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CAN SOMEONE SIN WITHOUT BREAKING THE LAWS OF GOD?

What does the word “sin” really mean? Do you know? How do you determine the meaning of this word “sin”? Does the Bible define “sin” for us? Should we be searching the Bible for “sin is ...” statements? Or will that give us only a part of the answer?

TWO DIFFERENT APPROACHES

There are two ways we can approach this matter of establishing the correct meaning for the word “sin”.

Approach #1 is that we **start out from the present** and work our way back into the past, to eventually get to the time when only God the Father and Jesus Christ existed. With this approach towards understanding the concept of sin, we start out with sin not only already existing, but actually being well-entrenched within all of God’s creation. With this approach we start out with a well-established meaning for our English word “sin”. With this approach **we start out by looking for “sin is ...” statements** in the Bible, and then we extrapolate back to why God’s servants provided these specific “sin is ...” statements in the Bible.

Typically most people don’t actually do that last part. Once they have found some “sin is ...” statements, **they don’t enquire any further**. For them the “sin is ...” statements are all they need. They make no effort to find out **why** the New Testament writers (i.e. the apostles Paul, James and John) presented the specific “sin is ...” statements which are recorded in the letters these men wrote.

The problem or weakness with this approach is that, while biblical “sin is ...” statements are most certainly true and correct, they don’t necessarily present **the complete picture** for “sin”. The concept of “sin” may include some things that are simply not covered by any of our biblical “sin is ...” statements. This possibility is something most people have never considered. Shortly we’ll look at some statements that illustrate the point I am trying to explain here.

That brings us to the next approach.

Approach #2 is that we **start out from the distant past**, before this universe was created, before the angels were created, when only God the Father and Jesus Christ existed. With this approach we start out where **sin does not yet exist anywhere**, where God has not yet even coined the word “sin”. “Sin” has not yet been defined by God. We start out with totally pure and sinless conditions, and we then work our way forward to our present sin-saturated world.

In that process we then establish a meaning for the word “sin”, but only after we have examined the distant past. With this perspective we **initially ignore all biblical “sin is ...” statements**, because we

start from a position before any of those specific statements would have had any meaning. We only consider those biblical statements once we have come down to the time when those statements take on any meaning (i.e. once human beings are on the scene).

The advantage with this approach is that our understanding of “sin” is not restricted or confined by the meaning we today assign to our English word “sin”. Our understanding is not restricted by the very-much-later recorded “sin is ...” statements. This approach enables us to examine **what God actually had in mind** when God originally coined the word for “sin”, long before any of the New Testament writers presented us with the various “sin is ...” statements.

Instead of initially looking for “sin is ...” statements, with this approach we start out by examining the Hebrew word that God Himself used to convey the concept of “sin”. That will give us information that precedes the existence of all New Testament “sin is ...” statements. And all New Testament “sin is ...” statements can then be examined from the perspective of how God Himself originally identified sin in the Old Testament. We then also consider the New Testament Greek word for “sin”.

Let’s start this process by looking at our English word “sin”.

THE ESTABLISHED MEANING OF THE ENGLISH WORD “SIN”

Our English word “sin” has an established meaning. When we hear the word “sin” it has a specific meaning to us, independent of what the biblical Hebrew and Greek words for “sin” may mean. We know what the English word “sin” means to us.

For example, the 1971 Unabridged Edition of **Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary** defines the word “sin” as follows:

- any voluntary transgression of a religious law or moral principle;
- moral depravity;
- wickedness;
- iniquity;
- an offense in general;
- a transgression;
- a breach.

This Dictionary then also provides the following **synonyms** for “sin”:

in righteousness,

- wickedness.

Now what do all these definitions and all these synonyms have in common? They all imply **a sense of guilt** on the part of the person who commits sin. They all imply **certain unacceptable actions**. The sinner is **doing something that is wrong**.

When we look **on the Internet** for explanations for our word “sin”, then we can find many statements like:

- Sin is **an immoral act** considered to be a transgression against divine law.

- Sin is **an offense** against religious or moral law, **an action** that is or is felt to be highly reprehensible.

- Sin includes a failure to do what is right. But sin also offends people; **it is violence and lovelessness toward other people, and ultimately, rebellion against God**, etc.

That should suffice to establish what the English word “sin” means in our world today. Now one thing emerges very clearly from all of these discussions of sin. And that is that with our understanding of what “sin” means:

You cannot possibly be sinning if you are not actually doing something wrong, or have some kind of immoral attitude. You cannot be innocent of any transgressions and yet be a sinner.

To us this word “sin” **always** implies some form of guilt.

That is **the understanding with which we start out** when we think about “sin”. The sinner has done something (or neglected to do something) that incurs guilt before God. And this understanding is then reinforced in our minds when we read that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4).

With this understanding for the word “sin” we then work backwards in time. We’re not seeking to determine what the word “sin” should actually mean. We have already decided that matter. We are simply looking to confirm and to endorse the meaning for “sin” that we have already established. And then we explain every reference to sin in the Bible in terms of some or other transgression. But in this process before we examine any reference to sin, we already have a fixed meaning for this word “sin” in our minds.

The definitions for our English language word “sin” represent our starting point for any examination of “sin”.

But let's try the other approach. Let's go back to the earliest biblical references to sin, back in the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures.

THE HEBREW WORD FOR "SIN"

The very first time sin is mentioned is in Genesis 4:7, where God was speaking to Cain.

If you do well, shall you not be accepted? and if you do not well, **sin lies at the door**. And unto you *shall be* its desire, and you should rule over it. (Genesis 4:7)

The Hebrew word here translated "sin" is "chatah". This Hebrew noun is derived from the Hebrew verb "chatah". **This verb "chatah" represents the source for the concept of "sin"**. God is the Speaker of these statements in verse 7. So the Hebrew words "chatah" (noun) and "chatah" (verb) present the meaning God Himself attached to the word "sin".

Does that make sense?

Now while Adam and Eve had sinned in eating the forbidden fruit, the word "sin" is not actually used in Genesis in the discussion about Adam and Eve. So here in dealing with their first son Cain we actually find the first reference to the word "sin" in the human realm.

However, the word for "sin" is also used by God Himself in reference to Satan's actions, which took place long before the creation of Adam and Eve. This use of "sin" is recorded in the Book of Ezekiel.

