



THE GRACE AWAKENING

GRACE: IT'S REALLY AMAZING!

JOHN 1:11-17; 8:30-32, 36



The Heart of the Matter

What is grace? Ask any theologian or serious Bible student and you will likely hear a two-word answer: *unmerited favor*. That definition, while true, is not entirely complete. As we'll learn in this series, grace surrounds us—in fact, envelops us—every day of our lives. Grace is behind all of God's actions. Grace prompts God's involvement in our lives, it takes the galling exactness out of our efforts to please Him, and it relieves us from the choking grip of needless guilt. When grace is understood and applied, we are no longer afraid of God and no longer demanding of others. Grace is at the heart of our eternal salvation; it removes all human effort from God's plan; and it motivates us to unity, harmony, and tolerance. Small wonder Satan, the enemy of our souls, works overtime to distort and deny this magnificent truth. Grace: it is *truly* amazing!



Discovering the Way

1. The Problem as It Exists Today

How can the church proclaim to the world the grace of God and minister that grace to people every day, when the church's ranks are filled with those actively working against grace?

2. Urgent Words to All Followers of Christ (John 1:11-17; 8:30-32, 36; Galatians 5:1)

The presence of grace reverberates most fully in the person of Jesus Himself (John 1:14).

3. Grace: Understanding the Term and Its Implications

What is grace? In the Bible, God's grace comes to us when He extends His favor to us, even though we do not deserve that favor.



Starting Your Journey

When we live life according to grace, we can expect to gain a new respect for God's gifts to us, to spend less time and energy critical of and concerned about others' choices, to become more tolerant and less judgmental, and to take a giant leap toward spiritual maturity.



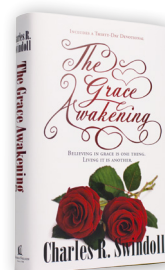
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THE GRACE AWAKENING

THE FREE GIFT

EPHESIANS 2:1-13



The Heart of the Matter

Grace: God's free and abundant demonstration of love to those who do not deserve it, have not earned it, and cannot repay it. Grace is acceptance without reservation and forgiveness without condemnation and pardon without probation. Even the sinner—lost, lustful, disobedient, and spiritually dead—can be the recipient of this grace . . . unconditionally. What an offer! Grace receives one of its clearest expressions in the New Testament promises regarding Christ's all-sufficient payment for sin at the cross (Romans 5:20–21). Let's seek to understand God's free gift of grace.



Discovering the Way

1. Warning: Heresy on the Loose (Genesis 11)

In the tradition of the wicked people of Babel, many today emphasize what we do for God rather than what He does (and has done) for us.

2. Defending: Truth on the Scaffold (Romans 4–5)

God's dealings with Abraham, as related by the apostle Paul, reveal that grace depends on God's work, not human effort. We should think of grace, therefore, as a free gift, not an earned wage.

3. Explaining: Grace for the Sinful (Ephesians 2)

The free gift of grace comes to us most significantly as God's solution (salvation) to our condition (sinfulness).



Starting Your Journey

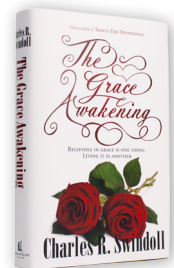
Remember two truths. First, God doesn't merely pity you; He offers you kindness, love, mercy, and grace. Second, God not only will save you; He offers you His life.



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THE GRACE AWAKENING
THE ROOTS OF A GRACE AWAKENING
ROMANS 4:1–5; 5:1–2; GALATIANS 2:20



The Heart of the Matter

The study of one's generational roots has become popular in the last several decades. Many have spent a lot of time, effort, and money to learn the details of the cultural background of their family history. Knowledge about our origins gives us a deeper sense of our identity—a better awareness of our purpose. It is equally helpful to learn about our spiritual roots, to find out how those spiritual awakenings began, especially the awakenings that helped shape the faith of people who came before us. From those spiritual roots, we can find the direct origins of the grace we embrace today. What we received from our ancestors, they received from their ancestors all the way back to the apostles themselves. But what is the content of that heritage, and how can we make grace a reality in our lives today?



