

INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

THREE FACES OF GOD

ROMANS 9:1-4, 6-7; 10:1-4, 11-12, 14-15; 11:1-8, 11, 33-36



The Heart of the Matter

Romans 9–11 focuses on a special area of importance: *how the gospel relates to God's chosen people, the Jews*. While Paul's treatment of this subject is both daring and dogmatic, it is—as you would expect with Paul—completely logical. As we begin this section, let's step back and see the whole scene that lies before us, somewhat like we do when we map out a long road trip. It helps to get an overview of where we're going. Our goal in this message is to get a clear perspective as we trace our way from start (Romans 9:1) to finish (11:36) . . . observing “three faces of God” along the way.



Discovering the Way

1. Where We Have Been (Romans 1–8)

In the first eight chapters of Romans, Paul presented a powerful argument that God's righteousness in our lives results from His gift, not our works, for salvation comes by grace through faith.

2. Where We Are Going (Romans 9–11)

In these three chapters, Paul presented his readers with three faces of God: His sovereignty, His justice, and His faithfulness.

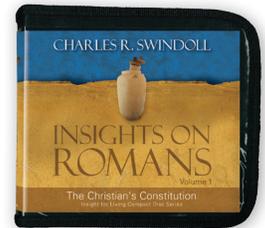


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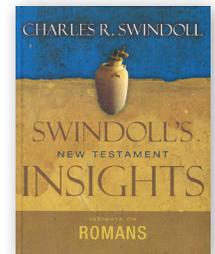
We see relevance in Romans 9–11 because, for believers, the past and the present are not a model for the future. Secondly, these chapters show us that our situations and our struggles are not one-dimensional.



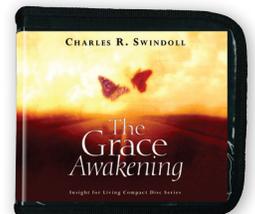
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INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT PREDESTINATION

ROMANS 9:1-33



The Heart of the Matter

Few topics have sparked as many theological debates as the subject of divine predestination. Unfortunately, all those debates have generated a lot more heat than light. In fact, this doctrine is still one of the most misunderstood and misapplied truths among God's people. Human opinion and horizontal logic have eclipsed the clear and forthright teaching of the Scriptures. Some have gone to dogmatic extremes in their position; many others have pulled back, choosing to ignore the issue entirely. Let's look into one of the most significant chapters in the Bible that addresses this subject head-on. While it doesn't answer all of our questions, it does focus on some of the core concepts that are central to our understanding of this important doctrine. May we calmly approach it with open minds and teachable spirits.



Discovering the Way

1. The Context of Romans 9 (Romans 9:1-5)

The book of Romans sets forth God's plan of salvation, not just the moment of conversion, but also the reasons for and means by which God credits believing sinners with His righteousness. However, what will happen to the Jews, a people blessed through history but who have rejected the gospel of Jesus?

2. Some Truths about Predestination (Romans 9:6-33)

Romans 9 reveals four truths about predestination. It begins with the sovereign choice of God, it upholds the perfect character of God, it identifies the specific responsibilities of God, and it defines the consistent plan of God.

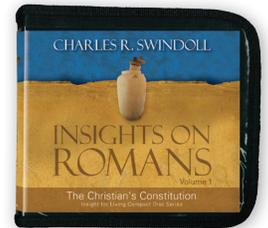


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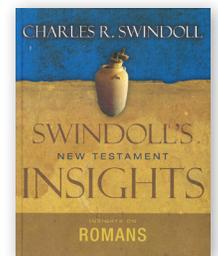
Those who hear about predestination often make one of two erroneous responses, either "I'll do it myself" or "I'll do nothing because God does it all."



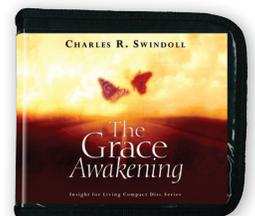
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INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY

ROMANS 10:1–21



The Heart of the Matter

Romans 9 addresses God's sovereignty, specifically regarding predestination. One popular, albeit extreme, response to that truth sounds like this: *since God is sovereign—since He is the Potter and I'm only clay—then I'm not really responsible for my actions or reactions. If I'm a disobedient believer, that's God's fault, not mine. If I'm lost and not a part of His family, that's His fault, not mine. I'm just clay!* In response to this position, Romans 10 shouts, "No way!" This chapter assaults such shallow and superficial rationalization. Without retreating an inch from what he just wrote in chapter 9, Paul next declared that God is not responsible for a person's lost condition—each individual is. At point-blank range, Romans 10 shoots a hole into the erroneous idea that people can hide behind divine sovereignty to excuse or ignore their sin. Then why are people lost? As Romans 10 teaches: they have rejected the gospel.



Discovering the Way

1. A Preview of Responsibility

We can summarize Romans 10 in a single sentence: God rejected Israel because the people of Israel rejected His Son, the Messiah.

2. An Analysis of Human Responsibility (Romans 10:1–21)

Paul began the chapter by focusing on the Jews, but he eventually turned his attention to the responsibility of all lost people to accept God's offer of salvation.

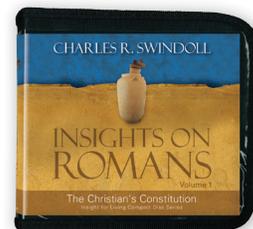


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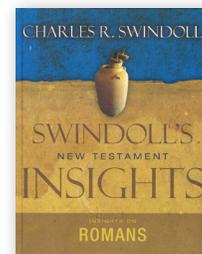
So who's responsible for what? The Christian is responsible to pray for and share with others. The non-Christian is responsible to face the truth and respond to it. And God is responsible to save whomever comes to Him.