By the multitude of your merchandise they have filled the midst of you with violence, and **you have sinned**: therefore I will cast you as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. (Ezekiel 28:16)

Here "you have sinned" is a translation of the Hebrew verb "**chatah**".

So we see that God had established the concept of "sin" before God even created human beings. In fact, God's establishment of the concept of "sin" was God's direct response to what Satan had done. **God expressed what Satan had done with the verb "chatah"**.

So what does this Hebrew word for the concept of sinning actually mean?

The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Dictionary defines "chatah" as "to sin, to miss, **to miss the goal or path of right and duty, to miss the mark**", etc. The imagery embodied in the Hebrew verb "chatah" goes back to **an archer** aiming his arrow at a specific target and then **missing the target**.

Other Biblical Hebrew dictionaries agree with this meaning for “chatah”. The idea is that God expects us to hit the target every single time. And when we miss the target, then we are “sinning”.

So note!

To tell us what God means by “sin”, God used the picture of an archer aiming at a specific target. God requires the archer to hit that target every time! And **when the archer does not hit that target, then he is sinning**.

Now forget about Robin Hood shooting his arrow at 30 paces right into the middle of the bullseye. A much more correct picture is having the archer using an ancient bow, without any distance calibration, to shoot from **100 yards** away at a target that is **one inch by one inch square**.

Yes, some skilled archers may **very occasionally** actually hit that small target. But that will be a fluke. And no human archer is capable of hitting that target every time, and never missing that target. So **even the very best archers will be “sinning” most of the time** because they cannot consistently hit that small target.

That is a far more accurate picture for understanding the concept of sin.

Today people don't fight with bows and arrows. So for our age a different picture might be more meaningful. Let's consider **a golf analogy**.

Picture an 18-Hole Golf Course, where all 18 Holes are par 3s, and all holes range in distance from 180 - 220 yards. With this picture the definition of sin is: every player who does not hit a Hole-in-1 **for all 18 holes** is sinning.

Now some professional golfers may very occasionally hit one or even two Holes-in-1 on such an 18-Hole course. But no human golfer can ever hit 18 consecutive Holes-in-1. So in this analogy **even the very best golfers will be sinning most of the time**.

For us human beings the impossibility of never sinning (i.e. never missing the target, or never missing a Hole-in-1) is spelled out by the Apostle Paul.

For **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God; (Romans 3:23)

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that **all have sinned**: (Romans 5:12)

When we talk about defining sin, understand that we are not talking about a target that is easy to hit. We

are in fact talking about a target that is impossible for any human being to hit every time. And so all people sin.

THE VITAL DIFFERENCE

Now there is **an extremely important difference** between our English language definitions for the word “sin”, and the meaning for “sin” which is presented by an archer not hitting a very small target at a great distance (or a golfer not hitting 18 consecutive Holes-in-1).

Put another way, there is an extremely important difference between how we define the word “sin” in English, and **how God defines the word “sin”** through the archer-missing-a small-target image.

Can you recognize that distinction?

Here is what we need to recognize:

With our English language definitions for “sin” it is impossible to have any sin if there are no transgressions present. The sinner did something wrong (or neglected to do something that is right) that is bad or evil or immoral. The sinner is guilty of something that is evil. That is what our English word “sin” implies.

But that is not true for the Hebrew imagery!

When anyone does something that is wrong, then that individual is assuredly guilty of sin. Absolutely! But here is the point:

The man who shoots an arrow at the target, can have a good attitude towards God; he can have no intention whatsoever of breaking any law of God; and he can really be trying his best to hit that small target.

But he still misses the target because he doesn't have the skill or the ability to hit that target consistently. With him there is no problem of morality; he just doesn't have what it takes.

People usually don't fail exams because they have a bad attitude. They can have a great attitude, but they lack the knowledge or the abilities to pass the exam. And so they fail. Their reasons for failure are not moral or ethical.

They just don't have what it takes!

So when we consider God's own use of the word “sin”, here is what we need to grasp:

1) Every transgression is assuredly sin.

2) Whenever there is any guilt, then there is also sin.

3) But in addition, **sometimes** there may not be any transgression, **sometimes** there may not be any guilt, and yet there may still be sin present.

An archer who does his best to hit a difficult target does not have a wrong attitude and he has no intention of transgressing. He does not have any guilt. But he still misses the target. The target is after all very difficult to hit consistently.

Let's look again at Romans 3:23 and notice how the Apostle Paul sums up our human condition.

For all have sinned, and **come short of** the glory of God; (Romans 3:23)

The dictionary form of the Greek verb translated "come short of" is "hustereo", derived from the adjective "husteros". The Greek verb "hustereo" means: to fall behind, to lack, to fail to achieve. But it has nothing to do with in any way "transgressing".

"Lacking something" or "falling behind" does not necessarily involve any guilt or transgression or moral condemnation. Applied to us human beings, it simply means that we just don't have what it takes, whether we are guilty of some transgression or not. People guilty of transgressions fall short, and people not guilty of transgressions can also fall short.

At this point I should mention that the **New Testament Greek verb** translated as "to sin" (i.e. "hamartano") **has the identical meaning** as the Hebrew verb "chatah". So in New Testament Greek the word for "sin" also refers to "an archer missing a difficult-to-hit target". So Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek are in full agreement about the meaning of "sin". Both languages convey the same image.

So Romans 3:23 in effect tells us:

"For all have missed the target, and fallen short of the glory of God."

Yes, those who transgress are certainly guilty of sin. But this statement in verse 23 also includes the possibility, though not necessarily the probability, that some people may not actually be guilty of some transgression, and yet have sin to give account for.

Can you understand that?

Falling short is not the same as transgressing.

So here in a nutshell is the difference between our English word “sin” and the biblical words (i.e. in both Hebrew and Greek) for “sin”.

1) Our English word “sin” always implies some form of transgression, and therefore some form of guilt.

2) The Hebrew and Greek words for “sin” most certainly include all the meanings of our English word “sin”. But in addition, the Hebrew and Greek words translated as “sin” also include some things that are not covered by the meanings we attach to the English word “sin”.

The biblical words for “sin” have a **greater, more far-reaching application** than our English language word “sin”.

That’s what we can learn when we start out with God’s use of the word for “sin”, and then work forwards to our present time, rather than starting out with the meanings that have already been attached to our English language word “sin”, and then trying to work by going back from the present into biblical times.

I believe that starting out with God’s use of the word translated as “sin” is the correct perspective for us to use in our quest for a correct understanding of everything that is “sin” in the eyes of God.

