

THE GRACE AWAKENING
STUDY SIX

Standing Your Ground for Grace

Galatians 1:6–10; 2:1–16

Why is it that, while we believe strongly in liberty for our country, so many Christians do not believe as strongly in freedom for their faith and yield to those who wish to take it away? Stand your ground for grace!

—Charles R. Swindoll

WHEN Christ set us free, He removed from our necks the oppressive yoke of the law and replaced it with His easy yoke (Matthew 11:28–30). He liberated us from the taskmaster of sin and released us from the burdens of guilt and shame. Because Christ defeated sin’s power through His death and resurrection, our freedom is certain. “If the Son sets you free, you are truly free” (John 8:36)!

However, we must never take for granted our freedom. We must keep a vigilant lookout for grace-killing heresy that can eclipse Christ’s message of freedom. As Paul warned church members in Galatia, legalists will sneak in and “deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ” (Galatians 1:7). Their joyless and intimidating teaching will take captive some Christians, putting them once again under the yoke of the law. Sadly, believers in bondage lose their joy and often become uptight, inflexible, inhibited, overly cautious, and obsessively fearful about what others think or say.

How can we, as Paul urged, “make sure that [we] stay free, and don’t get tied up again in slavery to the law” (5:1)? In this study, we’ll learn to stand our ground against legalism by defining two significant *terms*, identifying three powerful *adversaries*, and specifying four strong *defenses*.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

The two significant terms are *liberty* and *legalism*. Use the following definitions from Chuck Swindoll's book *The Grace Awakening* as prompts to pray for an area of your life in which you want God to help you experience more liberty and less legalism.

Liberty

Liberty is freedom from slavery or bondage. It is initially freedom from sin's power and guilt. Freedom from God's wrath. Freedom from satanic and demonic authority. And equally important, it is freedom from shame that could easily bind me, as well as freedom from the tyranny of others' opinions, obligations, and expectations. . . .

Such freedom is motivated . . . by unconditional love. When the grace of Christ is fully awake in your life, you find you're no longer doing something due to fear or out of shame or because of guilt, but you're doing it through love. The dreadful tyranny of performing in order to please someone is over . . . forever.

Grace also brings a freedom *to do* something else. . . . It's freedom to experience and enjoy a new kind of power that only Christ could bring. It is a freedom to become all that He meant me to be, *regardless of how He leads others*. I can be me—fully and freely. It is a freedom to know Him in an independent and personal way. And that freedom is then released to others so they can be who they are meant to be—different from me!¹

Chuck wraps up his thoughts on liberty with these words:

This freedom to be who we are is nothing short of magnificent. It is freedom to make choices, freedom to know His will, freedom to walk in it, freedom to obey His leading me in my life and you in your life. Once you've tasted such freedom, nothing else satisfies.²

Living in liberty sounds wonderful, doesn't it! Based on Chuck's description, into what new realms of liberty do you pray the Lord will *guide* you?



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Legalism

Next, Chuck explains legalism.

Legalism is an attitude, a mentality based on pride. It is an obsessive conformity to an artificial standard for the purpose of exalting oneself. A legalist assumes the place of authority and pushes it to unwarranted extremes. . . .

Legalism is rigid, grim, exacting, and lawlike in nature. Pride, which is at the heart of legalism, works in sync with other motivating factors. Like guilt. And fear. And shame. It leads to an emphasis on what [one] should *not* be and what one should *not* do. It flourishes in a drab context of negativism.³

What strikes you from this quote as aspects of legalism from which you pray the Lord will *guard* you?



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

With liberty and legalism clearly in view, let's identify from Paul's epistle to the Galatians three powerful *adversaries* that steal our freedom.



Observation: The Adversary of Heresy—Galatians 1:6–10

Paul founded the Galatian church on the central truth of the gospel: salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. After Paul moved on to the next city in his missionary journey, Jewish false teachers moved in and convinced the Gentile converts that faith in Christ was not enough. These legalists taught that God only accepts Gentiles who follow the law of Moses and are circumcised (Acts 15:5; Galatians 6:12–13).

Under Paul's leadership, the church had boarded Christ's train of grace headed toward freedom, but the false teachers hijacked the church and reversed course. They were leading the people from grace back to law, from the new covenant back to the old covenant, from Jesus back to Moses!



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Use the *Searching the Scriptures* method of observation as you read *Galatians 1:6–10*, and identify the first of three types of adversaries that Paul exposed in Galatia and we still encounter today.

How did Paul describe the legalists (Galatians 1:7)?

The New American Standard Bible's word-for-word translation of Galatians 1:6–7 more clearly communicates Paul's use of two contrasting Greek words—*heteros* and *allos*. Although both Greek words can be translated, “another,” *heteros* implies “another of a different kind” while *allos* means “another of the same kind.” The false teachers may have claimed their “gospel” was simply *allos*, another of the same kind as Paul's. However, Paul told the Galatians that they were following “a different [*heteros*] gospel; which is really not another [*allos*]” (1:6–7 NASB).

What point did Paul drive home by contrasting *heteros* with *allos*?

The legalists were “disturbing” people, intending to “distort the gospel of Christ” (1:7 NASB). Those who spread heresies double their damage; they trouble people's souls and twist Christ's truth! In this case, they cast doubt on the sufficiency of the cross and undermined the people's confidence in the Savior.

What was so treacherous about this heresy that angered Paul to the point that he called down curses on the legalists, not caring one whit about pleasing them (1:8–10)?



