November 2015

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HEALING AND THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

After Mr. Armstrong's death in January 1986, almost 30 years ago, one of the first teachings that was attacked by those who took over the leadership of the Church was the teaching about healing. Mr. Armstrong had written a booklet about the subject of healing. And central to that booklet was the point that **divine healing requires the forgiveness of physical sins**.

It is this central issue that was attacked by the people who wanted to change the Church's teachings, first on the subject of healing, and then on every other subject as well. It was claimed that all sin is spiritual and that there is no such thing as physical sins. It was falsely claimed that divine healing has nothing at all to do with the forgiveness of sins.

That attack on the central issue of the Church's teaching about healing became **the spearhead for the all-out attack** on all of the major teachings of God's Church after Mr. Armstrong's death. Acceptance of the assertion that there is no such thing as physical sin opened the floodgates for all kinds of heresies to enter the Church. And they have entered!

The people who accepted this false assertion that there is no such thing as physical sin also ended up accepting any number of other heretical ideas. That initial acceptance of one false teaching blurred their understanding of numerous other teachings.

The fruits of that acceptance are easy to see. All we have to do is look at what happened to Worldwide! And it all started with the claim that "there is no such thing as physical sin".

We don't get truth and heresies from the same source! We all know James 3:11.

Does a fountain send forth at the same place sweet [water] and bitter? (James 3:11)

The fact that after Mr. Armstrong the new leadership very methodically replaced one correct teaching after another with heretical teachings, makes clear that **not a single change introduced or promoted by the Tkach administration is correct before God. Not one!**

The problem we had at that time was that the people, who went out from Worldwide because of the endless heresies that had been introduced, wanted to **selectively choose** which of the Tkach changed teachings they wanted to retain, and which of the Tkach changed teachings they were willing to reject as heresies. [That process was in fact a close parallel to the Protestant churches deciding which of the Catholic Church's false teachings they would reject, and which of the Catholic Church's false teachings they would retain.]

Some of the people who had left Worldwide felt that while the new leadership had produced overwhelmingly "bitter water", yet nevertheless it had also (supposedly) produced some "sweet water". And it was **the supposed "sweet water" from the Tkach administration** that they desired to accept and to hold fast to.

But they didn't grasp the significance of James 3:11, that **any fountain that is controlled by Satan** is incapable of producing any "sweet water". Every single change introduced by the Tkach administration was heretical. No exceptions.

Now, 30 years later, the initial heretical teaching that there is no such thing as physical sin has found considerable acceptance amongst various groups of God's people. To all the people who have accepted this heresy that was introduced by the Tkach administration God says: "**o My people, they which lead you cause you to err**" (Isaiah 3:12).

In this article I am going to present the facts that prove that on this question Mr. Armstrong was correct! Divine healing does indeed require the forgiveness of physical sins. You can then judge that evidence for yourself.

A major aspect of the problem here is that **God's definition for sin** is not really the same as **our definition for sin**. When we speak about "sins" then in many cases that is not the same thing as when God speaks about "sins".

WHAT DOES "SIN" REALLY MEAN?

In the English language this word "sin" has only one meaning, and that is a religious meaning. For us the word "sin" simply does not have a secular meaning. It is exclusively a religious word. The English language noun "sin" refers to: an offense against God, a transgression of the law of God, referring to a misdeed or a fault. The English verb "to sin" refers to engaging in morally wrong actions or conduct. And we don't use the word "sin" in our secular lives.

For example:

If an employer gives his employee some very specific instructions which the employee for whatever reasons does not carry out, then the employer might say something like:

1) Why have you disobeyed me?

2) Why have you transgressed my instructions?

3) Why have you violated my instructions?

4) Why have you neglected to follow my instructions?

5) Why didn't you do what I told you to do? etc.

But the employer would **never** say: **why have you sinned**?

That is because in English we would never use the word "sin" to refer to disobedience or transgressions or neglect or violations in our secular lives. For us in the English language the use of the word "sin" is restricted to describing a specific aspect of our human conduct in our relationship with God, i.e. when our conduct either violates or falls short of what God requires and desires of us.

That's how most of us understand the word "sin".

While the actual etymology of the English word "sin" is not absolutely clear, the word "sin" is generally led back to the Latin adjective "sons, sontis", which means "**guilty**". And that meaning ties in perfectly with the meaning which the word sin has in English. To us the word sin always implies **some form of moral guilt**.

But here is the problem:

While both the Old Testament Hebrew words and the New Testament Greek words translated as "sin" and as "sinning" assuredly include our English language meaning of the word "sin", **they also include meanings that are not at all included or implied in our English language meaning of the word "sin"**.

In plain terms:

The Bible calls some things "sin" which we in English would never look upon as being "sin", because those things don't necessarily involve breaking God's laws, and yet before God they are "sin".

This I will explain thoroughly in this present article. It constitutes a major problem for our understanding of what God means, when God includes within the meaning of the word "sin" some things that don't necessarily constitute a breaking of His laws.

Let's start by looking at our Church of God definition for sin.

THE CHURCH'S DEFINITION FOR "SIN"

Ask any member of God's Church to define sin for you, and the chances are that they will quote or turn to 1 John 3:4.

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

There you are, they'll tell you, that's as plain and as unambiguous a statement as you could ask for. Sin is the transgression of God's law. Some people may even point out that instead of "the transgression of the law" the Greek text actually reads "**sin is lawlessness**", meaning a rejection of laws and a refusal to abide by laws. That outlook obviously also leads to laws being transgressed, but just with **a much more perverse attitude**.

The clear focus in this particular verse is on laws either being transgressed or being rejected. This focus means that when we look at any actions or conduct or behavior with this definition for sin in mind, we ask the question: **does that action, conduct or behavior break any of God's laws?** If it does, then we identify that action or conduct as sin. If it does not, then we believe that the action or conduct in question is acceptable before God.

Our focus is to **look for transgressions** in order to identify sins, the same focus that was accepted by Job's 3 friends.

And as far as it goes, this understanding is correct. Any and every transgression of God's laws is certainly sin. In no way do I mean to imply any disagreement with 1 John 3:4. And it makes no difference whether we say that "sin is the transgression of the law" or whether we say "sin is lawlessness"; both statements are clearly correct.

The problem is not the statement in 1 John 3:4. The problem we have lies in **the conclusions we have drawn from 1 John 3:4**. Our conclusions have assumed that 1 John 3:4 is the gold standard, as far as defining sin is concerned, the ultimate foundation with which all other definitions of sin must comply. But **1 John 3:4 is most assuredly not at all the gold standard for defining sin**!

Our problem is: when something is not a transgression of God's laws, then we have assumed that it cannot be sin and must therefore be acceptable before God, because 1 John 3:4 does not identify it as sin. **That assumption is wrong**!

Because of our focus on 1 John 3:4 we don't understand that some things may not in any way constitute a breaking of any of God's laws, but before God **those things are still viewed as sins**. Our focus on 1 John 3:4 can easily make us oblivious to sins that fall outside of the parameters of 1 John 3:4. Our over-emphasis of 1 John 3:4 has prevented us from recognizing sins that fall outside of the parameters implied in that verse.

THE HEBREW WORD FOR "SIN"

One way to define sin is to look for "sin is ..." statements in the Bible. And that is what we have traditionally done. But an even better way to define sin is to look at the meaning of the word or words that God actually inspired to convey this concept of sin to us. This approach will reveal **God's intentions** in expressing the concept of sin.

So let's take a look at some words in the Old Testament, since the concept of sin is certainly rooted in the Old Testament. There are a number of different Hebrew words that refer to specific forms of sin. For example:

- The Hebrew word "**avon**" means: perversity, depravity, iniquity.

- The Hebrew word "**pasha**" means: to rebel, to transgress, to revolt.

- The Hebrew word "**asham**" means: to offend, be guilty.

- The Hebrew word "**shagah**" means: to go astray, to err.

Without question all of the things identified by these Hebrew words (and their derivatives) are sins. They all have negative overtones. To be perverse is sin; to rebel is sin; when we are guilty we have sinned; to offend is sin, to go astray is sin; etc. And so these particular words are also **very occasionally translated as "sin" or as "sinning"**, though mainly they are translated with the actual meanings which I have presented above.

Here is the point for us:

All of these particular Hebrew words describe things that readily fit the definition "sin is the transgression of the law". Put another way: all of these Hebrew words (avon, pasha, asham, shagah) describe perfectly what we in the Church of God understand for the words "sin" and "sinning". These Hebrew words in fact define and consolidate our traditional understanding of sin.

Yet these are not the words that God has used to define the concept of sin!

To express the concept of sin God used a completely different word, one that doesn't have anything to do with rebelling or transgressing or offending or going astray or being perverse or with any moral guilt, etc.

All of the above Hebrew words together (and the additional Hebrew words that are formed from the

above four words) are translated as "sin" or sinning" about a dozen times in the Old Testament. Yet there are many hundreds of references to sins and sinning throughout the whole Old Testament. And those hundreds of references have nothing to do with any of the words we have considered thus far.

The correct Hebrew words that God has used to refer to sin are the primitive root verb "chata" and the words derived from this root verb, like the nouns "chatta, chet", etc. These Hebrew words are together correctly translated as "sin" many hundreds of times. These words (i.e. "chata" and derivatives) correctly convey what God means when He speaks about sins and sinning.

These words were initially secular words to which a religious meaning was attached at a later point. The verb "**chata**" refers to "**missing a target**". It was used for an archer who missed the bull's eye on a target. It also referred to **taking a wrong step**, and to **missing the way** (see Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament).

So we have the following situation:

1) When we think of the word sin, then **we think of the laws of God being transgressed**.

2) When God thinks of the word sin, then **God thinks of a target being missed**.

There is a huge difference between these two perspectives. While all transgressions of the laws of God most certainly also "miss the target", there are very many ways of missing the target that do not involve any transgressions of the laws of God. To miss the target we are aiming to hit is not the same as transgressing an instruction.

