

THE GRACE AWAKENING STUDY EIGHT

Guiding Others to Freedom

Romans 6:15–23

I would like to so develop the doctrine of grace in my life that I can be, through the power of Christ, as He is—accepting and yet pure, free and yet wise, enjoying what He has provided yet never flaunting, giving people room to be all that God would have them be yet never once deceiving them into thinking sin will lead them there. That’s a grace frame of mind.

—Charles R. Swindoll

GOD has blessed His children with freedom from sin and shame. But, sadly, not all Christians live free—such as those we addressed in the last study. Shackled by an iron chain of shame resulting from patterns of failure and habitual sin, they fail to leave their old master. In Romans 6:1–14, you’ll recall that Paul guided Christ followers with three steps to freedom from sin:

1. *To know* about their union with Christ and their new identity in Him
2. *To consider* themselves dead to sin
3. *To present* themselves in service to Christ who loves them unconditionally

While some Christians fail to leave their old master, others take their freedom too far. They also serve sin but *without guilt*. They reason that since they are under grace and not the law, they can do whatever they please. In other words, if no police officers lurk behind speed limit signs, why not rev up the RPMs and go full throttle? They shamelessly cheat on their spouse, cover up their shady dealings, bully people, take what isn’t theirs, and on and on, racing through life under the green flag of grace.



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As we'll learn in this study, reckless liberty inevitably leads to a wrecked life. What can we do to avoid this pitfall? In the second part of Romans 6, Paul explained the next steps that guide people away from sin into freedom by lighting the way to a proper understanding of grace.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take a quiet moment to meditate on the following declarations of our freedom in Christ.

Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. . . . So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.” (John 8:31–32, 36)

For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. (Romans 6:7)

And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. (8:2)

Write out a brief prayer asking the Lord to empower you with His grace, to guide you into the freedom from sin He has promised you, and to open your heart to the truth in His Word through this study of Romans 6:15–23.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Read *Romans 6:15–23* to get an overview of the passage. As you read, make mental notes of the series of contrasts between our old way of life serving sin (“you were” Romans 6:17, 20) and our new way of life serving Christ (“now” 6:17–19, 22).



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Observation: Careful Warnings to All Who Are Free

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we observe the text by looking for words or sections that are compared, contrasted, emphasized, repeated, or related. In particular, we look for central ideas, such as the overall principle Paul stated in *Romans 6:16*.

Overall Principle

In this verse, Paul presented the big idea or the central proposition of the passage, and he wrote it emphatically as if in all caps: “DON’T YOU REALIZE. . . ?” (Romans 6:16). What was the truth Paul desperately wanted his readers to understand? For additional insight, here’s a paraphrase of Romans 6:16 from *The Message*:

You know well enough from your own experience that there are some acts of so-called freedom that destroy freedom. Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it’s your last free act. But offer yourselves to the ways of God and the freedom never quits.



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Past Identity versus Present Identity

Building on his main idea, Paul contrasted our past identity as slaves with our present identity in Christ. In the chart below, fill in the contrasting points Paul described in *Romans 6:17–22*. The first one is filled in for you.

	Past Identity	Present Identity
Romans 6:17	“Once you were slaves of sin”	“but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you”
Romans 6:18		
Romans 6:19		
Romans 6:20–22		

With these contrasts, Paul has guided us to freedom step by step. We can summarize Paul’s progression of thought like this:

- When I was lost, I was enslaved to sin (“Once you were slaves of sin,” Romans 6:17).
- My slavery to sin only grew worse (“ever deeper into sin,” 6:19).
- Through Christ, I was freed from slavery to sin (“Now you are free,” 6:18).
- When I was converted, I changed masters (“slaves to righteous living,” 6:18).



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Central Command and Ultimate Results

These stepping stones lead us to Paul’s central command: “Now you must *give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living* so that you will become holy” (Romans 6:19, emphasis added).