With this foundation let’s now look at all our New Testament “sin is ...” statements.

1 JOHN 3:4

Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for **sin is the transgression of the law**. (1 John 3:4)

With this “sin is ...” statement we then draw our own conclusions. And from this statement we deduce that sin must always involve guilt on the part of the sinner (or a rejection of God’s laws, if we translate the Greek text as “lawlessness”). For sin to be present some law must have been transgressed. And if none of God’s laws have been transgressed, then there cannot be any sin, is how we reason. This verse presents an objective assessment that applies to all people.

And this statement in 1 John 3:4 is certainly true and correct. But it doesn’t answer one extremely important question. That question is:

In addition to transgressions of the law, **is there anything else that is also “sin”?**

Are there sins which are not covered by the statement in 1 John 3:4? In other words, is 1 John 3:4 a correct but incomplete definition for “sin”? Let’s look at the next statement, in this same letter.

1 JOHN 5:17

All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. (1 John 5:17)

Since righteousness is defined by keeping all of God’s commandments (see Psalm 119:172), therefore this statement basically says that all commandment-breaking is sin. So this statement is simply another way of stating the essence of 1 John 3:4. It adds nothing new to our specific investigation regarding the meaning of “sin”.

Let’s look at the next statement?

ROMANS 14:23

And he that doubts is damned if he eats, because *he eats* not of faith: for **whatsoever is not of faith is sin.** (Romans 14:23)

Here we have another clear and unambiguous statement regarding what is sin. This statement applies to people who defile their own conscience by doing something that their own conscience tells them they should not be doing.

QUESTIONS:

What does this “sin is ...” statement have to do with 1 John 3:4? What does this statement have to do with transgressing the laws of God? What do the two “sin is ...” statements we have looked at so far have in common?

ANSWER:

Nothing at all! These two “sin is ...” statements have nothing in common, apart from both defining specific types of sin. Romans 14:23 has **absolutely nothing to do with the law of God**, and yet it describes a certain sin. The law of God is simply not a consideration in the Romans 14:23 statement.

Can you see that?

Romans 14:23 is addressed to **how our own conscience evaluates our own actions**, and whether any of God’s laws have been transgressed or not is immaterial with this specific “sin is ...” statement.

So someone can have a guilty, compromised conscience because the person broke one or more of God's laws. But the person can also have a guilty, compromised conscience regarding things that have **not** violated any of God's laws.

In this latter situation the person may believe that some actions violate a law of God, when in fact those actions in themselves don't break any of God's laws (e.g. the moderate consumption of wine and other alcoholic drinks). But because in his own mind, this person **erroneously thinks** that his actions amounted to breaking a law of God, and he engaged in that action anyway, therefore before God **this person is guilty of sin**. That is what Paul is telling us here in Romans 14:23. The person compromised his conscience.

In this situation it is not the action that is sin. It is how that person's mind evaluates those actions that makes it a sin for **that person** to engage in **that action**.

So Romans 14:23 identifies a category of sins that does not necessarily involve a transgression of God's laws. The deciding criterion for this category of sins is not the law of God; for this category of sins the deciding criterion is the person's own mind. Is someone actually tempted to do something which the person himself believes is wrong in the sight of God, even when it turns out that the "something" is actually quite acceptable in God's sight (e.g. drinking a glass of wine)?

So Romans 14:23 shows that someone can be guilty of sin without breaking any of God's laws.

Let's look at one more "sin is ..." statement.

JAMES 4:17

Therefore to him that knows to do good, and does *it* not, **to him it is sin**. (James 4:17)

This is one more clear "sin is ..." statement. These people don't necessarily defile their consciences, because they don't necessarily feel guilty for not having done some specific good deed. They just lack the motivation and/or the understanding to do the good which it is in their power to do. They are content to let other people do the good which they themselves could have done.

And for that attitude they are before God guilty of sin. That is what the Apostle James is telling us.

So we ask the same questions as before:

What does this specific "sin is ..." statement in James 4:17 have to do with 1 John 3:4? What does this statement have to do with transgressing the laws of God? What do these two "sin is ..." statements which we are here looking at have in common?

ANSWER:

As with Romans 14:23, so also James 4:17 has **nothing in common** with 1 John 3:4, except that these two verses both identify certain sins. But James 4:17 has nothing to do with transgressing the law of God, and yet it describes a category of sins.

Two people can be aware of the same situation that represents an opportunity to do some good, and neither one actually does the good they could have done. Yet for one of those two men not doing good in that situation could mean that the person is guilty of sin, while the other person in the same situation is not guilty of sin.

How does that work?

The difference lies in **the way the minds of these two people work**. The one person understands that he himself could do the good (e.g. help someone in a difficult situation) and that he has the ability to do so; while the other person also recognized the difficult situation, but is totally clueless as to what he could possibly do to help in that situation.

The one person knows what he could do in that situation, and the other person doesn't know what he could do.

One clear illustration for this category of sin is presented in the parable of **Lazarus and the rich man** (Luke 16:19-31). There is no hint that the rich man was breaking any of God's laws. He wasn't stealing, lying, committing adultery, etc. The rich man's only fault, which Jesus Christ chose to present in this parable, was that he was aware of the beggar's near-starvation status, and he could very easily have given the beggar a generous portion of good food every day. But he didn't do that. The rich man was fully aware of the beggar's desperate circumstances, yet he did nothing at all.

This lack of helping the starving beggar amounts to sin in the eyes of God. The rich man did nothing wrong as far as breaking any of the ten commandments is concerned. But the rich man could very obviously have helped the beggar, but didn't do so. His sin is the one the Apostle James spells out in James 4:17.

So now we should be able to recognize that someone can indeed "miss the target" and be guilty of sin, without actually having broken any of God's laws. James 4:17 and Romans 14:23 make this quite clear.

But **why** do the categories of sin identified by Romans 14:23 and James 4:17 even exist? **Why are sins not restricted to "the breaking of God's laws"?**

To understand this we have to go back to the beginning.

IN THE BEGINNING

In the beginning, before the creation of the angels and of the whole universe, there were only two God Beings, whom we know as God the Father and Jesus Christ.

These two God Beings had a certain relationship to one another, which relationship is identified by the word "love". While They are two distinct and separate individuals, in **outlook**, in **character**, in **personality**, in **likes and dislikes**, in **attributes**, in **goals and intentions** they are "one". That is what Jesus Christ meant in John 10:30, when He said:

"I and My Father are one".

