

THE GRACE AWAKENING STUDY THREE

The Roots of a Grace Awakening

Romans 4:1–5; 5:1–2; Galatians 2:20

When we believe in Christ, His cleansing blood washes away our sins. We are placed into Christ and the righteousness of God is credited to our account.

—Charles R. Swindoll

THROUGHOUT history, God’s liberating song of grace has been calling people to freedom. In 1738, for example, Charles Wesley heard grace’s melody while reading Luther’s commentary on Galatians. For the first time, he understood salvation by faith in Christ alone, and he felt a peace that he had not found in his years of striving to please God. Three days later, Charles’ brother John experienced grace’s touch in a similar way. At a meeting, he listened to a reading from Luther’s preface to Romans that changed his life. John later wrote in his journal:

I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given to me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.¹

The joy of Charles and John’s “grace awakening” could not be contained. In the years that followed, the gospel of grace flowed out in torrents through the thousands of hymns Charles wrote and the countless sermons John preached. Wherever they traveled through Europe and America, the Wesleys, along with George Whitefield, spread the news of God’s grace and flamed a movement of spiritual revivals known as the Great Awakening.

The same grace awakening that gave roots to the Great Awakening still blooms today. In this study, we’ll examine how grace awakens our spirits through our salvation. Then we’ll start a journey that will take us through the rest of the series to understand how our grace-based salvation blossoms into a grace-based lifestyle, radically changing every aspect of our identity and relationships.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you prepare to study grace's biblical roots, take a moment to pray for God's Spirit to illumine your mind and heart. As Chuck Swindoll advised,

“Study without prayer is an incomplete process—a futile effort.”²

You may wish to pray as Chuck prays before he studies the Word:

I often pray, “Lord, speak to me. Help me understand what this passage is saying. I am listening. I am sensitive to Your truth. Lead me into it.”³



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Salvation by grace, based alone on the person and work of Jesus Christ, is the central truth of Christianity. The Bible offers no better example of grace-based salvation than the Patriarch Abraham.



Observation: Explaining the Gospel of Grace

As we discovered in the previous study, the apostle Paul made much of Abraham's example of faith—not religious works—as the means to receiving God's grace. Paul's faith-versus-works distinction in Romans 4:1–3 deserves another look:

Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did he discover about being made right with God? If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God's way. For the Scriptures tell us, “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.”



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In the previous study, we noted that our salvation is accomplished by God's work, not human effort, and it is a free gift, not an earned wage. Let's highlight the sentence, "Abraham believed God" (Romans 4:3). What specifically did Abraham believe? Read *Genesis 12:1–3*, and write down the promises that Abraham believed God would fulfill.

By faith, Abraham traveled to the land God showed him. Yet, even though God gave Abraham a homeland and influence, Abraham's faith was truly tested when God delayed giving Abraham an heir. What was Abraham's solution to his and Sarah's infertility (*Genesis 15:1–3*)?

What was God's answer? How did Abraham respond? What did God do (*15:4–6*)?

God counting Abraham as righteous because of his faith was an act of grace. Faith is the key that unlocks the treasure of salvation, and, according to Paul, because anyone can have faith, the treasure is available to all. Read *Romans 4:16* and *4:22–25*, and write down Paul's points about Abraham being the prototype for all of humanity.



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What exactly did Paul mean when he wrote, “God *counted* [Abraham] as righteous because of his faith” (Romans 4:3, emphasis added)? For the answer, let’s begin the interpretation phase of the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study as we define *justification* and explore a theological principle called “positional truth.”



Interpretation: Understanding Our Position in Christ

A judge “counts” a person as righteous or innocent when he or she acquits or pardons a person convicted of a crime. God does something similar at our salvation. This judicial image is at the heart of the Greek word *dikaioo*, often translated “justify.” Read the following verses from the New American Standard Bible that include this word:

- *But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.* (Romans 4:5)
- *He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.* (4:25)
- *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (5:1)

Who alone can justify, and what is the condition of those who are justified (4:5)?

What event in Jesus’ life made possible our justification (4:25)?



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What must we do for justification to occur, and what is the result (Romans 5:1)?

“Justification is the sovereign act of God whereby He declares righteous the believing sinner while still in a sinning state.” —Chuck Swindoll

We are like criminals who, having been convicted of multiple felonies, stand before a judge for sentencing. But with the bang of his gavel, the judge acquits us! How can he do that? How can a judge who justifies guilty people be just in doing so?

