

Fundamentals of Belief #8: Christ's Sacrifice

Edited Sermon Transcript
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We are going to continue the series that we began a number of months ago on the Fundamentals of Belief of the Church of God, The Eternal. There are twenty-six fundamentals in all. To this date, we have completed the first seven of those fundamentals. This afternoon, we will address fundamental number eight.

To this point, we have seen and understood the Biblical substantiation for a number of the very key doctrines that we learned originally through the ministry of Mr. Armstrong. These doctrines have been a fundamental part of our belief from the time that we were called to the knowledge of the truth.

We have come to understand who God is, as opposed to all the false beliefs of this world and of the people who are totally separated from God. We understand the nature of God, who the Father is and who Jesus Christ is. We understand what the Holy Spirit is and what it is not. We understand the value of the Holy Scriptures, that which God recorded specifically for the benefit of those whom He would call, give that way and open their minds. We have come to understand the very nature of man, what it is that we are in relationship to God and what it is we are not in the flesh. We have also come to understand the value of God's law, what His law is, what the transgression of that law is and what sin is in relationship to His perfect commands.

Those are the key fundamentals we have covered to date and now, getting into fundamental number eight, the short title I have given to this one is "Christ's Sacrifice." Here is fundamental number eight:

We believe God so loved this world of helpless sinners that He GAVE His only begotten Son, who, though in all points tempted as we are, lived without sin in the human flesh, and died for us as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice thus making it legally possible for man's sins to be forgiven and for God to release him from their penalty, since Jesus, whose life was of greater value than the sum-total of all other human lives (because it was He who brought them into being) has thus paid the penalty in man's stead.

That is fundamental number eight. We are going to talk about the significance of the very sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Let's take the first phrase, "We believe God so loved this world of helpless sinners that He GAVE His only begotten Son . . ." Then, let's skip past that next phrase which says, ". . . who, though in all points tempted as we are, lived without sin in the human flesh . . ." Hold your thoughts on that; we will come back to it. The next phrase says, ". . . and died for us . . ." I want to put those two together and discuss them together.

"We believe God so loved this world of helpless sinners that He GAVE His only begotten Son . . . and died for us . . ."

In putting together the notes for this sermon, the biggest problem that I faced was trying to think of a way to cover this so that we could all really grasp the significance of what it meant for God the Father, and the Son, collectively, to make that sacrifice. Also, what it meant for Jesus Christ to die for us.

The phrase in John 3:16 is quoted by so many churches and by so many people who claim to be Christians, that it is basically worn out. It is one of those scriptures, I believe, that we hear so much that it just rolls through our minds and doesn't stick for its full significance. That is the real challenge: to what extent we can open our minds and grasp the real depth of the significance of what it meant for that perfect God to be willing to make that sacrifice for us.

Those of you who watch any sports on television are familiar with this. When they pan across the stands of all of those people watching the sporting event, you see people holding up signs that say, "John 3:16." Did you ever notice that? Have you ever seen it? Here are these supposed Christians who are witnessing. They bring their religious tenant and the single most important religious tenant of a so-called Christian is this very concept contained in John 3:16. So, they hold up a sign that says, "John 3:16," and that is their witness—their testimony—for the work of Jesus.

Well, let's see if we can understand a little bit deeper what the significance of that scripture really is.

John 3:16–17:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

That is the whole purpose and plan for everything that we are going through, brethren. The fact that we have a creator God who is the personification of perfect love and that it is manifested. It is not just a claim that God made, saying, "I am love and I love you; accept it at face value." No, He demonstrated it. He demonstrated, absolutely, what He means by perfect love. The greatest example and manifestation of His love was in the very sacrifice of His only begotten Son. How valuable are you then in the eyes of God by the fact that He was willing to make that sacrifice? Keep it in mind.

Romans 5:6–8:

We are going to go to Romans 5 two or three times today because Paul had a lot to say about the significance of Christ's sacrifice. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

Do we ever consider ourselves to be the ungodly? No, we all pretty much accept the fact that Christ died for us, but how much do we really focus on our guilt—the fact that we are guilty and we were ungodly at the very time that sacrifice was made?

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners . . .

While we were yet transgressors of His perfect law, while we were yet ungodly, while we were yet totally separated from Him. By nature, we hate the things that are God's. We despise His laws and we despise His perfect way. The things that God said are righteous and holy repulse us. By nature, we are without God; we are separated.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners [transgressors of the law, ungodly], Christ died for us.

We have gone through the concept of sin—what human nature and man is about—but just to refresh our memories without turning to it, Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God . . ." It doesn't exclude a single one of us. We are all in that pot—all separated, ungodly and without any opportunity for a relationship with Him because of our sins.

