

Fundamentals of Belief #6: The Nature of Man

Edited Sermon Transcript
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I want to get right into the sermon this afternoon. As you might expect, we are going to continue with our series on the Fundamentals of Belief of the Church of God, The Eternal. We have gone through the first five fundamentals and we have now arrived at number six. If I would give a title to summarize this fundamental, I would call it *The Nature of Man*.

In discussing fundamental number six, we are basically going to be talking about the nature of man. We are going to be talking about what you and I are each like. The reality and the truth of what we are, as opposed to all of the lies and the deceit that the world has come to believe about their own nature, their orientation, and their origin. We are going to talk about what we really are. What you are going to find is that this fundamental of belief is probably one of the most significant things that separates us and our beliefs from all of the other religions of the world. Obviously, there are a number of them that fall in that category; yet, this single fundamental, I think, is that which separates us to an extent that, if you believe the things contained in this single fundamental, it would be almost impossible for you to ever affiliate with any other church group.

Let's read fundamental number six:

We believe man was created in the image of God, formed of flesh, which is material substance, living by the breath of life, and is wholly mortal, subject to corruption and decay, without possibility of eternal life inherent in himself, except as the gift of God under God's terms

and conditions as expressed in the Bible; that God placed before the first man, Adam, his free choice of eternal life through obedience to God's commandments, or death through sin; that Adam sinned, thereby incurring the death penalty without having received eternal life, having yielded to the temptation of Satan, and that the sinful fleshly nature with its sensual desires and its pride passed on all men, so that all become sinners, thus bringing upon themselves the penalty, death.

That is fundamental number six and we are actually going to try and cover all of this today. So, let's begin and get right into it. First, we believe that man was created in the image of God. Think about it in terms of any creation. I think we understand that if you were to sit down to create something, yourself, there is planning involved in it. You make decisions before you ever begin to do the work. Some of those decisions, in any kind of creation, include: what's it going to look like; exactly what is it that you are trying to bring to pass with whatever you plan to build or create? Another factor is, what is it going to be made of?

If you were to build a home, I think it goes without saying that you would sit down and create a plan or find a plan—a picture or something that you wanted it to look like. You would have an image in your mind, something that you would want it to be; and so you would come up with the picture in your mind and on paper and a plan of what you wanted that house to look like. You would also need to determine what that home was going to be made of—whether wood, stone, brick, or whatever material you would use to construct it, wouldn't you?

Those are all the things that God decided in his creation of man. He also created us according to a plan and with purpose. The first part of our belief says, "We believe man was created in the image of God . . ." This answers the question, "What did God make us look like?"

Notice it with me in Genesis 1:26–27: "And God said, Let us make man in our image . . ." You come to find out, brethren, that the creation of man was unique, absolutely, because He made man to look like Himself. There is not any other creature, none of His creation—whether the beasts, the animals, the fishes, or any part of the creation of God except for man—for which He chose to use Himself as the model. Think about the significance of what that means as we go forward and look at two or three scriptures.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

He emphasizes it and He reemphasizes it because it is important that we recognize the significance of what it means: the fact that the most powerful being in this universe, the heavenly Father who sits on His throne in the third heaven, absolutely chose to create human beings in His image. Their very purpose, ultimately, is to become part of that God family and to share that eternity. That's why, brethren, you have the very image of the creator God.

Genesis 5:1–2:

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.

James 3:8–10: Lest there be any doubts about that fact and the basis for our belief.

But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

James is saying, "How significant is it that God created human kind after His own image? For that very reason, by that purpose and for that purpose, there is an accountability that we have, one to another, to respect the very operation of God and what those human beings were created to accomplish."

Never that we condone the sins of men, but we recognize that God created human kind for the express purpose of having that opportunity to join His eternal family, to be a member of that God family. So, how should we look toward our brothers and sisters and all of those on the face of this earth?

But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

We see plainly that man was created in the image of God.

Next, our fundamental says, ". . . formed of flesh, which is material substance . . ."

"We believe man was created in the image of God, formed of flesh, which is material substance . . ." We have seen that the picture, the model that God used to create man was His own image. We find next the substance that God chose to create man with. Of what substance was He going to make that man?