In other words: all of the things that we think of as "sin" (i.e. transgressions of God's laws) are certainly also sins in the sight of God. But some of the things that God also views as sins, because they miss the target but without transgressing God's laws, we would not immediately identify as sins.

Our standard for sin is in fact far more restricted and narrow than God's standard for sin. God's standard for sin includes some things that we would not think of as sins. God's standard is simply higher than just 1 John 3:4.

Consider one passage where this Hebrew verb is used.

Among all this people [there were] seven hundred chosen men left-handed; every one could sling stones at an hair [breadth], **and not miss** (Hebrew = chata). (Judges 20:16)

The Hebrew verb "chata", which is translated over 190 times appropriately as "sin" or as "sinner", is here in Judges 20:16 equally appropriately translated as "(**and not**) **miss** (**the target**)".

"A hair breadth" is a reference to these 700 men being able to hit the bull's eye every time. If they had only gotten close to the bull's eye, then they would have missed. It's either the bull's eye or it is a miss.

That is the standard that God selected to represent the concept of sin!

Now when someone misses the perfect score, then that doesn't automatically mean that the person has broken any laws of God. He tried his best but fell short of perfection. No wrong attitude towards God is involved. Yet according to God's standard he has sinned, because he missed the target of perfection.

Are you beginning to see that a word that means "to miss the target" can include far more things than

just those that involve transgressions of God's laws?

It is not that 1 John 3:4 is wrong. It is simply that 1 John 3:4 is incomplete, when it comes to correctly defining the whole scope of the concept of sin. There is far more to sin than just 1 John 3:4.

Consider another Scripture where this verb "chata" is used.

Also, [that] the soul [be] without knowledge, [it is] not good; and **he that hastens with** [**his**] **feet sins** (Hebrew = chata). (Proverbs 19:2)

Here the translators inappropriately translated "chata" as "sins". The point is that hastening doesn't automatically imply or lead to sinning in the sense that we tend to think of sinning, i.e. doing something morally wrong. And Solomon wasn't trying to imply that hastening leads to sinning. What Solomon was saying in this verse is that **hastening easily leads to taking a wrong step**; it easily leads to missing the correct path (that's like missing the bull's eye).

Solomon's point is that we need to think before we act, but not that something done hastily is necessarily sinful. Consider that Abraham himself "hastened" to tell Sarah to quickly bake some bread, and then Abraham "hastened" some more to find a tender calf and have it slaughtered and quickly have it cooked, when Jesus Christ and two angels visited Abraham before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (see Genesis 18:6-7). And there was nothing sinful whatsoever in these actions.

In Proverbs 19:2 Solomon is not trying to imply any kind of moral guilt to those who hasten. This verse is more accurately translated in the 1853 Isaac Leeser Translation as follows:

Also in the want of knowledge in the soul there is nothing good; and **he that hastens with his feet misses the right path**. (Proverbs 19:2 Leeser Translation)

The point is that "chata" and the words formed from "chata" are **secular words** that refer to "something is being missed"; they refer to "**making a mistake and falling short of a perfect result**"; they refer to missing the intended target to some degree.

Such falling short or missing the mark does not always imply some moral guilt. **Even people with a right attitude towards God and towards fellow man can and do at times fall short**; they can and do sometimes miss the target. They can and do sometimes make mistakes. So the Hebrew words that are appropriately translated as "sin" don't necessarily always involve some moral guilt. We'll come back to this point in a moment. There is **a big difference in the mind** of the individual involved in "violating something" when compared to an individual who "falls short".

Sometimes "chata" applies to something that does not involve any moral guilt at all. It can in fact also apply to any form of conduct that falls short of perfection. We can fall short of perfection even when we don't actively offend or transgress or go astray or are perverse. We really meant to hit the bull's eye, but even with our best efforts we still ended up missing the target to some degree, which according to the Old Testament Hebrew word for sin implies that we "sinned".

Some people may wonder why we don't see more examples of the Hebrew word "chata" being used with its secular meaning in the Old Testament. The answer here is that the Old Testament is not really focused on secular activities, like marksmen shooting their arrows.

The Old Testament is overwhelmingly a book of religious instruction, and so the overwhelming instances where the word "chata" is used in the Old Testament refer to the religious meaning that was given to this word by God. So don't expect to find multiple places where "chata" is used with its original

non-religious meaning. The fact that the literal meaning of this word "chata" has without doubt been accurately preserved is sufficient proof for our point here. All reputable Hebrew dictionaries will verify this original meaning.

Now let’s contrast our understanding of sin with God’s view of sin:

Our understanding of the word "sin" is mostly based on the statement "sin is the transgression of the law". So when the word "sin" is a translation of the words that mean "to miss a target" (i.e. "chata", etc.), then we also tend to assume a sense of moral guilt for this word (i.e. for "chata") because that is what "sin" means to us; to us "sin" implies a sense of moral guilt. In many cases our assumption in this regard is justified and valid. But there are also other situations when such an assumption would not be justified.

We generally don’t understand how or why the word "sin" should apply when there is in fact no moral guilt involved. **We cannot understand how the word "sin" could possibly apply to any activity that does not break any of God’s laws!** It seems unfair to us to refer to anything that does not involve some moral guilt, as for example a genuine mistake, as "sin". **We don’t think of honest mistakes as sin, do we?** No, to us the word "sin" implies some moral responsibility before God.

God’s view of "sin", on the other hand, is based on a far higher standard than our view. God assuredly views all those things that involve moral guilt as "sin". But in addition some things that don’t involve any wrong attitude towards God (i.e. they don’t involve any moral guilt) could also be "sin" before God. Some things that don’t involve breaking any of God’s laws can also be "sin" in the eyes of God.

God’s definition of sin is very simple and all-encompassing. This is it:

Sin is anything that falls short of perfection!

As I said, God has a far higher standard for what constitutes "sin". We tend to look upon "sin" as anything that "transgresses the laws of God", or even as anything that is "lawless". But God views anything that falls short of perfection as "sin".

We need to understand that **all sin has consequences**, but not all sin involves a moral guilt before God!

With God the word "sin" is not restricted to a religious meaning. With God the term "sin" also applies to **every facet of secular life**, because the word "chata" describes every condition that falls short of perfection. **With God something is either "perfect" or it is "sin"**, because it has missed the mark of perfection. It is either the one or the other.

That godly concept of either-or was explained by Jesus Christ Himself, when He said:

"no man can serve two masters, for either he will **hate the one**, and **love the other**; or he will **hold to the one**, and **despise the other**" (Matthew 6:24).

We don’t actually see it this way. Millions of people have held down two jobs at the same time, and they have tried to do their best at both jobs. They didn’t have animosity or contempt towards one of their two employers. Many people juggle their responsibilities as husband, father, employee, member of a club, citizen, charity worker, etc., without hating all but one of those demands on their time.

Jesus Christ’s statement in Matthew 6:24 is based on a completely different way of thinking. The principle is that with God it is a case of a 100% commitment to one thing, with **no middle ground**. And

that approach also applies to the concepts of perfection and sin: something is either perfect or it is sin, with no other options.

We human beings, on the other hand, tend to view things on **a sliding scale**, ranging from perfect at 100% down to totally wrong at 0%. We spontaneously think that way because we know that we ourselves are not perfect, and we want to make allowance for that fact. So we are conditioned to evaluate things as 80% good, or as 40% good, or as only 10% good, etc.

In many cases we will still accept 40% or 50% as a passing grade, as something that is acceptable. But when it comes to identifying sins, then **God never uses a sliding scale** like that. With God if something is not 100%, then it is wrong. This approach is foundational to how God views sin.

Can we grasp what constitutes "sin" and "sinning" from God's vantage point?

We think of sinning as doing something morally wrong, while God thinks of sinning as anything that falls short of perfection, irrespective of whether it is morally wrong or not. **If it falls short of perfection then God doesn't want it around**, and the things God doesn't want around are designated as "sin", as "missing the mark" for what God desires and will accept.

We all know what Paul said in Acts 17:30.

And **the times of this ignorance God winked at**; but now commands all men every where to repent: (Acts 17:30)

While God has a far higher standard for sins than just His laws being transgressed, we should understand that God will very readily overlook and forgive sins that didn't involve any moral guilt. That is Paul's point in this verse. Sins committed ignorantly didn't involve any moral guilt, and those sins God is prepared to "wink at".

Let's look at some Scriptures.

SOME SCRIPTURES

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

Notice that here sinning is equated with "coming short of the target", without any specific reference to breaking God's laws. We have always interpreted this verse with **our bias** that sin must mean "transgressing God's laws". But Paul's focus in this particular statement is on falling short of perfection, like missing the target.

Furthermore, "coming short of the glory of God" is another way of saying that we have missed the mark of bearing much fruit.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. (John 15:8)

With God, **if we don't bear much fruit**, then we miss the mark and "come short", which means that in God's sight **we are sinning**, because we have missed the target of producing fruit, which target God had set before us. God has a high standard.

To be quite clear: even when no laws of God are broken, to not produce fruits amounts to sinning before

God. Some of the fruits God expects us to produce are listed in Galatians 5:22-23.

That is also one of the points in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. The man who had been entrusted with one talent didn't produce anything at all (see Matthew 25:25). This lack of producing fruit God refers to as "wicked and slothful" (Matthew 25:26). **To not produce fruit amounts to being wicked**, even though no laws were broken by that particular servant. That is what Jesus Christ is saying in this parable.

That's far stricter than our human standards, right? We might agree that someone who doesn't produce fruits is "lazy", but "wicked"? The word "wicked" infers an evil attitude, which is not what we usually attribute to people whose only bad attribute is that they are lazy. We don't think of "slothfulness" as sin, do we? In fact, in some of our modern societies laziness is glorified, like it is the ultimate luxury and reward.

We might also consider the lazy person's assessment of God's standards for what is "sin". He called God "**a hard man**" (Matthew 25:24), implying that **God's requirements are unfair**. That is just another way of saying that God's standard for what is "sin" is unfair.