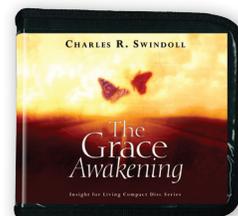
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INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

THE JEWS: FORGOTTEN OR SET ASIDE?

ROMANS 11:1-14



The Heart of the Matter

Paul never forgot his Jewish roots. No matter where he was, what he was doing, or how he was treated, his love for his own people never faded. And so, as he wrote about God's plan for those who believe in His Son for eternal life, Paul's heart was touched by the reality that relatively few Jews had accepted Jesus as their Messiah. The vast majority were conspicuous by their absence from the universal body of Christ. Making sure that his readers did not come to the wrong conclusion, Paul dedicated the central section of this letter (Romans 9–11) to the future of the Jewish nation. He underscored the fact that, while they may be set aside during this era, they have not been forgotten. God will still keep His promises to His chosen!



Discovering the Way

1. Let's Understand the Issues

Before jumping into the passage, it's important to gain clarity on two issues: who are God's people in Romans 11 and has God permanently rejected His people?

2. Let's Review the Plan (Romans 11:1–14)

Paul argued that God has not rejected the Jews forever but only temporarily. This temporary rejection provides an opportunity for the gospel to reach the Gentiles, which in turn is designed to make the Jews jealous and return to God.

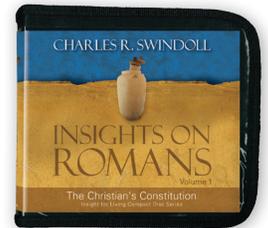


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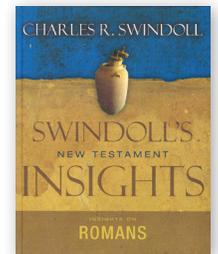
Two key points of application emerge from this passage: Unlike us, God always does His best work through a remnant. Second, unlike the world, God always keeps His promises.



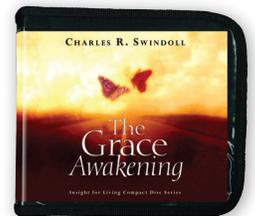
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UNSEARCHABLE, UNFATHOMABLE, AND UNMATCHED!

ROMANS 11:30–36



The Heart of the Matter

After making clear that God has not forgotten the Jews, Romans 11 goes on to show that the discipline the Jews are now experiencing will be only temporary, that the Gentiles are now enjoying the blessings of salvation, and that the Lord, even now, is working in the hearts of both Jews and Gentiles. It's this final point that caused Paul to burst forth into a brief but passionate discourse on God's magnificent wisdom, knowledge, judgment, and ways. Therefore, Romans 11:33–36 comprises one of the most exuberant doxologies in all the New Testament. The three previous verses (11:30–32) prepare us for this marvelous statement of praise, and all seven of these closing verses are worthy of great concentration and attention.



Discovering the Way

1. The Mercy of God: Unsearchable! (Romans 11:30–32)

God has shown mercy to all humanity—both Jews and Gentiles—despite our rebellious and disobedient hearts.

2. The Mind of God: Unfathomable! (Romans 11:33–35)

God knows no bounds. We cannot fully understand Him, we cannot presume to instruct Him, and we will never be able to provide for Him.

3. The Majesty of God: Unmatched! (Romans 11:36)

God is the ultimate source of all creation, which has come into being through Him. And though humanity has fallen away, God works to redeem the entire creation back to Himself.

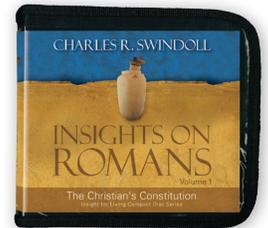


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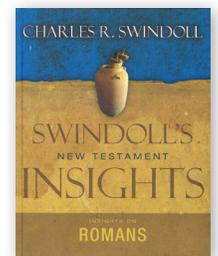
When we begin to grasp the greatness of our God, we are reduced to humble and contrite sinners who live out our lives grateful for God's grace.



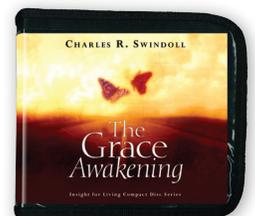
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INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

A COMPELLING COMMITMENT

ROMANS 12:1-2



The Heart of the Matter

We scaled the theological heights as we worked our way up the slopes of the first eleven chapters of Romans. During our climb, we explored the doctrines that form the foundation of our faith. All the while, we kept looking up toward the peaks of so many of the great truths that shape our beliefs. Having discovered the fundamental truths of the gospel (sin, salvation, justification, imputation, sanctification, and sovereignty) in our climb with Paul, we now turn our attention to *service*—the outworking of our faith. In other words, we shift our thinking from a vertical perspective to a horizontal one. This is no insignificant change. It requires incredibly deep soul-searching. It demands an honest investigation of our personal level of commitment. Whatever we do, we dare not miss the compelling urgency that is contained in these opening two verses of Romans 12.



Discovering the Way

1. Consecration (Romans 12:1)

Consecration is a radical separation from a secular worldview to a divine purpose and mind-set, expressed in an urgent appeal and a sacrificial act.

2. Transformation (Romans 12:2)

Transformation is a deliberate determination to think biblically and act accordingly, expressed in two commands and one will.

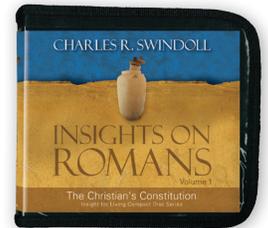


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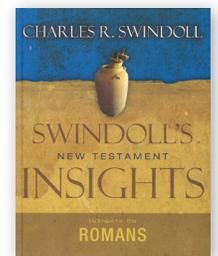
Evaluation is an honest and vulnerable appraisal of your spiritual passion, expressed in two questions. First, are you allowing the culture to dominate or weaken any area in regard to your body? Second, are you permitting this age to dull or shape your thinking in regard to your mind?