Let's notice it in Genesis 2:7. We are going to come back to this text two other times before we are done. Of what material did God choose to create man? Genesis 2:7 tells us:

And the [Eternal] God formed man of [What?] the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

We will leave the second part of that verse alone for now; we will come back to it. Focus on, for the time being, that the very material from which we were made was the basest of materials—the most common of all material on the face of the earth—the dirt. That is what he chose to make us from. Think about the dichotomy of the fact that He created us in His image, the most incredible model, the living God—God of this universe—with all power and all might and all majesty. He used Himself as the model for that which He would create, and of that incredibly glorious image, He made us of dirt. Can you think of anything that would seem humanly to be more opposing, in and of itself? Creating an image of the living God out of dirt. That is what we are.

1 Corinthians 15:45–50:

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural . . .

Already, we are finding out there is a difference between the substance from which man was made and that of which God exists, which is spiritual.

. . . and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy . . .

Doesn't that make sense? That which is made of dirt, brethren, is dirt. That which comes from a natural substance, from the ground, is natural. It is not spiritual. The attempt, by the churches of the world, is to cause man to believe a lie; and that lie was that they were something more valuable than they were in reality. To convince mankind that he had inherent value, that mankind had inherent glory within him already. This relates to the very first lie that was told by the serpent, which we will see later. I don't want to get ahead of myself. It is a lie, brethren. If you understand that one thing, you understand the truth that is hidden from the majority of human kind living and breathing on this earth right now.

The majority of all religions assume some sort of a belief in an immortality of a soul. Some inherent glory within mankind. That is the one thing—regardless of their differences in doctrines, beliefs and cultures—which they all seem to believe in one form or another. That man has some inherent glory or power or eternal essence. If you believe the truth about what you are, brethren, then you understand something that is more valuable than the sum total of everything else in the beliefs of this world.

As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. [There is a distinction.] And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Oh yes, the potential is there. We were created for that very purpose, brethren. Not to continue to live in the flesh and consist of that being that came out of dirt. No, that is not our ultimate goal. That is not what God wants for us. The fact that you are existing in the very image of the living God in your features—the way that your body is formed (having your face, hands and legs)—pictures in and of itself that there is some purpose for you far beyond that which is realized just in your physical existence in the flesh. Yet, at the very same time we are told, if we believe what the Bible says, that we have no inherent glory at this time.

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. [Yes, that opportunity is there, that potential is absolutely there.] Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

It made me think immediately of Luke 16:26. Turn with me very quickly. Some of you will remember, because I went through this at the Feast of Tabernacles in Newport last year—an explanation of Lazarus and the rich man. We find when the rich man was resurrected, he came to understand that he had failed. He was resurrected physical, still in the flesh. He was not given an immortal body; and he was looking and speaking, in this parable, to Abraham who had received his crown of glory in God's kingdom along with the beggar, Lazarus. There was a gulf that separated them and what do we read in verse 26?

And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

What is that gulf? It is the separation between physical and spiritual. It is the difference between the earthy and the heavenly—the difference between a spirit body, being born into the spirit family of God, versus remaining in the flesh, the corruptible. As we just saw, ". . . neither doth corruption inherent incorruption." So, without a miraculous intervention and the gift of eternal life, we do not have the power or the inherent glory which would allow us to inherit the kingdom of God.

John 3:4–5:

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh . . .

Can that be any more plain? What are we, brethren? Do you know? We are flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." So much for this concept of a physical shell encasing a spiritual essence.

No, we are going to see a whole lot of scriptures that expose that for the lie that it is. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Interesting enough, what Christ was saying here, brethren, is that because we are born of flesh we can have no opportunity to inherit the kingdom of God. We have no eternal essence within us, whatsoever. It takes a special miracle for us to fulfill that hope; and that process requires, absolutely, being born of water and of spirit.

Born of water, how? Through baptism, laying down of the old self, the flesh self. Being willing to sacrifice—to crucify—what we are by nature and to accept the very mind of Jesus Christ to live within us in its stead. That process does not happen without baptism. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." We are going to go through that in future fundamentals concerning that baptism and what it is about. I don't want to get off on it now, except to say, "Do we want the kingdom of God?"