God pardons us not because we deserve to be pardoned. The basis of our justification is not our *condition*, which is sinner, but our *position*, which is “in Christ.” We were “in Adam” prior to faith (1 Corinthians 15:22 NASB), but Christ redeemed (or purchased) us by paying the price for our sin when He died for us on the cross.

The death of Christ provides the complete payment for your sins. All of us, sinful as we are, are covered by the blood of Christ. His cleansing blood washes away our sins, and then we are placed into Christ and credited to our account is the righteousness of God. —Chuck Swindoll

According to [Romans 8:1–2](#), from what are we freed because of our position in Christ Jesus?



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Because of our grace-based salvation, we are free to live a new, grace-based life. Read what Paul said about this new life in Christ in The Message paraphrase of Galatians 2:19–21, and underline the phrases that illustrate the grace-based life.

What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn't work. So I quit being a "law man" so that I could be God's man. Christ's life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that.

As he stated in Galatians 2:20, Paul lived by faith, and he was not going back to keeping the law to please God. Why? Having been justified by faith, he was free to serve God within the context of a secure relationship with God . . . and so are we!



Correlation: Determining to Stand Firm in Our Freedom

What characterizes a grace-based lifestyle? Freedom. What did Paul teach about people who wish to take away our freedom (*Galatians 2:4–5*)?

What must we do to sustain our freedom (*5:1*)?

Let's wrap up our study by looking at the fruit that results from a grace-based life.



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Application: The Fruit That Grows from a Grace-Based Life

Like Abraham, we receive God's promise by faith. Because God justifies us by faith, not by our keeping the law, we are free from the law to experience the following fruit of a grace-based life:

- *Freedom from the control and domination of sin* (Romans 6:12–14)
Christ is our Lord, so sin need not control us because it is no longer our master.
- *Freedom from the demands and requirements of the law* (8:3–4)
Christ fulfilled the law, ending its authority to judge us.
- *Freedom from the grind and grip of death* (8:5–6, 37–39)
Death may touch us, but it cannot keep us. Our destiny is not the grave but life with Christ, and in Him we are secure.
- *Freedom from divine and human condemnation* (8:31–34)
Grace sets us free from the fear of judgment that those who work for their salvation dread.

Before Charles and John Wesley understood the gospel of grace, they feared God's condemnation and attempted to please God and people through religious rule-keeping. If you feel the same way, this may be your moment of faith in which you accept God's gift of salvation. Perhaps this prayer can help you express your heart's acceptance of grace.

Lord, I acknowledge that I am lost. I believe Jesus paid in full the penalty for my sin, and I believe in Him now. I take Jesus as my master, captain, and Savior. Thank You for redeeming me and declaring me righteous and accepted in Christ. Amen.

God not only saves you by His grace, He wants you to live in His grace. Use the following space to write your reflections on the four freedoms Chuck listed above and to express your desire to live in God's grace in every area of your life.

Through the remainder of this series, we'll discover the beauty of a life of grace with its freedom and amazing possibilities. What a journey it will be!



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, the only reason I can have peace with You is because of Your grace. By grace, You declare me righteous. By grace I'm saved, and in grace I live. Free me to experience Your power as I live each day dependent on You. In the name of Christ my Savior, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. A. Skevington Wood, "John and Charles Wesley and Methodism," *Great Leaders of the Christian Church*, John D. Woodbridge, gen. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 291.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 128.
3. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures*, 128.



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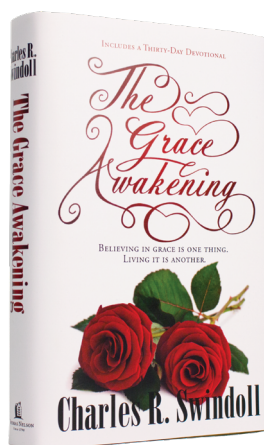
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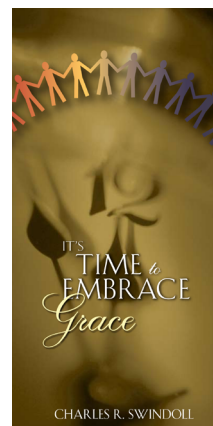
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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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