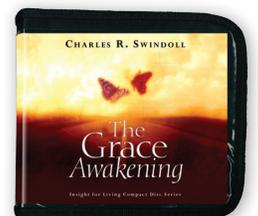
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HOW A RENEWED MIND THINKS

ROMANS 12:3-8



The Heart of the Matter

We have given serious and lengthy consideration to the first two verses of Romans 12. They contain Paul's urgent appeal for each of us to present our bodies (radical *consecration*) and to renew our minds (radical *transformation*) so that we might know what it means to live out "the will of God." We learned that in doing so, we come to realize just how "good and acceptable and perfect" God's will is. Now, we'll discover some of the foundational benefits of a "renewed mind." We will see that it enables us to have a correct view of ourselves, a correct understanding of fellow believers, and a correct appreciation of our spiritual gifts. Thinking correctly about these three subjects is crucial as we commit to a life of serving others.



Discovering the Way

1. Necessary Review (Romans 12:1-2)

Paul urged all followers of Christ to present their bodies as living sacrifices and to renew their minds.

2. Renewed Thinking (Romans 12:3-8)

Paul urged all followers of Christ to think correctly about themselves (Romans 12:3), to think correctly about other believers (12:4-5), and to think correctly about spiritual gifts (12:6-8).

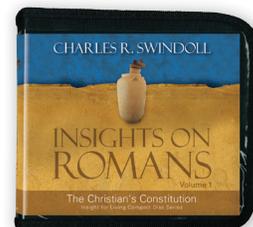


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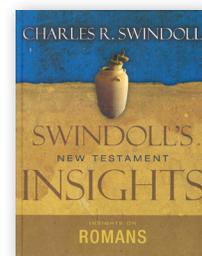
The practical results of renewed thinking: initially, you'll break the habit of "group think"; continually, you'll reap the benefits of seeing what others fail to see; and ultimately, you'll influence others to do the same.



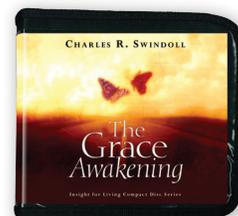
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INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

CHRISTIANITY 101

ROMANS 12:9-16



The Heart of the Matter

Life is complicated. Even the Christian life can be difficult for us to fully comprehend. The Bible tells us to do so many things, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, even confused. Because this is true, it's helpful to have some kind of "divine checklist"—a God-given list—which specifies a few essentials that should characterize our lives. That is exactly what we find in the last thirteen verses of Romans 12. Having challenged us to place our bodies before God as a "living and holy sacrifice" (Romans 12:1), all the while allowing our minds to be "renewed," Paul then wrote about how we, as Christians, are to think about ourselves and, next, how we're to relate to others in love.



Discovering the Way

1. Loved Defined and Prioritized

Love seeks the highest good of another person and colors all other virtues which we must practice.

2. Love Lived Out (Romans 12:9-16)

Love must be sincere, discerning, and lived out in seven distinct actions.

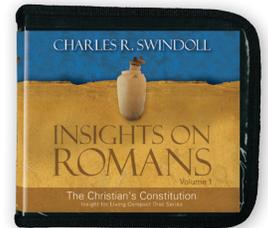


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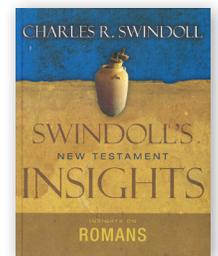
Love is often held back because we are either too proud to be vulnerable or we're too afraid to risk love.



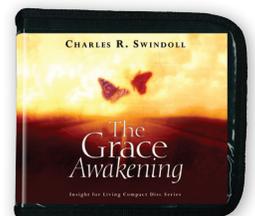
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DOING RIGHT WHEN YOU'VE BEEN DONE WRONG

ROMANS 12:14, 17–21



The Heart of the Matter

Paul unpacked the all-important virtue of love in the closing 13 verses of Romans 12. As he reached the end of this section, he addressed one of life's most practical problems: how to respond correctly to wrongdoing. His pen strikes like a needle as we read his words that touch an extremely sensitive nerve and expose our conditioned reflex to hit back. Common sense whispers, *You need to defend yourself*. Public opinion goes even further, shouting, *Don't be a fool—get even!* Like a rattlesnake, the flesh stays coiled within us, ready to strike. Even in our ranks as Christians, retaliation remains one of our favorite carnal sports. But, as we shall learn in this message, there's a supernatural alternative to our natural reaction.



Discovering the Way

1. Listen to a Story (1 Samuel 16–24)

David's attitude and actions are a model of godly restraint and trust—even while he was being actively pursued by Saul, whose evil scheme was to kill David.

2. Observe the Principles (Romans 12:14, 17–20)

When we've been wronged, we must deliberately resist our "natural" instinct for revenge (Romans 12:14), consciously fight our tendency to "get even" (12:17–18), and quietly trust God to handle all revenge (12:19–20).

3. Consider the Alternative (Romans 12:21)

When we've been wronged, we must not give in to the evil of vengeance but overcome that evil with the goodness of doing things God's way.

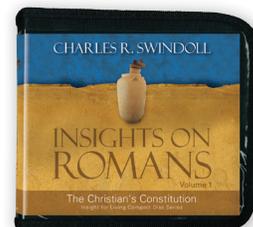


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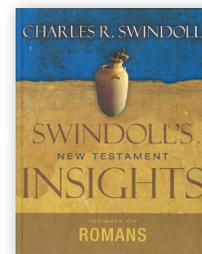
Modeling the message will not be easy because it requires you to be broken.