If we want the kingdom of God, brethren, it says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." If you understand the truth, if you believe in that kingdom which was preached, if you believe in that way, then the only way to achieve it is to become baptized. Otherwise, you don't want the kingdom of God because that is the only way you can get there—"born of water and of the Spirit."

We are made of the dust, in the image of God, but made of the very dust of the earth.

What is the next part of that fundamental? "We believe man was created in the image of God, formed of flesh, which is material substance, living by the breath of life . . ." Let's go back to Genesis 2:7 again. Why do we believe as a part of our fundamental, that man lives by the breath of life? Because that is what God recorded in the Bible.

Genesis 2:7: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life . . ." That is why we believe it because that is what it says. The question is, "What is that breath of life?" There are many that would try and tell you that the breath of life is this spiritual essence that gives

us an immortal factor or some element of connection, spiritually, with the ethereal world. Well, let's expose that a little bit here. Turn with me to Genesis 7:21–22 and see if that is true.

And all flesh died that moved upon the earth [We're talking about the flood.], both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: All in whose nostrils was the breath of life . . .

So, all of these creatures, including man and beast, that walked on the land or flew in the air—all except the fishes, basically—is what we are reading here, "All in whose nostrils was the breath of life . . ." All of these creatures had that breath, whatever it is. "All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died." Wait a minute, if this breath of life had some eternal essence that gave us immortality, then that certainly couldn't be, could it?

Obviously, whatever this breath of life is, it is not something that grants immunity to death. It says here, very plainly, that all of those creatures that died in the flood had the breath of life; and yet, they all died. They all died.

So, what is this breath of life that God gave to us that caused us to live? He created us in His image, He made us of dirt and yet, He breathed within us a breath that caused us to come to life and to become a living creature. What was that breath? It is the air—simply, the air that sustains us, oxygenating the blood in our veins—which gives us life.

By God's miracle, He created life and not a single human being has ever or will ever find the key to be able to create life. God has reserved that for Himself. Man plays with it, seeks to manipulate it—gene therapy and all of these other things—and tries to mess with the creative powers that God has reserved to Himself. The one thing that they will never find a way to do is to take dead, inanimate material and from it, bring life. That is reserved for the very power of the living God.

Yet, He did so. He breathed into us and caused us—that which was made out of inanimate material substance, even dirt—to live. "All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died." Whatever this breath was that He used to cause us to live is not that which gives eternal life.

Leviticus 17:10–11:

And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood . . .

We understand, brethren, that it is the very blood of Jesus Christ that gives us the opportunity for eternal life. The power has always been in the blood. So God designed us and made these physical, flesh bodies to be sustained by the process of blood coursing through the tissues, oxygenated by that breath that we take in through the lungs. Through a very complex system—a perfect system—which God created, oxygen flows, fills and refreshes the blood which carries it to all parts of our bodies to refresh those cells; and we live.

That is the process that God set in motion when He created us and that is what man is. Man that lives is flesh and blood; we thrive and are sustained only by the fact that we have that breath oxygenating that blood which courses through our veins and arteries, sustaining those cells. That is what causes us to live—not any inherent glory or eternal factor, as we will see in just a moment.

That is why Israel was commanded not to eat blood. That is why we do not eat blood because it signifies that which sustains life. God made it, actually, to be a curse if we eat it. It signifies Christ, which is the life. It is through His shed blood that we have an opportunity to gain the fulfillment of that reward that God has in mind for us.

What else do we believe? "We believe man was created in the image of God, formed of flesh, which is material substance, living by the breath of life, and is wholly mortal, subject to corruption and decay . . ." This is what separates you from every other human being on the face of the earth, if you believe this one thing—that we are wholly mortal, subject to corruption and decay. It is the thing that prevents you from ever affiliating with another group.

Even among my friends, for the most part, of those that grew up in the church—even if they rejected the fundamental teachings of the church—are many that still have had a very hard time ever coming to believe in the immortality of the soul. Once you understand, are taught, and believe that one thing, it makes all of

this nominal Christianity, all the beliefs of these churches, all these faiths in the Eastern religion, seem preposterous. If you believe the reality of what man is and what he is not, that is one of the fundamental bases that defines the falsehood in all other religious beliefs.