Turn with me to Isaiah 64:6–7. This is what we are, brethren: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags . . ." Our righteousness, brethren—the things that we think make us good, the things we believe down deep inside that make us of some value, that give us purpose, that are moral and right according to our own designation, the concepts and principles that come out of our own thinking and yes, there are many of them.

It is not that human nature is totally evil. No, as in all things, God made it as a mixture of good and evil. It is not that we desire to be evil. No, we desire to have good things. We all want to be successful, have peace and love. We pay lip service to those concepts; all human beings do. Yet, our form of righteousness leads us into a way of achieving those things which actually results in exactly the opposite.

All of those principles of love, peace and mercy come only from a relationship with the Eternal God. Without that Holy Spirit we cannot achieve or fulfill them, even if we set them as lofty goals. Human beings, however, think they can achieve them and so they have a concept of their righteousness. Without the Holy Spirit, each one of us also has had our own concept of righteousness.

. . . all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags [That is what they are to God.]; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities [our sins, our transgressions of His perfect law], like the wind, have taken us away. [No, it is not God's fault; it is our fault. We bear responsibility.] And there is none that calleth upon thy name . . .

That is the classic definition of the ungodly, brethren—those who do not take the true God into consideration in the things that they do. God is not a part of their lives, and so were we. It has nothing to do with how much we use the name. We can use the name "God" and "Jesus Christ" as much as we want and it doesn't mean a single thing if in the pursuit, supposedly, of that way, we are actually fulfilling our own concept of righteousness.

And there is none that calleth upon thy name [Meaning, every human being is separated, absolutely, from that perfect God.], that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

God cannot be associated with sin. God is perfect in righteousness and truth. He cannot be corrupted, Himself, by having any part of sin—the transgression of His perfect law. We are totally opposed to Him by nature and pursue our own concept of righteousness. We are sinners—transgressors of the law—and because of these things we separate ourselves from God because He can have no part with us as long as we are in that state. He cannot and will not defile Himself.

So, we have set the very dilemma in the fact that we are not worthy of anything and yet God still loved us—each one whom He called and all of mankind to whom He desires to give that opportunity, of all those billions of human beings that He allowed to be born for the purpose of having them all receive a chance at salvation. Yet, in our state we separate ourselves.

Let's notice Matthew 5:43. I inserted this in later, after I put my notes together. It struck me as I was going through them. The best way I can think to describe what the sacrifice of Jesus Christ meant in the mind of the Father and the Son, and how much it was that He gave, is fully explained in Matthew 5. These are the very principles that He taught to His disciples and those that listened. Even though they could not understand them at the time, this was exactly what He did.

Matthew 5:43–48:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." Why have we heard that said? That is what we think is ok. That is part of our righteousness. There isn't anyone who wouldn't believe that it is appropriate for us to sacrifice ourselves for those who are worthy of it—for our neighbors who show themselves to be good, nice and friendly people; people who help us and are nice to us; friends whom we like; people whom we appreciate; family members who seem to live up to a standard, by whatever yardstick we are using. That is what we do by nature. That is part of that moral law that we create in our own minds. So within society, all people will agree, it is appropriate to do good for those who show themselves worthy. It is appropriate to do good deeds, to respond in like kind to those who show themselves that they are worthy.

We also grow up to believe that it is absolutely appropriate to withhold goodness from those who show that they are not worthy. Those who become our enemies, who are hateful, spiteful and who try to hurt us—we have no obligation to them. Isn't that what comes to your mind naturally to believe? Come on, admit it; it does. How often are we guilty of that even though we are called and have been given the chance to have the Holy Spirit guide our thinking? How often can we catch ourselves responding according to our own righteousness? We say, "I am not going to be merciful to this individual because they have hurt me and have done something wrong and they are not worthy of it." That is our own righteousness, brethren. That is what God says is as filthy rags.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy . . . [Or just say, "withhold love."] . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and [withhold love from those whom we deem not worthy of it]. But I say unto you [Christ speaking], Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you . . .

How many of you can honestly say that you have passed that test given a circumstance where somebody was out to get you? When they were showing absolute hate and contempt for you, persecuting you with any number of means, did you respond exactly the way Christ said we are to respond here? How have we done?

"That ye may be the children of your Father . . ." This isn't just a platitude, brethren. This is the means by which we become the children of God—when we put off the natural nature and the inclination of our own concepts of moral law and begin, instead, to walk in a different way.

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

Yes, even the basest of men on the earth, guilty of every evil, show deference to the ones whom they like, who accept and fall in with them to support them.