Discovering the Way

1. Reviewing the History of Significant Spiritual Awakenings

The First Great Awakening, a movement of revivals in the 1730s and 1740s, had a deep and lasting impact on American religious life.

2. Explaining the Gospel of a Grace-Based Salvation (Romans 4:1–5; 5:1–2, 6–9)

Grace drives the salvation that comes from God as well as the ongoing life of the Christian.

3. Underscoring the Importance of a Grace-Based Life (Galatians 2:20)

Operating in life according to grace begins with an understanding of our position in Christ and is sustained by our determination to stand firm in our freedom.



Starting Your Journey

When we receive the saving grace of God, we have freedom from divine and human condemnation, freedom from the demands and requirements of the law, freedom from the control and domination of sin, and freedom from the grind and grip of death.



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THE GRACE AWAKENING
ISN'T IT RISKY TO EMBRACE GRACE?
ROMANS 6:1-15; GALATIANS 5:13-14



The Heart of the Matter

Pushed to its logical end, a proper emphasis on the grace of God can result in grace being taken advantage of. As a matter of fact, this not only can occur, it does occur; grace is taken advantage of. At this very moment, there are some in the family of God who have truly believed in Christ and, as a result, have been justified by faith, yet they have chosen lifestyles that do not square with Scripture. If and when those believers are asked, “Why do you . . .?” and “How can you . . .?” they usually use the word *grace* somewhere in their answers. Such rationalization cheapens the correct meaning of grace. God never extended His favor toward us so we might misappropriate the freedom it brings. Nevertheless, with human nature being what it is, we can be sure there will always be a few who abuse a good thing. And this will cause some to deemphasize grace and overemphasize law. Let’s clarify and analyze this tension while being careful not to allow the abuse of a few to diminish the message of grace.



Discovering the Way

1. The Reality of the Risk (Romans 6:1-15)

To believe by grace and to live by grace include the reality of risk: some who claim grace will cross the line and live unwisely and inappropriately.

2. The Inescapable Tension (Galatians 5:13-14)

As we explore the tension between receiving grace and abusing grace, we see joyous benefits of being liberated, tell-tale signs of being irresponsible, and the essential necessity of being balanced.



Starting Your Journey

Take note of three practical suggestions on guarding against extremes: First, enjoy the freedom grace provides. Second, treat grace as an undeserved privilege rather than an exclusive “right.” And third, remember that while grace came to you freely, it cost the Savior His life.



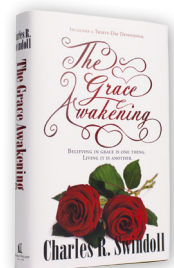
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THE GRACE AWAKENING

UNDESERVING, YET UNCONDITIONALLY LOVED

2 SAMUEL 9:1-13



The Heart of the Matter

Grace . . . how magnificent, how marvelous! The central importance of grace for all of life resounds through Scripture. By grace, the sick receive healing. By grace, the downtrodden are lifted up. And by grace, the lost come home. Grace impacts every person, though no person deserves it. Few individuals present a better example of grace than the man we consider in this passage of Scripture. Forgotten, obscure, and physically disabled, Mephibosheth was convinced he would live out his days in a wasteland. How wrong he was!



Discovering the Way

1. Reaffirming the Truth of Grace

When considering the topic of grace, we must remember that God does what He does by His grace, we are who we are by the grace of God, and we let each other be who we are by the grace of God.

2. Considering an Example of Grace (2 Samuel 9)

David sought out Jonathan's last living son, Mephibosheth, in order to bless the young man beyond what he ever could have imagined.



Starting Your Journey

As David provided grace for Mephibosheth, so has God the Father provided grace for us today.