Psalm 104:27–29: Are we truly mortal, subject to corruption and decay?

These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. [We are at God's mercy for blessing and cursing. He sustains us; He keeps us. We depend wholly upon Him.] Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

He gave us the breath of life and it caused us to live, but He can take that breath away. Without that breath oxygenating the blood in our veins, we return to the very dirt from which we were made. ". . . thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust." Notice also, Ecclesiastes 3:18:

I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. [Saying, that we might come to recognize what we really are and at the same time, what we are not.] For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts . . .

Keep this in mind, concerning the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and that which so many churches believe concerning mankind dying and going to heaven. Solomon was speaking of this very concept, which is extant from the beginning of man because the Devil, Satan, has fostered this false concept upon human kind from the very beginning.

For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath . . .

Whatever is that breath of life we have, is the very same breath that every animal, dog, cat, zoo animal and wild creature on the face of this earth shares. Now, that can easily fall into the realm of the occultists who believe in this preeminence of a spirit that emanates from all living creatures, plants, animals and

beasts upon the earth—their belief in mother earth and this essence that fills all of those living creatures. So, they would be very willing to agree that yes, the same essence that we have is that of beasts; but we know that, too, is part of the very gross lie of Satan. ". . . as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast . . ."

The only difference is your image. Your image is that of God, but the physical substance from which we are all created and which sustains our physical life is in common, absolutely, with every other creature on the face of the earth. It is that breath.

". . . so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place . . ." Wait a minute. I thought we went to heaven when we died if we were good little boys and girls. Only, if we are going to share that with all the other beasts of the earth, wherever it is, if we believe what Solomon said under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we are all going to the same place. "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."

No, it doesn't say, "We cast off our physical shell and our spiritual soul waifs up to heaven." Next, he even comments on the very false concept which is believed by almost every church today. "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?"

He is saying, "Whoever made up such a silly thing? Whoever believed such a false concept, that man, when he dies, goes up to heaven while the animals die?" No, the same thing happens to us all, because we are made of the same substance.

What was it that we learned through the revelation of God's truth? From the revelation of Jesus Christ through Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong in the last days of this church? A key and fundamental part of that doctrine which he taught, which he received from Christ, was this principle: man does not have a soul—man is a soul. Man does not have a soul—man is a soul.

Notice it with me again in Genesis 2:7:

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

What is that "soul" He is referring to? Those that have been in the church for a long time understand that the Hebrew word for "soul" there is *nephesh*. What is *nephesh*? Is this an indication that man is an eternal being himself in a physical encasing? The Hebrew word *nephesh* simply means "a living being or a breathing creature." It has no implication, whatsoever, of an immortal essence, not a bit. We will prove that with a couple of scriptures.

Numbers 19:13: If that soul, by definition, defines us as an eternal being, then please explain to me how there can be a dead *nephesh*.

Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the [Eternal] . . .

It says, "whosoever touches the dead body." What is that word "body"? The Hebrew word *nephesh*. The very same one that we found in Genesis 2:7. "Whosoever touches the dead *nephesh* of any man . . ." Now, if *nephesh*, which is translated "soul" in many places, refers to an immortal soul—that man became an immortal soul—then please tell me how to explain the contradiction here. We would have to be able to read this and translate those terms. If it can be translated "body" and other places it is translated "soul" and it is interpreted "immortal soul", then tell me how this makes sense: Whosoever touches the dead immortal soul. Does that make any sense whatsoever?

How can there be a dead immortal soul? It is either immortal or it is not immortal. If a *nephesh* is intended to be what these churches of the world will tell you, an immortal soul, then please tell me how there can be a dead one.

That is not what *nephesh* means and that is not what the term translated "soul" refers to at all. When it said in Genesis 2:7 that man became a living soul, it would have been more correctly translated, "man became a living, breathing creature; a living, breathing creation; a living, breathing body."