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

What is that perfection and how is it manifested? How did God prove that He was perfect? The very sacrifice of His Son. Why? Because we were not worthy of it. We were akin to the most despicable beings on the face of the earth. Of all people, that Father knew what we were and knew that we were unworthy to receive His mercy and His love, but He loved us anyway.

Jesus Christ and the Father applied this very principle in following through to provide the sacrifice of Jesus Christ because we were the enemy of God. Did you ever think about that? We were God's enemy, absolutely God's enemy—castigating Him, accusing Him daily, violating His laws, trampling on everything that He considered holy. Yes, we can say we did it in ignorance, but now we are not ignorant. How much are we still fighting that nature?

That nature and those inclinations did not go away just because we came to a knowledge of the truth. Even after we were baptized and received a down payment of the Holy Spirit, are you still not fighting? I am still fighting. Do you still not feel the manifestations of your flesh rise up and cause you to say things and do things opposed to the very righteousness of God? Yes. Before the knowledge of that truth we were totally opposed to Him. We were the enemies of God.

Romans 5:10:

For if, when we were enemies [There it is. That is what we were.], we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

How much did He love us? While we were enemies. That is exactly what Christ taught in Matthew 5—to love your enemies because that is what He did. Christ did not give us a command that He was not willing to fulfill Himself. No, He set the example and He lived it first. By these means, He proved to us that we should be focused every day, continually, on that principle of loving even those who hate us, despise us and seek to do us harm. Christ set the example by dying for you and me, who ourselves were the most despicable sinners, transgressors and enemies of God. Only if we begin to understand the significance of the depth of our own depravity as human beings, can we begin to understand the depth of what it was that He gave up by dying on that stake.

If I were to try to make up a secular story to describe it, totally inadequate of course, I might give you a story like this: A story of a wealthy family very

renowned, very powerful and very rich in a small town. Also, in this town there was a man brought up under the most despicable circumstances. He had a horrible attitude, totally degraded in every way, antisocial, without redeeming value of character in any way, shape or form. This man hated the wealthy family and despised them in every way. He looked for an opportunity to make them pay, feeling that they were not worthy, that he was the social outcast and had been overlooked. He hated their prestige, their authority and their wealth and he wanted to hurt them. So, he stole into their home at night, not just satisfied to rob from them, but murders one of the sons in his bed. Later, he is caught by the authorities, sentenced to die and put on death row. He is in line to receive his just deserts.

Now, in this story, what would be the most unexpected thing that you can think of? For the very family, the father of the son that was murdered to step forward and offer to sacrifice his other remaining son. To say, "Well, even though this man who is without redeeming character or qualities whatsoever, is absolutely guilty and hates me more than anything else, I love him. I have known who he is and I've known that I could not help him in his state; he wasn't aware of me because he was separated from me, but I knew who he was. I have always known who he was in this town and I love him as much as my own sons. Even though he is absolutely guilty of taking away the life of my son, I love him enough to sacrifice that he might live."

Knowing also that the other son was willing, in love for this despicable creature, to go to the authorities and say, "Please let him go and I will take his place. Instead of him, I will go to the gas chamber or I will receive the lethal injection or electrocution. Let this man go free."

Would that story ever be told in truth of any human family? If you had one of your children murdered, who would step forward and offer his own life or the life of another child to save the very being who committed the crime? It would never happen. Do you begin to understand the significance of what the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was all about?

That is, in essence, exactly what the Father did. The only difference is there were not two sons; there was only one son—His only begotten son. At the very same time that the Father and Son were expressing their perfect love for us by creating the plan by which that Son would have to die because of our sins, we were killing him. He had to die to pay the price for us—for that which we committed that made us worthy of death. The only reason that he had to die was to pay the penalty for us. It was in killing him; therefore, we bear that responsibility.

He died at our hands and we are each guilty of crucifying him and putting him to death. If no other human being on the face of the earth were guilty, we are each guilty in our own way. So, by the very means that we became guilty of death, the killing of the priceless Son was that which, in the very act, rendered our opportunity for redemption through His blood in that slaying. We will notice it as we go forward.

1 John 4:8–10:

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God . . .

No, there are a whole lot of people who think they love God. They are separated from Him absolutely, yet they believe in their heart of hearts that they actually love God. They think by nature there was something within them that made them special and drew them to want to fulfill the will of God and to love Him. No, not at all.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

No, we were all enemies against the God family. We hated God. We didn't say we hated God; but in our actions and in the things that we did, the things that we held dear, the principles and the ideologies that we defended, the way that we behaved before others, we proved, absolutely, that we hated God and that we were His enemies. In that very despicable state, their love was still perfect and they were willing to sacrifice and to die for our redemption.

