

Systematic Theology: The Nature of Man

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The Tuesday night gatherings are just a great encouragement to my heart. You know, we're studying things often that would not seem to hold much interest to the men of the world anyway certainly, and the fact that you want to be here and share in this time in God's word is always a great encouragement to me.

So with those things said, tonight is our final installment of systematic theology as it pertains to the doctrine of man. This is our fourth message on this topic. We covered the origin of man in creation, the historical Adam; last time we saw the image of God in man; and next week we plan to return to the Psalms for a little while anyway and tonight's material on the doctrine of man is necessary to round out our biblical understanding of man, of humanity, and if you wanted a title for your notes, you could put "The Nature of Man" as the title for this message. And you could say this, this material that we're going to see tonight gives us a glimpse into what you could say is the unseen realm perhaps, for we see what we would know intuitively if we would just stop long enough to think about it, that there is more to us than our physical bodies, there is more to us and there is more to life than what simply meets the eye. At first glance, the things that we're going to look at here this evening may seem a little bit esoteric, they are not things that you would lead off a big conference with thousands of people attending as a keynote address, but that's all right because what we're doing here is this, we are doing our best, we are trying over the course of time to teach the full counsel of God; to teach all of God's word to all of God's people who will listen anyway. That's what we're trying to do and so we come to what you might say is a little bit of a crevice, a nook and a cranny in God's word here and we want to shine the light on that and take a look at it because it completes our understanding of man and it also will give us some insight into the nature of life. I would go so far as to say that if we took the things of tonight's message seriously, we would be delivered completely from the maddening superficiality and materialistic nature of the world in which we live, the materialistic nature of our times. So tonight what we're going to do is we're going to deal briefly with two matters about the nature of man to round out our discussion. They do not fit neatly together but we're going to join them together for the sake of time.

So let's look first of all for your first point here this evening if you're keeping score at home, the first point for tonight is to address the essential nature of man. The essential nature of man will be our first point for this evening. The essential nature of man. This is

a little bit of a holdover from the image of God that we discussed last time and we ask this question as we sit here tonight: what exactly is the precise nature of man? What is man like? What is he in his component parts, you might say. It is obvious that man has a physical body, he has a material side, a tangible flesh and blood to him. That's obvious but it is also equally obvious for the man who thinks about it at all, that man is more than just flesh and blood. There is an immaterial aspect to him. There is a nonphysical side to man that we need to contemplate and come to grips with.

Now just to give you, there will be some technical terms tonight, some \$0.25 theological words and that's okay. It's okay for us to delve into some technical things from time to time. Christian theologians generally describe man, there are two different camps, that some will see man as a twofold being or a threefold being, depending on the way that they understand the Scripture texts that relate to this. The technical terms are called dichotomy, that prefix di indicating two, dichotomy and trichotomy. A dichotomous theologian would see man as having two parts, a trichotomous would see man as having three parts and let's start with the last one first. The trichotomous position says that man has three aspects to his being. He has three aspects to his being, the trichotomous would tell you: body, soul and spirit. Body, soul and spirit, and they will point you to a couple of passages that would seem to support their position.

You can turn in your Bible, if you would, to 1 Thessalonians 5. For some reason, as you're turning there, I just especially remember this when I was studying systematic theology for the first time in any depth in seminary and I just remember this aspect as something that I found particularly interesting, this matter of the essential nature of man. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 – I guess part of it was I thought it was cool to learn terms that I had never learned before, never heard them from a pulpit. You won't be in that position after tonight. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, the Apostle Paul said,

23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The trichotomist looks at that verse and says, "See, there it is as plain as day, three parts to man." He says, "Body, soul and spirit," or going in the sequence of the text, "Spirit and soul and body. Three parts, what could be more plain or obvious than that?" Along with that they would point you to the book of Hebrews 4, if you want to turn there, a verse that is famous for other reasons as well, given its testimony about the power of the word of God in our lives. Hebrews 4, beginning in verse 12 says – I'll give you a moment, I hear those pages crinkling along. Hebrews 4:12 says,