Recall the incident with the rich young man who came to Jesus Christ (see Matthew 19:16-22). He wasn't breaking any laws outwardly, and he said "all these things have I kept from my youth" (Matthew 19:20). Yes, I realize we could argue that the man was covetous. But the real point is this: even though he had outwardly not broken any of the ten commandments, **he hadn't really produced any fruits**! And to not produce fruits amounts to being wicked before God.

Can you see how the concepts of sinning and being wicked really focus on falling short of a target?

Look at another verse.

Let us therefore fear, **lest**, a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of **you should seem to come short of it**. (Hebrews 4:1)

Again Paul's focus is on sin being defined by "falling short of a target", a higher standard than simply avoiding disobedience to any of God's laws. In these verses Paul is clearly applying the literal meaning of the Hebrew word for "sin" to his statements.

Paul and all the other New Testament writers (except perhaps Luke) knew very clearly from their knowledge of the Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures that "sin" means "to miss the target". This understanding also influenced their choice of a word in the Greek language for "sin". So it should be no surprise that the New Testament Greek word for "sin" is also a secular word that applied to an archer missing his target. The New Testament writers had looked for, and found, a Greek word that conveys **the identical meaning** as the Hebrew word for "sin". (And Luke would obviously have understood this Greek word. So Luke also correctly understood the meaning of "sin".)

Let's look at another Scripture.

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

Perfection has always been God's goal for us human beings. The mere absence of disobedience to any of God's laws is not the goal because that is far too low a standard for what God expects. The mere absence of disobedience is not an adequate test for the human mind.

We have frequently read this verse, but we have seldom focused on the instruction to become perfect.

To become perfect like God in heaven is an extremely tall order and an extremely high standard. All of us fall so far short of perfection that we would just as soon quickly move on to talk about something else, something that is more attainable for us, right?

But to make this quite plain:

Being morally without guilt is certainly very important before God. (And having our guilt forgiven by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is a different subject, which we won't go into in this article.) But that is not enough. **We must strive for perfection**, even though in this life we won't attain it. We must go above and beyond the call of duty with willing pro-active obedience to all of God's laws. We have to seek God with our whole heart (see Deuteronomy 4:29). And **we must produce the fruits of God's spirit** in our lives. Those fruits are not optional; they are essential!

Consider one of the verses that defines sin with a "sin is ..." statement.

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

This definition of sin has nothing at all to do with whether or not any laws of God are transgressed! This definition of sin is aimed at perfection, not at the avoidance of disobedience to specific laws.

This definition of sin is on a far higher level than 1 John 3:4.

It is aimed at a much higher standard than how most of us understand the English word "sin". This verse is an explanation for the Hebrew word that means "to miss the target". Can you see that the statement "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" is **aimed at seeking perfection**, rather than being aimed at simply preventing the breaking of God's laws?

We all need to ask ourselves: are we really seeking perfection, or are we only focused on trying to avoid disobedience to God's laws? What is our mindset?

While we readily acknowledge this verse, it is not really the one that first comes to our minds when we look for a way to explain what sin is, is it? No, generally we almost always think first of all about 1 John 3:4.

Our dominant focus on 1 John 3:4 has had one undesirable consequence: It has led to us imposing **unjustified limitations** on the meaning of "sin". Breaking the laws of God has been our first and foremost criterion for establishing the meaning of the word "sin". For some people it is the only criterion for sin.

Let me give you **an analogy**. I realize this analogy falls short in some regards, but see if you can understand the point I am trying to make.

Someone asks you the question: **where is California?** You give the answer: California is between the Atlantic Ocean in the east and the Pacific Ocean in the west. That's like answering "what is sin?" with "sin is the transgression of the law".

Yes, California certainly is between those two oceans, and sin certainly is the transgression of the law. But this answer hasn't really given you a clear picture of where California is actually located. It is only a very general and vague answer, which is technically correct, but which creates a totally wrong picture in the hearer's mind, because he is likely to assume that California stretches all the way between the two oceans. Of course, you didn't actually say that, but that is what your hearer is likely to assume.

Likewise, sin certainly is the transgression of the law. But that answer is not at all a clear answer as what sin actually is. It is in fact quite misleading, just as misleading as deducing from the above answer that California must stretch between the two oceans.

We can in fact provide a far clearer answer to the question "where is California?", an answer that will create a far more accurate picture in the hearer's mind. Such a correct answer will put that first answer into an appropriate context.

Likewise, we can in fact also provide a far clearer answer to the question "what is sin?", an answer that will create a far more accurate understanding of sin in the hearer's mind. And such a correct answer will put the first answer ("sin is the transgression of the law") into an appropriate context.

Can you follow what I am trying to explain?

It is most assuredly "sin" to break the laws of God. But "sin" is actually much more than just the breaking of God's laws! 1 John 3:4 does not have and should not have preeminence amongst the definitions for "sin". As definitions go, 1 John 3:4 is only "**one amongst several**", with Romans 14:23 and James 4:17 being just as important and not one whit behind 1 John 3:4. But viewed in isolation 1 John 3:4 infers **incorrect limitations**, like "California is between the two oceans" infers the wrong conclusion that California must therefore stretch all the way between the two oceans.

The problem has always been that we can really sink our teeth into 1 John 3:4 because it sets some very specific parameters, whereas Romans 14:23 and James 4:17 are much too vague and subjective to allow us to spell out specific parameters. In other words, **1 John 3:4 appeals much more to the human mind than the other two definitions**, because 1 John 3:4 can be distilled down into specific do's and don't's, something that we cannot do for Romans 14:23 and for James 4:17.

But this also means that Romans 14:23 and James 4:17 come much closer to the real meaning of "to miss the target" than does 1 John 3:4. We need to see 1 John 3:4 as a supplement to the other two definitions for sin.

So now let's look at how James defined sin.

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

This definition also does not depend on any laws being broken. Laws are not the criterion here; perfection is the criterion. This is **a subjective definition for sin** because it depends on how much the person understands. This definition is also **aimed at seeking perfection**.

Can you see that? Incurring some moral guilt for breaking some law of God doesn't feature in these two definitions for sin. Both of these definitions are **aimed at the human mind**, rather than being aimed at regulating human actions and conduct. And James 4:17 shows that we can in fact incur a moral guilt before God without actively breaking any of God's laws.

Here is the main point we need to understand about James 4:17.

Irrespective of whether or not we know to do good, **it is always sin to not do good**, because it always misses the mark when we don't do good! It always misses perfection when we don't do good.

It is sin to every single human being "to not do good", and not only to those that "know to do good". However, for all those people who "don't know to do good" these are sins that God will "wink at", i.e. these sins of not doing good will not incur any moral guilt for all the people who "don't know to do good".

But for those who know to do good these sins will incur a moral guilt, even though they did not involve the breaking of any laws of God.

Anything short of perfection is sin before God.

Now **why** was James able to define sin like this in James 4:17? And **why** was Paul able to define sin like this in Romans 14:23? If you and I did not have these two verses as precedents to turn to, **it would never have occurred to us to define sin in this way**. But to James and to Paul these definitions came to mind very easily and very readily. **Why?**

These definitions for sin came to their minds very readily because they understood the meaning of the Hebrew word for sin. And **with a correct understanding of the Hebrew word for sin, these two definitions are nothing more than logical deductions**. James and Paul made the same logical deduction that I made when I said that before God sin is anything that falls short of perfection. That is a logical deduction, which God expects us to figure out on our own.

These two definitions (i.e. James 4:17 and Romans 14:23) certainly do not fit into the way we usually define the English word "sin", because the English word "sin" is focused on actions and conduct. Our usual definition for the word "sin" is based much more on 1 John 3:4, simply because 1 John 3:4 gives us something that is more tangible. But on its own 1 John 3:4 can also be somewhat misleading.

So **here is our dilemma**:

We have very clear parameters for what the word "sin" means in the English language. When we say "I have sinned", or someone else says to us "you have sinned", then we know that this is a reference to something we have done or neglected to do, or it is a reference to something we have said that is wrong. The parameters for the word "sin" are quite clear to our minds because our minds have been restricted by 1 John 3:4.

But, on the other hand, the New Testament time and again uses the word "sin" with **a meaning that lies outside of the parameters** of 1 John 3:4. In other words, the Old Testament and also the New Testament both **sometimes** use the word "sin" with a meaning that has nothing to do with 1 John 3:4, at least not directly.

For example:

And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and **if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him**. (James 5:15)

Here the statement "if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" is not in any way whatsoever a reference to sins that have incurred a moral guilt before God. It is not a reference to the sick person having sins of adultery and Sabbath-breaking and taking God’s name in vain and murder and lying and coveting and stealing, etc. forgiven when he is anointed. **Sins that incur a moral guilt have nothing to do with James 5:15**, because sins with a moral guilt always require repentance before they will be forgiven.

This statement in James 5:15 is a reference to actions and conduct that missed the target (i.e. it is a reference to "sins"), which actions resulted in the person becoming sick or injured. And in many cases there is no moral guilt attached to these sins that cause sicknesses or injuries.

The sins which James had in mind in James 5:15 fall outside of the parameters of the sins that incur a moral guilt before God. And because those sins had not incurred any moral guilt before God, therefore

James 5:14-16 also does not call for repentance on the part of the sick person. Morality is simply not an issue in this particular discussion of asking God for healing.

So notice: the fact that here in James 5:15 the offer for the forgiveness of sins is presented without in any way bringing repentance into the picture proves that the sins spoken about in James 5:15 cannot possibly involve any moral guilt. Never would any servant of God offer the forgiveness of sins that involve a moral guilt before God without making repentance a very clear requirement and pre-condition for such forgiveness.

Note!

This is not to imply that problems of ill-health are not at times caused by people doing things that violate **God's spiritual laws** and which sins therefore also reap a moral guilt. When that is the case, then those people are assuredly expected to **repent before even asking God to heal them**. But that is not the type of situation James was addressing in chapter 5. James was simply not speaking about spiritual sins.