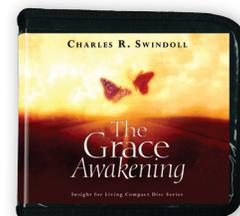
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INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

HOW TO BE A GODLY REBEL

ROMANS 13:1-7



The Heart of the Matter

God's people often are in a dilemma. While we are citizens of heaven, we're nevertheless instructed to be good and involved citizens of our country. Scripture commands us to both obey God and to submit to human governing authorities. But what do we do when those two realms of authority come into conflict? Do we yield to the biblical injunctions to obey God regardless? Or do we follow the equally authoritative biblical imperatives to obey the civil government? Jesus said to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Luke 20:25), yet godly men and women occasionally rebelled against the rule of human authorities. At the same time, we encourage respect for governmental authorities. Which is correct? Aren't there times when it's right to rebel?



Discovering the Way

1. Three Difficult Dilemmas

What would you do if you lived in the colonies during the American Revolution, or in the Deep South during the American Civil War, or in Germany during World War II?

2. Two Popular Extremes

Some people often exhibit an inappropriate independence from government or an uninvolved indifference toward government.

3. One All-Important Principle (Romans 12:21)

Disobedience toward civil authority is justified when that authority attempts to force us to disobey God.

4. Helpful Biblical Guidelines (Romans 13:1-7)

Paul provided an essential reminder (Romans 13:1), guidance on the issue of inappropriate resistance (13:2-5), and the issue of appropriate obedience (13:6-7).

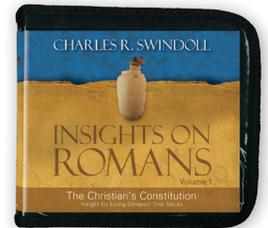


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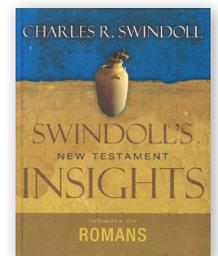
Obeying God is always the right thing to do. Obeying government is usually right and good.



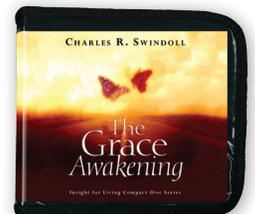
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INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

LEGAL TENDER AND LOVING CARE

ROMANS 13:8-10



The Heart of the Matter

This grand letter to the Romans spans the extremes—from the theological heavens (Romans 1–11) to the earthly practicalities (Romans 12–16). In the last five chapters, we find some of the most helpful teaching in the Bible on how to model a way of life that is genuinely Christian. We are helped, for example, in knowing how to have a healthy, realistic view of ourselves (12:1–3), how best to serve others (12:4–8), how to exemplify Christlikeness (12:9–13), how to deal with our enemies (12:14–21), and how to be good citizens (13:1–7). We continue along these practical lines by learning how to handle debt (13:8) as well as how to truly love our neighbor (13:9–10).



Discovering the Way

1. The Context

The context generally is how to live the Christian life (Romans 12:9–21) and specifically how to be a good citizen (13:1–7).

2. The Issues and Meaning (Romans 13:8–10)

Regarding loans, we owe nothing to anyone; regarding love, we owe that to everyone; and regarding law, we owe obedience to fulfill it through loving our neighbor.

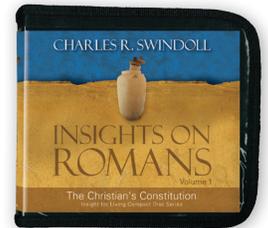


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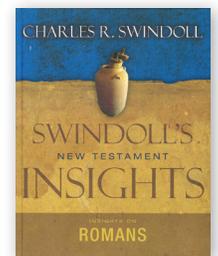
The relevance of all this is twofold. First, we owe only one continuing debt, which honors the Lord: love for one another. Second, there is only one penetrating truth that will fulfill the law: love for your neighbor.



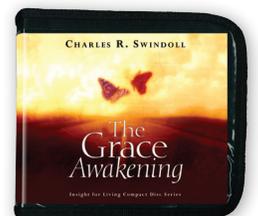
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INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

WAKE UP AND GET DRESSED!

ROMANS 13:11-14



The Heart of the Matter

As we have already learned, it is easy to allow the world around us to squeeze us into its own mold (Romans 12:2). The great temptation all of us face is to drift through life, flowing with the tide of popular opinion, allowing a yawning sense of complacency to characterize our existence. We're told to not make waves, we're warned against being alarmists, and we're urged most of all to "be tolerant" of everything and everyone. Look around and witness the evidence of such passivity; it's everywhere! But when we turn to the pages of Scripture, we hear a different message; we discover how important it is to become people of zeal and passion, fervently and diligently serving our Lord (12:11). We realize how quickly time passes and how essential it is that we make the most of every day. Urgency is the theme of these four closing verses of Romans 13. In no uncertain terms, this letter by Paul shakes us awake as it underscores the importance of our redeeming the time.



Discovering the Way

1. A Fervent Call for Urgency

God desires that His people be awake, aware, and alive. Now is the time to pay attention to what is going on around you.

2. A Strong Appeal for Purity (Romans 13:11-14)

Paul exhorted us to hear the alarm, awaken from our sleep, check the time carefully, change our clothes, live appropriately, and finish well.

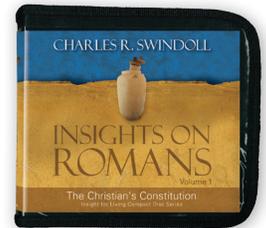


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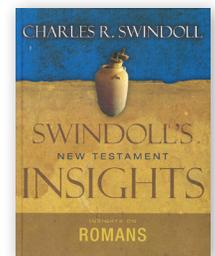
The essential reminder for victory is to stay away from anything that weakens your moral fiber and stay involved in everything that strengthens your walk with Christ.