12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

And so they say, "See, just like Paul said body, soul and spirit, here you see in the text that the soul and spirit can be separated from one another indicating that these are separate aspects of the being of man. So body, soul and spirit," the trichotomist says, "the essential nature of man is therefore threefold." And there are many good men who hold to this position. Some of the men who instructed me in seminary who are now with the Lord held to this position and these good men, these Christian men, these respectable scholars look at these verses and say that they teach that the soul and spirit are separate entities in the man, and what they go on to say is they might explain it this way, that the spirit is that part of man that relates to God and the soul is man's unique personality that enables him to relate to men. So the spirit gives you the vertical dimension of your relationship to God and the soul serves as that which interacts with men. So that's kind of a quick overview of the trichotomous position. There is more to it but we're just trying to give it in a very much survey fashion.

Now by contrast, the dichotomous view says that man is a two-part being. A two-part being, and the way that they will describe it, the way that they will define it is that man has a body and he has an immaterial element that is variously called his soul or his spirit, but those two terms are used interchangeably, not meant to be separate and distinct entities of the man. So that dichotomous says body and immaterial part, material and immaterial. Often the theologians, and this gets a little bit confusing, they'll say body and two parts, body and soul/spirit to indicate that those two terms are kind of joined together.

Now, what can we say about this? We're actually going to get to something that I think has a lot of important implications for us in just a moment here. You should see that the dichotomous and the trichotomous have something very important in common, they both see that man is something more than just a body; he's more than just a physical animal; that there is an important aspect of his being that is unseen, that is not tangible; there is something more to him than the physical operation of the atoms of his human anatomy, and we can see this in some texts that we will take a moment to look at here.

Turn in your Bible to Genesis 35 and I daresay, as I said in the introduction, that if men would simply take this aspect of theology and their own essence and being seriously, it would change the nature of their lives in a way that I intend to hopefully bring out more in just a moment. In Genesis 35, you will recall that Rachel is giving birth and in verse 16,

16 Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and she suffered severe labor. 17 When she was in severe labor the midwife said to her, "Do not fear, for now you have another son." 18 It came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin.

For tonight, all that we want to focus on is here is Rachel in her body giving birth to her son and Scripture says that her soul departed. There was a separation of this immaterial

aspect of her life, of her being, of her essence from her physical body. Her soul left her body and there was now a cleavage between the two and she died.

You can see this in a similar manner in the book of Ecclesiastes 12. Ecclesiastes 12, just after the book of Proverbs. Ecclesiastes 12:6 says,

6 Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; 7 then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

Rachel's soul departed, here Ecclesiastes talks about the moment of death when the spirit returns to God.

And finally in the New Testament, James 2. All we're using these three passages for is to highlight the clear scriptural teaching that there is a distinction between the material and immaterial part of man. James 2:26 says,

26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

A man is alive when his spirit and body are joined together. He is physically dead from an earthly perspective when the spirit departs and his body is left alone. Those of you that have been with a loved one who has passed away, you've seen evidence of this. At the moment of death there is a great change that takes place that is evident right before your eyes.

So man has an immaterial aspect that lives on after his death. Some people say it's a threefold existence, a threefold nature, some say it's a twofold nature. What do we teach here? What is the pastor's position at Truth Community Church? Well, first of all I would say this: this is not something to divide brethren over. This is not something that is a test of faith or a test of fellowship or anything like that. I would just point out a couple of things and sometimes in theological areas where there is not a lot of clear direct scriptural teaching on a matter, sometimes you're left with the view that has fewer problems than the other view. Sometimes you adopt a view and you recognize that you can't explain everything about it, that you can't answer every possible question that is thrown against it, but when you read broadly enough, you realize, "Okay, but the other view has even more serious difficult questions and so I'm left with this particular approach."