Psalm 146:3–4:

Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

I don't understand that, if man has an immortal soul that, upon the death of the physical body, waifs up to heaven. How many movies have you seen that assume and presume that very concept? Movies about out-of-body experiences, about ghosts. How many things have you seen in movies concerning someone who dies under very torturous circumstances or with unfinished business and therefore, his immortal soul cannot rest until his work has been accomplished? Then he can live in peace and either, go off to heaven or go on and complete whatever his spiritual mission is. You can believe that, but you can't believe the Bible at the same time. We just read here, in Psalms, "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."

His thoughts don't turn to going to the white light and then embracing God in heaven. That is not what it says. It says, when we die, when that breath goes forth from our bodies, our thoughts perish.

Notice also Ecclesiastes 9:5–6:

For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

This is not talking about other people's memory of them; it is talking about their capacity to have thought and to have memory themselves. When they die, the memory of them is forgotten—their capacity of mind perishes.

Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished [See, someone who is dead does not love; they don't hate; they don't envy; they don't do anything. If you are dead, you're dead.]; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.

Except for the very miraculous intervention of a resurrection, that would be the end. If it were not in God's plan to provide a miraculous resurrection, there would be no life after death. Left unto ourselves, without the miraculous intervention of God, when we die and when that breath of life goes out of our nostrils, we do return to the dust; our thoughts perish, absolutely. There is no more thinking, there is no more thought, there is nothing; we are over. As much dirt as we were before God brought us forth. That is really what we are.

Notice also Ezekiel 18:2–4:

What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. [No, he was going to bring something marvelous to pass, a great blessing.] Behold, all souls are mine . . .

Okay, here we use this term "soul" again. What does it mean?

Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

"Soul", the very same Hebrew word, *nephesh*. The *nephesh* that sins, it shall die. Not, the *nephesh* that sins will either go up to heaven or go down to hell to be tortured forever and ever in all eternity. The *nephesh* that dies—the soul, the body, the created being that is sustained by physical breath—that *nephesh* that sins, it shall die.

That is what happens to us, brethren. The penalty of that sin is death, as we are going to find out. In the merciful plan of our heavenly Father, He created us flesh and blood for a reason. He created us wholly mortal—corruptible—because if we fail to live up to that opportunity—to that obligation and that chance for eternal life—by generating within our own lives the willingness to sacrifice the self and put on holy righteous character, He will mercifully extinguish us; and we will go back to the dust. A merciful Father would never have us writhing in pain in a fiery chamber in the center of the earth, being poked by Satan's pitchfork for all eternity.

I don't see how people who make claim to that concept can believe it themselves. When you press them on it, many times they try to skate around it. It is totally inconsistent to believe in a merciful, loving God who is perfect in righteousness and every good quality and character, yet believe that he would have created a system that would allow for that kind of eternal punishing. That is not what we are and that is not what the fate of any human being is going to be.

The next part of our fundamental says, ". . . without possibility of eternal life inherent in himself, except as the gift of God under God's terms and conditions as expressed in the Bible . . ." We are not going to talk much about what that plan is,

because it does come up in the next fundamentals. We will talk about the overall plan of salvation for the resurrections, but let's look further into this concept of immortality and life inherent.

Why do we believe that man is ". . . without possibility of eternal life inherent in himself . . ."? Because there are a number of scriptures that tell us that Christ is the only one who is immortal. Christ is the only one who lived in the flesh and is now immortal. Let's notice it in 1 Timothy 6:15–16.

Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of Lords [who is Christ]; Who only hath immortality . . .

Now, how do you get around that? If you want to believe that you or I have an immortal soul—that we have inherent life within us—within this physical shell of a body, then how is it that we get around this scripture? It says, very plainly, that Christ is the only one who has immortality.

. . . the King of kings, and Lord of Lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

No, we do not all each have immortality, brethren. Christ is the only one with that immortality—the only one who lived in flesh and blood, died and was resurrected into immortality. He is the only one. The reward of those who obey God will be immortality. The reward of those who obey God and develop that holy, righteous character and prove that they are willing to serve God obediently—never to turn away—will be immortality. So, how then, can we already have the reward if we have to prove something before we gain it? Let's notice the scriptures that spell that out.

