

LIVING BY GRACE

STUDY SIX

Living Above the Drag of Defeat

Romans 8:1–14

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

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

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

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

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

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



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Pastor Chuck tells how he finally found hope:

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

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



PREPARE YOUR HEART

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

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



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

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

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



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

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

Now, since all this is true, *therefore . . .*

Observation: Assurance and Enablement

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

Assurances in Christ—Romans 8:1–4

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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Interpretation: A “Spirit” Frame of Mind

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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



Correlation: When We Are Weak

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

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

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

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

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



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Application: The Choice Is Yours

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

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

What is your frame of mind today?

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

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



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



A FINAL PRAYER

Write your prayer here:

ENDNOTES

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

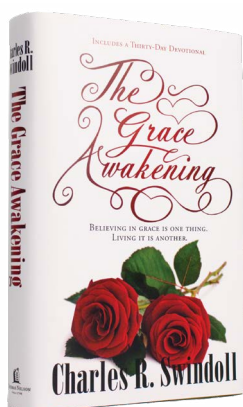


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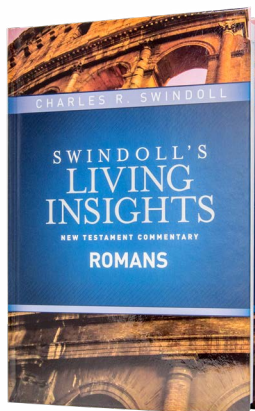
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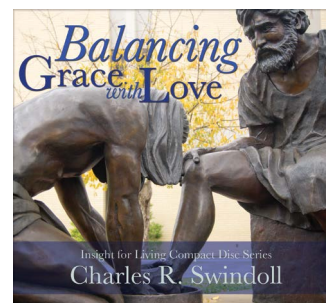
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