I am a dichotomist and here is why. I believe that it is difficult to consistently apply the trichotomist view across all of Scripture and there are a couple of good reasons for that. Sometimes in the Scripture you will find the word "soul" and "spirit" used in the same passage and used in an interchangeable way.

Look at the book of Job 7, Job before the book of Psalms. Job 7 says in verse 11,

11 "Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul."

That last clause is an echo of the middle clause. It's a Hebrew parallelism indicating that it's saying the same thing in just a slightly different way. He's not making a sharp distinction between what he's doing in his spirit and what he's doing in his soul, he is simply saying, "My inner man is overwhelmed and I'm going to vent my bitterness. I'm going to give voice to the bitterness that is inside me." He's not trying to make a sharp distinction between spirit and soul, he uses the terms in what seems to be interchangeable ways.

Mary did the same thing in Luke 1, the Gospel of Luke 1. I know we're bouncing around a little bit here. Luke 1:46 and 47, the text that reminds us that Mary was a sinner just like us. She was not a sinless being contrary to the false teaching of some major religion that we'll let go unnamed for now. Luke 1:46, Mary said after the angel had told her that she would give birth to her own Messiah, Mary said in verse 46,

46 ... "My soul exalts the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

She's using these terms interchangeably. They are an echo of one another. She's not saying, "My soul is doing this and separate and apart, distinct from that, my spirit is doing something else." She's just saying that, "My inner person is overjoyed with the grace of God that has been shown to me. My inner man is filled with happiness, with delight in what has been said to me and, therefore, I rejoice." So these terms are being used interchangeably.

Now, there is another aspect that I think the trichotomous view has a problem with that I think is perhaps even more persuasive. Remember that the trichotomist, as we said, says that, "See, it says body, soul and spirit, three parts," and that sounds fine as far as it goes, but if you take that logic and apply it on into other passages of Scripture, you're left with something that no one holds to.

Look at Luke 10, for example. Luke 10:27 uses four terms to refer to the inner man.

27 ... "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind."

Well, if you start to add these different terms up that are used to describe the inner man, you are left with soul and spirit, heart, mind, you could add the conscience to that. You're just left with this multiplicity of terms and no one is a quad-chotomist or a quin-chotomist or anything like that. That's not the point and so you can't take that logic and apply it consistently across all of the Scriptures or you're left with a realm, with a position that no one holds to. You just can't hold it consistently.

So how do we explain this? How do we look at these verses where they see three? How do we describe that? How would we understand that? The biblical idea here is not in those texts, is not to present mutually exclusive aspects to the nature of man but simply to emphasize the totality of the man. Body, soul and spirit, you get the idea we're talking about the whole man here, as in Luke 10:27, all of your heart, soul, strength and mind. Love God with all of your whole inner man. The idea is that there would be a complete devotion, a complete sanctification taking place and so it's an idea of totality, not separate elements that is being emphasized there. So we believe that the best way to describe man is that he is a material and an immaterial being. Body and soul, body and spirit if you like that term better, and somehow this body and soul function together while he is alive on earth to make him a unified being. There's a unity. There's an interplay between the inner and the outer man. You know what it's like. If a man is sad inside, his countenance shows it, right? If he's joyful inside, his body responds and there is a radiance to his countenance as a bride on her wedding day, you know, she's happy inside and she beams as a result. There is some kind of interaction there that takes place that would be hard to quantify, the idea being that man has an inner and outer being that form a unity.