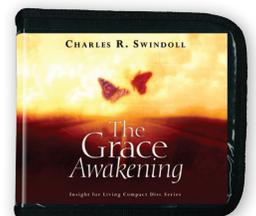
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PUTTING GRACE INTO ACTION

ROMANS 14:1-12



The Heart of the Matter

We do not live and die only unto ourselves. This is true of humanity but particularly true of Christians. Believers in Christ are interwoven and interrelated, comprising an interdependent system of cells and nerves, muscles and limbs in the same body—the body of Christ. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Bible frequently emphasizes the importance of unity among the Lord's people. However, no one can deny the presence of diversity in God's family. We know the value of unity, yet we cannot ignore the reality of diversity. And therein lies “the rub”! Because of the weak believer's human tendency to judge those who don't embrace his or her customs and convictions and, on the other hand, because of the strong believer's decision to discount judgments passed by those who find fault in his or her expressions of freedom, conflict emerges and persists. The solution is to put grace into action.



Discovering the Way

1. Cultural Conflicts: Then and Now

Frequently, at the core of conflicts, there are cultural issues or matters of custom and conviction.

2. Personal Categories: Weak and Strong

The weak are often rule followers and tend to judge others' freedoms, while the strong are often “rule breakers” and tend to discount others' strict convictions.

3. Crucial Issues: Legalism and Liberty (Romans 14:1-6)

Both the weak and the strong must learn to accept the others' convictions regarding diet and days.

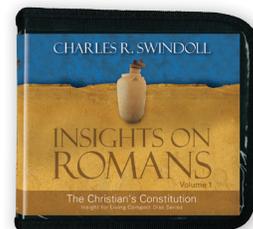


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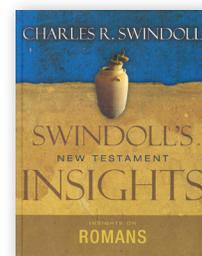
Practical principles that are wise and workable (Romans 14:7-12) include a life of grace that begins with acceptance. An attitude of grace requires releasing others—letting the Lord direct others' lives—and a commitment to grace means we never assume roles we're not qualified to fill.



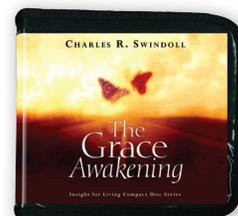
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LIBERTY ON A TIGHTROPE

ROMANS 14:13–23



The Heart of the Matter

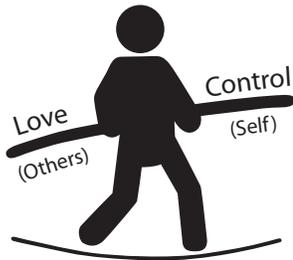
Balance. That's the ticket. While Christ is the bulwark of balance, our Adversary is the expert of extremes. He will do anything to disturb our spiritual equilibrium, move us off center, and tempt us into an out-of-balance lifestyle that is "too much." For example: Christian liberty. God's desire is that we, His people, enjoy fully our freedom in Christ. However, there must be self-imposed boundaries, or we will become self-serving, independent-minded, and careless rebels who have no regard for others. The last 11 verses of Romans 14 address this issue.



Discovering the Way

1. Correct Stance: To Get Us Started (Romans 14:13)

The secret of staying free is keeping love for others and control of self in constant balance.



2. Three Reminders: To Keep Our Balance (Romans 14:14–20)

A balanced believer realizes that nothing is unclean in and of itself (Romans 14:14–16), that the essence of Christianity is not external but eternal (14:17–19), and that when liberty hinders God's work, we must yield (14:20).

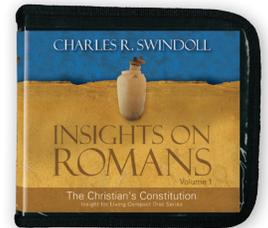


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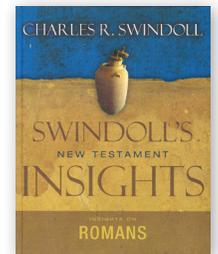
Three practical warnings will guard us from stumbling. First, be considerate (Romans 14:21). Second, be convinced (14:22). And third, be consistent (14:23).



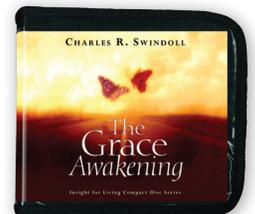
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INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

WE ARE ONE . . . OR ARE WE?

ROMANS 15:1-13



The Heart of the Matter

Writing to the church at Philippi, Paul cheered them on with the truth that in Christ they could find “encouragement . . . consolation of love . . . fellowship of the Spirit . . . affection and compassion” (Philippians 2:1). Because all of this was true, Paul then exhorted them to “make [his] joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose” (2:2). Great words, but just because we believe and say them doesn’t make them a reality. Being “united” or “one” means caring for one another, accepting one another, bending and adapting to make room for one another, and refusing simply to please ourselves just as Paul wrote in Philippians 2:3-4 and again in Romans 15:1-13 where he wrapped up his instruction on the value of true unity.



Discovering the Way

1. For the Sake of God’s Work . . . (Romans 14:21-23)

We must be considerate, be convinced, and be consistent.

2. Among God’s People . . . (Romans 15:1-7)

Paul gave a strong exhortation (Romans 15:1-2), provided a perfect illustration (15:3), wrote a scriptural instruction (15:4), and closed with a benediction and application (15:5-7).

3. Consider God’s Son . . . (Romans 15:8-12)

Paul reminded us of what Jesus became (Romans 15:8) and whom He served (15:8-13).

