

Church of God, The Eternal

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Fundamentals of Belief #9 Fundamental 5B; The Work of Satan

**Edited Sermon Transcript
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We want to continue on the Fundamentals of Belief that we have been going through. This, being the second sermon, will hopefully complete fundamental number five on Satan. To this date, we have gone through the first four of twenty-six fundamentals that we will go through. It will take us quite a while to get through these.

If you will recall, the first twenty Fundamentals of Belief of the Church of God, The Eternal are identical, word for word, to that which Mr. Armstrong originally wrote and put together for the fundamentals of the Radio Church of God. The additional six that are part of the Church of God, The Eternal fundamentals are those that have been added as certain specific issues of importance have come up in the age since the apostasy—those things that were always a part of the belief and the teachings of the church, but were not emphasized in the original twenty. They have been expanded and highlighted because of their significance to us in these last days.

We have gone through the first four fundamentals. Fundamental number one, if you will recall, was the nature of God. Fundamental number two concerned Jesus Christ—who and what He is and what His role is. Fundamental number three was concerning the Holy Spirit—what the Holy Spirit is and what the activities are of the Holy Spirit. Fundamental number four—the Holy Scriptures.

Last time we began on this topic of Satan. I will re-read the fundamental in its entirety. Fundamental number five:

We believe Satan is a personality, a spirit being; and as the Devil is the adversary of God and the children of God; and that he now has dominion over the world which God allowed him for a definite "week" of seven thousand-year days—the first six of which are his six working days for his labor of deception, leading the children of Adam into rejection of God's law and therefore rebellion against God—the seventh thousand-year day of which will be the DAY OF THE LORD (the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God), during which Satan will be forced to rest from his work of deception while

Christ rules the nations of the earth. Satan's power is merely to influence and lead, not to force men arbitrarily against their will. He has ruled by deception with the aid of a host of demons which are rebellious angels, spirit beings, who have followed Satan in his rebellion.

If you will remember from last time, we actually took the first phrase and part of the last phrase and put them together in a format to discuss what I called, "The Origin of Satan." We looked at the fact that Satan is real, that he is a personality and a spirit being, as all created angelic beings are. God made him a perfect being, a glorious being, called Lucifer. He became, because of his rebellion and because of his sin, the Devil, and has made himself the adversary of God and the children of God. Not that he became an equal adversary by any means. Obviously, he is subject to the laws and the power of God. There is no created being who can ever rise up to challenge the very Creator God.

We also saw that he has ruled by deception. He is aided by a host of demonic beings who followed him. One-third of all of God's holy angels followed him into his deception.

Now, we are going to go back and take the middle part of this fundamental and analyze it in more detail. This afternoon then, what we are going to focus on is what I am going to term, "The Work of Satan." We have seen what his origin is and how he came to be who he is. We also saw what his beginnings were and the progression of things that occurred—that which the Bible reveals to us to know, which showed how he became the despicable being and the character that he is now.

What we are going to focus on this afternoon is "the work"—the latitude, the dominion of that being, what God has allowed him, for what reason, and how he actually carries out his work and what the limits and the scope of that work will be.

First, the fundamental says, "and that he now has dominion over the world which God allowed him." He now has dominion over the world which God allowed him. Let's look and see what scriptures we have in the Bible to substantiate that part of our Fundamental of Belief. Satan does, absolutely, have authority and dominion on this earth right now. 2 Corinthians 4:3–4, we will begin to see:

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost [or, are being lost]: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

We find that there is a being, totally in opposition to God, who is called "the god of this world." That is this Satan, this demonic being that we are discussing. He is called, "the god of this world." He does have a dominion—that which God has allowed him to have. John 12:30–32:

Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

Christ is setting the stage to show the comparison of dominions; the transition from the dominion of one being to that, in the future, of another Being. Christ is the one who qualified to replace someone. It is Satan, the Devil, who currently has that title. He is, as Christ called him, "the prince of this world."

What is a prince? A prince is a member of a royal family. What is a royal family except a governing family, a governing body? It is a government office and therefore, the fact that Satan is called a "prince" is not just to be taken lightly. He is the prince of this world. It is a governing relationship in the fact that he has authority. It is a very limited authority and yet, God has allowed him to retain that very office which he originally was given when he was a glorious spirit being in God's service. God has not removed him yet. He was given that office and that office has not been taken from him. You see, because you cannot remove one unless you are ready to replace that officer with his replacement. We will understand more about that in coming sermons when we talk about further parts of the plan in this fundamental series about Christ's role—who Jesus Christ is in relationship to his mission in the overall plan of salvation. We will find out that through His death and resurrection He qualified to replace this officer whom God has left in place. Even though he turned vile and despicable, a rebel to the Nth degree, God has not removed him. He is still that prince and he still holds that office of dominion on this earth.

Notice also, in that very same verse, verse 31: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world [certification that he does hold the office. Now shall the prince of this world] be cast out." How is it that he will be cast out, except there is one with greater authority, by far, who has allowed him to have his office and yet, will remove him in an appointed time?