Romans 2:6–7:

Who will render to every man according to his deeds [There is going to be a judgment and we are all going to make account for our actions, our deeds and everything that we have done in our lives.]: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life . . .

Now, wait a minute. If we already have immortality, why are we seeking for it? If we already have eternal life, why is it a reward that is in the distance that we hope to achieve? It doesn't make any sense, does it? No, the hope of those who love God and are seeking him—seeking to obey, who want to live forever with God—is to gain immortality and eternal life. So, obviously, if their hope is to gain it, it is not something that they already possess. Isn't that the only conclusion that we can come to?

To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek immortality. (Take out "glory" and "honour" and look at it.) By patient continuance in well doing seek for immortality. What is the reward? Eternal life—that which we do not now possess; that which we hope and strive for.

1 John 5:11–12:

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life [Oh, here's a scripture. This says we have eternal life. Let's jump on this one; maybe we are immortal after all.], and this life is in . . . [our own bodies. Is that what it says?] . . . and this life is in his Son.

Remember, we already read that Christ is the only one who has gained that immortality. ". . . and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life . . ." No, not those that have an essence within themselves that gives them eternal life, not at all. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

All these so-called Christians are out trying to save the world and are proselytizing around the world. They are trying to "save" people so they can go to heaven. They are trying to turn people on to Jesus, but what happens if they don't embrace Jesus or say the magic words, "I believe"? What happens? If they believe this one scripture right here, ". . . he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." But they all believe that they do have life; they just think they are going to go to hell. It says, they that have not Christ, have not life, because that's the state that we were all born into, separated from Christ. In the flesh we are absolutely separate—set apart by that gulf of the Spirit—from God and from Christ.

"He that hath the Son hath life" because Christ is the only one who has that immortality right now. Any wonder why we should be that much more interested in putting on more of the mind of Christ within us? If you have been baptized, you have laid down the old self—committed yourself to walk in this way. You have received a

down payment of the Holy Spirit. That gift of the Holy Spirit, brethren, is the essence of Jesus Christ living and dwelling within you. That is how you can have immortality.

You can have a taste of that immortality, in a way, because you have Christ living in you. You have the presence, the essence of an immortal being who is dwelling in your mind and in your heart. No, it doesn't give immortality to your flesh. However, it does give you an opportunity to share the very mind of that perfect being who Himself is immortal, who has received His reward for faithfulness.

The only way that we can have immortality is through Christ. In the day of our resurrection when we stand before that very Christ as the judge, if we are judged faithful, true and worthy, then we will have the fullness of Christ. We will be changed into immortal beings and be given eternal life. It will be the very fullness of the mind of Jesus Christ and the Father which emanates from us in that glory. We have an opportunity to have a down payment—just a very small amount of that immortality dwelling in and influencing our minds and hearts—if we have Christ because He has that eternal life.

1 Corinthians 15:53–54:

For this corruptible [which is what we are] must put on incorruption [See, we don't have it already. We don't have an incorruptible body, an immortal soul or eternal life.], and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Without that transition that can only come through a miraculous gift of God, death would not be swallowed up. The penalty, that which we all will experience in one way or another, is death of these flesh and blood bodies—the extinction of what we are. The only way for death to be conquered and swallowed up in victory is through the miraculous gift of eternal life, which we desire and hope for.

What else do we believe in our fundamental number six? ". . . that God placed before the first man, Adam, his free choice of eternal life through obedience to God's commandments, or death through sin; that Adam sinned, thereby incurring the death penalty without having received eternal life, having yielded to the temptation of Satan . . ."

Yes, we believe that God put before Adam the opportunity for eternal life. Have you ever stopped to recognize that Adam had a chance to have eternal life without needing Christ? Without needing the sacrifice of Christ. Why do we need the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? Because of sin. If Adam had not sinned, he would not have incurred the death penalty. If Adam had not incurred the death penalty, God would have given him the reward of eternal life. Have you ever thought about it that way?