These two all-powerful God Beings then developed a plan to build a Family of beings like Themselves, who would then also "become one with Them". That would then be "the Family of God". As Jesus Christ said:

That they all may be one; as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You, **that they also may be one in Us:** that the world may believe that You have sent Me. (John 17:21)

The goal of God's plan for mankind is that all those human beings to whom God will give immortal life will become "one" with God.

To become "one" requires that we also "walk together". And the Prophet Amos pointed out that "walking together" is only possible if we are agreed.

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3)

To become "one" with God, we have to agree with God **in everything!** Not just regarding the actual law of God. The law of God spells out how God expects us to live. But the law does not spell out **what we as individuals are supposed to be like**, what character traits and what type of personality we are supposed to develop. The statement that we are to become "one" with God the Father and with Jesus Christ means that in our personality and in our character and in our wishes and desires we are to become like God.

That is a much taller order than just keeping all of God's laws.

When God the Father and Jesus Christ decided to create other beings who would become "one" with Them, then They not only expect all of those "other beings" to live by the laws of God. They expect all those "other beings" to also have **the same character, the same personality, the same outlook on life, the same likes and dislikes, the same attributes, and the same goals and intentions** as have God the Father and Jesus Christ.

When all those human beings who will eventually be given immortal life within the Family of God agree with God **in all these things**, then they can become “one” with God. And then they can be the sons and daughters of the Most High.

I have said, you *are* gods; and **all of you are children of the Most High**. (Psalms 82:6)

God the Father and Jesus Christ do not want anyone in Their Family, who has a different personality, or different likes and dislikes than God, or different character attributes than God, or different goals and intentions for the future than God. **God is perfect in every way**, and God will not have people in the Family of God whose characters, personalities, likes and dislikes, etc. differ from God’s perfect standard in all these things.

Recall the occasion when God sent the Prophet Jeremiah to the potter’s house (see Jeremiah 18:1-6). In that situation the potter started to make an item of pottery. But as he was making that item, it developed a flaw. At that point the potter was not prepared to continue working with that flawed item, and so he just stopped working on that item, and made it into a ball of clay, to start all over again. He used that same clay to then make something else (verses 3-4). In other words, the potter was not prepared to accept anything that didn’t turn out **exactly as he wanted** it to turn out. He rejected work that did not meet his standards.

Then God said:

O house of Israel, **cannot I do with you as this potter?** says the LORD. Behold, as the clay *is* in the potter’s hand, so *are* you in My hand, O house of Israel. (Jeremiah 18:6)

In this situation the clay wasn’t guilty of anything; the clay did not develop some kind of moral or ethical issue. The clay simply didn’t turn out to be exactly as the potter wanted it to turn out. So the potter rejected it, and started all over again.

Now God is the Potter and we are the clay. And God works with us, like the human potter works with the clay. Now if we don’t turn out to be exactly what God wants to produce in us, then that could be for **a whole range of different reasons**. It could be because we have broken God’s laws. But it could also be because God doesn’t like our character or our personality. It could even be because God doesn’t like the way we use our minds, the way we think and reason. And it could perhaps be because God knows that He cannot really trust us, even if we are not breaking any laws right now.

Yes, there could be a range of different reasons why some people just don’t turn out the way God expects us human beings to turn out. And whenever that is the case, then **just like the potter God will reject those people** who didn’t turn out the way God expects them to turn out.

A major difference between how the potter deals with his clay, and how God deals with us human beings is this: The potter will reject the clay as soon as the very first flaw develops in the product he is trying to make. He immediately starts all over again.

But **that is not what God does!** Rather, when we sin and fall short of God's expectations, then God continues to work with us, over and over and over again. God does not give up on us as soon as we develop the first flaw after repentance and baptism. No, unlike the potter, God is longsuffering, and God will continue to work with us as long as there is even a glimmer of hope that we will overcome, whatever the issue may be. But if at the end of the day (a figure of speech, not literally) certain flaws persist in us, then God will reject us, and use someone else.

This ties in with the correct meaning of the word "sin". Let's look at a more inclusive definition for sin, one that covers all aspects of sin. Since such a definition is not recorded directly in the Bible, we'll have to provide such a definition ourselves.

SO WHAT IS SIN?

God the Father and Jesus Christ planned to create the Family of God with sons and daughters, who will all have certain attributes. Now once Satan had rebelled against God, then God established the word "sin" to apply to all the wrongs of which Satan had become guilty. Sin includes not only the breaking of any of God's laws; **sin includes also all those conditions and circumstances that are the precursors to someone breaking any of God's laws.**

Personality traits and **character traits** and **certain mind-sets** that do not directly break any of God's laws, but **which**, given enough time, **will lead to a conflict with God's total way of life**, are also unconditionally rejected by God. We might think of this as God **preemptively** identifying such attributes as sins.

With anything that increases the likelihood of **later** (i.e. after having received immortal life in the Family of God) developing into a problem for God to deal with, **God will preemptively eliminate those things**, rather than waiting for those problems to eventually develop; at which point there could be the potential of huge damages being brought about. God preemptively rejecting those things means that in practice it never gets to the point where people with those traits are actually changed into spirit beings.

So God designates transgressions of His laws as "sins". And God also calls certain character and personality traits "sins", because those traits commonly precede actual transgressions of God's laws. In other words, **those character and personality traits are bad**, even if no laws of God have yet been transgressed.

Now you and I might not identify those specific traits and attributes as eventually leading to rebellion against God. We are naive. And thus we might view labeling some of these traits as sin rather harsh. But **God knows with certainty** what every trait and attribute will eventually produce!

Many character and personality traits had never existed before Satan rebelled. Those traits only came into existence when Satan rebelled against God. Many, if not most, of those specific traits are in fact an expression of Satan's character and personality. And those traits and attributes will all be eradicated by God, before God creates the new heaven and the new earth.

We also need to recognize that something that right now may be nothing more than an unpleasant or undesirable or rather unbalanced **personality trait**, is quite likely to develop into an undesirable **character trait in the future**. And in time that progression is likely to lead from character trait to transgressions of God's laws. God can foresee where today's conditions will lead to in the future. As God tells us through the Prophet Isaiah.

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure: (Isaiah 46:10)

Also keep in mind that God's choice for the concept of "sin" is for an archer to miss a difficult-to-hit target. And all of Satan's character and personality traits certainly "miss the target", and therefore all of them are most certainly "sins".