Look at Matthew 4:4 and actually as you're turning there, I want to give you a point of application for what this means that I think has some significant ramifications for it if we would only think about it. The fact that man is an inner and an outer being, he is a material and an immaterial being, would affect the way that a man lives and what his goals in life are. It would affect and apply to the way parents deal with their children, even. You say, "Really? Wow. No kidding. I didn't see that coming." Well, think about it this way: we all know parents, perhaps we've had parents, perhaps we've been parents, who were simply satisfied in their parenting to provide for the material aspects of their family's well-being, simply content to provide for the material well-being of their children and so they'll say things like, "Well, I gave myself over to my career and I was gone a lot but I was trying to provide for my family." Whatever. You know, my point is not to critique parents here, simply to point something out. If people, if parents understood, "No, do you know what? My child has an outer man, yes, and I need to provide for that, but I also understand that there is an inner aspect to my child, there is an inner aspect to his nature that I need to nurture, that I need to develop, that I need to feed, that I need to cultivate. It's not simply feeding his body, it's a matter of feeding his soul as well." That would change parenting dramatically to realize, "I need to tend to that inner aspect of his life as well as his tangible, physical, material needs." A parent with a fully informed view of the nature of man suddenly looks at his child in a different way and says, "I need to provide for his heart as well as for his tangible needs."

Let's apply it in a different realm, think about it in a different realm. People are constantly shocked, aren't they, when someone who is extremely wealthy dies a miserable death or you have a wealthy person of fame and status that commits suicide, as has been so often in the music world and the realm of entertainment which is so shallow and empty and really illustrates the point that we're trying to make here, I believe. They are shocked. "The guy had everything. Do you not know the mansion that this guy had? The fame that he had?" Well, if man was only an outer being, if he was only a physical material being, you couldn't explain why having everything he would be dissatisfied with life. When you

understand that there is an inner nature to man and you realize that that aspect of his life has been shriveled up and neglected, that the outer things cannot feed the inner man, then all of a sudden you say, "Oh, this makes a whole lot more sense to me. I can understand this theologically. I'm not surprised when a man of great wealth or a man of fame and fortune and stature in the world's eyes, finds that it's worthless, finds that it doesn't satisfy. I think it's tragic that he didn't turn to Christ in order to find the answer to the hole in his heart," so to speak, "but I can understand it when I realize, I look at the nature of man and say there are two aspects here. The neglect of the soul to the only attention of the outer man and that which feeds the flesh, obviously that's doomed for failure." Man has an inner being that needs to be, that must be addressed.

Going even further and pressing it a bit further, isn't it true that if we were more mindful of this, more mindful of the inner man, more mindful of the soul that lives on after the body dies, isn't it obvious that if people realized and took seriously the fact they had an eternal soul, there was an essential part of their nature that was going to live on after it departed from their body like the soul of Rachel lived on after her death, isn't it obvious that any thinking man who is not blinded by Satan or blinded by his own sin, any thinking man would say, "I need to tend to that eternal soul. I need to make sure and take care of its well-being. If it lives on after my body, then it must be more important than my body itself." And yet people won't take the time even to crack open the word of God because they are dead in their trespasses and sins.

So you see, this has a lot of implications when you understand this inner nature of man. It would affect the way you view parenting. It affects the priorities that you have in life. It explains why people can have it all and still be miserable because they have an inner being that has not been fed, that has not been nurtured, that has not been supplied with the grace of God. The essential nature of man points us in all of these directions and I think, if I can just step beyond just one step further, there have been books that have been published by excellent authors, excellent things on the nature of salvation and things like that that I'm very grateful for but I really think that this area of the teaching on man, the doctrine of man, the doctrine of anthropology, is an underemphasized element of Christian theology. You don't hear a whole lot of teaching about this but it's only when you understand that man has been created by God in the image of God and that that is what he has fallen from, it is only when you have some kind of understanding and comprehension of that that you realize how desperately bad the fall of man was. It's one thing to tell humanity that it's sinful and that's a good thing to preach and proclaim, but you can only understand the loss, you can only understand the depth of the fall when you understand what man was originally created to be, the lofty position that he was created to hold, and that he forfeited that with his sin, that he has fallen from that and that he has marred the image of God. I think we need these things in order to give a fullness and robustness to our theology so that when we talk about sin and we talk about salvation, we realize that we are talking about restoring, regaining something very valuable that's been lost by sin. So we'll leave that for another time and hopefully someone down the road will hear that and think that that's worth pursuing even more. For tonight, we need to move on.