We need the sacrifice of Jesus Christ because we are each guilty of sin; therefore, that death penalty is passed upon us. Without the pardon, without someone else to pay our penalty, that debt of guilt in our stead, there is no hope for that reward. There will be a lot more said about that in future fundamentals, but let's look at Genesis 3:1 and we see the story.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? [Saying, "Is that what God told you? Did he really tell you that?"] And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. [So, she obviously understood the instruction, didn't she? She was able to repeat it right here.] And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die . . .

What was God thinking? He must have another agenda. You shall not surely die—the very same lie that is being promulgated by most religions of this world. You shall not surely die. You are either going to return to the essence, or you are going to go to heaven or hell, or you are going to float around in the atmosphere, or you are going to be reincarnated into another flesh and blood being.

"You shall not surely die," he said. The very same lie you are hearing from every other church.

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

He is saying, "The only thing you don't have is awareness. You are not going to die. What you need to do is just open your mind and take advantage of all the power that you have within yourself. Get in touch with your spirit, your essence that

you have within. Let it come out and use the fullness of this capability that you already have." That's what he was saying. Have you heard any of that in any of these false religious concepts?

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food [Oh yes, that concept really appealed to her.], and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

That devious woman, if it hadn't been for her. Or, there may be another explanation. Turn with me quickly to 1 Timothy 2:13–14, a very eye-opening statement. It would be nice to be able to blame women for everything. I would always rather blame my wife for something than take responsibility for it myself, but that doesn't work either. What do we read in 1 Timothy 2:13–14?

For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

It doesn't say that Adam wasn't in the transgression; it just says, ". . . the woman being deceived was in the transgression." The reason Eve was in transgression, the reason she sinned, was that she allowed herself to be deceived. Tell me which sin is worse. They both bring the death penalty; so in that sense, one is not worse. However, comparatively, what this tells us is that Eve was deceived by the serpent, but Adam was not deceived; yet, he ate the fruit, didn't he? Adam wasn't deceived and he still ate it. I wonder what that means? He was not deceived the way Eve was and yet, he still sinned; figure that one out. Whose sin was greater? He did it, knowing what he was doing. Adam was not deceived.

Romans 5:12:

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin . . .

Why? Because he was the first man; she was the first woman. See, there was no sin without what? Transgression of the law, which is going to be the topic of the next fundamental, but it was breaking of the law that caused sin. Therefore, until that law was broken, there was no sin.

. . . by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin [Because the penalty for sin is death]; and so death passed upon all men . . .

Because Adam sinned? No, Adam brought the death penalty upon himself; Eve brought the death penalty upon herself; but we each brought the death penalty upon ourselves, as well.

. . . death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned . . .

We are not guilty because of Adam's sin; we are guilty for our own sin; but you see, the significance of Adam's sin was that he was the first. He was created by God. He was, of any human being that has ever lived on this earth, the one that had the best chance of living up to the law. There is no other human being that had a better opportunity to make it and not need the sacrifice of Christ than Adam.

Adam failed, he sinned, he broke the law, he incurred the death penalty and we are the progeny of Adam and Eve. We are just like them; we have exactly the same nature that they have in every way—a nature that is totally opposed to God and cannot love His way. When that sin entered into the world, it passed upon all men because we are just like them; we have the same makeup, exactly, as those first parents. They had the best opportunity to make it and they failed. Every offspring that came out of that pair has the same fate awaiting, because there is no way we are going to live in this flesh and not sin.

. . . by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned . . .

That is why we believe ". . . that God placed before the first man, Adam, his free choice of eternal life through obedience to God's commandments, or death through sin; that Adam sinned, thereby incurring the death penalty without having received eternal life, having yielded to the temptation of Satan . . ." We believe that because that is what the Bible tells us.

Next, ". . . and that the sinful fleshly nature with its sensual desires and its pride passed on all men, so that all became sinners, thus bringing upon themselves the penalty, death."

Notice it with me in Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God . . ."

Look further in Romans 3:10–18:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips . . .

Have you ever had the poison of asps under your lips? Think about it. It is manifested in the way that we use our tongues, things that we say, infer, gossip or speak about other people.

Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.

That is you and me, brethren. That is you and me, absolutely, by nature. That is what we are. Deny it and you enter into the same course of deception that envelopes and engulfs all humanity. Accept it, believe it, take it to heart, believe what you are, recognize it, admit it deep down and you have an opportunity to come out of it. Deny that you have that nature and you have no chance of putting on Jesus Christ.