That which the world does not understand, brethren, is that Satan is not locked into an equal battle with God. There are many such concepts that are very common in Eastern religion. This idea of *ying* and *yang* and if you are familiar with movies, even such as *Star Wars*, in which you have "the force" and you have the "dark side of the force." All of these concepts are right out of the mind of Satan, trying to get us to believe, to convince us, to deceive us, that Satan's power of darkness is equal and offsetting to that of God.

The whole concept of balancing opposite forces, which keep the universe in its balance, is not a correct comparison of the power of God and that of Satan. Satan has always been subject to the dominion of God and of Jesus Christ. He only exists and continues to hold his office because whether he knows it or not, whether he accepts it or not, he is absolutely carrying out the very will of the living God, even for our perfection. Matthew 4:8–9:

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him [this, during Jesus Christ's temptations], All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

You don't see that Jesus Christ argued with Satan over his claim. He did not respond and tell Satan, "You don't have dominion over this earth. It is not within your power right now to give me dominion over these nations." No, He didn't challenge the authority. He did not challenge the dominion that the Father has actually allowed Satan to have. He does have dominion, in this day and age, over the kingdoms of the world. He is the one inspiring and leading all nations, all peoples on the face of this earth, into utter rebellion and rejection of God. He is the god of this world; he is the prince of the power of the air. Ephesians 6:11–12:

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities . . .

Are we talking about some form of a government structure, some type of authority that has been given or allowed? Yes, indeed.

. . . against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness [probably better translated, wicked spirits] in high places.

Those wicked spirits are in high places for the time being. They have been allowed by God to have the latitude, to have dominion and to exercise their evil deeds in the lives of those on this earth. Notice that it said, "against the rulers of the darkness of this world." This world is in darkness, brethren. It is God who represents light. It is God who always represents light. His truth and His very Spirit is that which is personified in light. It was that being, Lucifer, who once was a great light-bringer. He was a glorious and a beautiful being when he was fulfilling his commission, when he was fulfilling that which God gave to him as that covering cherub, as that beautiful archangel that spread his wings over the very throne of God. *Then* he was also full of light, the very reflection of God on His throne and he reflected the glory of the living God. Yet, when he rebelled and he was cast down to this earth, as we saw last time, he became full of darkness. He was cast into that state of restraint, that confinement, even until his final judgment at the end, the very end.

He is in darkness. He is the god of that darkness and because the world follows after that being, it is captured in every way by his very own concepts and all of that which he espouses. That is why we are talking about the rulers of darkness in this world. This world is shrouded in that darkness. He is the god and the prince of that very way of life and orientation because it is totally opposed, in every way, to the things of God.

We know that the dominion of Satan is only by the authority and the express permission of the living God, who allows him to continue for reason. Colossians 1:16–17:

For by him were all things created [we are talking about a different Being now—that God of the second part that became Jesus Christ] that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones [so now we are seeing a description of those things, all of them, that were put under Jesus Christ by the Father. We start to see now that governments are a big part of that which is given to Christ.] or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him"

Who is it then, that is in charge? Who is it that is governing the execution of the master plan of the Father? Who is it that has real control of all governments, all authority, even that of the adversary? Verse 17: "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

This is the thing, brethren, which the world does not understand. As they go about their business, those who claim to be Christians, seeking to save the world, thinking that God is locked in a battle with Satan for the souls of men—trying to save them, hoping that they become the servants of God and to accept Jesus Christ as opposed to accepting the ways of the Devil and losing their eternal life. God is not locked into a battle with Satan. He is not seeking to war against him. He has allowed that being to hold an office within the confines of his government. Even those things that were created for and by Jesus Christ to fulfill His will.

I have always thought, if Satan understands those things, because certainly he must, why does he continue his work of deception? Doesn't he understand that it just fits in and is fulfilling the very thing that God wants? It must be that his attitude is so vile and he hates God so much that he is consumed with that hatred, that bitterness, that evil orientation, and he cannot resist using everything he has within him to try and destroy as many of the called of God that he can. He fulfills God's will, even in his bitter attitude.

How long is that dominion going to last? How long is God going to allow this despicable character to hold an office on this earth? Even in his state of restraint, a state of darkness, how long will he be able to influence this world and to cause the misery, the anguish and the evil in the lives of the men on this earth?

The next part of our fundamental gives us an answer to that question, *how long?* ". . . for a definite week of seven thousand-year days—the first six of which are his six working days for his labor of deception, leading the children of Adam into rejection of God's law and therefore rebellion against God."

We have already seen, last time, that he is the adversary of the children of God. His purpose is to destroy all those whom God has called—to prevent you, even you brethren, from fulfilling God's will, from creating and generating in your lives a love for that way of life, from developing holy righteous character, from passing those tests and making the sacrifices to prove that you are capable, willing to be servants, faithful, loyal to God, even for all eternity. He is out to destroy you. He is out to stop you from succeeding.

