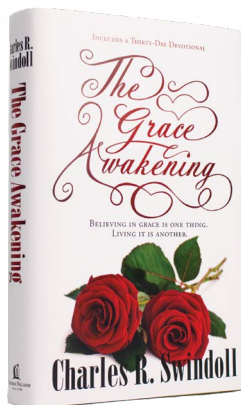


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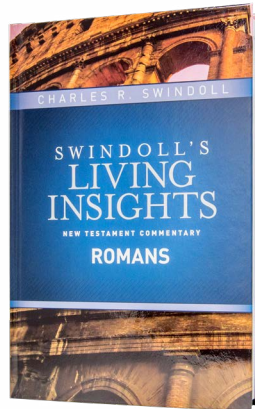
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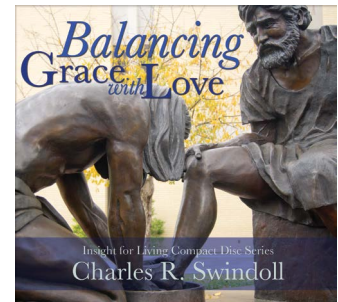
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For the 2023 broadcasts, these *Searching the Scriptures* studies were developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

