Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Joy!

Showcasing **all humanity** finished in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28 Volume 46 Issue 1131

There is still much light to break forth from the Scriptures. A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

Is the Human Heart Really "Deceitful" and "Desperately Wicked"?

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by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9, *KJV*).

This verse is often used to support the mistaken idea that the human heart is *utterly wicked*. This is a doctrine known theologically as *total depravity*. This concept is fueled by bad translation, such as in the *King James Version*.



However, these words *"deceitful"* and *"desperately wicked"* are simply not accurate translations of the Hebrew text.

So, let's investigate.

"Deceitful"

The word used by the *KJV* to translate *"deceitful"* is the Hebrew עָקֹב (*ʿâqôb*, H6121). This word can mean:

- "*crooked*" in contrast with straight (or "windy," "bumpy")
- "tricky"
- "hard to track"

The idea is not *deceit*, but rather:

- instability
- complexity
- unpredictability

If a road is said to be "crooked," one would not then conclude that it was "deceitful," but that it was just windy – not even, not straight.

Additionally, it is interesting to note that the Septuagint[1] actually renders the verse differently:

*The heart is **deep** beyond all things …*

"Desperately Wicked"

Neither is *"desperately wicked"* an accurate translation of the Hebrew text.

The word used by the *KJV* to translate *"desperately wicked"* is a single Hebrew word: אָנַשׁ (*ʾânash*, H605). This word more properly means: (*continued on page 9473*)

1. The Septuagint, also known as the LXX, is a Greek translation of the Hebrew "Old Testament." Translated in the 3rd century B.C., it predates the oldest surviving complete Hebrew manuscript by over 1,000 years. It is often regarded as translated from an older Hebrew manuscript tradition that differed from the later Masoretic text.

Is the Human Heart Really "Deceitful" and "Desperately Wicked"? 9471
Obituary: Larry Sisson 9476
Complete in Him! (poem) 9476
"Until" 9477
Our Mailbox 9478
The Facts of Death and Resurrection (quote: Otis Q. Sellers) 9478

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Bible Student's Notebook™
Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal
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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This *free* electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding joy (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3-4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
  - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
  - union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6);
  - adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of saints intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

We're just presenters, not persuaders. – Steve Martin

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

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- sick
- frail
- weak
- incurable

This same Hebrew word is used elsewhere of:

- Job's injury:
  "My wound is incurable" (Job 34:6)
- David's child:
  "it was very sick" (II Samuel 12:15)

Neither of these contexts has anything to do with *moral wickedness*.

Therefore, Jeremiah 17:9 is speaking more about:

- weakness
- frailty
- mortality

Thus, this verse presents the heart as:

- profound
- mysterious
- difficult to understand

Therefore, the resulting question of the prophet, *"Who can know it?"* fits naturally with the idea of the heart being *"deep."*

Additionally, ancient Hebrew manuscripts originally had no vowels, allowing different legitimate readings of the same consonants.

Because of this, one Hebrew word may be read as *"sick/weak,"* or as *"man/mortal."*

The Septuagint translators chose readings that emphasized:

- the depth of the human heart
- humanity's inability to fully know itself

And the immediate context supports this interpretation:

> *I, Yahweh, search the heart …* (Jeremiah 17:10).

Thus, the focus of the passage is NOT concerning human wickedness, BUT God's sole ability to truly know the interworking of the human heart.

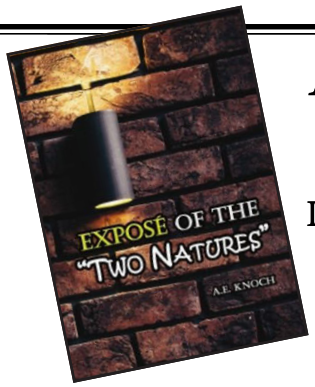
Hebrews 4:12-13 connects to this same truth, telling us that God's Word discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart, with nothing being hidden from Him.

> *For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is* ***a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*** *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.*

Jeremiah 17:9 does not teach *total depravity*. It teaches the weakness, depth, mystery, and hidden makeup of the human heart.

Only God alone can fully search and understand man's inner being.