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Not only do legalists disturb and distort by teaching heresy, they also harass people through the tactics Paul described in our next passage.



Interpretation: The Adversary of Harassment—Galatians 2:1–6

Read *Galatians 2:1–6*. In this passage, Paul recalled a meeting of the church leaders in Jerusalem. He brought with him to this meeting Barnabas, a circumcised Jew, who was well-known and respected in the Jerusalem church (Acts 4:36–37). He also brought Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile, who represented the scores of Gentiles turning from idol worship to follow Jesus (Galatians 2:1).

When Paul met privately with “those considered to be leaders of the church,” what did he share with them and why (2:2)?

What were the results of Paul’s meeting with the heads of the church (2:3)?

A critical step in the interpretation phase of the *Searching the Scriptures* method is understanding the cultural and biblical context of a passage. Remember the interpreter’s rule of thumb: “A text is best understood in its context.” What was behind the backdrop of Paul’s meeting?



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Lurking in the shadows was a group of legalists who questioned Paul's mission to Gentiles and hindered the growth of Christianity. To understand the issue and its serious threat, take a few minutes to consult a commentary on this passage. We recommend *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* as a reliable resource. For an online resource, consult William Barclay's commentary on Galatians 2:4–5 at StudyLight.org. Record what you discover about the identity of these legalists, the crux of their complaint, and their threat to the gospel.

Notice the sly nature of these legalists. They “sneaked in to spy on [Paul]” (2:4), and their devious intent was threefold: “take away the freedom [Christians] have in Christ Jesus,” “enslave” them, and “force [them] to follow their Jewish regulations” (2:4).

Legalists harass Christians who have freedom in Christ by spying and enslaving. Explain in your own words what this looks like today?

Legalists don't announce they're coming. They don't announce their presence. They sneak and spy. Why? To bring us into bondage, get us back in the cell, and lock the door. —Chuck Swindoll

Paul fought for his freedom and the freedom of the young Gentile converts. He fought against those who taught heresy and who harassed others. He also fought against a third type of adversary: those who lie and deceive through hypocrisy.



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Correlation: The Adversary of Hypocrisy—Galatians 2:11–16

The third adversary appears in Paul's account of his rebuke of Peter. We can use correlation to compare this passage with Peter's vision in *Acts 10:9–16*. What did Peter see, and what was the meaning of the vision?

When Peter visited Cornelius what did he say to this God-fearing Gentile (*Acts 10:28–29*)?

In Christ, the barrier between Jew and Gentile no longer exists (*Ephesians 2:14–18*). God first revealed this truth to Peter, who should have been bold in standing his ground for the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church. Yet Peter succumbed to the insidious adversary of hypocrisy and could have caused great division had Paul not corrected him. Read the account as Paul described it in *Galatians 2:11–16*, and write down what happened.



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Hypocrisy is a treacherous thing—acting like we believe one way with a certain set of people, then acting like we believe another way with another group. What does Peter’s lapse into hypocrisy and legalism warn you about your own susceptibility to the same traps? Could the fear of other peoples’ opinions cause you to yield to legalists too?

Legalists are all about seeking the favor of other people. Legalists expect you to please them. It’s all about the flesh. It’s pride! —Chuck Swindoll



Application: Four Strong Defenses against Legalism

If we’re determined to live free, we must take steps to guard our freedom. In his message, Chuck erected four defensive walls against legalism.

- *Keep standing for your freedom.* If a group of people doesn’t honor your convictions or respect God’s guidance in your life, leave the group!
- *Stop seeking the favor of everyone.* Seek the favor of God alone rather than looking to others for approval, no matter how spiritual they may seem.
- *Start identifying legalism.* Don’t turn a blind eye to legalism when it’s in your presence.
- *Continue embracing biblical truth.* Live honestly. Where Scripture is clear, say so. Otherwise, in the multitude of gray areas, draw principles from Scripture, pray for guidance through the Holy Spirit, and move forward with courage and without judging others.

If you’re prone to people-pleasing like Peter, what can you do to avoid trading your liberty just to impress legalists?



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Are there times when you act differently around different groups of people? How can you avoid falling into the trap of hypocrisy?

Have you been the victim of those who control others with heresy, harassment, or hypocrisy? What happened? How is God encouraging you to stand your ground through the truths of this study?

How is God answering your opening prayer to help you live in liberty and avoid the bondage of legalism?

Our “grace awakening” began when we stopped trying to earn favor with God through personal merit and started trusting fully in Christ’s work on our behalf. We’re saved by grace so that we can live in grace. It’s a lifestyle of freedom worth fighting for!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the joy of a daily, dependent, life-giving relationship with Christ. Protect me from the pitfalls of heresy, harassment, and hypocrisy that characterize the legalists who pressure me to conform to a life that is not from You. Guide me in the path of freedom of obedience to Your Son, Jesus, in whose name I pray, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 71, 72.
2. Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening*, 72–73.
3. Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening*, 73, 74.



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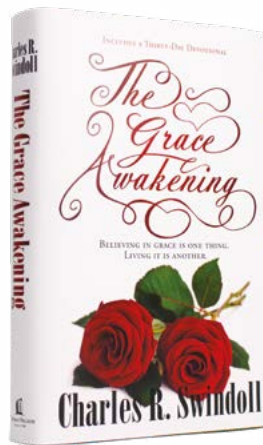
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Tools for Digging Deeper



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by Charles R. Swindoll
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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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