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THE GRACE AWAKENING
STANDING YOUR GROUND FOR GRACE
GALATIANS 1:6–10; 2:1–16



The Heart of the Matter

Christ has set free His followers. No longer living under the Law, no longer enslaved by the dominating authority of sin, and no longer plagued by a life of guilt and shame, believers are “free indeed” (John 8:36). Jesus spoke openly of His desire for us to “have life . . . abundantly” (10:10). What provisions! What grace! Free in Christ, we are liberated from the shackles, released from bondage of sin. Tragically, numerous believers do not live grace-based lives to the fullest extent. Far too many Christians are uptight, inflexible, inhibited, overly cautious, and filled with fear. The reason isn’t difficult to understand. The relentless, joyless, intimidating, grace-killing message of legalism has eclipsed the Son’s message of freedom, leaving us victimized and paralyzed, obsessively concerned about what others may think or say or do. Let’s expose legalism for what it is and explore the toll it takes on those who were meant to be free but are, in fact, living like slaves.



Discovering the Way

1. Defining Two Significant Terms

Let’s begin by taking a look at two significant terms: *liberty* and *legalism*.

2. Identifying Three Powerful Adversaries (Selections from Galatians)

Christians must be on the lookout for three subtle adversaries associated with legalism: doctrinal heresy, ecclesiastical harassment, and personal hypocrisy.



Starting Your Journey

To defend against legalism, keep standing firm in your freedom, stop trying to please everyone, start identifying legalism, and continue embracing biblical truth.



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THE GRACE AWAKENING
IF YOU'RE FREE, WHY NOT LIVE LIKE IT?
ROMANS 6:1-15



The Heart of the Matter

Many Christians are just beginning to get a grasp of grace. Because it is so liberating, some still think it's too good to be true. It is not! But to capitalize on the benefits of living in the freedom of grace rather than in the narrow and restrictive confines of the Law or sin's domination, we must break some old habits. We must retrain ourselves to operate our lives as victors instead of victims (Romans 6), a perspective that is seldom emphasized by Christians today. Having been emancipated from slavery to our old master (sin), we're to live like free men and women. Most believers have no trouble believing that Christ's death has delivered us from sin's penalty and guilt, but when it comes to sin's authority over us . . . well, things get a little fuzzy. Tragically, many in God's liberated family live like they're still enslaved to their old master. And so we need to answer two questions: Can we really live above sin's dominion? And has sin truly lost its authority over us? Grace shouts, "YES!"



Discovering the Way

1. Reviewing Some Realities Regarding Spiritual Slavery

Since the fall of humanity, all people have been born in bondage to sin. As a result, Christ came to set us free. However, many Christians still live as though they are enslaved.

2. Understanding the Major Themes from Romans 6 (Romans 6:1–2, 15)

In Romans 6, Paul recognized that Christians often drift to one of two extremes: we fail to claim our liberty, or we take our liberty too far.

3. Living Out Our Freedom Over Sin (Romans 6:3–14)

In order to truly live out our freedom as God intended, we must know our position before God, we must consider that believers are dead to sin's power and alive with God's power, and we must present ourselves to God as instruments of righteousness.



Starting Your Journey

Remember two practical warnings: first, breaking old habits is always a battle, and, second, finding and enjoying new freedom is worth all the effort.



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THE GRACE AWAKENING
GUIDING OTHERS TO FREEDOM
ROMANS 6:15–23



The Heart of the Matter

What a liberating truth is the grace of God! All of us were once hopelessly and helplessly enslaved. By birth, by nature, and by choice, we were dominated by sin. Living under the control of this cruel taskmaster, we were unable, in ourselves, to break the yoke of sin's reign over us . . . *and then came Christ!* In grace, He redeemed believers from the curse of the Law, from obedience to sin, and from the tyranny of pleasing our own flesh. Grace freed us to serve the only good Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. Regrettably, there are some who abuse this freedom. Twisting the principle of grace, they think that if grace super-abounds where sin only abounds, why not sin to the fullest? Paul the apostle addressed this directly in the last nine verses of Romans 6. All of us who are tempted to abuse the marvelous grace of God would be wise to examine and apply the guidelines set forth in this powerful paragraph from God's inerrant Word.



