

ROMANS

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSTITUTION

STUDY FOUR

The Bad News about the Whole World

Romans 1:18–25

The bad news sets us up for the wonderful news that God's love for you is surpassing anything you might try to suppress. His plan for you is greater than anything you could imagine. When He sent His Son to die on that cross, He had you in mind. Had you been the only one, He would have come to die for you.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

EFFECTIVE treatment requires an accurate diagnosis.

Medical professionals in white coats take our vital signs, collect specimens, perform tests, and take X-rays of our organs, bones, and tissues. They make us open our mouths to say “Ahh!” Time goes by. Then, into the room they come with the report in their hands. The more extensive the assessment, the more accurate the diagnosis, and the more effective the treatment!

In the same way, the bad things we hear and see every day in our world tell us something is wrong with the human heart—from the heinous crimes that keep us awake at night to the small lie on the lips of a child. Something is off with humankind.

Starting with this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we begin taking a hard look at what exactly is wrong. It's our spiritual condition. Thankfully, what we learn comes from the report of the Great Physician who not only has the best diagnosis but also the only remedy that can make us healthy.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Psalm 119:130 says,

*The teaching of your word gives light,
so even the simple can understand.*



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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The rays of God's Word light the way to our understanding and insight. Prepare your heart by asking the Holy Spirit to illuminate His Word so you can apprehend its truths. In your own words, humbly request that God turns on His light in your heart and mind.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As we read Paul's letter to the Romans, we must determine its context.

Who were the original readers? We have evidence that the membership of the Roman Christian community included gentiles, non-Jews. Paul specified that Jesus appointed him apostle to the gentiles (*Romans 1:13; 15:15–16*), which included the Roman congregation (*1:5–6, 13*).

An important theological term to remember that relates to gentiles' knowledge of God is *general revelation*. General revelation refers to the way creation signals God's existence and eternal attributes (*Psalms 19:1–4*). Though one may not have access to a Bible, God's radiance reaches them through His visible lights.

Keep this information in mind as you observe and interpret Romans 1:18–25.



Observation: God's Wrath and Humanity's Downward Spiral

Start with the first step of our *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, observation. Read *Romans 1:18–25* and answer the question, "What does it say?" Thoughtfully and repetitively, read it as if you're reading it for the very first time.¹ Note your initial observations.

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Romans 1:18–25

Reread [Romans 1:18](#). What is revealed from heaven against people's ungodliness and unrighteousness?

[Romans 1:18–20](#) tells us that humankind suppresses the truth about God. How did God make that kind of truth evident, according to verses [19–20](#)?

In [1:21–23](#), we read that even though God-rejecters knew God, they did not honor Him as God nor give Him thanks. Instead, what have they done?

Reread [1:24–25](#). What does a holy God do to those who deliberately choose to worship created things instead of Him, the Creator? What are the consequences?

Darkened hearts become fools in denial of the one true God—removing God and replacing Him. Finally, they completely exchange truth for a lie.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The report is in! God's wrath is revealed against the spiritual corruption of humanity. Let's take a closer look at these spiritual vital signs to deepen our understanding!

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Interpretation: Darkness in the Human Heart

Now, focus on interpreting the passage by using various tools to come to an understanding of what it means.¹

Romans 1:18 tells us that God’s wrath is revealed against ungodliness and unrighteousness. You can analyze the meanings of the Greek words *orge*, *asebeia*, and *adikia*—translated as “wrath,” “ungodliness,” and “unrighteousness”—using the Greek-English dictionary available for free at billmounce.com. Once you have a deeper understanding of this verse, rewrite it in your own words.

Wrath, as used here, refers to God’s holy aversion to all that is evil.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Romans 1:18–20 states that humanity without Christ suppresses the truth about God. Look up the Greek word *katecho*, which is translated “suppress” in the Greek dictionary. How would you explain this word to a friend? And why are those who suppress the truth about God without excuse?

Humankind holds down the evident knowledge of the majestic, transcending power of God, our Creator God, our Sustainer God, all-knowing, all-powerful. All of this has entered into the minds and consciousness of humanity, and we have deliberately, on our own, suppressed it. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Paul explained in *1:21–23* that the minds of those who suppress the truth have become futile. They profess to be wise but have become fools. Research these verses. How do they inform your understanding of the human heart?

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The meaning represents one who denies the existence of God. But there has to be someone we turn to. The heart craves someone, something, to turn to when life's bottom drops out. And so we become very, very creative, and we begin a whole process of idolatry. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Deepen your understanding of the word [idol](#) using the *Holman Bible Dictionary* at studylight.org or your favorite Bible dictionary. How would you explain it to modern-day readers?

*In our culture, our idols are what we drive and where we live and the size of our bank account and those in our family, if we're not careful.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

In [Romans 1:24–25](#), Paul mentioned that as a result of their idolatrous and rebellious hearts, God gave them over to their own desires. Look up these verses in a commentary like [Constable's Notes](#) at netbible.org. Focus especially on the meaning of the Greek verb, *paradidomi*, translated “to hand over.” How do these verses help us understand the depravity of humankind?

Record one or two key principles you have taken away from your deep dive into 1:18–25.

The heart that blocks God's rays is bound to experience darkness—just as it desires . . . even though it really doesn't comprehend how tragic that desire actually is.

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Correlation: How Dark Can the Human Heart Be?

Willful disobedience appeared in the human heart in the early pages of Scripture. Although Eve was deceived by Satan's temptation, Adam's choice to eat the forbidden fruit was deliberate. In what way does Adam's disobedience in [Genesis 3:1–19](#) resemble Cain's rebellion in [4:1–16](#)?

Observe the condition of humankind in [Genesis 6:1–13](#). What similarities do you find between the Great Physician's assessment in 6:5 and [Romans 1:18–25](#)?

Read [Jeremiah 17:9–10](#); [John 3:19](#); and [Ephesians 2:1–5](#). Based on what you've read, how would you describe the human heart . . . just how bad off or dark can it be?

Depravity doesn't mean that we are as bad as we could be, because we could always get worse; it means we are as bad off as we can be.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

How does John describe the coming of Jesus and the darkness in the human heart in [John 1:1–13](#)? What promise do we find for those who accept Jesus, the true light?

Humanity's dire condition screams for God's intervention. Good news! The Savior has come!

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Application: The Whole World Needs Jesus!

You sat in. You heard the report of our spiritual condition. After hearing a passage like this one, every person is left with two responses: *I cannot bear hearing this . . .* or . . . *I dare not ignore the truth of what I've heard.* Reflect on what you've learned. What specific truths has the Holy Spirit especially brought to your attention?

Ignoring God leads to spiritual decay. How has the passage emphasized the world's desperate need for Jesus? Take some time to pray for those you know who have not accepted the bad news about humankind nor received God's good news about Jesus.

Given our own way without the aid of a Savior and the presence of God in one's life, we become the predator and sometimes the victim. Not until we fully acknowledge the bad news will we have sufficient appreciation for the good news. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Word that reveals the downward spiral of humanity's sinfulness. I thank You for sending Jesus, the true light, to shine in our darkness. That's great news! I thank You for personally rescuing me. May I be forever grateful for Your Son's sacrifice. May my life reflect my gratitude. Help me remember how much the world needs Jesus. Help me pray for the lost and share the good news in the name of Jesus. 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 © 2006, 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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