For how long? For a week. The week represents the time span of God's master plan for our salvation. As I was putting these notes together, it made me stop to think, do you realize what a phenomenal revelation that is? How many churches on this earth, anywhere in the world, understand that one simple principle—that the very week, in its creation, that work which God did in creating the heavens and the earth and then reforming the earth over a period of seven days was an absolute prophecy of the very fulfillment of the plan for man's salvation? Six days of work followed by the seventh day of rest—that Sabbath rest representing the Millennium.

We are not going to take the time to go through all of that this afternoon because in future fundamentals we will be able to focus on that master plan of salvation—the comparison of those six days of work to the one day of rest which represents the Millennium.

Some think, and now like to rewrite history and claim that they knew these things all along or they figured them out from their own Bibles and that they are just glad Mr. Armstrong came along and agreed with them—proved that he also understood those things that they had figured out. I don't think so. How many of those groups that try to accuse Mr. Armstrong of having gotten his doctrine, his philosophies or his beliefs from either the Seventh Day Adventists or from this group or that group, understand that one single principle—that one principle about the plan of salvation and the representation of the week in the very length of time of man's existence from the creation of Adam—the six-thousand year completion of that time? The seventh thousand year period represents the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath, and is the time of the Millennial rest, Christ's return, and the restructuring of this earth under the laws of God. How many understand that?

Who was it that brought all of that together except for Mr. Armstrong? You can't even go to that many scriptures in the Bible and pull all of those things together. Let's turn to one of them, one of them that gives us a hint, the best one, 2 Peter 3:7–10: "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store . . ." We are talking about Peter's statement here, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who is making a comparison now. He is making a very strong and pointed statement concerning the purpose of the earth, those things that were created and the timeline that God provided for their existence in fulfilling their purpose.

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Those heavens and that earth—which we now see, that surround us, that are our environment that we understand and we know—they were created for a purpose. But those physical things, those heavenly bodies, those physical bodies including this earth, have a limited purpose in the plan of God. They were created for a specific purpose and when that purpose is fulfilled, they will be destroyed even by fire. They will have used up their purpose.

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Now, when I was a child I remember interpreting that and just thinking, "Well, that just means that time is irrelevant to God. One day to him can be as long as he wants to make it in mind, or a thousand years could be as short as he wants to make it in mind. He can either speed up time or slow down time in the way He thinks." I'm sure that is absolutely true and yet, that is not the significant intent of this scripture and what Peter was saying. He was recording for us one of the things that provide the key to understanding the overall plan of salvation and how God created it: that it is a seven thousand year plan, that from the re-creation of the earth and from the time that Adam was created, a plan was set in motion that would be fulfilled in bringing millions and millions of sons into the family—the eternal family of God. It is a seven thousand year plan.

Who else knows or understands that? ". . . one day is with the Lord as a thousand years." It is giving us the equation, it is saying there is a direct relationship to the created day. The day, the twenty-four hour period that God created, is defined as the earth spinning in its rotation, on its axis, and is compared to a period of a thousand years—the year being that period of time defined as the revolution of the earth around the sun. They represent the same thing because a day in the week, as we know and understand, directly applies and is synonymous in the plan of God with a thousand year period. That is how we become able to understand the significance of the Sabbath.

If we do not understand this one concept, brethren, we have no understanding of the Sabbath day, its significance, its purpose and why God commanded us to keep it. How many people are keeping the Sabbath Day, or claim to keep the seventh day of the week, but have no understanding of what that Sabbath is about? The most they might understand is that it was commanded as a day of rest and if they keep it, or try to keep it at all, that's all they seem to think it is—a day to sacrifice to God, to set aside time for His worship—but they have no idea that the very Sabbath day is a prophecy of the coming of the Millennium.

Who understood that before Mr. Armstrong taught it in these last days? Do you know? It was a revelation, brethren. A human being, even through the specific scriptures that do hint at it, would never have been able to put those scriptures together and come up with and understand that one simple fact. What you have and what you understand about the length of God's plan and the timing of that seven thousand years is absolutely a miracle.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

This earth is going to be destroyed. It is going to be burned up in fire because it will have served its purpose once all of the harvests, those resurrections, have been completed—once all of the purification and the trying and the proving, the teaching and the qualification, is finished. Satan has a role, a very significant role, in that overall plan. Even though he is totally opposed to God, he is absolutely fulfilling the will of God and he is conducting his work for six thousand years—six thousand years that God has given him, along with man, to do their will, to pursue all of those things that man thinks will make him happy. And that evil being, Satan, the Devil, inspiring them in all the ways that he knows, leading them to destruction. Yet, it is all for a purpose.

"The seven thousandth day of which," the next section of our fundamental says, "will be the DAY OF THE LORD (the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God), during which Satan will be forced to rest from his work of deception while Christ rules the nations of the earth."