Okay, so here is an all-inclusive definition for "sin".

Sin is everything that God does not like!

If there is **anything** that God does not like, then that is "sin"; it misses God's intentions for why God created human beings. It doesn't matter whether that "anything" breaks any of God's laws or not. God will simply not co-exist for all future eternity with anything that God does not really like. God will not "put up with" anything that does not have God's 100% approval.

So when we want to establish **whether or not something is a sin** in the eyes of God, then we do **not** ask the question:

Does this "something" break any of God's laws?

That question is fine, but it can also produce **a large number of "false negative responses"**. In other words, this question can produce a large number of "no, it doesn't break any of God's laws" results. But those results are false, because the correct answer in those cases may be:

No, it doesn't break any of God's laws, **but it is still sin!**

It is a sin because God has identified it as **a precursor for transgressions** of His laws, and therefore God labels it as "sin". Once our minds go down a certain road, God can predict the outcome.

Here is an important point we need to understand!

Identifying and exposing the precursors for transgressions as "sins" is **a warning from God** that we are going down the wrong road. We are missing the target by going down this road. This is a warning before we actually go as far as transgressing God's laws. We still have the opportunity to put that "precursor to

breaking God's laws" out of our lives. We still have the opportunity to change our personalities and our characters.

In wanting to establish whether or not something is sin in the eyes of God, the correct questions are:

- 1) **Is this something that God actually likes?**
- 2) **Is this something that is "pleasing in God's sight"?**

If the answers to these two questions are "no", then that "something" is sin.

It is the **carnal, unconverted person** who asks: does this break any of God's laws?

It is the **converted person** that asks: is this something that God likes, something that will please God? This is a completely different perspective.

Recall what the Apostle John tells us.

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. (1 John 3:22)

What's the point of being in God's Church, if our main and most dominant motivation is not **a desire** to do those things that are pleasing in God's sight?

If our only motivation is to ask: "is this okay with God's laws, or would it break any of God's laws?", then we are no better than a vast number of unconverted people out in the world. And we need to understand that **very many people** who are baptized members of God's Church only ever ask themselves this specific question. That is not a good situation.

They never progress to the stage of asking themselves: yes, it may not break any of God's laws, but **is what I am doing or planning to do actually pleasing in God's sight?** Only asking "is this okay with God's laws?" is the same standard that many of the religious but unconverted people in this world live by. That's not exactly good company, is it?

It is a completely different perspective from asking: Lord, what would You **like** me to do, never mind what may be **permissible** for me to do? I really want to know: yes, but is that what You, Lord, would want me to do in these present circumstances? I'm not satisfied with only knowing what I may be "allowed" to do.

If in our relationship with God we do not seek to find out what will be pleasing to God, **then we are**

probably not converted. Let's call a spade a spade, right?

You already know 1 John 3:22 from all your years in God's Church. Here is this verse once again:

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, **and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.** (1 John 3:22)

While this verse does not give us a definition for "sin", it does highlight that sin involves more than just keeping God's commandments. God only answers our prayers if we comply with both parts of this statement. **It is simply not enough for us to only keep God's commandments!**

Unless we, on top of keeping God's commandments, also actively strive to do all those things that we know are pleasing in God's sight, God will not answer our prayers. If we **only** do what we have to do (i.e. keep God's commandments), then Jesus Christ Himself calls us "**unprofitable servants**" (see Luke 17:10). It should not be too difficult to understand that "unprofitable servants" are not going to be in God's Kingdom. So where does that leave people whose only motivation is "**what do I have to do** to be included in the first resurrection?"

A DIABOLICAL APPROACH

"Diabolus" is the Latin word that means "devil". So with "a diabolical approach" I mean an approach that has been inspired by Satan the devil. It is an approach that reveals Satan's very devious line of reasoning.

Here is that approach:

People will ask:

Does God legislate against ... (what someone would like to do)?

Does ... (what someone would like to do) **break any specific commandment?**

Would it be wrong to ... (do whatever someone wants to do)?

The Bible does not say that ... (what someone wants to do) is wrong.

This biblical instruction only applies to ... (a different situation than the one that applies to our circumstances), etc.

What do I have to do ... (regarding a specific issue or situation)?

You may be able to think of a few other variations of this approach. Satan here wants us to believe that: as long as what we want to do is **not specifically forbidden by God, we are free to do what we would like to do**. There is no law or commandment against what we want to do.

That's how Satan wants us to reason.

All of the above questions limit God. They have the negative focus of "is this forbidden?", "would it be wrong?", etc. None of those questions want to know what would please God. None of them want to know what God would prefer to see. None of them are actually interested in God's likes and dislikes.

Now Satan certainly does not want you to use your own mind. Satan certainly does not want you to ask: yes, but is what I would like to do actually going to be pleasing in God's sight? **Would God really encourage me to do what I am contemplating doing?** Or is it just a case of my contemplated action technically not actually breaking any of God's laws?

What would God prefer me to do in regard to the action I am contemplating? Everything that God would prefer us not to do is sin. So the answer to this question will identify sins.

SOME CATEGORIES OF SIN

Now let's consider a random list of things that are "sin" in the eyes of God. This list is by no means intended to be exhaustive. It is simply a collection of things that readily come to mind.

With every category we always ask the same question: **would this be something that God would like me to do, something that is pleasing in God's sight?** Whether or not these things also break some of God's laws, is, except for #1, only a secondary question.

Our primary concern here is to identify those things that are **not** pleasing in God's sight, because that automatically means that they are sins before God. Things that are not pleasing to God obviously "miss the mark" of pleasing God. In other words, with our approach here we gladly apply **a far higher standard** than simply trying to identify the minimum requirements for avoiding all sins. After all, we are committed to doing **whatever it takes to please God**, right?

So let's start.

1) **BREAKING GOD'S LAWS & COMMANDMENTS:** Here the answer to our question is obvious. It is obviously not pleasing to God if we break any of His laws. That is clear from 1 John 3:4 and many other Scriptures. So this point constitutes the main and most obvious category of sins.

2) **UNCONTROLLED ANGER**: Does God like it, is God pleased when we give way to outbursts of uncontrolled anger? No, such outbursts are certainly not pleasing to God. Does anyone doubt that? Therefore such outbursts are sin.