A simple example of a sickness being caused by sins that did incur a moral guilt before God is when the leprosy of Naaman came upon Gehazi, Elisha's servant, for his greed and covetousness (see 2 Kings 5:26-27). Greed, a breaking of the tenth commandment, was the cause for Gehazi's leprosy.

When greedy, covetous people contract serious health problems, then I suspect that in many cases those health problems are likewise a direct penalty from God for their greed and covetousness. Gehazi is certainly not the only greedy person who has ever been punished by God with a serious health problem. In those cases the health problems are due to a violation of God's spiritual laws.

But these are not the type of situations James had in mind when he wrote James 5:15.

To continue:

The question now is: **who decides** what the words "sin" and "sinning" are supposed to mean? Does God determine that meaning or do we human beings determine that meaning?

I ask this question because **if we human beings in a CoG decide** what constitutes "sin", then we spontaneously settle for the Hebrew words that mean "to transgress" and "to offend" and "to be perverse" and "to rebel" and "to go astray". On the other hand, **if God decides** what constitutes "sin", then we'll have to accept the Hebrew word that means "to miss the target" and "to take a wrong step" and "to fall short of perfection", a word that applies to anything that falls short of perfection.

Obviously, we all understand that God is the One who determines the correct meaning and application for the words "sin" and "sinning".

This has some very significant consequences regarding the question about physical sins. Here is how:

If we human beings in a CoG had the right to decide what the word "sin" is to mean, then we would apply it to actions and conduct which incur a moral guilt before God. And with that limitation for the word "sin", **then it would be correct to say** that: **all sins are spiritual and there is no such thing as physical sin**.

But God has decided that the words "sin" and "sinning" refer not only to actions and conduct that incur a moral guilt, but even to actions as simple as missing a target and as common as taking a step in the wrong direction, in fact to anything that falls short of perfection.

This clearly much expanded application for the word "sin" means that the word "sin" applies not only in spiritual matters, but **also in every other facet of our lives**. And yes, with this understanding of the word "sin" **there is indeed such a thing as physical sins** which don't involve any moral guilt before God.

Without any kind of a wrong attitude towards God we can "miss the target" or "miss the mark" or "fall short of perfection" in any area of our lives. Thus, in addition to spiritual matters in connection with our relationship with God, we can also "miss the target" (i.e. we can also sin):

- in the way we look after our health,

- in our diet,

- in our whole lifestyle,

- in the activities we engage in,

- in the way we do our work,

- in the way we use our minds,

- in the way we groom ourselves,

- in the way we dress,

- in the way we speak, etc.

With all of the things in this list we have **a great deal of latitude** as to what is fully acceptable before God, without in any way "missing the target". I do not wish to in any way minimize that great latitude. But while we do have a great deal of latitude for all of the things in this list, there obviously are also **some things** in each of these categories that amount to "missing the mark".

That would include, for example, those things we sometimes refer to as "going to extremes". It would also include things like using our minds in negative ways, eating an unhealthy diet, engaging in obviously dangerous activities, dressing immodestly, ignoring basic principles for good health, speaking without first thinking, etc.

Now when we do "miss the target" in any of these areas, then in many cases and most of the time such "missing the target" (i.e. "sinning") **will not incur a spiritual penalty before God**. In most cases such "missing the target" does not lead to the lake of fire.

Note!

This type of "missing the target" is not really what Paul had in mind when he wrote "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

In Romans chapter 6 Paul was speaking very specifically about spiritual sins, which is also the case most of the time throughout the Bible. That is clear from Paul's opening statement in verse 1 ("shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"). That is also clear from his reference to reckoning ourselves "to be dead indeed unto sin" (Romans 6:11). That is also clear from his statement "his servants you are whom you obey, whether of sin unto death ..." (Romans 6:16). Paul's statement that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23) is focused specifically on **sins committed by using our minds**.

But that is not the type of sin James had in mind when he was speaking about us approaching God for healing our sicknesses and diseases and injuries.

In the context in Romans, which was a doctrinal explanation by Paul for the Christians in Rome, Paul was not in any way thinking about missing the mark in ways that don't involve a moral guilt before God. Paul and James were simply thinking about different categories of sins in their respective statements.

Consider that Paul said that "the wages of sin is **death**" and Paul also said that "the times of this ignorance God **winked at**". **The same man made these two statements.** Now the point is that Paul was not making light of the need for repentance for sins that incur a moral guilt, when Paul spoke about God "winking at" certain sins. The Greek word that is translated as "wink at" in Acts 17:30 literally means "**to overlook**, **to take no notice of**".

But killing, stealing, lying and committing adultery, for example, always incur a moral guilt, even for people who don't understand God's truth, because all people know that these things are wrong. These are the type of things that are "contained in the law" **which all people** "**do by nature**" (see Romans 2:14). And these sins all incur the death penalty according to Romans 6:23, unless they are repented of. And **none of these type of sins does God ever overlook and ignore**!

We need to recognize that the sins that incur the death penalty are never winked at or overlooked or ignored by God, simply because people did not understand God's truth. All sins that have incurred the death penalty require serious repentance; they require a serious changing of the person's mind before those sins are forgiven. Yes, forgiveness upon repentance is very readily available to such people, but such sins are never treated lightly by God. God never "overlooks" or "winks at" such sins, but God will forgive them upon repentance.

The sins Paul had in mind in Acts 17:30, when Paul talked about God very easily forgiving them, are sins of ignorance that did not incur any moral guilt before God. Such sins are easily overlooked by God **because those sins did not involve a rebellious frame of mind towards God**. Ignorance is not the same as rebellion. The sins God winks at do not involve the death penalty.

So with his statement about "the wages of sin" in Romans 6:23 Paul was not speaking about any sins that don't incur any moral guilt. Genuine ignorance does not incur any moral guilt, and therefore also does not incur the death penalty. The death penalty only enters the picture when ignorance mutates into rebellion.

And likewise James in James 5:15 was not speaking about any sins that incur a moral guilt. James was speaking about sins of ignorance that God is prepared to overlook and to "wink at".

Getting back to the examples I mentioned above regarding missing the target in physical ways:

While these ways of "missing the target" in most cases do not lead to the lake of fire, they do nevertheless all have specific consequences. To state this very plainly:

Every form of "missing the mark" (the meaning of the word "sin") has some undesirable consequences!

The reason most of the "missing the target" in these things does not incur spiritual consequences is because most of the time our "missing the target" in these things is due to ignorance or a lack of understanding or plain thoughtlessness on our part, but without a wrong and rebellious attitude towards God. And once we have missed the target, then the undesirable consequences (i.e. penalties) follow.

Examples:

We thoughtlessly engage in some activity and then we ourselves or someone else gets hurt. The unanticipated consequences should be a teaching moment.

We talk without thinking first and end up offending some people. Now we have to deal with hurt feelings.

We use our minds to think negatively, pessimistically or covetously, and eventually we end up with ulcers or some other digestive problems, or perhaps some other health problems.

We don't make a serious effort to look after our good health and we eventually end up with numerous health problems. (This does not apply to all health problems.)

We don't take care of grooming ourselves properly, and at some point we end up with ingrown toenails or hair lice or skin problems.

We dress with shoes that "miss the mark" and over the years we end up deforming our feet, in addition to developing bunions and other foot problems.

We do our work carelessly and then problems come along. etc.

The point is this:

It may not carry a spiritual penalty, but **every form of "missing the target" always without exception has negative, undesirable consequences**. And in very many cases those "undesirable consequences" in some way or other adversely affect our physical health, frequently in ways that are painful.

That is how God designed it! Causes and consequences!

A basic principle we need to understand in this regard is this:

PAIN IS A PENALTY FOR SIN!

Where there is pain, there is sin. For that matter, even the pain in childbirth is a penalty that God imposed for Eve's sin (see Genesis 3:16). Now the fact that certain actions and behavior cause us **pain** and suffering **proves that these things are sins**! If before God those things were not sin, then they also would not have produced pain. Pain is always the irrefutable evidence that some sins have been committed.

Ill-health is proof that sins have been committed. It is not possible to have any form of ill-health in the total absence of sins. (Keep in mind that sins are anything that is less than perfect.)

The only qualifying point in this matter is that with conditions of ill-health the sins may sometimes (perhaps even often?) have been committed by one party, and the ill-health is then experienced by someone else. So in very many cases the sick person is the innocent victim of someone else's sins. Some people sin (pollute the air, the water and the soil, drive recklessly, carelessly or even deliberately injure other people, take drugs before conceiving a child, unknowingly spread contagious diseases, etc.) and other people then innocently suffer the consequences of those people's sins.

That is why James made the conditional statement "if he have committed sins ..." in James 5:15. This conditional statement shows that James recognized that sometimes we experience sicknesses as a consequence of other people's sins. And in those cases we don't need to have the sins that caused the

sickness forgiven. In those cases the sins belong to other people.

We should, however, understand that many instances of "missing the target" will have consequences that can adversely impact on our physical or mental health, even when those instances do not involve any moral guilt on our part.

Now consider the following point:

God’s choice of words to convey the concept of sin to us human beings all by itself reveals God’s intended meaning and application. God freely used many different Hebrew words to describe activities that are sin, including the words we looked at earlier, i.e. "avon", "pesha", "asham" and "shagah". And if these were the only terms God had used, then we might well conclude that God was restricting the meaning of the concept of "sin" to transgressions of His spiritual laws.

But when God selected **a word that refers to an archer missing his target** as a way of identifying the concept of "sin", then God was already revealing that the word "sin" applies to anything that falls short of perfection. That implication goes well beyond compliance with all of God’s spiritual laws. By using a secular Hebrew word, without any automatic moral implications attached, to identify what sin is, God was showing that this word applies to **every aspect of human lives**.

So in plain language:

The word "transgress" has negative moral implications. The same is true for the words "to be perverse, to rebel, to go astray, to offend"; they all imply some moral guilt. But for an archer "to miss the target" does not automatically imply any moral guilt at all. "To miss the target" is on a different level from all those other words.