Discovering the Way

1. Wonderful Truths Regarding Freedom

As Christians, we have been set free from the power of sin. Some believers fail to live in that freedom, while others indulge it.

2. Careful Warnings to All Who Are Free (Romans 6:15–23)

We each have to choose whether or not to follow God in all our doings. However, certain events have occurred in the past that should impact how we think about that choice in the present.



Starting Your Journey

Heeding these two reminders will keep us balanced: first, abusing grace stagnates—it causes us to lead others astray, and, second, living in freedom motivates us—it prompts us to let others go.



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THE GRACE AWAKENING
THE GRACE TO LET OTHERS BE
ROMANS 14:1-17



The Heart of the Matter

Grace comes to us in two dimensions: vertical and horizontal. Vertical grace centers on our relationships with God. Freeing us from the demands and the condemnation of the Mosaic Law, vertical grace gives hope to the sinner by not only providing eternal life but also freeing us from any requirement to pay back God. Vertical grace is truly amazing! Horizontal grace centers on our relationships with others. Relieved from our guilt and shame, when we walk in grace, we're free from the tyranny of pleasing people. We're free from their demands and expectations, and they're free from ours. When we demonstrate horizontal grace, we accept others as they are. We have no personal agenda to make anyone be someone he or she is not. Horizontal grace is truly charming! In this lesson, let's turn our attention to that horizontal dimension and learn to help others find the same freedom God grants us, as we accept them as they are and release them to learn and grow.



Discovering the Way

1. Two Strong Tendencies That Nullify Grace

Some of us struggle with two tendencies that, when practiced, nullify grace: comparing ourselves to others and seeking to control others.

2. Four Biblical Guidelines That Personify Grace (Romans 14:1-17)

We can personify grace when we remember that accepting others is basic to letting them be, releasing others allows the Lord to direct the details we're not qualified to fill, freeing others means we never assume a role, and loving others requires us to express our liberty wisely.



Starting Your Journey

These three actions will help you to magnify grace in your life: first, refocus on things that encourage peace; second, remember that sabotaging saints hurts God's work; and, third, refuse to play God in anyone's life!



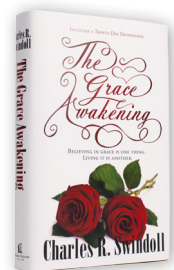
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THE GRACE AWAKENING
THE GRACE TO DISAGREE . . . AND PRESS ON
ACTS 15:36–40



The Heart of the Matter

Having a grace state of mind doesn't mean life automatically becomes a super-harmonious downhill slide. Embracing grace doesn't change our address from the real world to Fantasyland. Even though we, in grace, pursue righteousness and peace and joy and commit to building up one another in love, we will still face conflicts on occasion. We will still have to live with disagreements. Human nature, being what it is, will occasionally get in the way. Opposing opinions will surface, family members will see things differently, and coworkers will clash, even when both parties desire to do the will of God. As people of grace, our goal is not to force everyone to agree but to press on in spite of disagreements.



Discovering the Way

1. Things We Agree on Regarding Disagreements

We can all agree on the following: disagreements are inevitable, even the godly will not always agree, every disagreement includes two ingredients (an issue and viewpoints), and in most disagreements each side has valid points.

2. A Disagreement between Two Godly Leaders (Acts 15:36–41)

Scripture presents us with a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas—a disagreement which began over an issue involving two opposing points of view and ended with a decision to separate permanently.



Starting Your Journey

How can we model grace in disagreeable times? First, always leave room for opposing viewpoints. Second, if an argument must occur, don't assassinate. Third, if you don't get your way, get over it. And fourth, sometimes the best solution is a separation.



