

FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

STUDY THREE

My Sin . . . and “The Things of the Spirit”

Romans 6–8; Galatians 5:13–23

Surely, the Holy Spirit was not given just for people in biblical days. Because the Spirit dwells within us, we can know power that overcomes sin and gets us through life.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

So far, we’ve witnessed the Holy Spirit’s flame burn brightly in the lives of the apostles and early Christians. When the Spirit settled on them as tongues of fire, He enabled their tongues to proclaim the good news of Christ in many languages. He broke the chains of fear that held them behind closed doors and emboldened them as witnesses, unintimidated and willing to die for their Savior. But those days are gone, right?

According to Pastor Chuck Swindoll, the Holy Spirit’s flame still burns bright in our lives.

He longs to empower you and me with His dynamic presence. He is ready and able to change our attitudes, warm our hearts, show us how and where to walk, comfort us in our struggles, strengthen us in the weak and fragile places of our lives, and literally revolutionize our pilgrimage from this planet to paradise. . . .

Never forget this: the Holy Spirit is interested in transforming us from the inside out.¹



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

My Sin . . . and “The Things of the Spirit”

Romans 6–8; Galatians 5:13–23

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we flip the pages of history forward to our day. What chains will the Holy Spirit’s power break in your life? How will He revolutionize your “pilgrimage from this planet to paradise”?



PREPARE YOUR HEART

One reason God gave us the Holy Spirit was “to fill our hearts with his love” (Romans 5:5). As you open God’s Word, warm your heart by the fire of God’s love and pray for insight into His message for you.

Father, Your Word is “my joy and my heart’s delight” (Jeremiah 15:16). Draw me into the joy of Your presence as I learn how to walk closer to You with authentic and pure devotion in the power of the Spirit. In Jesus’ name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

At odds with the Spirit is our flesh—our natural inclination toward sin. Paul wrote extensively about sin in the opening chapters of Romans, concluding that “everyone has sinned” (Romans 3:23), and “the wages of sin is death” (6:23). God, however, “freed us from the penalty for our sins” by offering Jesus as our atoning sacrifice (3:24–25). He “makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus” (3:26). This is good news . . . but there’s more!

Because God loves us, He not only *delivers* us from the penalty of sin but also *frees* us from our habits of sin—habits that don’t surrender without a fight. In Romans 6–8 and Galatians 5, Paul wrote like a battlefield correspondent, reporting on the war that wages in our soul between our flesh and God’s Spirit. Paul delivered good news and bad news but assured us that, in the end, we have victory in the power of the Spirit.



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 **Observation: Admitting the Struggle, Claiming the Victory**

A chart is a helpful tool to record observations. Read the verses in the chart below closely and reflectively. Write down any similarities or contrasts you observe about our freedom in Christ, ongoing struggles with sin, and hope in the Spirit.

Sin No Longer Has Power Over Us	
In the following verses, Paul rang a liberty bell. What good news do these verses sound out to Christians?	
<i>Romans 6:6–7, 12–14</i>	<i>Galatians 5:1, 13</i>

We have been emancipated! We have been freed from slavery to sin. Sin no longer has power over us. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Sin Is Still Present Within Us	
While sin is a vanquished foe, it still is a present enemy. What do you observe about the conflict between the Spirit and the part of our humanity that is drawn to sin? In Greek, Paul labeled this part, <i>sarx</i> —which the New Living Translation translates as the “old nature” or “sinful nature” and the New American Standard Bible translates as the “flesh.”	
<i>Romans 7:5, 18–20</i>	<i>Galatians 5:17, 19–21</i>

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Sin may no longer have power over us, but it is still present within us. There is a part of our being, our inner person, that still desires to live disobediently. We cannot get away from the fact that we carry around the carnal desires of the flesh. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Holy Spirit Provides a New Dimension of Living	
Now that we have the Spirit, we can submit our will to God in such a way that we desire the things of the Spirit rather than the things of the flesh. When we make that choice, we live in a new spiritual dimension. We “walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16 NASB) as the Spirit empowers us to live free from sin. What do these verses teach about the Spirit-controlled life versus the flesh-controlled life?	
<i>Romans 8:9–11</i>	<i>Galatians 5:16, 22–25</i>

“Walk by the Spirit.” Now, that is the secret. This is not talking about believing that Christ died for your sins. That’s conversion. Now that you’re a believer, do you walk by the Spirit? —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Understanding the “Things That Please the Spirit”

How do we win the battle of our desires? By redirecting our desires from the things of the flesh to “the things that please the Spirit” (Romans 8:5). These “things” appear in Romans 8 as the Spirit’s beautiful blessings—which are such a contrast to the ugliness of sin.

Note the blessings of the Spirit in the following verses. Write down your interpretation of each item *along with its spiritual benefit for you personally*. To help discern the meaning, read the verses in three Bible versions, including the Amplified Bible. Feel free to use your Bible study resources to help you discover the meaning.

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What does “life and peace” mean for you—*Romans 8:6*?

What does “not . . . fearful slaves. Instead . . . adopted” mean for you—*Romans 8:15*?

What does “heirs of God’s glory” mean for you—*Romans 8:16–17*?

What does the “Holy Spirit prays for us” and “pleads for us” mean for you—*Romans 8:26–27*?



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Life, peace, release from fear, security as God’s children, assurance about our future, assistance in prayer, awareness of God’s will—such blessings! In addition are the *fruit of the Spirit*: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22–23). Compare these virtues produced by the Spirit with Paul’s list of fleshly vices in *Galatians 5:19–21*. What impression did Paul intend to leave for his readers with these two contrasting lists?

When viewed side-by-side, the things of the Spirit appeal to us far more than the things of the flesh, don’t they? Our souls genuinely crave life, assurance, security, love, joy, peace . . . every blessing the Spirit offers! Whether or not we experience these things depends on how we set our mind—“the *mind set on the Spirit* is life and peace” (Romans 8:6 NASB, emphasis added). Let’s dig deeper into this concept in other passages.



Correlation: Setting Our Minds on the Things of the Spirit

What do the following verses teach about the crucial role our mind plays in determining our behavior?

Romans 12:2



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Philippians 4:8–9

Colossians 3:2–3

The Spirit unleashes His transforming power when we set our minds on the things of the Spirit. He peels the veneer off sin so we can see sin for what it is—ugly, destructive, and deadly distortions of all that’s good. He helps us build new, life-giving habits to replace the old habits of sin. So what should you set your mind on today?

Application: Thrilling Thoughts to Consider

Begin your day with this thought: *I choose to desire what God desires—the things of the Spirit not the things of the flesh.* It’s a simple first step, but an important one. Your goal isn’t to eliminate desires but to surrender them to God and focus them on the things of the Spirit—the spiritual blessings from the Father who loves you. Can you take that step right now?



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The next thought is this: *I yield control to the Spirit who lives in me.* Only the Spirit can empower the things of the Spirit. So, invite Him to take control when you’re trying to be patient in a traffic jam or trying to find peace in a crisis or trying to love an enemy. Can you take this step?

These are just the initial steps in walking by the Spirit and living in a new spiritual dimension. But there’s more to learn. What does the filling of the Spirit mean? How do we experience His filling daily? How can His filling change our lives? In the next *Searching the Scriptures* study, we’ll dig into these concepts in Ephesians 5:15–21.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, when I feel the battle waging in my mind between my flesh and the Spirit, help me to set my desires on You and Your will. Clear my head of wrong thinking about sin. It’s not what it appears to be; rather, it is the source of all pain and sorrow in life. Help me to desire only the things of the Spirit and to live in submission to Your will. In Jesus’ name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Embraced by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 9.