Isn't it interesting, for those that think that Satan is an equal match to God; that God is going to force Satan to keep the Sabbath? Did you ever think about it that way? Revelation 20:1–3:

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years [that same thousand years, brethren, which is to God, a day, specifically the Sabbath Day, the Millennium. He laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years], And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled:

He will be forced to rest from his work of deception. That is why we believe it and that is why it is part of our fundamentals of belief. Not that Satan will yet have been judged. He will only have been put in this state of further restraint—separated, not to be able to tempt man, not to be able to deceive human beings because God will put upon this earth, finally, the institution of His laws under Jesus Christ. Again, so much time we could spend going through all the scriptures that talk about that part, but it will be coming up in another fundamental so I don't want to rob from that one.

Satan will be bound during this period of reconstruction on the earth when the laws of God will reign and man will have an opportunity to compare life under God's laws to that which they experienced for the first six thousand years. Those beings that will be resurrected will have a chance to compare their former lives—that which they pursued in attempting to be happy, to have peace, to have all of the benefits and the glorious things that they desired. But instead, they experienced misery, suffering, persecution and all manner of evil at the hands of themselves and the influence of that adversary. They will have an opportunity to compare that to what God will offer them, even in their time in the Millennium.

They will have ample time to compare. God will give the earth rest, a reconstruction, to be able to manifest the reality of God's laws and His perfection—what his dominion under Jesus Christ is like compared to the dominion of Satan and that which he has had for six thousand years. After which, all men will have a chance to choose and select which they want, ". . . and after that he must be loosed a little season."

The will of God for Satan will not have been completed at the time that Jesus Christ returns. Even at the end of the Sabbath, after the end of that thousand-year reign of peace and harmony under God's laws, there is still yet a use for that adversary. He will be loosed for a little season, however long that is. It will be the continuing part of God's plan to finally test, in the crucible, those in that final great resurrection, that harvest. They will have a chance to test all that they have learned and see if they will resist that evil power, to see if they will have come to respect, appreciate and love all that God has manifested and showed them in His way—to see if they choose to be a part of that eternal life in His family, or to pursue the natural mind.

Satan will then have his opportunity, one last time, for a short season, at the end of those thousand years, to deceive. Those that go along with it will be destroyed. Those that reject it, those who seek God's Holy Spirit, will pass those final tests and be born, even as the firstfruits, into that glorious Kingdom.

Until his removal, Satan does hold that office. The archangel Michael set the very best example that we have recorded for the respect of authority because Satan does hold an office. We don't respect him whatsoever. We know he is a despicable, evil being who has

rejected God in every way, but he holds an office, a principality, a dominion that God has allowed him and we respect the law and the authority of God who allows him to be there. Turn with me to Jude verses 6 and 9. "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation." This, we saw last time, is the rebellion of Satan and all of those one-third of God's holy angels who defected. They left their habitation, which was this earth, that which God had given them to take care of, and rebelled.

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

Because the judgment of the great day has not occurred yet, they are still in that state of restraint now, even on this earth. Verse 9:

Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses [whatever that dispute was], durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

Michael was not willing, because it would have been sin, it would have opposed God's law to accuse Satan, who is the most despicable, the most evil being that lives, Michael was not willing to bring against him a railing accusation. What better example do we have of the significance of the authority that God has instituted in all of His creation and according to His government? How easy is it for us, though, to decide that we think some human being has created some offense to such a degree that it is worthy of us using what we want to call righteous indignation, and then being subject to falling into what God considers a railing accusation—especially within governments, civil governments, those governments that God has allowed to exist, men whom He has put in office, let alone in the church?

You have seen an example for all of these years of a minister who has told you that he never was willing to accuse, even Mr. Armstrong, in spite of the fact that he allowed himself to be swayed, even to change the doctrines. You didn't see a railing accusation towards Mr. Armstrong out of Mr. Cole. No, because he respected the office.

For those who have departed the church, I don't understand it, I really don't. These people who have left make all forms of accusations—they absolutely rail. However, they are not railing about the doctrine. They are not railing about our defection from the truth, they rail on a personal basis about what they claim to be defective character. Those are the signs and the symptoms of one who is led by the very accuser. Railing accusations, brethren, are not a part of God's true people, those that are being led by the Holy Spirit. There is no railing accusation that will come from the Holy Spirit.

Michael did not rail, even against the most despicable one. If anyone had been justified, would it not have been Michael, against Satan? However, it would have been breaking God's law to do so. It would have been breaking His law. So how do we classify any of these men who have manifested this same spirit of accusation in railing and their attempt to sway and deceive?

For me brethren, it was that very example of the fact that Mr. Cole was not willing to engage in that kind of accusation, backlash, which told me there was something different compared to these other ministers. That was significant. So when the most recent ministers left, I applied the same standard. I said, "Look at this letter, look at this personal letter that I have. It is full of these personal attacks trying to sway me to go along with them and support them, claiming that Mr. Cole had become this despicable, evilly oriented being." By the very nature of the fact that those things were written, that this was the basis for their attempt to sway me, I knew it was not of the Spirit of God. It was not the same Spirit that was leading Michael to refrain from railing against Satan. The respect for God-ordained authority is nowhere better shown than that very example in Jude.