So the fact that the Hebrew word for describing "sin" is a word that refers to an archer missing his intended target tells us that God applies the concept of sin to every single aspect of our lives, including those areas that don’t necessarily have spiritual consequences.

To miss a target encompasses far more than being perverse or rebelling or going astray, etc. Missing a target applies to all actions and activities on the human level, above and beyond the matter of either obeying or else transgressing God’s laws. Seeking to avoid missing a target implies that **our sights are set on perfection**.

So we need to recognize that the meaning which we have attached to the word "sin" in the English language has imposed **an artificial and unjustified limitation of what God means by "sin"**. We need to recognize that before God sin is anything that falls short of perfection, without everything necessarily also always drawing moral condemnation.

So yes, there is indeed such a thing as "physical sin". And every sin, every missing of the target, has consequences. Spiritual sins have spiritual consequences, and physical ways of missing the target have physical consequences. And of course, sometimes physical sins and spiritual sins are closely connected, and then the consequences are likewise connected.

But physical missing of the target (i.e. physical sin) with things that are not directly linked to any of God’s laws, in the absence of any kind of wrong attitude towards God, does not have moral consequences; it does not incur any moral guilt because it is not the product of a hostile mind.

It only incurs physical consequences to start with. And if the mind continues to be right before God, once

those physical consequences have kicked in, then moral consequences never enter the picture. However, if the human mind becomes hostile or resentful towards God as a result of those initial physical consequences, at that point moral consequences would enter the picture.

Now, as already indicated, **the New Testament Greek word** translated as "sin" **also refers to "an archer missing his target"**. So in both the Old Testament Hebrew and in the New Testament Greek the word for "sin" refers to "missing a target", i.e. falling short of achieving 100%. Thus we need not get involved in a detailed examination of the New Testament Greek words. If you so desire, you can easily check those words out for yourself.

So here is the point for us:

We really need to get away from our understanding of the narrow English language meaning of the word "sin", which inherently always implies some form of moral guilt. While that is certainly a major component of how God uses the word "sin", God's use of the word "sin" is not restricted to this specific meaning. God also uses the word "sin" to describe anything that is less than perfect, even when no moral guilt of any kind is involved.

And that is a meaning that is not covered by our definition of the word "sin" in the English language. **We need to expand our understanding of the word "sin" to include the broad scope that God includes when He uses this word "sin".**

The reason God has this very broad meaning for the word "sin" is because **everything that is less than perfect will in due time be eradicated by God**. That includes things that don't even have anything to do with any kind of moral guilt, the type of guilt that leads to the lake of fire.

Ultimately God will burn up this entire universe ... because it is less than perfect. This planet Earth and this universe have not acquired any moral guilt, yet because they are not perfect they will be eliminated nonetheless. The reason for the yet future destruction is not because the universe has somehow actively sinned. This present universe will be destroyed **because it is less than perfect**, even though it has not sinned. The sins were committed by Satan and the demons and by human beings, but the universe will be destroyed and then replaced by something that will be perfect.

Perfection is the rock-bottom minimum standard for everything in the presence of God.

Put another way, perfection is the only standard that God accepts.

To summarize this section: we need to understand that, as Mr. Armstrong correctly taught, there is indeed such a thing as "physical sin", because we human beings very easily and very frequently miss the target in various ways, sometimes without incurring any moral guilt in that process. That is, we can actually have a good and repentant attitude towards God while we still sometimes miss the target in physical ways.

Consider **the sacrifice of Jesus Christ** for us human beings, which sacrifice consists of two very distinct parts:

1) Jesus Christ was brutally beaten and His body was broken.

2) Jesus Christ's blood was shed and He died for us.

You are very familiar with these two distinct parts of Christ's sacrifice from the Passover service you attend every year. You already know the relevant verses in this regard (Isaiah 52:13-14; Isaiah 53:1-7; 1

Peter 2:24; etc.).

So here is the point:

The purpose of Jesus Christ's total sacrifice is **to remove all sins committed by human beings**, those sins that incurred a moral guilt, and also those sins that did not incur a moral guilt, but yet they did incur very undesirable physical consequences.

Jesus Christ's body was broken to make possible the removal of all human sins that did not incur any moral guilt. And Jesus Christ's blood was shed (i.e. He died) to make possible the removal of all human sins that did incur moral guilt.

The human sins that did not necessarily incur any moral guilt overwhelmingly resulted in producing a huge spectrum of physical sicknesses and diseases, and physical pain and physical, mental and emotional suffering, if not for the perpetrators then for others in their environment.

The division of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ into two parts shows that those sins that do not incur any moral guilt do nevertheless cause pain and suffering. That is why Christ was beaten with many stripes. But if all sins automatically incurred the death penalty, then Jesus Christ would not have been beaten before dying for our sins.

Consider this:

To cover all human sins that incur the death penalty Jesus Christ could have given His life with a quick and painless merciful death. It is precisely because His death did not address those human sins that had not incurred the death penalty, yet had caused pain and suffering, that Jesus Christ endured intense physical suffering before then giving His life for all our sins that have incurred the death penalty.

The understanding that there are indeed physical sins, as far as God is concerned, is central to providing a way for making possible the removal of all ill-health.

Mr. Armstrong correctly understood all of this simply by looking at the Passover and its obvious symbolism. Here he simply followed God's way of thinking. And that is why Mr. Armstrong was able to write on page 47 of his "Healing Booklet":

"To say there is no such thing as physical sin, as has been said by self-professing intellectuals, is NOT intellectual --- it is rank STUPIDITY, IGNORANCE or WILLFUL PERVERSION OF PLAIN SIMPLE TRUTH!" (this is Mr. Armstrong's own emphasis)

I fully agree with Mr. Armstrong's assessment here.

ONE CONCISE PROOF FOR PHYSICAL SINS

God will never hold one person responsible or accountable for the spiritual sins of another person. That principle was spelled out by God in the Book of 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)

The principle here is very clear that God will never impose any kind of penalty on someone for the moral guilt of another person. A son will never be punished in any way by God for the spiritual sins of his father. Penalties for the breaking of God's laws and commandments are only imposed on those who have committed those sins, and not on anyone else.

But back in the ten commandments God had already said right within the context of the second commandment:

You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD your God *am* a jealous God, **visiting** the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; (Exodus 20:5)

The Hebrew word here translated as "visiting" is "paqad" and it really means "**to punish**". Examples where "paqad" is appropriately translated as "punish" include the following verses, where I have rendered the translation of "paqad" in bold text for easy recognition:

Wherefore it shall come to pass, *that* when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, **I will punish** the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. (Isaiah 10:12)

And **I will punish** the world for *their* evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. (Isaiah 13:11)

And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* **the LORD shall punish** the host of the high ones *that are* on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. (Isa 24:21)

And there shall be, like people, like priest: and **I will punish** them for their ways, and reward them their doings. (Hosea 4:9)

You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore **I will punish** you for all your iniquities. (Amos 3:2)

Likewise, the correct meaning of Exodus 20:5 is:

"... **punishing the iniquity of the fathers upon the children** unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me."

So in **Exodus 20:5** it says: "punishing the **iniquity of the fathers** upon the children to the third and fourth generation".

And in **Ezekiel 18:20** it says: "The son shall **not** bear the **iniquity of the father**, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son".

The only possibility for these two statements is that they are talking about different forms of "iniquity", and **iniquity is always sin**. So these two statements are talking about **different forms of sin**. A vital key to correctly understanding these two statements is the reference in Exodus 20:5 to "**unto the third and fourth generation**". That is a very clear reference to **genetics**! And it is equally clearly not a reference to any spiritual principles.

Exodus 20:5 is showing that some things may be genetically passed on as far as the third and even the fourth generation. This is clearly a reference to **physical problems** being passed on to the next three or four generations. But the physical problems that are genetically passed on for three or four generations

do not in any way involve moral responsibilities for those subsequent generations for those problems coming about in the first place. That is made clear by Ezekiel 18:20.

So while a son will never be responsible for the spiritual sins which his father may have committed, the son may very possibly have to endure the physical consequences of his father having broken certain physical laws of health, in the form of genetically inheriting certain health problems or deficiencies from his parents.

So right within the context of the ten commandments themselves God was already referring to physical sins. Can you see that?

With all of the above discussion we have established the reality of physical sins. So now we can move on to examine the relationship between healing and the forgiveness of sins.

TWO SETS OF TWO EXAMPLES EACH

In the gospel accounts there are exactly **two instances** when Jesus Christ **forgave somebody's sins**. The one case applies to a sick person having his **physical sins** forgiven. And the other case applies to a woman having her **spiritual sins** forgiven.

Then there are **two** different **instances** where Jesus Christ said "**go and sin no more**". The one case involved the woman caught in the act of adultery, a **spiritual sin**. And the other case involved the man who had been sick for 38 years, a consequence of **physical sins**. In these two cases Jesus Christ did not say anything about forgiving any sins.

Of special interest in this regard are two comparisons that stand out and beg to be examined. **The two women** in these four cases were both guilty of sexual sins. Yet one woman was told "your sins are forgiven", while the other woman was told "go and sin no more". This shows that Jesus Christ treated these two women differently.

The two men in these four cases were both unable to walk (i.e. they were more or less paralyzed). Yet one man was told "your sins are forgiven", while the other man was told "go and sin no more". This shows that Jesus Christ also treated these two men differently. We'll examine the reasons why Jesus Christ treated these people differently.

These two pairs of examples each contain many important lessons for us. We'll examine all four of those instances. We'll see that they also distinguish between physical sins and spiritual sins. However, we should be clear on the following point:

I am not presenting any of those four cases to "prove" the existence of physical sins. **The proof for the existence of physical sins is what I have already presented up to this point in this article.** I am presenting these four cases as illustrations for the differences between physical sins and spiritual sins. So I will approach the discussion of these scriptural passages from the premise that the existence of physical sins has already been established, and these Scriptures simply illustrate specific points that apply to healing and to the forgiveness of sins.

Let's now start with the first of these four cases.