Not only was the Father carrying that perfect love for us—not only was the Father willing to sacrifice His Son—but also the Son, in total harmony with His Father in love, was also willing to make that sacrifice. I wonder how much we stop to think about that. What is the harmony, the unity of mind that really exists between those two beings in the Godhead—the divinity of God?

Deuteronomy 32:9–12:

"For the [Eternal's] portion is his people . . ." The word "Lord," which we know, is taken from the Hebrew word *Yhvh*.. Who was the *Yhvh*? We talked about

that when we talked about the nature of God in the first two fundamentals. We know it was Jesus Christ. This *Yhvh* was God of the second part who became Jesus Christ.

For the [*Yhvh's*] portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.

Does the Son share the same depth of love for His people as the Father? You better believe He does. There is perfect union, perfect unity between the Father and the Son. Those that hate the concept of authority cannot reconcile this. They will tell you that there cannot be perfect unity and harmony in any relationship of authority.

They will try to tell you that the only way that the apostles had unity was that not one of them was over the others. They all did things democratically. The fact that they voted or however they made decisions—they did so collectively. Everyone had an equal say and decided through the Holy Spirit by this collective basis, all the decisions that they made. Their presumption and interpretation of the scriptures is that, had one apostle had any jurisdiction over the other apostles at any given time, there never could have been unity, harmony, and oneness of mind. This concept is a direct castigation of the God family. We know that the Father and Son are in a relationship of authority—the Father having all preeminence even over the Son.

Those who believe in this concept are saying, without knowing it, that the Son cannot really be a willing partner with the Father. He can't really love as deeply as the Father does. The Father must have cooked up the plan for the sacrifice and said, "Now you are under my authority, Christ, so you are going to have to submit to this because I am over you." The inference there is that Christ went along with it because He had respect for the Father and He couldn't do anything else, but maybe He wasn't as willing of a participant. Maybe He didn't really like the idea as much as the Father. Maybe He didn't really love us the way the Father did. He was just following orders.

Or, is it just possible that, in spite of the relationship of authority between the Father and the Son, they do have perfect unity? They both love us and they both love the plan for the salvation of mankind just as much? That the Son was willing to sacrifice Himself just as much as the Father was willing to sacrifice His only begotten Son?

I can tell you, brethren, that is the picture of godly authority with the use of the Holy Spirit. I can tell you that a relationship of authority does not preclude total unity of mind and purpose. God helping us, Mr. Raymond Cole and I will continue to prove that and demonstrate it with the way that we work together. I am absolutely under authority, absolutely. Let there be no doubt about it. I can also tell you, that does not preclude us from working together in absolute harmony for the service of God's people in these last days.

As long as we do work together in that unity and harmony, we are witnessing that which slaps in the face the concepts of all of those who have gone out from us in total defiance and rebellion against the very government of God. The longer we stay together in that unity and harmony, doing the work of God through the gift of the Holy Spirit, it continues to speak—hopefully, if we do it correctly—of the very relationship of the Father and Son in heaven. That is who we are all supposed to be emulating, isn't it? Are we not supposed to be emulating the Son?

John 10:11, 15 and 18 speak of the love that Jesus Christ Himself has for us as being equal to that of the Father.

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. (Verse 15) As the Father knoweth me, even so I know the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. (Verse 18) No man taketh it from me [No one forced Christ into anything.], but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Yes, it was a command of the Father and yet Christ had the power to fulfill the will of the Father because it was, in essence, His own will as much. He agreed with it, He believed it, and He desired to fulfill it as much as the Father desired for Him to fulfill it.

Ephesians 5:2:

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us [It is not referring to the Father here; it is referring to Christ.], and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Yes, both the Father and the Son loved us perfectly and Christ did die as a part of that perfect plan for our benefit.

What is the next part of our fundamental? ". . . though in all points tempted as we are, lived without sin in the human flesh . . ."

Let's notice first John 1:1—the scripture in the Bible that refers to the earliest period of time in history, the very beginning. Not just the beginning of this world in creation, but the beginning.

John 1:1–3, 14:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (Verse 14) And the Word [which we know was Jesus Christ] was made flesh [Why do we believe Christ was made flesh? That is what we read right here.], and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

God of the second part divested Himself of His divinity and became born of flesh. He became, as we are, flesh and blood.

Hebrews 4:14–15:

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities . . .

We don't have a High Priest who cannot identify with us in the things that we go through. We have an advocate, a lawyer, a solicitor, or whatever office you might want to call it. An agent in an agency relationship, someone who represents you before someone else—that is what the High Priest office is all about. An intermediary between us and the Father, a High Priest who is our Advocate seeking for our good and our benefit.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

". . . in all points . . ." Can we begin to fathom the significance of that statement? ". . . in all points tempted as we are . . ." This was not God who became flesh but was really without the potential of sinning—that in His perfection, He was

prevented from being able to make a mistake. We are not talking about a being who was predestined to succeed without the possibility of failing. He was tempted in all points as we are. He made the free moral agency choices not to sin, not to violate God's law, not to become a transgressor Himself, but to obey. He did so because He had a full measure of the Holy Spirit which gave Him the power to choose.

Hebrews 2:14–18:

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood [which we are], he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil . . .

If we think about that, to what extent does the Devil have the power of death? He has the power of death if we give in and subscribe to his orientation of mind.

And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. [Yes, that is what we have been, brethren. Being in the flesh, pursuing the righteousness that we concoct in our own minds, was absolute bondage.] For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. [Yes, He became flesh and blood. He became a son of Abraham.] Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Christ was tempted. He just didn't float along without any problems or difficulties to put on a good show so we could write the book and say that Christ died for us. No, He went through it. He went through an entire short life for His thirty-three or so years in the flesh, fighting daily just like you do, the temptations of your natural natures rising up. So did Christ; He was just like we.

That is how He can identify. That is how he can be that Great High Priest who can be our Advocate at the throne of God. When we ask for forgiveness of our sins, He understands. He fully understands what it is that we fight. He experienced it for Himself and He experienced it to a level that we have not.

Philippians 2:5–8:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death [Have you ever thought about Christ actually becoming obedient?], even the death of the [stake].

Christ did learn obedience through the things that He experienced and He qualified to become our Great High Priest. How did His death help us? We have learned and demonstrated through the scriptures that God loved us and that Christ actually died for us. It was for us. We learned that He and the Father were both in absolute harmony in the decision to make that sacrifice, but for what purpose? Why was the sacrifice necessary? How did it help us?

The next part of our fundamental says, ". . . and died for us as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice . . ." Well, what does that mean?

Let's read it in 1 Peter 1:18–20:

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot [That is what Christ was. He was a Lamb designated and set apart for sacrifice.]: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you . . .

We are going to look at a few scriptures that demonstrate that Christ was the Lamb of God and He was destined to be a sacrifice. We are going to follow by looking at the significance of that sacrifice. First, let me go into a calculated digression because I want to pick on this concept. We are going to learn some more about the sacrifice of Christ as we do it.

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world . . .

I put this question to you, "Was Jesus Christ a free moral agent?" Now He, in total harmony with the Father, before the foundation of the world, was foreordained to die. Isn't that what we just read here? Before the foundation of the world, before the first human being was ever created, before sin was ever committed by a human being, Christ was foreordained to be a sacrificial Lamb and to die.

The opponents of the revealed doctrine of predestination will tell you that if God had advanced knowledge of something that was going to happen, of an action that was going to be taken by any human being, free moral agency was not there. That is what they say. They say, "If God knew it, it means that He manipulated it to happen and to come out the way that He wanted it to. So the only way we can justify that we are all free moral agents with the right to choose whether to obey or not to obey, is that God chooses not to know which choices we are going to make." He chooses not to know—what a concept.

So, when I wrote on this concept of predestination in the December 1999 monthly letter, we saw within a couple of months, basically, a rebuttal paper come out on the internet from this individual. He almost word for word quoted some of the statements that I made that substantiated the original teaching by Mr. Armstrong, only in a rebuttal format. There was one concept though that he stayed totally away from and would not address. In that monthly letter I asked the question, "Was Christ a free moral agent?" Why is that important?

These individuals don't like the idea that God knows the end from the beginning. They can't stand the concept of having our names written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world and that God knew who we were by name. That gives them a problem. How can they answer, with their concept of God choosing not to know, the status of Christ? He didn't answer the question, "Was Christ a free moral agent?"

As we are getting ready to see, He was foreordained and fulfilled specific prophecies that were written hundreds of years before He was actually born in the flesh, lived, grew up and died. Christ fulfilled so many prophecies, dozen and dozens of them, that were written hundreds of years before. According to that line of reasoning, we would have to decide that Christ was not a free moral agent. How could He have the opportunity to choose Himself, when everything He was going to do was already written in a book—several books of the prophets—hundreds of years before?

Yet, at the same time, brethren, if Jesus Christ was not a free moral agent, then you do not have a Savior. Did you recognize that? You do not have a Savior if Jesus Christ was not a free moral agent; because if so, He was not like us. He was not like us in the flesh. He was not qualified to become our High Priest and to petition the Father on our behalf if He did not experience everything just like we do, in the very state that we are in.