Now, let's get into the section, the final part of the fundamental, but that which is most significant: "Satan's power is merely to influence and lead, not to force men arbitrarily against their will." Even though he absolutely has a dominion on this earth, it is not to interfere to forcibly make human beings bend to his will. No, it is a dominion of deception. He has been given license to roam this earth and to carry out all of his nefarious agendas in the lives of human beings, but he cannot force anyone.

If this evil being cannot force a single human being to do his will, how is it that he is so successful? Ever thought about that? How is it that he is so successful when that is not technically a part of the dominion that God has given him? Have you ever heard the old adage, "The Devil made me do it"? You see, that is an attempt to blame Satan. Yes, he is to blame. He will ultimately have all of the sins of the world placed upon his head and yet, Satan cannot make any of us do anything to which we are not willing to give in. He can't force us, so the Devil doesn't make us do it.

We are going to see a whole lot of scriptures that demonstrate that he tempts and deceives and he basically talks us into giving over our will to him and opposing the very laws of God. Genesis 3:1–5:

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the [Eternal] God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

What was his ploy? It wasn't a frontal attack, it wasn't to come and to say to her directly, "You should defy God. I am opposed to God. I hate God. He's cast me down. I

am in a state of restraint right now. He wants you to have eternal life, a position that He didn't offer to me, and that is one of the reasons I hate you so much. So, my goal, see, is to get you tripped up. I am just telling you that up front." No, that's not the way he works. He started by asking a question. Have you ever had anybody try to influence you by asking you a question? That which seems very mild, very innocuous?

Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? 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. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.

What he was saying is, "See, I am on your side, let me tell you something you don't know. I am going to give you some inside information that God didn't share with you." It was almost as if he was saying, "Yes, we know God created everything and He created you and He put you here, but see, in spite of God's incredible power and His authority, He has a hidden agenda that He hasn't told you about. He really doesn't have your best interest at heart. You actually have more capability than you think you do. He hasn't told you everything, but see, I have inside knowledge and I am going to share it with you. I am going to tell you the things that are going to allow you really to have happiness. If you knew what I knew, that which God is trying to keep from you, you would have incredible opportunities because you can be God. You have it inherently within you; you don't really need God to be eternal. All you have to do is eat of the tree and you are going to have all of that knowledge which God has been hiding from you—that which can make you happy and fulfilled and give you incredible power beyond your wildest imagination."

Ye shall not surely die: 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 promised eternal life to Eve. Yes, he said, "Don't believe God's plan. God does not have your best interest at heart. I'm the one that can tell you the real story. He may have the power, but he doesn't have integrity. He is evilly-oriented. He is actually kind of a wicked being; if you only knew him the way I know him," so says Satan. 2 Corinthians 11:3:

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

He is a subtle being, brethren. I think it is very easy for us to forget that, or to not really take it to heart. His power is not that which can force us to do anything. It is because Satan is so subtle, and as we will see in a moment, he appeals to a nature within us that absolutely agrees with him. Therefore, when we hear the voice of Satan, we don't think it

is his voice. We think it is our own intelligence and our own ability to reason. We respond to him and we act on it because it is what we wanted to do anyway. He just gives us the reason, the justification, and everything that we need to act and to deceive ourselves.

". . . as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." I think we forget that too, brethren. The very laws of God, that which leads to eternal life, the road that we have to walk that God has commanded us, it is actually very simple in principle. It is not that difficult to understand and keep straight. Once you have been given knowledge to understand the truth, had your mind opened, had it revealed, given the Holy Spirit, it is simple.

There is no reason why any of us should be subject to that deception, to fall away from the truth. Christ has made it simple, but we forget how simple it is. We begin to think it is more complex. Satan influences us to believe that it is more complex, that there is more to it. So, we forget the simplicity of the very way that God outlined for all salvation. What simplicity? Hold onto the faith once delivered. Don't we get tired of hearing that? Don't we think we have heard it enough? That is the simplicity: judge by the revelation.

All of these other groups out there, made up of people that once were called and understood, have absolutely been led into deception. They have tried to make God's truth more complex, more individualized. You know what is the most simple thing to believe? Jesus Christ delivered the truth through an end-time servant. We heard it, we responded, we accepted it. Hold onto the thing that you believed from the beginning. Don't let anybody make you change it. Growth is not a change in truth. Growth is an expansion upon the same foundation. Don't let anybody talk you into changing that which we received through the ministry of Mr. Armstrong, because it was revelation, it came from Jesus Christ. You don't have to be a technician—you don't have to be a scholar. All you have to do is believe the very fruits of your own life that were manifested from walking in that way which we received from Him. That is simple, isn't it? It's very simple.

If we believed, really believed, that simplicity, then when someone comes along and says, "You know what? Pentecost isn't really on Monday, it's on Sunday, because let me give you this technical explanation why." Or, "Divorce is OK because . . .", and then they go into this technical explanation of the words, *ervah*, *porneia*, and all of this, or other explanations that are opposed to that which we received from the beginning of this work in the last days. Or they make an accusation against the minister that is holding onto the truth by saying, "Well, I know how he appears on the surface, but you only see the public man or the social man. You don't see and know him the way I know him, having seen his real character at other times." No, that is not the simplicity of Christ. That is not the way God works. That is not the criteria that God uses to preserve us in the truth.