PHYSICAL SINS THAT ARE FORGIVEN

This is the example of the man who was "sick of the palsy", i.e. he suffered a type of paralysis. This incident is recorded in all three synoptic gospels. See **Matthew 9:1-8** and **Mark 2:3-12** and **Luke 5:18-26**. Each account mentions some details that are not present in the other accounts. To get the whole picture we will look at details in all three of these accounts.

[Comment: The English word "**palsy**" refers to both, paralysis and also to a condition marked by uncontrollable tremor of the body. The Greek word translated as "palsy" in these verses is "**paralutikos**", and this word means "**a paralytic**", as well as "**someone disabled on one side of the body**", for example as a result of a stroke. So the English and Greek words cover the same basic meaning. The individual in this incident here appears to have been more disabled than the man we will look at later.]

Here was the situation:

A paralyzed man in the city of Capernaum (Mark 2:1) persuaded four of his friends (Mark 2:3) to carry him to the house where Jesus Christ was preaching. The house was already filled with people so that nobody else could come in (Mark 2:2). Now the paralyzed man was clearly convinced that Jesus Christ had the power to heal him, and he desperately wanted to see Jesus Christ. Matthew simply tells us:

And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, **lying on a bed**: and Jesus **seeing their faith** said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. (Matthew 9:2)

Matthew's account doesn't explain why or how Jesus Christ was able "to see their faith". But Mark and Luke both provide more details in this regard.

And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, **they uncovered the roof** where he was: and when they had broken *it* up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. (Mark 2:4, see also Luke 5:19)

In other words, this wasn't a straight-forward matter where these people simply walked in, which is the impression we might get from Matthew's account.

The paralyzed man and his four friends were clearly **very determined** to gain access to Jesus Christ. They first carried the man to this house. Then they carried him up to the roof. Then they proceeded to take the roofing apart over the room in which Jesus Christ was standing. While not nearly as difficult a task as that would be with our modern houses, in all likelihood these men worked for ten or more minutes to open up a sufficiently large hole in the tiling of the roof, something they would be responsible for later repairing again.

Everyone in the room would obviously have heard the noise coming from the ceiling, as these four men were opening it up. And so everyone would have looked up. This was an extremely unconventional way of gaining entry into a room, to put it mildly.

Next, the four men needed four good-sized ropes to slowly lower the bed with the paralyzed man on it. It is unlikely that they had come prepared for this. So it probably took them some time to find four suitable ropes. Then they had to lower the four corners of the bed, all the while carefully taking the strain so as not to drop the paralyzed man.

Picture yourself in the position of one of the four men who were helping this paralyzed man. These men went to a considerable amount of effort to get this paralyzed man to Jesus Christ. It seems highly likely that these four men were motivated by the paralyzed man himself appealing to them with a request

something like: "**please don't give up; please do whatever it takes to get me into the presence of Jesus Christ; I must get to see Him**".

It is this amount of effort that these men put forth that is the foundation for the statement that Jesus Christ "saw their faith". Christ saw **how hard these men had worked** to come to him. This is an example of the principle which the Apostle James explained.

Yes, a man may say, you have faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works, and **I will show you my faith by my works**. (James 2:18)

That is exactly what these men had done, shown their faith by their works. And so in this account the evidence for faith was present before any healing took place. All three accounts make quite clear that Jesus Christ forgave the man's sins in response to the faith He had seen. Notice:

When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy ... (Mark 2:5)

... **and Jesus seeing their faith** said unto the sick of the palsy ... (Matthew 9:2)

And **when he saw their faith**, he said unto him ... (Luke 5:20)

Let's continue with Matthew 9:2.

"... Jesus ... said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, **be of good cheer**; **your sins be forgiven you**."

The question is: **why** did Jesus Christ forgive **this man's sins**? Why didn't He forgive other people's sins, like the four men who had gone to this enormous effort of bringing this paralyzed man before Jesus Christ? Why, in a room filled to capacity and overflowing, with people who were eager to hear Him, did Jesus Christ forgive this one particular man's sins, when this man had not even directly asked for any kind of forgiveness? **Does God ever forgive us without us actually asking God for forgiveness?**

That doesn't normally happen, does it? I mean, think of Matthew 7:7 with "ask and it shall be given ...". What the man was very clearly "asking for" was healing. So why did Jesus Christ give him something that he hadn't even asked for (i.e. forgiveness of sins)? Was it perhaps that Christ gave the man something that was a prerequisite for what he actually **was** asking for, which was healing?

We understand that real repentance, together with faith, is an absolute prerequisite for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38, etc.). Real repentance involves us coming to change the way we use our minds, changing our way of thinking. While there is very compelling evidence that the paralyzed man and his four helpers had faith that Jesus Christ had the power to heal, **there is no evidence at all that the paralyzed man**, or any of his helpers for that matter, **had made any commitment to repent in a spiritual sense**.

There is no direct statement that the paralyzed man understood the need for real repentance, because **there were no obvious sins that he had to confront**. If the man had been known to have committed adultery or killed someone or stolen from people, then there would have been obvious evidence that the man needed to make some changes and that he was in need of forgiveness. But that wasn't the case; **this man wasn't known in the community as "a sinner"**.

So why did Jesus Christ totally out of the blue forgive this one man his sins?

The reason why in response to their faith Jesus Christ forgave this one man's sins was because this man had a serious disease! The man's disease was the real reason why Jesus Christ forgave his sins.

The man’s disease is the obvious key to this forgiveness of sins.

In other words, **if this man had not been sick, then Jesus Christ would also not have forgiven his sins**!

Now the "rank stupidity or willful perversion" (Mr. Armstrong’s words) involved in the claim that there is no such thing as physical sin used the following line of flawed reasoning for this incident (paraphrased):

"After Jesus Christ had forgiven the man’s sins, **the man was still paralyzed**. The man was only healed moments later when Jesus Christ said ‘arise, take up your bed and go into your house’ (Matthew 9:6). So since the man was not healed when his sins were forgiven, therefore this event could (supposedly) not have been the forgiveness of physical sins."

Can you recognize the mistake in that flawed line of reasoning? That line of reasoning falsely equated healing with the forgiveness of physical sins. **That is a false comparison!**

Let me give an example to expose the flawed reasoning of those people who deny the reality of physical sins.

In the days of old warfare was conducted with swords and bows and arrows. So consider the following hypothetical case.

In a battle you are shot in the upper chest or the shoulder with **an arrow**. You experience **severe pain**. The arrow has penetrated deeply into your body and may have damaged a vein or an artery or a tendon or some muscles or even an internal organ. You are **bleeding** profusely from the wound.

In this situation:

1) The arrow **caused** your problem. **The arrow** represents the **physical sins** that cause health problems.

2) To start the process of recovery, the very first thing that needs to be done is that **you must remove the arrow from the wound**. You must remove the cause of the problem. The **forgiveness of physical sins** is like removing the arrow from the wound. Unless you actively remove the arrow from your chest or shoulder, you cannot possibly start the healing process.

3) However, once the arrow has been removed from the wound (i.e. once the physical sins have been forgiven), that does not mean that the problems the arrow caused have also been removed. **The problems remain behind even after the arrow has been removed from the wound.**

4) So for anyone who is wounded with an arrow in his chest, two distinct and very different things need to happen:

A) The arrow needs to be removed from the wound.

B) **Then** the problems caused by the arrow need to be dealt with.

5) Removing the arrow from the wound does not stop the bleeding, and it doesn’t automatically heal the blood vessels or organs or muscles that were damaged by the arrow.

6) Stated another way:

Removing the cause of a problem is not the same as dealing with the consequences that resulted. Removing the cause of a problem does nothing more than open the way to begin dealing with the undesirable consequences that came about.

7) Now the "rank stupidity" or the "willful perversion of the truth" **attempted to equate the arrow with the wound produced by the arrow**! It attempted to equate the cause of a problem with the problem itself.

8) Almost always problems continue to exist to some degree even after the causes of those problems have been removed! That is because **the cause of a problem** and **the problem itself** are two very distinct and different things. They are not the same thing!

You can probably think of other analogies that illustrate this same point. For example:

- A raging flood washes away a number of houses and devastates a large area of a city (e.g. New Orleans). Removing the flood waters does not remove the problems that were caused by the flooding. Removing the flood waters does nothing more than open the way to start dealing with the problems that were caused by the flooding.

The forgiveness of physical sins is like removing the arrow or the flood waters. It doesn't resolve the problems that came about. It only opens the door to begin dealing constructively with those problems.

However, it is never helpful to deny the causes of our problems, something many of us regrettably often try to do. That would be like denying that we have an arrow sticking in our chest, or that our houses are standing in ten feet of flood waters.

So coming back to the man with the palsy in Matthew chapter 9.

When Jesus Christ said: "**your sins are forgiven you**", then that was like pulling the arrow out of his chest. He was still severely wounded (i.e. in his case it was paralysis), but the cause of his problem had been removed. Thus the way had been opened to deal with the consequences.

Pulling the arrow out of the chest is not healing, but it is a prerequisite for starting the healing process. Likewise:

The forgiveness of physical sins is not divine healing! But the forgiveness of physical sins is a prerequisite for divine healing! It is a prior requirement!

In this example in Matthew 9 Jesus Christ showed us the two distinct parts involved in God healing us. The first part consisted of Jesus Christ saying "your sins be forgiven you". With the arrow now pulled out of the chest (in analogy), the second part then was the actual divine healing, with the words "arise ... and go unto your house".

We need to understand very clearly that the forgiveness of physical sins is not the same as divine healing. But the forgiveness of physical sins must always **precede** divine healing in those cases where the sick person himself is responsible for the physical sins.

In very many cases the sick person himself is **an innocent victim** of physical (and perhaps also spiritual) sins that were committed by someone else; and in those cases the sick person does not need to have any physical sins forgiven before divine healing can take place. That is the premise of the statement in James 5:15 which says "... **AND IF** he have committed (physical) sins, they shall be

forgiven him".

Now consider something else which you may not have considered before.