These people will tell you that the issue of predestination is not a salvational issue. I will tell you, brethren, that you had better believe that we were predestined to be called, which is what Mr. Armstrong said. Not predestined to be saved or lost, but predestined to be called, known by name from the foundation of the world. If you do not believe that God has the ability to look down through the corridors of time and know what choices you will make with your free moral agency—if you hold on to this idea that the advanced knowledge of God, of what choices you would make, takes away free moral agency—then you also have to believe that His advanced knowledge of what Christ would do in His life, takes away Christ's ability to choose for Himself.

How can that be? How can we have a Savior if He did not have the free moral agency to choose to obey God or Satan? It was all a sham if He was not a free moral agent.

Let's notice some of those prophecies. The very earliest prophecy of the sacrifice of Christ, which is what we are talking about today, is in Genesis 3:14–15:

And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman [representing the church], and between thy seed and her seed [What was her seed? Her seed was Christ.]; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

There is your first prophecy in the Old Testament concerning the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—that it would occur and that He, by comparison, would have His heel bruised. Yes, He would be slaughtered, He would be sacrificed, He would be killed as the Lamb of God; but because He was resurrected unto life, it was not that which took away His life for all eternity—compared to the penalty that Satan will experience which is an injury, a wound to the head. No, He will not die, but He will be restrained for all eternity.

Because Christ, in having His heel bruised, being killed in the flesh, will qualify to be the sacrifice for human kind to save us, we will then be victorious—those who are deemed qualified. Christ's sacrifice will have not been for naught. Ultimately then, by that sacrifice, Christ qualified to become the King who will rule this earth. He will dethrone Satan. Satan, in that regard, will receive a head wound. He will be bound; he will be taken out of his office and be restrained for all eternity.

Notice also the prophecy of Isaiah 53:6. Here are some of the specifics recorded hundreds of years before Christ came in the flesh, of things that He would do. God knew when He wrote them what would occur. He had advance knowledge of the choices that Christ would make.

Isaiah 53:6–12:

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Hundreds of years before, God prophesied the free moral agency choices that Christ would make—that He would make the right choices. ". . . he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." If God chooses not to know—because in knowing, it would mess everything up and take away Christ's ability to make a choice for Himself—then how is it that we can believe that Christ was a free moral agent, but it was prophesied that He would do no violence nor would there be any deceit in His mouth?

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him [referring back to that first prophecy]; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin [That is what He was for us, brethren. That is why it is in our fundamental of belief. He was an offering for sin—our sins.], he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall

be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong . . .

Who is it that Christ is going to share His spoil with? Those who are spiritually strong, who take this way of life when given it and use their free moral choices to show that they desire it more than anything else. Those who show they will use the Holy Spirit given as a gift and will obey and be strong spiritually.

. . . he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Where were these prophecies fulfilled? Without turning to them, make a note. Matthew 27:13–14 says, "And he answered him to never a word [when confronted by Pilate in question, 'Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?']; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly." This was the fulfillment of the very prophecy.

Mark 15:18 says, "And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors." He absolutely fulfilled that which was foreordained, written hundreds of years before in the prophets.

Also, you are aware of Psalm 22:18. "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." Even the activities that would occur at the base of the stake on which He was hung were prophesied. God knew them from the foundation of the world. He knew the individuals that were going to be involved, exactly what they would do, and that they would cast lots for the very clothes of Christ after they nailed Him to the stake.

Then, John 19:24 says:

They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots.

We have to have a way, brethren, to be able to reconcile the fact that Christ was a free moral agent, in spite of the fact that God knew from the very beginning the

choices He would make and everything that would occur in and around His ministry and even the details of His death. Christ was not prevented from tests and trials. It says He was tempted, and that means He had the opportunity to fail.

Why did He go up the mountain to be tempted of the Devil if it was all semantics? God had already prophesied. Maybe we should have just picked up the Bible, read it and said, "Well, it says He is going to pass it; let's just skip this test because we know Christ can't fail. He is not a free moral agent. He is automatically going to pass, so let's just dispense with it."

The reality is that He was a free moral agent despite the fact that God had already prophesied in writing what choices He would make. It did not save Christ from the tests. He had to go through it, He had to be tempted and He had to make the right decisions under the influence and the power of the Holy Spirit. You know what, brethren? So do each one of you.

Yes, God knows the end from the beginning. Let's put away these crazy ideas and philosophies about God choosing not to know. No, He knows who is going to be in His Kingdom. He knows whose names are going to stay in the Book of Life, but it is up to us to get there, to prove that we want it. He just happens to know—because He is the God—what we will choose to do in the end, whether we will make it and whether we will be there. It is still our choice to make.