3) **BAD-TEMPERED**: Are bad-tempered people pleasing to God, people who fly off the handle at the drop of a hat? Does God like people who have a chip on their shoulder? No, to be bad-tempered is to seriously miss the mark for what God expects to see in us human beings. So being bad-tempered is a sin. It misses the mark by a long shot.

4) **PRIDE AND ARROGANCE**: Is God pleased with people who are proud and arrogant? Certainly not! You can easily find Scriptures that show God's rejection of pride, like Proverbs 8:13, etc. So pride is a sin, and arrogance is a sin.

5) **CARELESSNESS**: Does it please God when we are careless in fulfilling our duties and responsibilities? Hardly! So carelessness is an attribute that misses the mark, and therefore it is sin.

6) **CRUELTY**: Is God pleased when we are cruel towards animals or towards other people? No, God does not like cruelty, and therefore cruelty is sin.

7) **DESPISING THOSE THAT ARE GOOD**: Does it please God when we despise those who are striving to live by all of God's laws? Obviously not! Proverbs 14:21 tells us that "he that despises his neighbor **sins ...**". See also 2 Timothy 3:3. So yes, despising other people, especially those that are good, is a sin.

8) **BRAGGING AND BOASTING**: Bragging about achievements and presumed abilities is a hallmark of our age. See again 2 Timothy 3:3. But does any boasting please God? Obviously not! So boasting is also a sin.

9) **BEING DISRESPECTFUL**: Is God pleased when we show a lack of respect for other people, especially for those who are older than we are? Certainly not! In Leviticus 19:32 God tells us to "rise up before the hoary head and honor the face of the old man". So being disrespectful towards others, especially our elders, is once again sin. This type of conduct also seriously misses the mark for what God desires.

10) **NOT DOING GOOD**: Is it pleasing to God if we do not do the good we know we could do? No! We've already seen James 4:17. So when we are in a position where we know we could do certain "good" and then choose not to do it, then that is also sin.

11) **BEING DOUBLE MINDED**: Are we pleasing God when we are "double minded", i.e. insecure and hesitant in our approach to God? See James 1:5-8. Being double minded also applies to other areas of our lives. It refers to being insecure and afraid to make binding decisions and commitments. Is this state of mind pleasing to God? No, it isn't. So being double minded is also sin, even when the double minded person does not break any of God's laws or commandments.

12) **GETTING DRUNK:** Is God pleased when we get drunk? Obviously not. So when we get drunk, then we are sinning.

13) **A LACK OF EMPATHY AND COMPASSION:** Is God pleased when the trials and suffering of other people have no effect on us? Certainly not. Regarding this condition in our world today, see Romans 1:31 and 2 Timothy 3:3, where this condition is described as “without natural affection”. If we lack empathy and compassion for the sufferings of other people, then we are seriously missing the mark for what God requires of us. So such a lack is also sin.

14) **BEING MERCILESS:** The parable of the servant who had ten thousand talents forgiven, and who then mercilessly sued a fellow-servant who owed him a mere hundred pennies, makes very clear that God actually hates it when we, who have received mercy from God, refuse to likewise extend mercy to other people, who may be indebted to us. So being merciless is very emphatically a sin. See also Romans 1:31 once again.

15) **ENVY:** Is God going to be pleased if we envy other people? Obviously not! That’s basically covered by the commandment to not covet anything. So envy is a sin.

16) **NOT HAVING FAITH:** Does God like it if we don’t have faith in Him, and if we don’t really trust Him to keep His promises? Obviously not! In fact, “without faith it is impossible to please God” (see Hebrews 11:6). For that matter, a lack of faith is “**the sin** which does so easily beset us” (see Hebrews 12:1). So **a lack of faith is a major sin**. And here we all fall short frequently and easily. It is, after all, the sin which “**so easily**” besets us. In Revelation 21:8 “the unbelieving” make up the second category of people who will be thrown into the lake of fire. They are mentioned ahead of any of the transgressors of the ten commandments.

17) **FEARFULNESS:** Is God pleased if people are fearful? Certainly not. Staying with Revelation 21:8, “the fearful” are the very first category listed for being thrown into the lake of fire. So being fearful is a sin. It misses God’s intentions for the human mind.

18) **FOOLISHNESS:** So does God like it if people are foolish? Is that pleasing in God’s sight? It is the fool who claims that God does not exist (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). The fool causes problems for his own family (Proverbs 11:29), and fools don’t control their own emotions (Proverbs 14:16). So no, God does not like people who are fools. Therefore it is a sin to be foolish. If God does not like something, then that something is sin. It’s really simple.

19) **FOOLISH SPEECH AND IDLE WORDS:** Is God pleased with foolish speech, and does God like idle words? See Matthew 12:36. No, God certainly does not like foolish speech. Therefore foolish speech is also sin. We might keep in mind that most of our TV entertainment consists of “foolish speech”, where idiots are highly-paid celebrities.

20) **GOSSIPING:** Does gossiping please God? Obviously not. So gossiping is sin.

21) **GREED:** Does God like greed? Certainly not. That is surely self-evident. So greed is sin.

22) **TEACHING HERESIES AND LIES:** Again, God obviously does not like to see anyone teaching heresies. So spreading lies and teaching heresies is also sin. And there are many who are guilty of this in our world today.

23) **HYPOCRISY:** Does God like people who pretend to believe something they don't believe, and who pretend to be something they are not? That is, does God like hypocrites? Matthew chapter 23 is one passage where Jesus Christ emphatically condemned hypocrisy. So no, God certainly does not like the character attribute of hypocrisy. Therefore hypocrisy is also a sin.

24) **WILLING IGNORANCE:** Does God like it when people deliberately avoid examining **evidence against their own beliefs**? See 2 Peter 3:5 and Proverbs 19:2 for a sampling of this question. And no, God does not like it at all when people deliberately refuse to examine evidence that disproves their own beliefs. That is a very bad character trait, and willing ignorance is sin.

25) **IMPATIENCE:** Do we please God if we are impatient? Does God like impatience? Obviously not. In 2 Timothy 2:24 Paul tells us that God's servants must be patient. So if we are impatient, then we miss the mark regarding what God expects from us, and therefore we are sinning.

26) **INGRATITUDE, BEING UNTHANKFUL:** Is God pleased when we are unthankful? Again, obviously not. Being unthankful is a major hallmark of our age (see 2 Timothy 3:2). And ingratitude is a sin. How often are we guilty of this sin?

