

ROMANS

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

STUDY EIGHTEEN

Let's Talk about Our Walk

Romans 8:1–13

Within every one of us there are these constantly conflicting forces, one driving us down, the other one driving us up and onward. One pulling at our glands to convince us that yielding to temptation is the only way to go—if it feels good, do it! On the other hand, there is the Spirit of God saying, “No, no, no. Walk with Me, trust in Me. I will take you from this normal carnal lifestyle into a realm that would cause others to be amazed at your life.”

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

FAMILY talks! We have them, we need them! They usually begin with someone saying, “We need to talk.” Then everyone gathers to address how things are going in the family. We talk about feelings and behaviors. We discuss the acts of kindness that made the day lighter for everyone or the angry outburst that added tension to our family dynamics. We search for motives behind the words that escaped our mouths. We reveal what drives our behavior, and we encourage healthy changes.

Similarly, the apostle Paul took time in his letter to the Roman congregation for a family talk. He invited them to consider what drives their thoughts and actions—the flesh or the Spirit?

Paul went first by confessing his own fleshly struggles: “I want to do what is right, but I can’t” (Romans 7:18). We all can identify with Paul’s exasperation. We’ve struggled with sin too. The answer to Paul’s plight and ours is Christ, who, through His atonement, broke the chains of sin and sent the Holy Spirit into our lives.

Now we have a choice to walk in the power of the flesh *or* the Spirit. The loving disposition that we have toward our spouse or the quietness and rest that persists in times of trouble reveal the abiding ministry of the Holy Spirit, who longs to bring health to our souls and our relationships.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we’ll join Paul’s family talk and let him help us with our Christian walk. There’s a better way to live, and we have all we need to experience it!



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Prayer before, during, and after time in God's Word shows our humble and teachable spirit. Pray with the psalmist:

*Teach me to do Your will,
for You are my God.
May Your gracious Spirit lead me forward
on a firm footing. (Psalm 143:10)*

Express your own earnest desire to know and do God's will as you learn principles in Romans that will strengthen your walk with Him.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Romans 8 is the pinnacle of Romans, the majestic summit to which everything Paul has taught leads up to and from which everything he will teach flows. It begins with, "Therefore" (Romans 8:1 NASB), which looks back over the ground Paul covered in chapters 1–7. Let's take a moment at this mountain overlook for a quick review.

Paul opened with a bleak picture of humanity's lost condition (Romans 1–3). Thankfully, Christ bore sin's judgment, and in His grace, God "count[s] us as righteous," not because of our works but because of our faith (4:24). In chapter 5, Paul culminated his teaching on 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.

Summarize the main message of Romans 7 and how it leads to Paul's triumphant declaration, "So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus" (8:1).

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As a zealous Pharisee, Paul knew very well what it means to be driven by one's own desires or religious motives (*Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2; Galatians 1:13-14*). Now that he's been entrusted with the good news of grace, Paul's teaching in Romans 8 underlines the essential role of the Enabler of our Christian walk. The third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, indwells and empowers every believer.

So when we come to Romans 8, we come to this marvelous pivot point where the Spirit of God is introduced and we realize that this is for our benefit.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Observation: The Spirit Versus the Flesh

Three magnificent truths open Paul's chapter on the Holy Spirit. Use your skills of observation to identify the words or phrases in *Romans 8:1-4* that accentuate these truths.¹ In Christ, we are . . .

1. Eternally secure (Romans 8:1): _____

2. Internally free (8:2): _____

3. Positionally perfect (8:3-4): _____

Paul says that we can know we're living in the Spirit, first, by our *mind-set*. Read *8:5-8* 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, 7-8</i>	Minds Set on the Spirit <i>Romans 8:5b, 6b</i>

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When you operate in the flesh, you are hostile toward God. You resist Him and you resent Him. You resist those who try to represent Him to you. But there is this welling up of the transforming presence of the Spirit, and it's magnificent! You're not faking it. There's a divine life within you longing to get out.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Even Christians can behave like non-Christians when they view life through a fleshly frame of mind. What did Paul remind his readers regarding the essential difference between Christians and non-Christians in [Romans 8:9](#)?

Then Paul addressed the Spirit's power regarding our *bodies* in [8:10–11](#). What truths did Paul convey?

Finally, having addressed our mind-set and our bodies, Paul next addressed our *actions*. What did Paul say about the flesh and the Spirit in regard to our deeds in [8:12–13](#)?

Paul says, "So then, men and women, we are under obligation." To What? "To live not according to the flesh but to live according to the Spirit."
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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.

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Interpretation: Two Principles, Two Mind-Sets, Two Walks

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 whole outlook, our frame of mind, and the way we view the world.

The New English Translation (NET) captures the meaning of *phronema*:

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. (Romans 8:6–7)

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

“For the mind set on the flesh is death.” I want that to hit you with full force. A death-like existence kicks in. There is within you and me an emptiness, a futility, a frustration. We’re plagued by shame and guilt because the old nature took control. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

In *8:9–13*, Paul tells believers to put to death the deeds of the flesh through the power of the Holy Spirit. Look up the Greek word *thanatoo*, translated “put to death,” in the Greek lexicon at billmounce.com. Consult your Bible-study resources. Explain the importance of the power of the Holy Spirit in taming the flesh.

How would you define the “outlook of the Spirit” (8:6 NET)?

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When the Holy Spirit does His work within me, there's a hunger that can never be satisfied. I love spending time in prayer. I love spending time in His Word. I love talking about spiritual things. I love it when God does things and I see Him at work. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Set Your Sails Toward the Spirit

With correlation, the third step, we compare our Scripture with other passages. Scripture in its entirety highlights how believers' reliance on the Holy Spirit impacts their thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors.

How do passages such as *1 Corinthians 2:14* and *Galatians 5:17–21* emphasize the inability of the flesh to please God?

When I am in the flesh, I know that those activities did not and cannot please God. It's like another language is being spoken. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Now compare these passages with *Galatians 5:16* and *Ephesians 5:18–19*. How essential is it for believers to rely on the Spirit?

People don't make great things of their lives because life is calm and easy. It's because they've set their sails toward the Spirit, and they're determined not to operate in the realm of the flesh. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Application: Rely on the Spirit!

Application is the step that enables us to deal with our struggles and allow the Holy Spirit to transform our lives with the principles we've learned. Illustrate the opposing outlooks of the flesh and the Spirit with examples from your experience. Think of a time you were in a stressful moment and had a fleshly outlook. What was your attitude? What did you say and do? What were your actions?

In contrast, think of a stressful time in your life, but you had the outlook of the Spirit. What was your attitude? What were your actions?

The power of the indwelling Spirit of God won Paul's heart and turned him from one you would see as just another ordinary man to an individual who had vision and faith that put him among those Bible figures we most admire.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

How does knowing about the ever-present battle between flesh and Spirit change the way you think about your personal struggles, relationships, and the Christian life?

When I'm in the flesh, there's an open defiance in my spirit against God. It can happen to anyone when the flesh takes control. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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What practical steps can you take to rely on the Holy Spirit?

You can say to the Spirit of God, “Take over, speak through me, use me, give me strength, keep me from saying yes to temptation. Hold me back from that temptation.” And the Spirit of God comes to your rescue, and you’re freed from the dominance of the old nature. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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

Heavenly Father, thank You for divine help! Help me to rely on the Holy Spirit every day. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*”

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 2007, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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