It is simple. He says to look at the fruits based upon the doctrine that is being taught. Hold onto the yardstick that will carry you through, no matter what is said and no matter what is done. That's how simple it is, brethren. But Satan says, "It's not that simple, let me tell you the real story. Let me show you what you are missing, what you don't know that is going on, that should make you reject those things that you thought were right." 2 Corinthians 2:10–11:

To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of [God] [or, Paul is saying, by the authority of God], Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

So you see, forgiveness is one of those very critical requirements. We have to be willing to forgive one another—not to hold grudges, not to hold someone else's feet to the fire. Because why? Because withholding forgiveness gives Satan an advantage. It is one of those things that we can do, harboring a grudge toward anyone else, especially within the church, which opens us up to his subtlety. "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." Or, are we?

Or, are we ignorant of his devices? Maybe we are still too ignorant of his subtlety so that we do not recognize its manifestations in our own lives. Maybe we think we are using the mind of God. Maybe we think we are being led by the Holy Spirit. If our fruits are to withhold forgiveness, to criticize, to chastise, to defend the self, I guarantee you, brethren, you are not listening to the voice of God through the Holy Spirit.

When we engage in those things and we find ourselves trapped into that orientation, we are listening to that subtle voice. We know, from the example of Jesus Christ's temptation—He actually went through the temptation of the Devil—that Satan is the tempter. We won't turn to it, but Matthew chapter 4 tells that story. That wasn't just a facade; that wasn't just a random exercise; that was a temptation. Jesus Christ was flesh and blood; He was subject, as we are, to that subtle voice—especially, in a state of weakness physically, after fasting for forty days and forty nights. When physically He should have been at His weakest, yet, He was at His strongest because of His closeness to God.

Satan came and tempted Him according to the weaknesses and the pulls of the flesh—according to the very physical mind that even He had, which will by nature, hone in, and agree with and accept a subtle influence. He resisted because He was perfectly led by the Spirit. He rejected the subtlety of that being. 2 Corinthians 11:13–15:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

He used to be an angel of light. You see, it is as if Satan is trying to recapture past glory. He is trying to have the glory that he had when he was a faithful member of that army of God, holding that position at the very throne. With his subtlety and his influence he is trying to convince us that he is still that angel of light.

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

You have been, you are, and you will continue to be addressed and contacted by those who are the agents of Satan, attempting to influence. They would never claim to be the agents of Satan. They don't believe themselves to be the agents of Satan. They think they are doing God's service. They have probably absolutely convinced themselves that they are approved of God and doing His will. Yet, their whole orientation is to try and get you to despise the ministers of God, to stop your ears from hearing, to reject, to listen to an accusation of a personal nature, a character assassination in order to draw you away from the very simplicity of the way of Jesus Christ.

There are only two spirits, brethren. There are only two spirits: the Holy Spirit and the spirit of Satan, that adversary. The interesting thing is, we were made and created, intentionally, by God, with the very orientation of Satan. We are going to see a couple of scriptures to support that in a moment. That evil does appeal to our flesh. We want the things that Satan is offering because that is a part of our indigenous nature. God made us that way. I don't want to go too far into that because the very next fundamental, number six, is about the nature of man. Then, we will get into that in detail. Let's look quickly at 1 John 3:7–9, 11.

"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous..." Oh, it has something to do with the fruits, I guess. It is not somebody who claims they're righteous. It is not somebody who claims that they are doing such wonderful works, they have helped so many people, and they have sacrificed so much—that they are so righteous in their own relationship with God, that they pray so much, they fast so much. No, "he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning."

That was the moment in time when that glorious, bright, covering cherub, Lucifer, became a devil—the point in time in which sin was found in him. ". . . the devil sinneth from the beginning." "He that committeth sin is of the devil." Have we not all committed sin? Are we not all born with those fleshly minds, which are opposed, in every way, to God? That means, brethren, that in that state of sinning, we are of the Devil. We have something in common with him. We share his orientation. The thing that trips up so many people is when they fail to realize that one fact.

People have the idea that, "Well, there is this evil power of Satan and there is the great goodness of God and in between, there is kind of this neutrality. See, I kind of see myself as a neutral person. I have this power of intellect and ability and I can kind of use that." No. There are only two spirits, brethren: the Holy Spirit and Satan. If you are not being led by one, you are absolutely being led by the other. There is no neutral ground.

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Those who will be born into that kingdom, brethren, will have perfect will, perfect power, and the fullness of the Holy Spirit. They will not sin because they shall will, perfectly, to obey. It is going to take the absolute character of God, proven through the crucible of these human lives, to develop the capacity for that kind of perfect will.