"SON, BE OF GOOD CHEER"

Notice that only Matthew recorded Jesus Christ saying "son, **be of good cheer**" (Matthew 9:2) **before saying** "your sins be forgiven you".

Do you know why Jesus Christ said those words?

This expression is very significant! The Greek word underlying this expression "be of good cheer" is only used 8 times in the New Testament (there are also two places in Acts 27:22,25 where the English expression "be of good cheer" is used, but there it represents a different Greek word), and in some of those 8 places it is translated as "be of good comfort".

The Greek word for this expression is always either the singular "tharsei" or the plural "tharseite", the present active imperative form of the biblical Greek verb "**tharseo**". This verb "tharseo" is formed from the noun "**tharsos**", which means "**courage**" (modern Greek has changed this to "tharros", which is easier on the tongue, but has the same meaning).

So whenever we read "be of good cheer" Jesus Christ was really saying "**be of good courage**", or simply "**be courageous**"! And Jesus Christ said this when people were inclined to be fearful. For example:

In Matthew 14:27 (also Mark 6:50) Jesus Christ said "be of good courage" in response to the disciples being **very fearful** when they saw Christ walking on water. In Matthew 9:22 (and also Luke 8:48) Jesus Christ said "be of good courage" to the woman who had an issue of blood for 12 years and who was **very fearful** once she knew that Jesus Christ knew that she had secretly touched the hem of His garment. And in John 16:33 Jesus Christ said "be of good courage" to the 11 apostles, who were **very fearful** because Christ had just explained to them that He would have to die.

The point is this: Jesus Christ didn't use this expression "be of good courage" (translated in the KJV as "be of good cheer" and as "be of good comfort") just as an empty filler. **Jesus Christ used this expression whenever people were very fearful**, when people feared for their lives. This expression is said to people who are on the right track, but who need encouragement to stay strong and resolute.

So what about **our paralyzed man in Matthew 9**?

The paralyzed man and his four friends had gone to a great length for the paralyzed man to come into the presence of Jesus Christ. The actions of these men made clear that they had faith in Jesus Christ's power to heal.

But Christ's words "son, be of good courage" provide an additional insight into the man's mind. Jesus Christ said these words because Jesus Christ could discern that **the man was very fearful**. And the question is: **WHY** was the man fearful, when he and his friends clearly demonstrated their faith in Christ's ability to heal? Faith and fear don't normally go together.

Here is the point:

The paralyzed man was fearful because he realized that **he was either totally or else to some degree guilty and responsible for his own paralysis**. Yes, he had the faith that Jesus Christ could heal him. But he also had a guilt that bothered his conscience. Very possibly he had engaged in some foolish conduct that had resulted in a spinal cord injury that had left him paralyzed. So his conscience bothered him because he realized "I am in this condition because of my own stupidity". That feeling of guilt bothered him.

While this is certainly not always the case, there are indeed some situations when we become sick or injured because of something foolish we have done. In those cases we know that we ourselves caused our own health problems. And we feel guilty. And we want God to remove that guilt from us, in addition to asking God to heal us. That was more or less the situation for this particular paralyzed man.

The feeling of guilt on the part of this paralyzed man was an expression of repentance for his foolish conduct. His fear was an acknowledgment of his own responsibility for his problem. He had had a change of heart about what he had done before becoming paralyzed. And he felt guilty for his previous foolish and dangerous conduct. So he was fearful.

This frame of mind had given the man a very strong motivation to come before Jesus Christ, to the point of taking apart the roof of some other person's house. Perhaps his four friends had said to him: "look, that house is already packed like a tin of sardines (they would have used a different figure of speech), and there is no way that we're going to be able to get you in there". And he might have replied: "well, in that case take me up on the roof, and take the roof apart so that you can let me down into Jesus Christ's presence. I don't care how you do it, but you must do whatever it takes to get me into Christ's presence." His conscience was driving him.

And so of all the sick people that Jesus Christ met during His ministry, **this was the man who needed to be told "your sins are forgiven"**! And the opening statement "son, be of good courage" was to let the man know that Jesus Christ understood what was really bothering the paralyzed man, which was his conscience.

So when Jesus Christ then followed this opening statement of "be courageous" with the statement "your sins be forgiven you", then that was aimed at **setting the man's conscience at ease**. Jesus Christ did not primarily say these words in order to pick a fight with the Pharisees. Christ was not looking for an excuse to deliberately offend them.

Jesus Christ took this unusual approach to healing one more person because **that man was remorseful** for his previous foolish conduct that caused his paralysis (though he was not necessarily remorseful for his likely spiritual sins of lusting and coveting, etc.), and therefore that man needed to hear that **his foolish conduct had been forgiven**.

So even before healing the man Jesus Christ already **set the man's mind at rest**. And then Jesus Christ healed the man.

We should also note one other point. Jesus Christ didn't use words lightly. It may surprise you that this paralytic man is **the only person** in all four gospel accounts who is ever addressed by Jesus Christ with the word "**son**"!

That is recorded in Matthew 9:2 and in Mark 2:5. Nobody else in the New Testament is ever directly addressed by Jesus Christ as "son". [Comment: Luke only heard about this incident second-hand and he didn't know that Jesus Christ had used the word "son". Luke had been told that Jesus Christ used the word "man". See Luke 5:20. But Matthew was an eyewitness to this incident and Mark heard it directly from Peter who was also an eyewitness.]

This is not the modern patronizing way by which we today sometimes address someone from a younger generation as "son". Keep in mind that Jesus Christ referred to those who had a rebellious attitude with the words "you are of your father, the devil" (John 8:44), which is another way of saying "you are sons of the devil". So when Jesus Christ addressed this paralytic man as "son", Christ was indicating that **this man had a right attitude**, one of acknowledging his own responsibility for his particular disability. Jesus Christ would never have addressed any of the Pharisees as "son", because of their attitude towards Him.

All this is what the brief expression "son, be of good courage" is supposed to tell us.

Now let's look at something in Mark's account.

From the Apostle Peter's perspective (Peter basically provided the information for Mark's gospel account) the situation was as follows:

Mark 2:5 = In response to their faith Jesus Christ said "son, your sins be forgiven you". This was very likely in response to perceiving the paralytic man's guilty conscience and his remorseful attitude. That statement had resolved the problem that was uppermost in the paralytic man's mind, his guilty conscience.

Mark 2:6-7 = Then some of the scribes took umbrage at Christ's statement. They judged Christ's statement to be blasphemous. The next verse presents Christ's response to these scribes.

And immediately **when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves**, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? (Mark 2:8)

Notice that what Jesus Christ now says is in response to their unspoken, but readily discerned accusation of blasphemy. The question is: what if these scribes had not reacted the wrong way? What if they had accepted Jesus Christ's statement "son, your sins be forgiven you"? It seems highly likely that Jesus Christ could predict that the scribes would be critical of His statement, and that they would challenge His authority.

Earlier, in Matthew 8:5-13 Jesus Christ had already healed another man of the palsy, but without saying anything at all about forgiving sins.

At any rate, Jesus Christ now confronted the scribes with **a choice**. The choice was: which of these two things is easier to achieve? Notice:

Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *your* sins be forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and take up your bed, and walk? (Mark 2:9)

We need to note that Jesus Christ did **not** say that these two things are **the same thing** or that they are equal to one another. They are not! He did not say that the forgiveness of sins is equal to healing a person. This is simply a comparison of the degree of difficulty for two different things, both of which are impossible for human beings to perform, but **both of which are easy for God to perform**.

The unspoken point here is that either one of these two things can only be done **by the power of God**.

Let's look at the next two verses.

But **that you may know** that the Son of man has **power on earth to forgive sins**, (he says to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto you, **Arise, and take up your bed**, and go your way into your house. (Mark 2:10-11)

After posing the question "what is easier to say?", Jesus Christ now proceeded to demonstrate that He can do both of those things: forgive sins, and also heal the sick.

Note!

Jesus Christ here did not say that healing is the same as forgiving sins! What Jesus Christ did say here is that this healing **proves** that He has the power to forgive sins. Can you see that?

Now there is only one way that this healing could **prove** that sins had been forgiven. Only one way! Do you know what that one way is?

The only way this healing could actually prove that sins had been forgiven is if the sins that had been forgiven were the cause of the sickness involved here!

There is no other possibility! If the sins that were forgiven had nothing to do with the sickness that was healed, then there would be no way that this healing could possibly prove the forgiveness of sins. The one thing (the healing) can only be the proof for the other thing (the forgiveness of sins) **if there is an interdependent relationship between these two things**.

In analogy:

If you can start the engine of your car, then **that proves** that there is gas in the tank. If there is no gas in the tank, then the engine won't start. So having gas in the tank of your car is a prerequisite for starting the engine.

In this analogy "**gas in the tank**" is like the **forgiveness of sins** (i.e. only in those cases where the sick person himself is responsible for the sins); and "**starting the engine**" is like divinely **healing a sickness**. There is a very close dependency between starting the engine and gas in the tank. It is that close dependency that establishes that the one is proof for the other.

That is the point Jesus Christ made in this verse!

Healing the sick person (i.e. "starting the engine") proves that sins have been forgiven (i.e. that there is gas in the tank). However, healing does not prove that sins of adultery or lusting or coveting, etc. have been forgiven because there is no relationship between these sins and the particular health problem.

And even as starting the engine is **the evidence** that there is indeed gas in the tank, even so the healing of this paralyzed man is **the evidence** that physical sins have indeed been forgiven. That is the only possible way that we can establish some kind of link between the healing and the sins being forgiven. And there must be a link because otherwise Jesus Christ would not have joined these two things here in this context.

The next verse shows that the man was healed immediately.

And **immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth** before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion. (Mark 2:12)

When correctly understood, this incident is additional proof that sicknesses and all health problems are caused by physical sins, as Mr. Armstrong used to teach. This incident establishes **a very clear link between the forgiveness of physical sins and divine healing**.

Let’s move on to the next example.

SPIRITUAL SINS THAT ARE FORGIVEN

This is the situation of the woman "who was a sinner" having her sins forgiven. This incident is recorded in **Luke 7:36-50**.