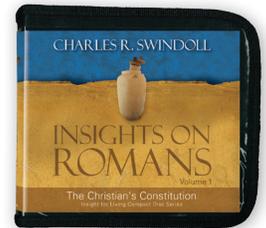


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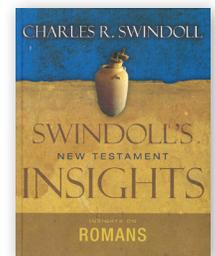
Because of God’s Son, we are filled with joy and peace, and we abound in triumphant hope (15:13).



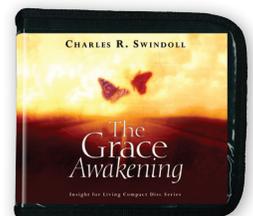
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ENCOURAGING WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

ROMANS 15:14–16



The Heart of the Matter

At the conclusion of Romans 15:13, Paul the apostle ended his major message to the believers in Rome and then began his epilogue in verse 14. Hoping to bring his thoughts to a close in a much more personal manner, he wrote the rest of his letter with candor and affection. From Romans 15:14 to the end of the letter, he employed an “I” / “you” directness in his style. He started by encouraging them with affirming words, and then he opened his heart and life to his readers, revealing the past, present, and future of his ministry. He then asked for their prayers of protection on his behalf. Before his final benediction, he sent his personal greetings, naming one individual after another, most of whom are mentioned nowhere else in all the New Testament.



Discovering the Way

1. The Epilogue Explained (Romans 15:14–16:27)

Paul reserved his most personal words until the end of the letter, divided into six sections.

2. The Believers Encouraged (Romans 15:14–16)

Paul encouraged the Roman believers to inwardly overflow with goodness, to fully be informed and aware, to genuinely and competently instruct and admonish, to passionately be committed to evangelism, and to deeply depend on the Holy Spirit.

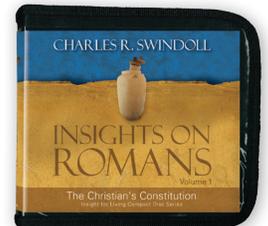


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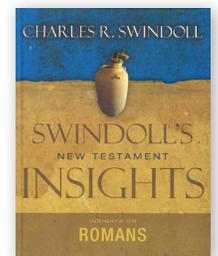
In your personal life are you full of goodness? Are you growing in your knowledge? Are you faithful in admonishing others? In your ministry are you passionate about evangelism? And are you consciously leaning on the Lord?



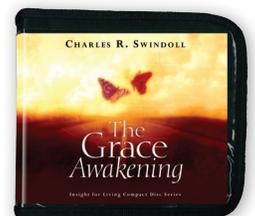
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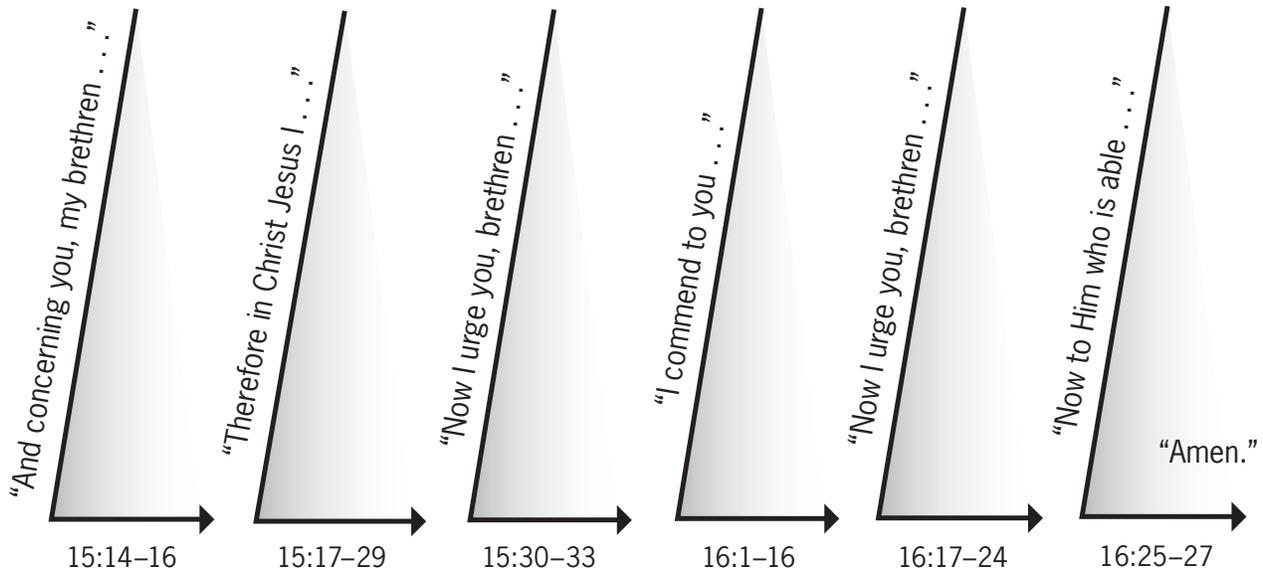
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ENCOURAGING WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

ROMANS 15:14-16

A Survey of the Epilogue to the Romans

(15:14-16:27)



1. _____ 3. _____ 5. _____
2. _____ 4. _____ 6. _____



INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

PREACHING AND TRAVELING WITH PAUL

ROMANS 15:17-29



The Heart of the Matter

Last message, we learned that Paul began his epilogue in his letter to the Romans at 15:14. In these final 47 verses, he drew his thoughts to a close and, in doing so, he mentioned things here that he rarely—and in some cases never—mentioned elsewhere. Here, we get a glimpse of Paul's strategy for ministry and read of his longstanding desire to visit Rome en route to Spain. Here, we see his missionary heart and his depth of commitment. These 13 verses are thoroughly autobiographical.