27) **IRRESPONSIBILITY:** Is God pleased if we behave irresponsibly? Will God like that? Obviously not. Therefore conducting ourselves in an irresponsible manner misses the mark in God's sight. And therefore irresponsibility is also a sin.

28) **LAZINESS AND LETHARGY:** Is God pleased with people who are lazy? Absolutely not! Lazy people are identified by God as "wicked and slothful servants" (see Matthew 25:26). So laziness is very emphatically a sin.

29) **PRESUMPTUOUSNESS:** Does it please God if we are presumptuous? Certainly not! As King David said, "keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins" (see Psalm 19:13). So presumptuousness is a sin. Good to keep in mind the next time we are tempted to act presumptuously.

30) **SCORN AND CONTEMPT:** Is God pleased when we treat other people with scorn and contempt? No, God doesn't like that at all. So when we treat others with contempt, then we are sinning; we are missing the target that God expects us to aim for.

31) **SELFISHNESS AND BEING SELF-WILLED:** Does God like it when we behave selfishly? Is that type of conduct pleasing to God? No, of course not. Does God like it when we are self-willed and always

want to get our way? Again, of course not. So selfishness and being self-willed are also sins.

32) **ENTERTAINING WRONG THOUGHTS IN OUR MINDS:** Does God like it when we think about things that are wrong, when we dwell on thoughts of lusting and coveting, etc.? No, of course not. Proverbs 12:5 tells us that “the thoughts of the righteous are right, but **the counsels** (i.e. their thinking, how their minds work) **of the wicked are deceit**”. So when we entertain the wrong thoughts in our minds, then we miss the mark God expects us to achieve, and we are sinning. This applies to me just as much as it does to you. None of us are immune to wrong thoughts entering our minds.

33) **UNTEACHABLE:** Does God like it if we are unteachable, if we are not prepared to learn more? Is God pleased with such an attitude? Obviously not. Matthew 18:1-5 applies in this context. Little children are teachable. So if we are not teachable, then we are guilty of sin.

34) **VANITY:** Does God like it when we are vain? Can you think of any Scriptures that apply to this topic? God certainly does not like it when human beings become vain. And so vanity is another form of sin.

35) **MAKE-UP:** Does God like it when not only women but also men use make-up in an attempt to make themselves look better? Make-up doesn't actually **make** anyone better. Make-up only creates an illusion. So yes, it is a sin to try to change our appearance through the use of make-up. It simply is not pleasing to God when we try to present a facade that is false. All facades are false, right?

36) **SMOKING:** Is God pleased with us when we smoke? Does God like smoking? It is God who created the penalty of lung cancer for smoking. So yes, smoking is assuredly a sin, because smoking destroys the human body, and God does not like smoking.

37) **USING DRUGS TO ALTER OUR MOODS AND PERCEPTIONS:** Is it pleasing to God if we use drugs to “get a high”, to artificially alter our moods and our feelings? No, of course not! So just like smoking, using drugs means that we are sinning.

38) **EATING THINGS THAT ARE BAD FOR OUR HEALTH:** Does God like it when we eat and drink things that will damage our health? Here we are not talking about eating anything that is “unclean” by biblical standards. There are thousands of items that we today eat and drink, and very many of them can over time cause serious health problems. We commonly call those things “junk foods”. So is God pleased when we eat and drink those things? No, of course not. Therefore consuming items that can damage our health is not something God really likes. And if God doesn't like it, then it is automatically sin.

39) **SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS:** Does the character trait of self-righteousness please God? Certainly not. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 30:12: “there is a generation that are pure in their own eyes (i.e. self-righteous), and yet they are not washed from their filthiness. So self-righteousness is another category of sins that we need to root out of our lives.

40) **NOT PRAYING EVERY DAY:** Does God like it when we go for days (or even for weeks?) without

ever getting down on our knees in prayer to God? Is that pleasing to God? Certainly not! So when we do not spend some time every day (barring valid emergencies) on our knees in prayer to God the Father, then we seriously fall short. And that means that we are sinning.

41) **STUBBORNNESS**: Does God like people who are stubborn? Is God pleased with people who have this attribute? In 1 Samuel 15:23 Samuel told King Saul: “stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry”. That should suffice to understand that God certainly does not like stubbornness, and that means that it is also a sin.

42) **BEING GROSSLY OVERWEIGHT**: Is God pleased with us when we are grossly overweight? I don't mean 10 or 20 pounds overweight. I mean 50 pounds or 100 pounds or more overweight. Does God like that? The Apostle Paul tells us who are members of God's Church:

For you are bought with a price: **therefore glorify God in your body**, and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:20)

Does it glorify God when we neglect to look after our bodies? The obvious answer here is “no”. So in most cases (i.e. making allowance for some rare medical conditions) we are sinning when we allow ourselves to become grossly overweight.

43) **TATTOOS**: Is God pleased when we tattoo our bodies? Is that a way to glorify God in our bodies? Certainly not! So covering our bodies with tattoos misses the mark for what God desires for us. Therefore getting tattoos is also a sin.

44) **LACKING SELF-CONTROL**: Is God pleased with people who lack self-control? Certainly not. This character attribute is obviously something that God does not like. So a lack of self-control is also sin.

Well, that should suffice. I have tried to show **how** we can determine whether something is a sin or not. The key is to always seek to establish whether something is going to be pleasing to God or not.

SO WHAT ABOUT US?

For people outside of God's Church it may be okay to just look at all of God's laws, and to then ask: Will what I am considering doing break any of God's laws? And then respond accordingly. That's fine for people in the world. God is not working with those people, or **at least not yet** working with leading them to have a part in the first resurrection.

But that question is not fine for you and for me, who are members of God's Church. God expects us to apply **a much higher standard** in determining whether or not something is sin. God expects us, who are members of God's Church, to understand that **our calling is to strive to always do only those things that are pleasing in God's sight**. So anything that God does not like, we must do our best to avoid, and to remove out of our lives.

So God expects us to **not only** ask: will what I am considering doing break any of God's laws? That's only the question in the "entrance exams" for being accepted into the training program for a part in the first resurrection.

God expects us, members of God's Church, to go one higher, and to **also** ask:

1) Will God be pleased with **what I would like to do**? Or would God **prefer** that I don't get involved with those things?

2) Are **my personality traits** pleasing to God? Does God like all my personality traits; or are there some things in my personality that God does not really like? Are there aspects of my personality that God really expects me to change?