John 1:29–30:

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God [Why did he call him the Lamb of God? John understood that this was the Messiah who was coming to take away the sins of the world.], which taketh away the sin of the world. [He was going to fulfill that very appointment, to be the sacrificial Lamb in our stead.] This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.

We will address the final part of our fundamental number eight all at one time. Here is the reason why we needed the sacrifice of Christ since we know God loved us. He was willing to show His perfect love by making the sacrifice of His Son and His Son was willing to make the sacrifice because He also loved us as much. He became a sacrifice for us as the Lamb of God, but why was that necessary? Why did the sacrifice have to take place at all? Here is what we will see.

". . . thus making it legally possible for man's sins to be forgiven and for God to release him [meaning, each one of us] from their penalty . . ." How was that possible? ". . . since Jesus, whose life was of greater value than the sum-total of all other human lives (because it was He who brought them into being) has thus paid the penalty in man's stead."

What are we talking about here? We are talking about the existence of a perfect law, which we have already gone through. We have seen what the perfect law of God is and what sin is—the transgression of the law. We have seen what righteousness and unrighteousness is and that breaking the law has a penalty—death.

Why did we need a sacrifice? Why did this have to be a part of the way for us to enter into God's Kingdom? The law cannot be broken and with that law is a penalty for breaking the law. We have each been guilty and continue to be guilty of breaking that perfect law. This means we keep heaping upon ourselves the death penalty. We become guilty of death—to have our lives snuffed out. Without someone else to pay that penalty, we would have to be snuffed out—absolutely, completely, without recourse, to die. Why the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? To save us from our sins and the penalty of breaking His law. That is why we needed it.

In the laws that we have of this land, we do not have the ability within the structure of our judicial system for someone else to step forward and say, "I know this person has been found guilty and is on death row. I would like to pay the price instead." Our governments and our laws don't allow that. The person who committed the crime does the time. Haven't you heard that? The person that is condemned to death because he is guilty is the one who has to pay the price. No one else can step forward and pay the price for him.

According to God's law though, He has provided the means for someone else other than the guilty party, to actually pay the price in our stead. God be glorified, otherwise we would all be dead—dead without recourse. See, according to God's sense of a legal system and justice, He has provided the means for someone else—even His only Son perfect without sin—to pay for our guilt, as if we were sitting on death row.

In essence, Jesus Christ walked in and said, "I will take his place. Let him out and put me in the restraints. I will pay the price in his stead. Let him go free." Even though we are the ones who are guilty and we committed the crime—the

abomination—against the law of God, we walk out free. He, instead, paid for our sins. That is what happened.

In God's law, He has allowed someone else to pay the price. How significant does it make the total authority and immutability of God's law, which we have already gone through? You see, if God's law can be done away, then why the need for someone to have a sacrifice? It is the fact that a law cannot and does not exist unless there is a penalty for breaking it. Did you realize that? Your children know it.

Your children, absolutely, understand the validity of that principle. If you say that there is a law—lay down a law to your child—and say, "Don't do this," but they can do it, get away with it and there is no penalty that follows, what does the child understand that you don't even understand? There is no law at all. You can say that there is a law and a rule; but if you don't enforce it and if there is not a penalty that is paid for breaking that law, then the law doesn't really exist at all. Did you ever think about it that way? So, when you tell your child, "Little Johnny, don't do this," and he does it anyway and you let him off, little Johnny knows that isn't really a law at all; it is just words.

God's law doesn't work that way. Breaking of God's laws brings automatic penalties—built-in penalties for breaking every commandment of God. Therefore, when we became guilty—every one of us—of breaking God's commands, we became guilty of the death penalty; and that death penalty, equivalent of the second death, absolutely is and would have been executed if not for someone else to stand in our place and to die in our stead.

Colossians 1:12–17:

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins . . .

". . . even the forgiveness of sins . . ." which warrant a death penalty. He couldn't just forgive us and say, "That's ok; walk away from it. I know you broke the law, but I am going to let you off this time. No one is going to pay for it. I am not going to make you pay for it. I am not going to make anyone else pay for it. Just try not to let anyone know." No, we committed the crime; we had to pay the price. Or, someone had to pay

the price. Jesus Christ was the one who paid that price for us in our stead. ". . . we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins . . ."

It was forgiven for us. He took it upon Himself. He became the sacrifice. He paid the penalty and we walked away scot free.

. . . who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Exactly what we read in John 1—the fact that He was God from the beginning, God of the second part with the Father. He was with God and was God and He was the being who actually executed the creation and made it happen under the authority of the Father. Why is it that Jesus Christ is capable of being a sufficient sacrifice for all humanity—all of the billions and billions?