Mark 7:20–23:

And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

I wonder how much we really analyze the results of things that we do, actions that we take, things that come out of our mouths when we speak. To what extent do we really go back and think, *Now, where did that come from? Why is it that I was willing to do that? What caused me to be subject to making that action, thinking that thought, saying those things? From where did it come in my heart and my mind? Was that really coming from the Holy Spirit or was that a manifestation of my carnality, of that which I am by nature?*

Galatians 5:17–21:

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Oh! A way for us not to be subject to God's law. No, what it is saying is that if you are being led by the Spirit, you are not under the penalty of the law. Why? Who does the penalty of the law apply to? Those who break it. That penalty is death. If you are led by the Spirit, brethren, you are not committing sin; you are not breaking the law. Therefore, the reason that we're not subject to the law, if we are in the Spirit, is because by not breaking it, being led by the Holy Spirit and avoiding sin, there is no penalty of death that comes upon us. When we are acting under the influence of the Holy Spirit—the mind of Christ dwelling within us—then we are not committing sin. We are not breaking the perfect law of God and therefore, there is no penalty to be paid for its breaking. It is only when we break that law—which is not a manifestation of the Spirit, but of our own carnal minds—that we are subject to the penalty which comes from its breaking, which is death.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

All of those things that we do by nature.

1 Corinthians 15:16–26:

For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised [Those who don't believe in a resurrection from the dead, don't believe then that Christ was resurrected from the dead.]: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

Yes, He is our hope. The fact that He lived and died in the flesh and was resurrected again to immortality to sit on the right hand of His Father in heaven, is our hope of being able to have the very same reward.

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die [Because Adam committed the first sin with his wife in rejecting God and we have done likewise in our lives, just as our ancestors.], even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

There is a synopsis of the plan of God by which means He has chosen to give us the hope of eternal life. Not an eternal life that is inherent within us now, not an immortality that we have already. We have the hope of immortality. We have the hope of eternal life through the plan that God has purposed, which is through the resurrection in our appointed time. The gift of eternal life, that which we do not have now, is what we hope for in the future.

James 4:1–5:

From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

There is a spirit that we have by nature, but it is certainly not an immortal one. It is a spirit by nature within us which lusts to envy and it drives us to break every law of a perfect God who made us.

That is what we are, brethren. That is what the nature of man is. That is our Fundamental of Belief that we received as a revelation in these last days through

God's end-time servant. It would be depressing, it would be very disheartening if we did not understand the reason that God made us as He did—the reason He laid upon us these natures that are totally opposed to Him in every way. He made us of corruptible, mortal flesh. However, keep in mind the fact that He made you in the image of Himself. In spite of the trials and the difficulties that you have to fight, that we all fight with our own natural natures which oppose Him, the fact that He made us in His image—when you look in the mirror and you see those features, those common elements that God has—is your source of hope.

He made you in His own image because He wants you to share in His family for all eternity. He wants you to be in His family, to be one of His immortal children. That is our hope; that is absolutely the reward that God would love to give us. Part of it has to do, though, with recognizing the reality of what we are now—not trying to ascribe to ourselves glory, honor or attributes that we do not have, that God has not given us. And certainly not paying attention to that satanic influence that seeks to tell us that we are better than we are, that we are more than we are.

Our hope to receive the glory of sonship in that family is to recognize the reality of what we are and what the nature of man is.

Romans 7:24–25. Here is the orientation:

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? [Yes, the body that is subject to death, not to immortality in itself.] I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Yes, it is a battle. Continuing in chapter 8:1–2:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

The penalty of that law, a perfect law, is death. What is the key? Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ living and dwelling within us who have crucified, through baptism, and are crucifying continually, day after day, that natural man that rises up. Being willing to fight the natural nature with which God created us, to seek instead for more of the

very mind of the living Christ to dwell within us. That, brethren, is how we can have that immortality and that eternal life. He is the key and He is the only way.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Next time, when we get into fundamental number seven, we will talk about sin and the law. More next time.