We talked about the essential nature of man and now point 2, we're going to talk about the origin of the soul. The origin of the soul. Where did this inner man come from, in other words? Where do our souls come from and Christian theologians wrestle with this question as well. Now, there are two views here as well that we'll discuss tonight. We'll leave to the side those rare individuals who have talked about a preexistent soul. We're not going there tonight. There are two primary views in Christian theology about the origin of the soul in man that actually has a lot of implications for what we believe about abortion, even. Two primary views about the origin of the soul in man. Where did your soul come from? Have you ever contemplated that? Where did this inner man of mine come from? You understand that your physical body came from the procreative act of your parents. We get that part, but you think about the physical aspect, where did this nonphysical aspect come from? There are two primary views. The first view is known as the creationist view and the second view is known as the traducian view. Traducian or traducianist view. It will be quite a while probably before we get down to terms this technical in the future.

Now when we talk about the creationist view, I want to encourage you and to help you and to clarify for you, especially those of you who are involved with that creation ministry down the road, this view when we are talking about the origin of the soul, is not to be confused with the issues surrounding six day creation. This is something distinct. This is a different aspect. The word "creationist" is being used in a different way in the context of this discussion than it is when we look at Genesis 1. The creationist view holds this: it says that each soul of a man is a direct creation of God and the time of that creation cannot be precisely determined. In other words, God directly creates a soul within the fetus within the womb, perhaps some have said, at the moment of birth the soul is imparted by God to the physical being, and so this is called the creationist view because it is seen as a direct act from God and there are about five texts that they will look at. We'll only look at a couple.

You can write down Zechariah 12:1. Zechariah 12:1 is a common verse that is used in support of this position. Zechariah 12:1, back in the minor prophets, in that portion of your Bible where the pages still stick together. Zechariah 12:1. Marissa thought it was funny, at least. Zechariah 12:1 says,

1 ... Thus declares the LORD who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him,

He forms the spirit of man within him, Zechariah 12:1.

Then in Hebrews 12:9 it says, it refers to God as the Father of spirits. Hebrews 12:9, God is the Father of spirits.

9 ... we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

That's the creationist view, a couple of texts that they rely on, the idea being that God creates the soul directly himself without using other means, without mediate means being used. Now, there are a lot of solid theologians, again, who hold this view like Charles Hodge in his systematic theology, volume 2, pages 70 and 71, so we would be wise not to lightly dismiss this view, but there are difficulties with it. There are difficulties with it. First of all, Scripture says in Genesis 2 that God ceased his creative activities, Genesis 2:1 through 3, God ceased his creative activities.

Now, there is another aspect not necessarily so directly biblical but one that we need to realize has a great impact on viewing it this way. If God directly creates each soul without regard to the inheritance of traits or does it distinct from and separate from the parents' procreative act and that's how God does it and he creates the soul directly and that soul is separate from the parents who gave life to the physical aspect of the baby, if that's the case, how do you explain then the fact that family traits under this view, how do you explain that family traits are passed down from generation to generation? Not simply physical traits but there are tendencies of personalities that are also passed along, how do you explain that if there is no physical connection to the origin of the soul with its parents? Also, along with this, David said in Psalm 51:5, he said, "in sin my mother conceived me." The soul is sinful. If God created the soul and according to this view the soul did not come from the parents, where does his sinful nature come from? Are we making God the author of the sinful nature of the soul with this view? Those are the challenges and like I said last time, sometimes you're left with a view that has less difficult questions to answer even if you can't answer them all. Those are pretty difficult views for the creationist view of the origin of the soul.