> *The heart is crooked above all things, and it is mortally ill; Who can know it? I am Yahweh Who investigates the heart …* (Jeremiah 17:9-10, *CV*).



Exposé of the "Two Natures"

by — A.E. Knoch

Long have believers labored under the false premise that within them resides "two natures." This is a refreshing, liberating, scriptural investigation of the key subject. 42 pages, paperback.

> *The heart is deep beyond all things, and it is the man, and who can know him? I the Lord try the hearts …* (*Septuagint*).

In 1925, regarding Jeremiah 17:9, A.E. Knoch (1874-1965) wrote:

> Another stronghold of those who try to believe in the total depravity of the present human race is Jeremiah 17:9, which in the *Authorized Version* reads:
>
> > *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it?*
>
> Apparently, the translators were determined that something was true about the human heart which they *imagined* they saw there, so they just put it there. The heart of man is "desperately wicked" thought they, so this must just be the very thing that Jeremiah was trying to express.
>
> The *Revised Version* tones this down to "*desperately sick*."
>
> The Septuagint says,
>
> > *The heart is deep* [or, immense], *above all things, man is also; who will get to know him?*
>
> The *Jewish American Revised English Version* of 1917 has,
>
> > *… it is exceeding weak--who can know it?*
>
> Young renders,
>
> > *Crooked is the heart above all things, and it is incurable--who doth know it?*
>
> *"Crooked"* is an expressive word here, and very suitable. It has the same root as the name Jacob. *"Desperately wicked,"* however, must go. It is false. It has no foundation whatever. In Hebrew it is one word only, which means "incurable," "very ill" or "sick." David's child by the wife of Uriah became "very sick" (II Samuel 12:15). Job had said, *"My wound is incurable"* (Job 34:6). Now David's child had not had enough time to become "*desperately wicked*," nor could Job have said that his wound was the same.
>
> Well do we know that the human heart is incurable and crooked; it is beyond repair or cure.[2]

2. Unsearchable Riches (volume 16, page 205ff, 1925), edited



The Lucy Series

by — Steve Martin

Perfect gifts for bedtime reading or encouragement, wrapping young hearts in truth.

Full-color paperback, with illustrations.

Always Loved **(Book 1) – The story of Lucy and her Daddy's favorite promise.**

In Always Loved, Lucy discovers that God's love is bigger than mistakes, stronger than fears, and with her every single day. This heartwarming story reassures kids of all ages that nothing can make God stop loving them – ever.

Forever Friends **(Book 2) – A story of God's care for every creature.**

Forever Friends is a tender, heartwarming story about love, loss and hope told through the simple faith of a child. Based on Romans 8:21 and Revelation 21:5, it reminds children (and adults) that God's care extends to every living creature – and that one day, He will make all things new.

Uncle Joe **(Book 3) – When someone you love dies.**

A tender story for children and parents to read together when hearts are hurting and questions are beginning.

(More to come.)

The next year, Knoch additionally wrote:

> Probably the most quoted passage on the subject of the human heart and its depravity is Jeremiah 17:9.
>
> > *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: Who can know it?*
>
> Much has been said about the word "*deceitful*." It has been defined as "*crooked*." It is the verb of the name Jacob. The heart is a Jacob. Perhaps the word *tricky* would be as near as we can come to it. It describes one who trips up another by the heel. The Septuagint renders it,
>
> > *The heart is deep, beyond all.*
>
> As there is a close similarity between the Hebrew word "*deep*" and the one now in the text, it is possible that "*deep*" was the right reading when the Septuagint was translated. It leads very naturally to the question which follows: "*Who can know it?*"
>
> The following phrase is a "*desperately wicked*" translation, for there is not the slightest suggestion of wickedness in the word itself or any of its contexts. God is not speaking of man's wickedness here, but of his mortality and frailty. Job said that his wound was "*incurable*" – the same word. But it was not wicked, and it was cured. David's infant child was very ill (II Samuel 12:15), but it certainly was not "*desperately wicked*."
>
> There are two things which make the human heart a problem no one can solve. It is liable to *trip*, and it is *too ill* to be depended on. Who can know it? Only the Lord, as the very next verse affirms,
>
> > *I, Yahweh do search the heart …*
>
> We look upon the outside, but "the hidden human of the heart" is invisible, except to the eye of God.
>
> This, also, is the great prerogative of the Word of God. It is,
>
> > *… living and active, and keener than any two-edged sword, and penetrating up to the parting of soul and spirit, as well as the articulations and marrow, and is a judge of the sentiments and thoughts of the heart. And there is not a creature which is not apparent before it. Now all is naked and bare to the eyes of Him to Whom we are accountable* (Hebrews 4:12-13).[3]