Discovering the Way

1. Paul's Thinking (Romans 15:17-21)

Regarding his accomplishments, Paul thought of himself as a servant; regarding his ministry, he was a pioneer.

2. Paul's Travels (Romans 15:23-28)

Paul had traveled far and wide from his home base in Jerusalem, but his great dream was to preach the gospel in Spain.

3. Paul's Attitude (Romans 15:22, 29)

Paul was both a realist and an optimist concerning his dream.

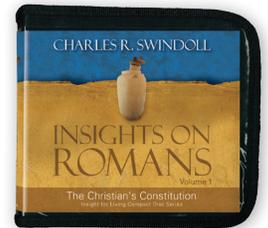


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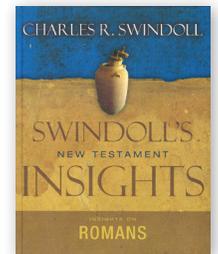
Remember these four timeless principles. First, life's greatest accomplishments are achieved through joint effort—stay involved. Second, joint accomplishments are never achieved without hindrances—stay determined. Third, hindrances are overcome by sustained hope in the goal—stay focused. Fourth, the essential companion of sustained hope is enthusiasm—stay positive.



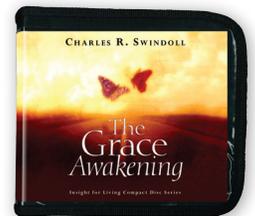
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INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

PRAYING WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART

ROMANS 15:30–33



The Heart of the Matter

For many, the subject of prayer is about as exciting as changing a flat tire. For others, it's more like the sign we see near a fire escape: *For Emergency Use Only!* Or it's something we finally decide to do when all else has failed. But prayer—prayer that is effective, powerful, and carried out as Scripture instructs us—is one of the most powerful instruments (and sometimes, *weapons*) available to God's people. Through prayer, we conquer the strongest foes we face, including our archenemy the Devil and his demonic host. In these few verses at the end of Romans 15, we will discover yet again the importance of praying with our whole hearts.



Discovering the Way

1. A Pathetic Example of Prayer (Acts 12:1–16)

Though the believers prayed for Peter's release from prison, they did not believe it was him when God saw fit to orchestrate Peter's release. We must remember: prayer makes a difference!

2. An Urgent Appeal to Pray (Romans 15:30–33)

Prayer requires four things: an awareness of the need, a willingness to get involved, a precision in our requests, and a restfulness in God's will.

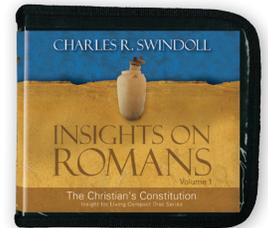


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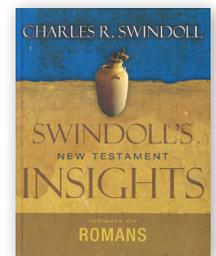
When you pray, remember that prayer deserves top priority, it is essential, and it is the ideal source of tranquility and a quiet spirit.



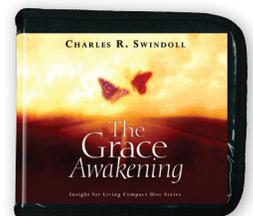
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INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

LOVE AND KISSES

ROMANS 16:1–16



The Heart of the Matter

Open and unguarded displays of affection are becoming increasingly rare in Christian circles. There are some wonderful exceptions, but they are few. In our touch-me-not, keep-your-distance culture, we can easily become isolated entities fenced on all sides by various boundaries of formality and cool professionalism. Unfortunately, churches are not immune. And when we ape our society, the consequences are dreadful: we begin to model an independent lifestyle of serious and efficient employees in a corporation instead of an affectionate and caring body of loving believers. In this unique section of Scripture, we discover the softer and gentler side of the brilliant and disciplined apostle Paul. Here he was overtly affectionate—to the point of admonishing his readers to *kiss* one another. It will be our joy in this lesson to find a biblical basis for affectionate love that is both authentic and demonstrable.



Discovering the Way

1. A Reminder of the Value of Affection (Romans 12–15)

Time after time in the latter portion of Romans, Paul encouraged Christians to express their love and affection for one another in demonstrable ways.

2. A List of Observations (Romans 16:1–16)

A passage full of names, titles, and greetings, here we see that the body of Christ has variety in unity, servants in obscurity, esteem in humility, and love in simplicity.

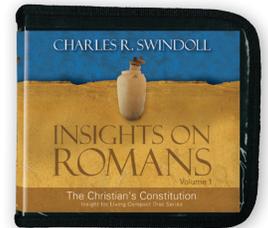


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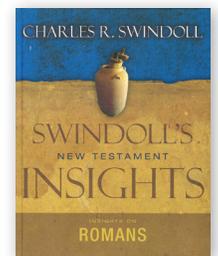
In light of this passage, commit to adopting the ABCDs of authentic affection among Christians: accept the variety, become a servant, cultivate esteem for others, and demonstrate your love to God's people.



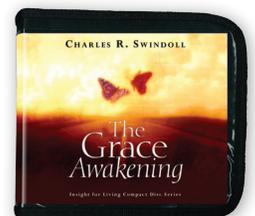
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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

BOARS IN GOD'S VINEYARD

ROMANS 16:17-20



The Heart of the Matter

During His earthly ministry, Jesus promised, "I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (Matthew 16:18). But His statement didn't imply that our adversary wouldn't try his best to bring us down! Satan's inroads often have taken a serious toll—one that can be traced all the way back to the first century. Even though we are tempted to idealize the early church, contention and dissension were not that uncommon. In fact, down through the centuries, conflicts have continued to surface. But let's not forget that even though the church has had its share of battles, bruises, and black eyes, harmonious fellowship and fervent love have far exceeded the friction. However, no church today can completely escape dissension. Where Spirit-led vision and vitality encounter strong wills and differing opinions, the enemy of our souls goes to work. The question is will these conflicts divide and weaken the body of Christ or will they draw us together in fervent prayer and deepened commitment?