Unfortunately, the last-day servant fell away from that very concept. In the earlier writings you will find they all demonstrate the belief of the original revelation—that man was created with the mind of Satan, an evil orientation that is enmity against God. In later writings, I think even in 1976, a book called, *The Incredible Human Potential*, already showed a departure from that doctrine. You will find in there, the orientation that says, "Little babies are not born with an evil nature. They are born neutral." Then, you saw this concept evolve that said, "No, they just quickly tune into Satan's wavelength, rather than to God's." How many people did not recognize that? It was so subtle. It changed dramatically the whole orientation of the church toward that which is the nature of man. Again, I will get into more detail on that when we get into the next topic. However, that was a huge departure because it denies our very weaknesses and the basis of our weakness.

Why is it that we are so easily influenced by the subtlety of Satan? Why can he lead us, even though he has not the direct power to force us? How is he so successful? It is because we have his nature within us. God made us that way. Yes, from the time we were in the womb and from the time we were born, we have had a nature which is opposed to God, and Satan absolutely plays upon that. If we think we are neutral then we are much more likely to believe and be led into believing that things that we decide to do in our hearts and minds are right, when they are absolutely wrong. Verse 11:

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother

Cain didn't think he was wicked; he was offering a sacrifice before God, wasn't he? Isn't that what he was doing? He was bringing a sacrifice to God. That is not wicked. Didn't God command a sacrifice? "I'm just doing what God told me to do," Cain said. "I'm

sacrificing, I'm showing honor to God." But he was going to do it his way. He wasn't going to bring the lamb that God commanded; he wasn't going to do it in the way that God ordained it—he was going to individualize and personalize his service to God and thereby prove that he was of the spirit of the adversary. That's all Satan wanted to do from the beginning. He just wanted to do it his way too. John 8:41–45:

Ye do the deeds of your father [Christ, not mincing any words]. . . Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me:

Can't get anymore plain than that. But who did Christ think He was, claiming that He was the representative of God—a man standing there in the flesh saying, "If God were your Father, you would love me"? How arrogant that seems in the minds of men, except that, He was of God, and they rejected Him.

If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

Same thing we are telling you, today. We are claiming to be the representatives of Jesus Christ. We are claiming that we are carrying on the message that He gave to a last-day servant. We are not claiming to be anything special of the flesh, only men that have been ordained to carry out that purpose and that will—holding onto what we were given, doing what we were taught, believing what we were baptized into. However, that will sound arrogant too, to those who want to accuse, those who want to use the spirit of Satan, their own minds.

I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil . . .

He didn't say, "You're neutral. I am of God, you are neutral, and then there is the Devil." No, either it is one or the other, brethren. There are only two spirits.

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.

We also know that anyone who is of that faithful ministry that Jesus Christ commissioned, beginning with the twelve, continuing through the Apostolic Age down to the one who was called in the last days, and those that have been ordained today to carry

forth that same commission, that doctrine, will receive the same type of response. They will be denigrated in the very same manner. They will be rejected and called liars by those who are absolutely following their father, the Devil.

The nature of Satan is our very own and that is what makes it very, very subtle. It puts us absolutely at risk. No time to turn to it, but Romans 8:6–9 tells us that the carnal mind is enmity against God. It doesn't say that it's neutral and it has the capability of being either good or bad. No, it says, it "is enmity against God." That is why we are "tuned in" from the beginning to Satan's wavelength. Acts 13:9–10: One more scripture that talks about the subtlety of that adversary:

Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy [Spirit], set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

That is the work of Satan. That is the adversary that is against each one of you even now. If you are holding onto the truth, wherever you are, if you are trying to hold onto the doctrines of God, that adversary wants to find an opening in order to induce you to give it up. What weaknesses are we still harboring, brethren, that make us prey? He will find it because he knows.

How many have we seen that have resisted that subtle influence for years and years and years—they have walked with us faithfully, keeping that original doctrine, believing in it? However, because they harbored some flaw, an orientation, a thought, that they carried with them, even if it didn't manifest itself for so long, because they still harbored it and did not purge it out, Satan ultimately found a way to attack it? What else can explain how people turn 180 degrees in their orientation—who once believed one thing and then talk to them less than six months later, and they're saying something totally opposed? It amazes me. It absolutely amazes me how that can happen.

One man who told me six months ago, he said, "I will tell you the way I told Raymond Cole years ago; as long, Jon Brisby, as you hold onto the original doctrine Mr. Armstrong gave, I will be there to back you up and support you, but the minute you change, I'll be gone." I said, "Thank you very much, I appreciate that. I intend to hold on." I haven't changed a single thing in my orientation in the last six months, but now he's gone. What happened? I don't understand. I did what he said. He thought I was holding onto it then at the Feast of Tabernacles last year. Six months later and he's gone now saying that we've departed.

That is a subtle spirit that can cause a human mind, even one who is faithful for years and years, to turn and adopt error that quickly. Don't underestimate it, brethren. Don't underestimate it. He is a tempter and he is a seducer.