A second view, the second view that I mentioned is known as the traducianist view. The traducianist view and that's another \$0.25 theological word that means this: it means to pass on by transmission. In other words, the parents transmit the soul to their child. Somehow in a way that we can't understand, the parents pass a soul onto their children in procreation. So according to this view, men derive their souls as well as their bodies from their parents and proponents of this view have a few different texts that they look at.

Turn first in your Bibles to Acts 17:26. I'll get there eventually too. The pages that I crinkling now are in my own Bible. Acts 17:26. We'll go ahead and start in verse 24, Acts 17. Paul is speaking on Mars Hill and says to the pagans who are listening to him,

24 The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

The key part here being that it was from one man that all the nations of mankind came from and that God had appointed that man and then from that man through the act of procreation, the nations were developed. But it came from the man rather than directly

from God. It was through the man that this multiplication of humanity came from. Made from one man. From one man, the source being man, not God directly himself.

Romans 5:12 in a similar way, Romans 5:12 says,

12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--

So Adam sinned and his sin spread throughout all of humanity because he was the originator of the human race.

Then finally in Hebrews 7:9 and 10. You can turn there with me. Hebrews 7:9 and 10, and as I said, there are good Reformed theologians on both sides of this question. This is not something to get bent out of shape on one way or the other. Hebrews 7:9 and 10 says,

9 And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, 10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

Saying that Levi was in the loins of Abraham before he was born, indicating that Levi was on the end of the transmission of physical life. He was not Abraham's son. Abraham had Isaac and Ishmael and then Jacob and then Jacob leading to others. Here the idea being that there were generations in the loins of Abraham before they were yet born. Traducianists see this as being an indication that our souls and our bodies as well come from our parents.

Now what can we say about this? The appeal of the traducian view in my opinion, my opinion, this is, "Thus saith Don," the appeal of the traducian view in my opinion is that it preserves the unity of the human race. Rather than having billions of direct creations by God that are unrelated to one another, there is this common connection through the propagation of both body and soul from our first parents that are passed down through the generations to give us our common unity in the human race. This explains inherited depravity. The reason that your children are sinful is not that you can blame God on it, they got it from you. You passed on your sin nature when you propagated their souls as well as their body. And the traducian view also accounts for the obvious passage of inherited traits from parents to children. But how does this happen? How when the male and female come together in a physical act does a nonphysical being come into being? How does the physical act produce a nonphysical part of man's nature? We really don't know. We really can't explain that. There is a limit to our knowledge on it and that also tells us something. The best of theological minds of which I am not one, the best of theological minds have looked at what God has revealed in his word and they are left at the limits of their knowledge. They look at these things and come to different conclusions. There is a realm of uncertainty about the origin of our souls that is found as you study this in greater detail than what we've looked at here tonight.

Think about what that means. Think about what this means for what we think we know. We have, you and I have this eternal soul that is going to live forever. It's going to be separated from our body if the Lord tarries. One day it will be rejoined with a resurrected body but we have this eternal soul of infinite value and we can't even say definitively where it came from. Isn't that crazy? In one sense it's crazy to realize that the most important aspect of our being, we can't explain clearly and definitively where it came from. That's not a lack of God's word because God's word is perfect, it simply shows the limits of our knowledge and it shows that there are some really fundamental basic things that we just don't know and can't explain and where that leaves us is humbled. In all of our great expansion of technological knowledge and in different ways we've come to, you and I have come to different levels of expertise in our chosen fields, be it music or construction or other areas of expertise, business expertise, and we can kind of get carried away, puffed up on what we do know but then we look and we realize and we study Scripture carefully and we say there are the most fundamental questions that we don't know the answer to. What theology then teaches us is it brings us to the outer reaches of what God has revealed and we study that to the best of our knowledge and try to grasp and deal with it as best and honestly as we can, and yet we step back from that and we are humbled and we realize there are so much basic things that I don't know, that I can't explain, that God knows but that are beyond my ken, that are beyond my knowledge and it's one other dimension that should drive us to a posture of humility before God.