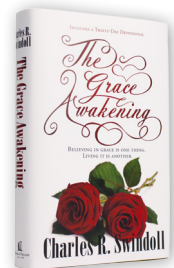
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THE GRACE AWAKENING
BRINGING GRACE UP CLOSE
SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

More than three hundred years ago, John Bunyan wrote his immortal work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It's the fascinating story of one man's pilgrimage from earth to heaven and the numerous obstacles he encountered along the way. Those familiar with the story have no trouble remembering the pilgrim's name: Christian. However, most don't recall that Christian's given name was Graceless. All of us who claim the name of Christ as Savior have a similar story. Our name is now Christian, but it was not always so. Before Christ became part of our lives, we were people who lacked grace. Unfortunately, there are some whose names have been changed—who have believed in Christ as Savior—and yet their lives remain graceless. As we begin this lesson, stop and ask yourself, *Am I one of them?* Keep your answer in mind as we discover together the impact that grace can make in a person's life . . . especially in areas where virtually everyone struggles.



Discovering the Way

1. Understanding God's Goal

God seeks to transform us by His grace, a process that takes time, includes pain, and requires change.

2. Claiming God's Grace (1 Corinthians 15:6–10; 2 Corinthians 12:7–10; 1 Peter 5:5–6)

To overcome our many struggles, we must claim the grace to be who we are, to admit that we are weak, and to submit to what we need.



Starting Your Journey

We can accept God's plan by being *patient* during God's time, being *willing* to accept the pain, and being *open* to whatever changes.



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THE GRACE AWAKENING
DO YOU REALLY MODEL GRACE?
SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

We have already examined grace from several perspectives: vertically and horizontally, relationally and doctrinally, biblically and personally. We have discovered that grace is important in our homes with family members, in our churches where we serve so closely alongside one another, and at our jobs where the world is watching when the pressure mounts. In all these situations—especially when disagreements abound—we must work our way toward peaceful resolutions. Repeatedly, we’ve learned that there’s nothing like grace to oil the gears when life becomes a lengthy grind and especially when we encounter those who aren’t easy to be around. Now, let’s give our attention to the importance of modeling grace—a great need among all of us who minister in *any* capacity as members of the body of Christ seeking to fulfill our callings as followers of Jesus Christ.



Discovering the Way

1. A Strong Reminder from an Ancient Prophet (Zechariah 4:6–7)

The prophet Zechariah reminds us that we cannot serve God successfully in our own power but must rely on the empowerment of God’s Spirit.

2. Marks of a Grace-Oriented Follower of Christ (Selected Scriptures)

Grace-oriented followers of Jesus possess generosity with personal possessions, encouragement in challenging circumstances, ministry beyond the “letter” of Scripture, liberty for creative expression, and release from past failures.



Starting Your Journey

To truly embody grace, we each need to *grow in grace*. None of us have arrived, but with the Spirit’s help, we will be transformed.



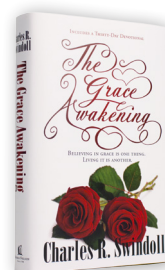
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THE GRACE AWAKENING

A MARRIAGE OILED BY GRACE

SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

No study on the subject of grace would be complete without addressing its importance in the home, especially between marriage partners. We have spent considerable time examining God's grace in His offering salvation to those who are lost, spiritually dead, and unable to do anything to earn divine acceptance. We've called that "vertical grace." We have also searched Scripture for insight in the realm of "horizontal grace," our attitude toward and treatment of one another. But we have not *specifically* considered the essential value of grace in the husband-wife relationship. As we shall see in this lesson, grace is the oil that decreases domestic friction, the one ingredient that prompts us to release our partners to be all God would have them be, all the while affirming one another in an atmosphere of unconditional love.



Discovering the Way

1. The Grace to Face Marital Realities (1 Corinthians 7:3–5, 10–13, 27–28)

We need to embrace three realities about marriage: it requires mutual unselfishness, it means a lifelong commitment, and it includes stressful times.

2. The Grace to Accept Personal Responsibilities (Ephesians 5:15–24, 28)

For a marriage to work well, each partner must accept his or her primary responsibility.