James 4:7–8: "Submit yourselves therefore to God." Here is the key. Here is how we can avoid being scared, how we can avoid being worried that we may fall prey. We don't have to. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." He cannot overtake you. He cannot force himself upon your minds and your hearts. Only if we allow him in can he do his nefarious work.

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

No, brethren, we have to put out our "wishy-washiness," the double-minded elements of our own nature. We have to recommit ourselves to the simplicity of the truth and the way of Jesus Christ. It is simple. If we recognize it as being simple we can avoid falling into all of these traps—these traps that are generated by those who want to make it more difficult. They want to make following God and doing His will so much more complex than it really is. It is simple. 2 Timothy 2:22–26:

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

How many people could have been saved from the apostasy? How many could have been saved from deception, that activity of Satan, if they would have only paid attention to this one admonition? ". . . foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes." Foolish and unlearned questions—those who get caught up in their own scholarship, their own ideas, who are going to interpret words and they are going to come up with justifications to say that we are not required to tithe, to say, as one minister did who left years ago, that we are apostate, that Church of God, the Eternal has been an apostate group from the beginning because we keep Monday Pentecost, but to get to Monday we count the wrong way. Therefore, I guess, it is not a matter of just keeping the right day, you have to balance your head just right when you count it or whatever, or else God still doesn't accept it.

No, striving after words, unlearned questions avoid. It is the domain of Satan. That's how he gets to many, brethren. Appealing to your sense of scholarship, of human reason, to try and disavow the simplicity that came through a last-day servant who was not a scholar. He was absolutely not a scholar. I think it would have detracted significantly from the very revelation and the idea of revelation, if he had been a biblical scholar. If people had

been attracted to him and accepted that way of life because of his human credentials as a scholar, it would have taken away from the very glory of God. It is because that he was not a scholar that it made his ministry all the more phenomenal. Who else could have come up with those principles? He didn't, he was given it as a revelation from Jesus Christ.

But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. . .

This ministry works to give patience, as much as we can—even to those who have difficulties, who are very much fighting themselves, under the influence of this adversary. We have shown patience and we will continue to show patience as long as we are able—as long as there is hope. So, brethren, please don't challenge us. The fact that we are not acting the way some would want—to sanction, to put our foot on, to crucify, to excommunicate or whatever, someone whom somebody else deems has committed a sin great enough, which should make them be kicked out of the church. We are going to continue this administration of mercy and patience.

We are not going to condone sin. We are going to uphold the principles of God, but we are also going to uphold the very nature, the meekness and the mercy manifested by Jesus Christ in giving every opportunity. Those who are opposing themselves, even now, will have an opportunity. If they can get a hold of themselves and seek the Holy Spirit and reject the very nature of Satan, which is pulling at them, and become that new creature.

. . . if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Don't be one of those, brethren, who are taken captive at his will. He cannot take you captive at his will unless you open your mind to it. Unless you begin to say that you have some inside track on knowledge which is more complex than the simplicity of Christ. Either that, or you have some inside information on somebody's character. That is not what God gave us to do.

Finally, brethren, Ephesians 6:11–18:

Put on the whole armour of God [here is how we can be victorious. Here, is how we can absolutely resist being manipulated as a puppet by that evil being], Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world,

against [wicked spirits] in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth . . .

What is first on the list, brethren? Your loins, your tender private parts. Wrap yourself in truth, the truth, the revelation. The truth is what keeps us from being naked. If we don't have truth, we are in open nakedness before the world, subject, in every way, to the influence of Satan. Wrap yourselves, brethren, in the simplicity of the truth—the Faith Once Delivered.

. . . having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness [that which protects all of your organs, your bodily functions, a shield, righteousness. Put on the righteousness that comes from that truth, acting upon it in our lives, producing the fruits], And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace . . .

It is a gospel of peace, brethren. It is not a gospel of agitation. It is not a gospel of war. It is a gospel that tells us how to live life to the fullest and have the blessings that God desires to give to us. If we are experiencing peace, then we are experiencing the blessing of God through the gift of the Holy Spirit. If we are not experiencing peace, guess what? We are experiencing the manifestations of another spirit.

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Why is faith so important? Why is it compared to the shield? When you hear the accusations and those subtle voices, of even your friends and your family members, who approach you and say, "You know what? I have inside information; you really need to know this. I know something about somebody's character. I know this and I know that." When you hear those things, it is your faith that will be your shield. It will repel those things from taking seed in you and making you prey.

. . . wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation [the vision, brethren—remembering what it is all about. Salvation, eternal life—that is why we are here. Take the helmet of salvation], and the sword of the Spirit [yes, it is the Holy Spirit that God has given to you with which you can absolutely cut through all of the evil, as a blade] which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints . . .

We have been given the power, brethren, to fight against that evil being who has been given dominion for a time on this earth. We don't have to be subject to it. All we have to do is recognize that he is the most subtle being that God allowed. Through his deception, he has deceived the whole world. He is being allowed to carry out his nefarious activities according to God's plan, but you have been called to partake of a different spirit. We can absolutely overcome that very being if we will believe that which we received by revelation is the truth, and hold it more dear than anything else.