Even in our judicial system and the laws of this land, if one individual were capable and if the law allowed you to volunteer to pay the price for someone else on death row, how many lives do you have? You only have one to give, don't you? Even if you were magnanimous enough to be willing to die, that a death row inmate could walk free, you would pay the price for that one individual and you would be dead and would live no more. You would not be here to be capable of making that sacrifice for any other human being, would you? Even if a human being, at any time in the course of human history, had been capable of living a perfect life—never sinning once—the value of that one human life as a substitutionary sacrifice could have only paid the penalty for one other human being. One perfect life for one other imperfect life.

How is it then, that Jesus Christ—living without sin and dying one time—is capable of satisfying the death penalty for all human kind, flesh and blood as we are? It is because He is the Creator. It is because His life, as is a part of our fundamental, is worth more than the sum total of all human beings because He is the one who created us all. The life of the creator is always more valuable than the subjects who were created. That is why He could do it legally, making it legally possible. It wasn't just a sham that God set up. No, see, it makes sense, even from a legal standpoint.

Romans 5:17:

For if by one man's offence death reigned by one [Beginning with Adam because he was the first man and he sinned.]; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation . . .

Why? Are we just paying for Adam's sin? No, because Adam was our father and we are just like him. He incurred the death penalty for himself because he sinned and likewise we incurred the death penalty for ourselves because we have all sinned.

. . . even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

The only way that could happen, brethren, is if the value of His life is greater than the sum total of all humanity. So that by His perfect life and His single sacrifice, He became more valuable; and His blood through His death could cover and pay the death penalty for every single one of us.

Did Jesus live a perfect life in our stead so that we are not required to keep the law? We saw some of this last time, but turn with me quickly to 1 Corinthians 6:19–21.

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy [Spirit] which is in you . . ." Here, we are talking about those who were called, those who have accepted Jesus Christ. They have had that knowledge given to them. They understand it; they accepted that way of live through baptism. They said, "I know this is right and if I want to have life, I have to make this commitment and vow before God; I need His help through the power of the Holy Spirit."

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy [Spirit] which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price . . .

That is what happened to us, brethren. We were on death row. Jesus Christ, who came and set us free from the penalty that we had brought upon ourselves, died in our stead. By making that substitutionary sacrifice for us, He has a claim on our life; because otherwise, we would have been dead.

The only real forgiveness of sins, the only way to take that death penalty away, brethren, is to accept the real Christ—not a concept of believing on His name. No, accepting the real Christ and vowing to live after the gospel of Christ, which is obedience to the law. He paid the death penalty for us, providing that we will turn and walk the other way and begin to live differently than that way which brought upon us the penalty to begin with. Otherwise, as we will find out later when we talk about this concept of grace, we make His sacrifice of no effect and we put Him to an open shame.

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body [And that means in the flesh while we are still alive, having accepted that way.], and in your spirit, which are God's.

We are bought and paid for, brethren. We belong to Him now, because He sacrificed for us.

1 Corinthians 5:7:

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us . . .

Christ, our Passover, the Passover Lamb, the substitutionary sacrifice, the representative who stood in our place and paid our penalty. What is the price for the fact that He did pay that penalty for us? It is that we cannot continue to walk in the ways that we did before which brought on the penalty originally. He paid the penalty. He became our sacrificial Lamb; but then we, in turn, have to walk a different way and pursue the perfection of the laws of God.

In closing, brethren, Romans 6:14–23:

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law [Paul answering his own question.], but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

We prove whom we love by the actions that we take and the decisions that we make in our lives. We prove absolutely, every day, what we love the most.

But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you [Divine revelation]. Being then made free from sin [Meaning, the penalty of sin. We walked off death row scot free because He paid it for us.], ye became the servants of righteousness.

What was the price? We became bondservants to Jesus Christ.

I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness [law-keeping, God's perfect commandments] unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. [No part of righteousness, no part of God.] What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed . . .

What was the fruit of your life, brethren, before you had the truth, before you accepted Jesus Christ and before you had the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit guiding you and teaching you a different way? What was the fruit of your life? What were you experiencing?

. . . for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

That is what the purpose of Christ's sacrifice was, brethren—that we might have eternal life, forgiven for committing those sins which bring upon us death. That is the significance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That is the significance of John 3:16. If we understand why we needed His sacrifice, the significance of His love, the perfect love of the Father and the Son which resulted in that perfect sacrifice, we can begin to understand the depth of the love of God and how we, in turn, should behave as the bondservants.

Next time, we will continue with the significance of Christ's resurrection.