3. The Grace to Fulfill Distinct Roles (1 Peter 3:1–4, 7)

As we seek to live out a marriage oiled by grace, both husbands and wives must recognize the need for grace to fulfill their roles.



Starting Your Journey

Married couples should value mutual equality, mutual dignity, mutual humility, and mutual destiny.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

THE GRACE AWAKENING
THE CHARMING JOY OF GRACE GIVING
2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-9; 9:3-8, 13-15



The Heart of the Matter

There is no way we can remove giving from grace. Giving is the essence of grace. God doesn't charge us for His grace; He gives it to us. When we come to Him, by faith in His Son, God doesn't frown and say, "That'll be \$2,500, please . . . plus tax!" No, He gives us His forgiveness. He gives us His love. He gives us eternal life with the promise of heaven. We've established that kind of grace as vertical grace . . . God's giving to us what we do not deserve, what we can never repay. We've also examined horizontal grace—our giving to others. We don't give in order to reciprocate. We give because we have received grace as a gift from God. That gift motivates us to be people of grace, and where there is grace there *must* be giving. It's like love—God first loved us when we were unlovely and unattractive. Because He continues to love us, we, in turn, should love one another. God also gave to us—and continues to give—in spite of our waywardness, rebellion, and ingratitude. In turn, that kind of "grace giving" ought to flow from our hands to others' hearts.



Discovering the Way

1. What Makes Us So Defensive?

Why do we get defensive about messages on giving? Requests for giving can seem boringly repetitive, giving has become commercialized, and there always seems to be a hidden agenda.

2. What Makes Giving So Addictive? (2 Corinthians 8:7-9; 9:5-6)

Giving is addictive when we keep a healthy balance, when we model the same grace as Jesus Christ, when we counteract selfishness and covetousness, and when we become increasingly more generous.

3. What Makes Grace So Attractive? (2 Corinthians 9:7-15)

Grace individualizes the gift, makes the action joyfully spontaneous, enables us to link up with God's supply line, and leads to incomparable results.



Starting Your Journey

Remember: Jesus is God's greatest demonstration of grace to every one of us.



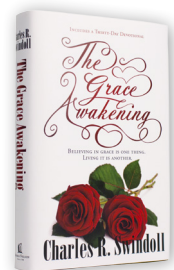
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THE GRACE AWAKENING
GRACE: IT'S REALLY ACCEPTING!
SELECTED SCRIPTURES



The Heart of the Matter

Truly, “it is more blessed to give than to receive,” as our Lord Jesus taught (Acts 20:35). In a selfish world where greed and envy remain at the forefront of most lives, encountering those who have cultivated the grace to give is a pleasure. Such people are refreshing models of true servanthood. There is, however, another side to such generosity: the grace to receive another’s gifts. In our culture that emphasizes independence, self-assurance, and productivity, a subtle pride begins to develop deep within most of us. This pride can easily lead to an attitude that says, *I’ll take care of myself, thank you . . .* which leaves little room for acknowledging one’s needs or accepting another’s attempts to give. Grace that is really amazing is grace that is truly accepting.



Discovering the Way

1. The Flip Side of Several Strengths

We must watch out for the dark underbelly of several strengths: with a lifestyle of discipline comes a tendency to judge; with a well-developed education comes a sense of exclusivity; and with an emphasis on independence comes pride.

2. Scriptural Examples of Resisting and Accepting Grace

We see from the lives of biblical figures that we tend to resist grace when our guilt has not been adequately dealt with or when our pride is still paramount. On the other hand, we accept grace when we release all our expectations or when we no longer put confidence in the flesh.



Starting Your Journey

How can we better accept the gifts of others? It takes an admission of humanity and a heart of humility.



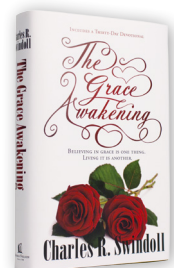
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