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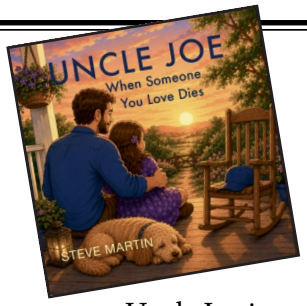
Topics:
Major: Heart; Jeremiah 17:9; Translation(s)
Minor: Septuagint

abridgment.

3. Unsearchable Riches (volume 17, page 206ff, 1926), edited abridgment.



Uncle Joe – The Lucy Series, Book 3

by — Steve Martin

When someone you love dies.

When a child loses someone they love, the questions can be bigger than the answers.

Uncle Joe is a gentle story about grief, love, and hope told through a conversation between Lucy and her father after receiving difficult news – her favorite uncle has died in prison. As Lucy asks honest questions about death, mistakes, God, and what happens next, Daddy offers quiet reassurance: death is real, sadness is real, but neither has the final word.

Rather than fear or shame, this story emphasizes rest, remembrance, resurrection, and the belief that no life is forgotten and no person is outside the reach of love. With warm illustrations and thoughtful dialogue, Uncle Joe helps families talk about loss in a way that honors grief while offering peace and hope.

A tender story for children and parents to read together when hearts are hurting and questions are beginning. 40 pages, paperback.



OBITUARY.

Larry Sisson

(1952-2026)

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

With sadness, we have learned of the death of our dear brother, Larry Sisson, of Mammoth Spring, Arkansas. We first meet Larry at the 2023 Birmingham, AL Scripture Conference hosted by Will Marshall. He was so thrilled to be there and meet others who shared his understanding of Scriptures. He was a sweet, humble and meek student of Scripture who loved to discuss the things that he saw in God's Word with anyone who was interested.

He also traveled to the 2024 Johnstown PA Conference, where He shared some of his journey to the truth with us in a 12-minute recording that can be seen on the Biblical Resource YouTube channel:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZGmQZvaSITw

Larry had served as an Elder and Sunday School teacher for many years. He spent a lifetime studying, that began in earnest in 1974 after acquiring a copy of E.W. Bullinger's *Companion Bible*, and later, while reading through Bullinger's books, *Foundations of Dispensational Truth* in particular, his life was changed dramatically. He would come to live in the epistles of Ephesians and Colossians, with Colossians 3:1-4 being his favorite verses in the Bible.

Larry would eventually come to see God as All in all. In his video testimony he leaves us with his super-celestial hope in our manifestation with Christ in Glory.

Good night, dear brother. We will see you in the morning! BSN

Complete in Him!

Click here to listen to this article

A poem by — Robert Kosharek

"*Ye are complete in Him*" (Colossians 2:10)

I'm complete in Him,
Right now, right this moment!

Right as rain-
accepted, beloved, at peace, COMPLETE!

Ahh, such sweet contentedness-
no struggle, no effort, no earning,
no performance, no judging, no pride.

No guilt, no regret, no worry,
or frustration lurking in the back of my mind,
only rest, peace, relaxation!

Just full, vast, permanent, overall completeness …
… in CHRIST!

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh … BSN

Scripture Inspired Meditations

"Until"

by — Deverlain L. Trefethen

Click here to listen to this article



I'm reminded of a small word in Ephesians chapter four: *"until."*

Therefore, He says, "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men." (Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the Earth? He who descended is the same also as He who ascended up far above all Heavens, that He might fill all things.) And truly He gave some to be apostles, and some to be prophets, and some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ. ***And this until*** *we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a full-grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;* ***so that we no longer may be infants, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, in the dishonesty of men, in cunning craftiness, to the wiles of deceit.*** *But that you, speaking the truth in love, may in all things grow up to Him who is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole Body, fitted together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of each part, producing the growth of the Body to the edifying of itself in love* (Ephesians 4:8-16).