We are humbled in so many different ways in the presence of God, aren't we? We run through this list pretty often. It's rarely in my notes, it's usually just spontaneous because it's so embedded in the way that we think. God is the uncreated Creator. Here we are a creature humbled before him. God had no beginning, will have no end. We had a point of time where our origin began in our existence, our eternal existence is derivative of him. He is unmade, we are made. He is the Creator, we are the creature. He is holy and sinless and we are very sinful and fallen. He is the God of all knowledge. He knows all that there is to know about everything and he knows all of the potentialities of things that don't even exist and we can't even explain and know and see where our souls come from. The most essential part of our being, we can't even point to something and say this is where it starts, this is how it happens. We can't explain that and it just illustrates for us again that God is great and we are small. God is magnificent and we are creatures dependent upon him. There is this part of us that will live on forever in heaven or in hell and yet the best minds of Christian history can't tell us exactly what it's like or where it came from. Is it soul and spirit? Is it soul/spirit? Did God make it? Did our parents give it to us? Flip a coin.

Beloved, understand that this does not undermine our confidence in God's word. We can know, we know the realm in which these things happen, we just can't explain it all out and answer every final question that would come into our minds, the point being that God has given us everything that we need to know, he's given us enough to know that we need to take the immaterial, the spiritual aspect of life seriously; that we have a soul that needs redemption in Christ because it's going to live on forever in heaven or hell; and those are the things that capture our attention that we give and devote our greatest time to and yet we realize that I can't press to the ends and answer every question. We are humbled by it.

We are humbled by the infinite mind of God, the magnificence of his revelation, and we accept the fact that there are some mysteries about our existence that we can't fully explain and that leads us not to question God's word. We never never never go there. We never ever ever ever doubt the sufficiency of God's word. Rather we look and say how small and finite and ignorant I am and, therefore, we turn with a renewed sense of dependency on God and on his word and we trust him for the things that we don't know and that we don't understand.

Where does all of this stuff about the origin of the soul and the essential nature of man lead us? Beloved, it should lead you to a renewed reverence for God, a renewed reverence and a renewed fear of the infinite basis of his knowledge, and also it should bring you to a place of renewed gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ. When you realize how weak and finite your knowledge is, how weak and finite the best of minds are to be able to explain the most fundamental aspects of existence, how grateful you and I ought to be that we who are unable to save ourselves, who wouldn't even know the first place to begin to save ourselves if we could and we can't, how grateful we are the one who knows all things became Incarnate in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, went to Calvary to shed that perfect innocent blood for the salvation of your souls, the remission of your sins, and that he who knows all, he who paid it all, has taken you into his family, has redeemed you and saved you and you can rest securely in him knowing that the questions that you can't answer, he can; knowing the sins that you could not remit, he did. How blessed we are to be in the Lord Jesus Christ here tonight. For those of you that do not know him, he made a blood atonement for sinners just like you. I invite you to receive him by faith tonight.

Let's pray together.

Great are you, our God, our Lord and our King, and we offer our praise to you here this evening. There are aspects of our being that we cannot understand, that we cannot explain in full but, Lord, you have given us enough to make us accountable, you have given us enough to see that there is a physical and an immaterial aspect to our being and that we have a soul that will live on forever and whatever the particulars of the origin of that soul may be, that soul needs Christ, it needs redemption. Father, it needs to be fed by your word because man does not live by bread alone, it's not simply the physical sustenance that gives man life, but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, Father, responding in our inner man to that word that you have revealed. Bless us as we go. May we come out with a renewed sense, may we go out with a renewed understanding and sense of purpose that we will cultivate the inner man, that we will seek to grow in Christ, to grow in the grace and knowledge of him and, Father, we pray that your Spirit would be swift to bless us and help us as we seek that important aspect of our signification. In the name of Christ our Lord, we pray. Amen.

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