3) Are all of **my character traits** pleasing to God? As my character stands right now, would God call me "a person after God's own heart"? Or are there things in my character (things identified at least to some degree by the 40+ points in the above list) that God still expects me to eliminate from my character?

We've all heard the old expression: **your wish is my command**. Well, that needs to be true for you and for me and for all of God's people. In trying to figure out how we should conduct our lives, we first need to understand all of God's laws, and how we can best apply them in our personal circumstances. And that is a good start.

But that is only the beginning.

Once we are familiar with all of God's laws, as recorded in the Bible, then we need to say:

Lord, **I want to know** whether You, Lord, **would like** me to do this or that. I want to know what I should do in this situation that will be **pleasing** in Your sight. Just like Your servant David, I would like to become "a person after God's own heart". And therefore I want to strive to only do those things that please You. And in my personality and my character I would like to develop those attributes that are pleasing in Your sight, and I would like to eliminate all those attributes that are not pleasing to You, Lord. Therefore please help me to understand my personality and character traits from Your point of view.

For such an approach we all need to consider the above list of 40+ points, at least as a starting point.

I have tried to show that **with every issue regarding sin**, after first establishing that something does not directly break any of God's laws, we then should always ask the same question. That question is:

Is the subject of my question something that will be pleasing in God's sight? Is it something that God will like? Or is it something that God does not like?

The above list is **only a start**. If you put your mind to it, you might be able to add another 20 or more points to that list. But the question is always the same. And here is the point:

Once we ask the right question, with a correct focus on God, the correct answer will in very many cases become obvious to us. It will be a case of: well, **if you put it like that, then I can see that ...** (the correct answer regarding what will please God).

So don't focus only on God's laws. Focus even more so on a desire to please God. If God were ever to say to us: well, technically you would not be breaking any of My laws, but **I would prefer** you to not do ... (whatever the subject might be), then our response should always be: Lord, **to me Your preferences are the same as Your laws**.

THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

In the lead-up to the Feast of Unleavened Bread we all diligently put out all leaven, and then during the Feast we don't eat anything that contains leaven. And that's as far as it goes for most of us.

I would like to suggest that when the Feast of Unleavened Bread approaches next year, that you also evaluate your own life against this list of 40+ points that also constitute "sin" in God's eyes. It might give you a worthwhile focus for the whole Feast of Unleavened Bread, where "putting sins out of our lives" will take on a far sharper focus. And it may reveal a whole range of things that could benefit from some serious soul-searching.

WHAT ABOUT "PHYSICAL SINS"?

Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to explain that sicknesses and illnesses are the result of "physical sins". After his death some people rejected this explanation by claiming that "there is no such thing as physical sins".

But when we keep in mind that God uses the word "sin" to identify everything that misses a difficult-to-hit target, then it becomes clear that yes, there certainly are "physical sins".

We can **miss the target spiritually**, in which case "the wages we receive will be death" (see Romans 6:23), meaning the second death (see Revelation 20:14). But we can also **miss the target physically**, in which case the wage will not be the second death, though it might lead to the first death. But this situation would constitute "a sin **not unto death**" (see 1 John 5:17).

All sins have consequences. And sicknesses and other health problems are commonly a consequence of physical sins, meaning sins that in themselves don't carry the second death penalty. Such physical sins need not have been committed by the person who has the health problem. Millions of people suffer health problems because of things that other people have done (i.e. sins those other people have committed), like polluting the foods we eat, the air we breathe and the water we drink, like causing

serious accidents, etc.

As far as **spiritual sins** are concerned, we will never suffer from the penalty for sins that were committed by other people. As God said to Ezekiel:

The soul that sins, it shall die. **The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son:** the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. (Ezekiel 18:20)

But as far as **physical sins** are concerned, sins that are “**not unto death**”, we are all frequently exposed to the penalties that were incurred by other people. Physically we can, and often do suffer as a result of physical sins committed by other people. At other times we ourselves committed those physical sins.

Understand that “the forgiveness of sins” that is mentioned in connection with being anointed (see James 5:14-15) is not the forgiveness of sins like adultery, coveting, breaking the Sabbath, etc. Anointing has nothing to do with the forgiveness for having broken any of the ten commandments. **The forgiveness mentioned in James 5:15 is not the forgiveness of spiritual sins!**

Nobody can be anointed in order to remove any sins connected with the ten commandments. The mechanism for the forgiveness of such sins is real repentance.

Rather, the sins that will be forgiven when we are anointed for some health problem are **the sins that produced that health problem**, in the event that we ourselves had committed the sins that caused that health problem.

The reference to the forgiveness of sins in James 5:15 proves that there is a category of sins which are best identified by the term “physical sins”.

IN CONCLUSION

In creating the Family of God, God is looking for individuals with very specific attributes, attributes that will make it possible for those individuals to become one with God when they are resurrected. Any personality traits and character attributes that are not compatible with God are not going to be accepted by God. Keeping all of God's laws is the rock-bottom minimum requirement for anyone to be considered for a part in God's Family.

But in addition to obedience to all of God's laws, God is also not going to have anyone in His Family who is fearful, who lacks faith in God, who is sarcastic, cynical, proud, hypocritical, vain, arrogant, and reluctant to help other people who are in need.

To live a sin-free life is an extremely difficult target to achieve, even if people don't break any of God's laws. In fact, to live a sin-free life is an impossible task for any human being. Jesus Christ is the only One who ever achieved that extremely difficult task, because Jesus Christ always controlled His mind perfectly. But all the rest of us have sinned many times. Take another look at that list of 40+ categories.

We can never restrict our search for sins to "transgressions of the law". If we don't approach this question from the perspective of wanting to know what is and what isn't "pleasing in His sight", then we already have a problem. People who restrict themselves to asking "does this break any of God's laws?" are still only "unprofitable servants" according to the words of Jesus Christ.

And yes, it is quite possible to sin without actually breaking any of the ten commandments. This is proved by **the life of Job**. When Job said "behold, I am vile" (Job 40:4), Job was acknowledging that he was guilty of sins, even though he hadn't broken any of the ten commandments. That's what God Himself said about Job to Satan, right? When God called Job "**a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God and hates evil**" (see Job 1:8), God was saying that Job had not broken any of God's laws!

And yet, Job eventually recognized that he was vile, meaning that **he was guilty of sins**. Job's sins involved some of those 40+ categories we have considered.

We need to recognize that God determines what is and what isn't sin. And the correct definition for "sin" is:

Sin is everything that God does not like!

Frank W Nelte