He GAVE GIFTS unto men **until.**

ALL of those gifts have ceased.

Those gifts were given for a specific time with a specific purpose and a specific finality.

Those today, in this Secret Administration – who are teachers worth any amount of attention – have studied the Scriptures, and Father has granted them realization to share what He has opened their heart to see.

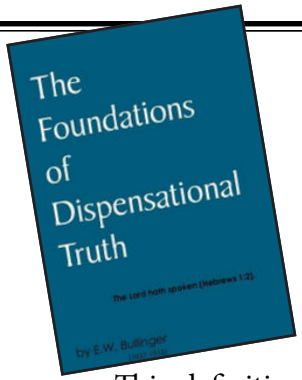
These teachers do NOT have a "church" that others attend where they rule over them through fear, condemnation and guilt.

In this Administration – there is NO building to "assemble yourselves together" until the day approaches.

There are NO envelopes or offering plates passed through the crowd to gather "your tithe."

NOPE!

We are NOT awaiting the Savior's *Parousia* to the Earth.



The Foundations of Dispensational Truth

by — E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

Originally published in 1913, this was Bullinger's last book. It serves to help cut the tether of tradition with which Christians have been bound for so long. It does so by showing the absolute necessity of observing the great duty of "rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

This definitive work recognizes the clear distinctions between the Body of Christ and Israel. Controversial in the eyes of traditional Christianity, this extraordinary work will prove invaluable to the serious student of Scripture. 260 pages, paperback.

We await the death of every member of the One Body of Christ – in order that we will be manifested TOGETHER with Christ in GLORY! BSN

Note: For more information see,

- The Adjustment Period, *Bible Student's Notebook* 1046
- We Only Have One Leader: Christ Jesus. *Bible Students' Notebook* 868
- Assembling of Ourselves Together, *Bible Student's Notebook* 1017
- Not Forsaking the Assembling of Ourselves Together (Reader's Question Box), *Bible Student's Notebook* 898

Topics:
Major: Ascension Gifts; Secret Administration
Minor: Ecclesia; One Body



My wife and I were out for a drive last night and talked about how fortunate we are to have been called out from among them. We talked about, who would've thought that back in the day when we sat in Baptist churches that there'd ever be a better place. Who would've thought that those places taught the opposite of the truth at every turn, etc.

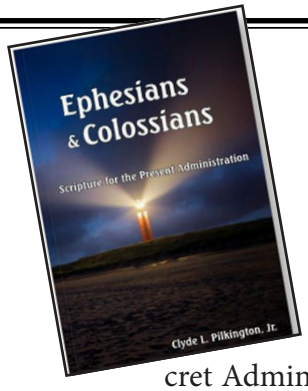
And, who would've thought that there were many men like yourself already called out and living among us, whom God had already made writers. Writers with so much content to write about there's no end. Yes, who would've ever thought that we'd ever see the day when we really understood Ecclesiastes 12:12. – ***WI***

I've enjoyed many of your books along with other StudyShelf books that expound sound doctrine! – ***WI***

The Great Omission is a fantastic book. I have read it many times, each time gaining more insight from Scriptures. I have ordered multiple copies for give-away. Keep up your great work. – ***ID***

The facts of God's Word force me to believe that death will bring an end to my life and that resurrection will bring me back among the living again. I believe that death came about through sin, and that it is an enemy. I believe that resurrection comes about through Christ Jesus, and that it is a friend. It seems proper and fitting that it should be resurrection, and not death, that should usher me into whatever blessings I have in Christ Jesus.

– Otis Q. Sellers (1901-1992)



Ephesians & Colossians: Scripture for the Present Administration

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Ephesians and Colossians are the present truth for the current dispensation. Ephesians introduces the Secret Administration in which we live, while Colossians, its companion epistle, completes the Word of God. There are no other Secret Administration letters beyond Ephesians and Colossians. A look is also made into the nature of the book of Philippians, the gateway epistle into the Secret Administration. 76 pages.