Discovering the Way

1. In the Past, Dissensions Arose

From the very beginning, the church has dealt with dissension in the form of Pharisees, heretics, defectors, deceivers, and fighters.

2. In Rome, Trouble Was Brewing (Romans 16:17-20)

Some self-serving and deceptive people had entered the church at Rome, resulting in dissension. The church needed to watch out for the interlopers and separate themselves from the offenders.

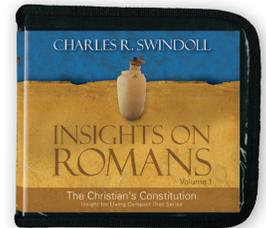


Starting Your Journey

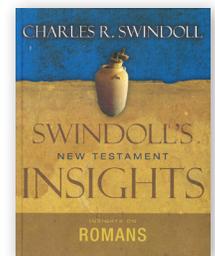
To stand strong against dissension, we need a deep commitment to Scripture, a firm determination to glorify God, and an honest appraisal of our personal walk.



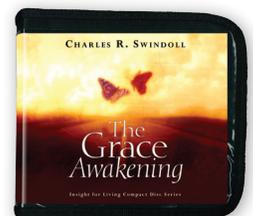
Tools for Digging Deeper



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INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

PUTTING DOWN EVIL, LIFTING UP FRIENDS

ROMANS 16:20-24



The Heart of the Matter

The Bible is a book of strong contrasts. Light and dark. Obedience and disobedience. Faith and works. Joy and sorrow. Right and wrong. Sheep and goats. Victory and defeat. Truth and error. Love and hate. Trust and worry. God and Satan. Heaven and hell. These opposite distinctions help us determine our standards for everyday living. They give us mental and moral boundaries. They enable us to interpret the events of life with objectivity, rather than get lost in the gulf of uncertainty. The section of Scripture we're considering in this message offers another example of a contrast: evil that is unseen and insidious as opposed to good that is tangible and encouraging. Our main interest lies in the practical insights that accompany what we discover about both.



Discovering the Way

1. Reviewing the Significance of Romans

While the book of Romans stands as Paul's magnum opus, it continues to be wonderfully practical and pragmatic.

2. Putting an End to Evil (Romans 16:20)

We can take hope in the truth that God will soon crush Satan and bring an everlasting peace.

3. Bringing Encouragement to Others (Romans 16:20-24)

When we understand grace, we'll understand the importance of lifting up our friends.

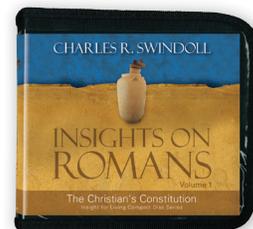


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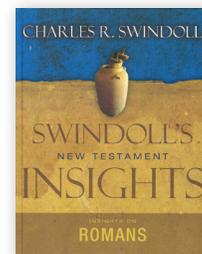
Let's remember three key lessons. First, we cannot ignore or deny the presence of evil. Second, we need not fear or be intimidated by evil. And finally, we will not experience victory until we appropriate grace personally.



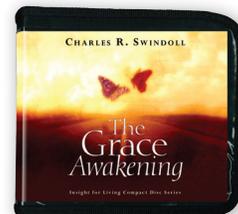
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INSIGHTS ON ROMANS: THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

TO GOD, ALONE, BE THE GLORY FOREVER

ROMANS 16:25–27



The Heart of the Matter

As we have journeyed through this magnificent letter Paul wrote to the Romans, you'll recall that on several occasions he wove into his writings both benedictions and doxologies. The first appears in 11:36, the next in 15:33, and another in 16:20. And so, we're not surprised that when Paul came to his closing words, he wrote his final—and longest—benediction. Each of the benedictions in this letter points the reader's attention to the living God, emphasizing one or more of God's attributes. This final ascription, as we shall see in this message, unveils some of the most significant truths found anywhere in Holy Scripture about our heavenly Father. They exalt the plan, the wisdom, and the glory that belong to Him—and only to Him.



Discovering the Way

1. To God, Alone . . . (Romans 16:25–26)

We see in these verses four foundational facts about God. He is the Giver of stability, the Revealer of the gospel, the Proclaimer to all the nations, and the Initiator of obedience.

2. Be the Glory . . . (Romans 16:27)

We glorify God because He is uniquely above all others, because His wisdom is self-initiated and self-sustained, and because we have access to Him through His Son, Jesus Christ.

3. Forever (Romans 16:27)

In Christ, we are the recipients of everlasting life by the grace of the eternal God.

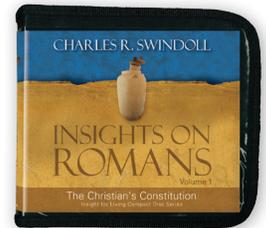


Starting Your Journey

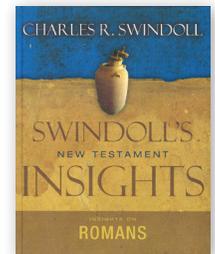
Use Paul's letter to the Romans to mark a new beginning—maybe that means a new relationship with Christ, or maybe that means recommitting yourself to His purposes for your life.



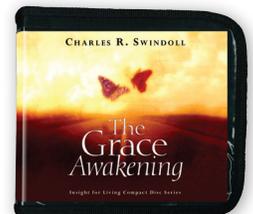
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