Because we’re under grace and not the law, we have freedom of choice. What did Paul say are the results if we choose to *disobey* his command and the results if we *obey* it? Read [Romans 6:20–23](#) for the answers.

Grace guides us to a crossroads, doesn’t it? At this junction, we are free to choose whether to obey sin or God. But, as Paul made it clear, we’re not free to choose the consequences of our choice.



Interpretation: Living Out Our Freedom over Sin

In his book *The Grace Awakening*, Chuck Swindoll illustrated that grace frees us to choose our actions . . . but not the consequences of our actions.

Life is like a menu in the Grace Restaurant. In this new establishment you are free to choose whatever you want. But whatever you choose will be served to you, and you must eat it. If you choose the wrong food and realize later just how badly your body reacted to it, don’t think that grace will protect you from getting sick.¹

In light of Chuck’s illustration, reflect on the meaning of the words *death* and *life* in Romans 6:23. We often use this verse as an invitation to a non-Christian to receive the free gift of salvation, and that’s a valid application.

However, look again at [Romans 6:22–23](#) in its context. Paul was addressing carnal Christians who thought they could eat anything they wanted on the “menu” of life and not suffer the consequences of their sinful choices because they were under grace. In this context, what was Paul saying to Christians, not about life in heaven but about a heavenly kind of life on earth?



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Want to know the kind of employer sin is? He's horrible! Every time you cash a check that comes from sin, it's got death written all over it. An awful ache in the soul. A constant battle with guilt. A loss of personal testimony. A breakdown of integrity. A sudden stoppage of growth until you deal with it. The beginning stages of iniquity, which becomes addictive as time passes. That's the death that comes from sin's wages. —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Warnings from Proverbs

What warnings do the wise sayings in *Proverbs 5:21–23* offer?

Sin is the worst sort of master, but we exhibit wisdom like Solomon's when we choose God as our Master. No one can live without a master; we all need guidance. The question is which master will we choose?



Application: Helpful Reminders That Keep Us Balanced

As we conclude, let's tie a couple of strings around our finger as reminders of the balance necessary to walk with Christ.

- *Abusing grace stagnates us.* It dulls our spiritual taste buds to the sweetness of God. It causes us to live casual, indifferent lives instead of committed ones.
- *Living in freedom motivates us.* It motivates us to choose a righteous lifestyle in the power of the Spirit through the indwelling presence of Christ who gives us the grace we need to do what we can't do in our own strength.

If you've been choosing to follow the wrong master, what consequences have you experienced?



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What steps can you take to change masters? Perhaps you can talk to a trusted friend about your desire to change and ask him or her to help guide you to freedom. Perhaps you can meet with your pastor or Christian counselor for guidance. What ideas do you have?

Finally, what about the loved ones you know who are racing through life at a reckless clip, running past stop signs, and not caring about the consequences? Based on our study of Romans 6:15–23, what can you share with your loved ones to guide them to true freedom?

In the next study, “The Grace to Let Others Be,” we’ll learn ways to show grace toward others when we have strong disagreements. Until then, let’s conclude Romans 6 with a final prayer and a personal commitment to live free under the authority of our new Master.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You sent Your Son to give me life in abundance. The kind of life I’ll feast on in heaven someday is the kind of life I can taste today as I live in Your kingdom, surrendered to Your authority as my Master. Forgive my lapses into sin when I lose sight of Your grace. Thank You for settling the issue of my forgiveness at the cross where Jesus died for me. Help me love others with the same grace with which You love me. Help those I love to know the joy and freedom of serving You. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 131.



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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

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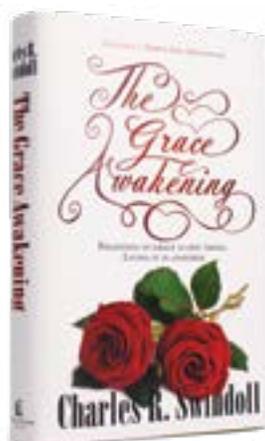
Romans 6:15–23



Tools for Digging Deeper



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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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