Jesus Christ had been invited to a meal in the home of a Pharisee (Luke 7:36). Verse 37 tells us:

And, behold, **a woman in the city, which was a sinner**, when she knew that [Jesus] sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, (Luke 7:37)

The implication here is that **her sins involved immorality**; she had "a reputation", as is also indicated in verse 39. So notice what this woman did.

And stood at his feet behind [him] **weeping**, and began to **wash his feet with tears**, and **did wipe [them] with the hairs of her head**, and **kissed his feet**, and **anointed [them] with the ointment**. (Luke 7:38)

What are all these actions by this woman supposed to convey? **Why** was she crying? She was expressing **deep remorse** for her guilty conduct, which guilty conduct she was freely acknowledging by her actions. She was **looking for forgiveness**, and she was clearly determined to change. In other words, **this woman was repenting** of the way she had lived, and she was pleading for forgiveness.

The fact that she was looking to Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of all her past sinful conduct also shows that **she accepted that Jesus Christ is the Son of God**, and that He does indeed have power to forgive sins. This means that she had obtained a certain amount of understanding.

By that time first John the Baptist and then also Jesus Christ had been preaching "repent because the kingdom of God is at hand". John had preached "the baptism of repentance **for the remission of sins**" (Mark 1:4). Then Jesus Christ came and preached **the same message** (see Mark 1:14-15). And like John the Baptist, Jesus Christ also baptized those people who did repent (John 3:22 and John 4:1-2).

This woman here in Luke 7:37 was aware of the message that Jesus Christ had been preaching. Very likely she had personally heard Jesus Christ speak at some point and **she understood that Jesus Christ had preached the forgiveness of sins**. And she was moved by her past guilt and desperately wanted forgiveness in order to make a new start with her life.

Where the man with the palsy in Luke 5 was bothered by his conscience because some foolish conduct had resulted in his paralysis, **this woman was plagued by her conscience** to a far greater degree. She knew that she had lived immorally, something which she now regretted deeply. And she had made a very firm commitment to change.

Let’s continue with the account.

Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw *it*, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this is* that touches him: for she is a sinner. (Luke 7:39)

The self-righteous Pharisee looked at nothing but the woman’s immoral reputation, something everyone

in the local community knew. But the Pharisee was **totally incapable of recognizing real repentance**. Nothing the woman did made a positive impression on the Pharisee, nothing at all. In his eyes the woman couldn't do anything to put her past behind her. And he most certainly did not understand that before God he, the self-righteous Pharisee, was far worse off than this woman.

So Jesus Christ then presented a parable to this Pharisee. The parable was about two debtors having their debts forgiven. But the one debtor had ten times as much forgiven as the other one. Then Jesus Christ presented the key lesson for this short parable.

And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, **which of them will love him most?** (Luke 7:42)

The Pharisee had no idea that this parable was about him and this woman in their relationship to God. In this parable the woman was the one who had ten times as much forgiven as the Pharisee himself had been forgiven.

So the Pharisee gives the logical and correct answer.

Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, **you have rightly judged**. (Luke 7:43)

Jesus Christ then applied this correct answer to **a comparison** between this woman and His host, the Pharisee. In this comparison Jesus Christ pointed out the totally different spirit between these two individuals. The Pharisee had been **minimally hospitable** towards Jesus Christ, and this approach was **a reflection of the man's own self-perception**, as well as his assessment of Jesus Christ's position in God's plan of things. Not only did the Pharisee not accept that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but **he was in fact critical of Jesus Christ**. And the way he had treated his guest Jesus Christ was a reflection of that critical attitude.

The point Jesus Christ was making here is that **critical people don't really receive forgiveness from God**!

The woman, by contrast, freely acknowledged her guilt before God, and she was actively seeking forgiveness for her sins. The woman clearly had the same attitude as the publican in the later parable, who said "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (see Luke 18:13). All of her actions were an admission of her guilt before God, for which guilt she was now deeply sorry, and resolutely determined to change. Her attitude was the total opposite to the attitude of the Pharisee.

The point Jesus Christ was making with this woman's example is that **God only extends forgiveness to those who freely and unconditionally acknowledge their guilt before God.**

Here is Christ's conclusion to this parable.

Wherefore I say unto you, **Her sins, which are many, are forgiven**; for she loved much: but **to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little**. (Luke 7:47)

Jesus Christ then followed up this statement by saying directly to this woman:

And he said unto her, **your sins are forgiven**. (Luke 7:48)

Here we have an example of Jesus Christ forgiving the woman's sins, and implied are sins of immorality, sins that involved breaking some of the ten commandments. This act of forgiveness of her

sins put this woman into the same category as **all the people who repented and were then baptized by Jesus Christ or by one of His disciples** (John 4:1-2). That means that Jesus Christ was giving this woman the opportunity to be in the first resurrection.

But that also means that she was receiving her one and only opportunity for salvation. The forgiveness of her sins shut the door to any possibility for this woman to ever be in the second resurrection, which will be to physical life. For this woman, even as for all of us in God's Church today, the only two options are: either the first resurrection to spirit life, or else the third resurrection to be burned up in the lake of fire.

We might note that while Jesus Christ very clearly forgave the woman's sins, He did not insist on her having to be baptized. Whether or not she was ever baptized is not mentioned one way or the other. One reason for this silence would be to maintain her anonymity.

Now while I obviously cannot prove this, I strongly suspect that this woman was there on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. After Jesus Christ had ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives (see Acts 1:9-12), we have the names of 11 apostles who lived for a while in "an upper room" (see Acts 1:13). This was a few days before Pentecost.

Notice who else was a part of the group of disciples in the days leading up to that Pentecost.

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, **with the women**, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. (Acts 1:14)

The woman whose sins Jesus Christ forgave in Luke 7 remains anonymous. That was deliberate, as Jesus Christ had no intention of publicizing her sins to the world. And we will never know her identity, even as our own secret sins will never be broadcast to anyone else. But I suspect that this woman was a part of the group that is referred to here as "**with the women**". I believe that it is highly likely that this woman will be in the first resurrection.

One more point to note with this instance of Jesus Christ clearly forgiving the woman's sins is that Jesus Christ did not admonish this woman in any way. There is no warning of any kind. Specifically, **Jesus Christ did not warn this woman with a statement like "go and sin no more"**.

Do you understand why Jesus Christ did not give any warning to this woman, when in the other example of a woman guilty of immorality (i.e. adultery in her case) Jesus Christ very clearly told that particular woman "go and sin no more" (John 8:11). Why did Jesus Christ not give this woman in Luke 7 the same admonition?

Was there a difference between these two women? We'll look at this question later, after we have examined the other example.

This incident did not involve a miracle. There was nothing to see for all the people present at that meal. And so after Jesus Christ had said "your sins are forgiven", the other guests at that meal became quite critical. As verse 49 says:

And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, **Who is this that forgives sins also?** (Luke 7:49)

Then we have Jesus Christ's parting comment to this woman. Having already told the woman "your sins are forgiven", Jesus Christ now provided an explanation for **why He had forgiven her sins**. This explanation applies to every single one of us just as much as it did to that woman almost 2000 years

ago.

And he said to the woman, **your faith has saved you**; **go in peace**. (Luke 7:50)

There are two parts to this statement. First of all, the reason why Jesus Christ had forgiven her sins was **her faith in Jesus Christ**. And that is exactly the same reason why God will forgive us our sins. Faith in Jesus Christ is **the only way** any human being can have his sins forgiven by God. As Paul put it, "without faith it is impossible to please God" (see Hebrews 11:6).

With the confidence that our past sins have been forgiven as a foundation, then we can move on to the second part. And that is that we can then have "peace", meaning a clear conscience. So Christ's expression "go in peace" means "**go with a clear conscience**". As long as we have a guilty conscience, so long we also don't have real peace.

We have now examined **the only two instances in the gospel accounts** where Jesus Christ forgave sins. In the case of the **paralyzed man**, Jesus Christ forgave the man's **physical sins** that had led to his paralysis. Then Jesus Christ healed the man's paralysis. And that forgiveness of sins did not mean that the man was having his one opportunity for salvation. His spiritual sins had not been forgiven.

In the case of **the woman** who had been involved in sexual sins, Jesus Christ forgave her sins, meaning her **spiritual sins** of having broken the ten commandments. This opened up the opportunity for this woman to have a part in the first resurrection.

In both cases Jesus Christ extended this forgiveness in response to the faith of the individuals involved. Faith is always the key!

Now let's look at the first of two examples where Jesus Christ admonished the individuals concerned to "sin no more". Both cases are recorded in the Gospel of John. And both cases are clear parallels to the two cases we have already looked at.

"SIN NO MORE" AFTER 38 YEARS OF INFIRMITY

This event was recorded by John in **John 5:5-15**. This took place on a weekly Sabbath day (John 5:9) at a pool in Jerusalem named Bethesda, which pool had five porches. "Bethesda" means "house of mercy". Here is the situation:

In these lay **a great multitude of impotent folk**, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. (John 5:3)

There were literally **dozens of people with major health problems** waiting for an angel to stir the water of the pool, because the first one to enter the water after that was going to be divinely healed (John 5:4).

So the first thing for us to note is that Jesus Christ did not heal everyone at that pool who had a major health problem. This account here relates how Jesus Christ healed **one man** out of this "great multitude" of people who were weak, powerless, blind or lame, etc.

So let's pick up the account in verse 5.

And a certain man was there, **which had an infirmity thirty and eight years**. (John 5:5)

This man had in fact been afflicted with this infirmity for longer than Jesus Christ had lived as a human being. The man was in a very pitiful state and **Jesus Christ was moved with compassion** for the man.

Note!

This man didn't express any faith and he didn't have a repentant attitude. But he was suffering. While there is no direct indication of any kind regarding the man's age, I suspect that this man was already in his late 50's or early 60's, meaning that he had been in his very late teens or early-to-mid-twenties when he was struck with this infirmity. Shortly I'll explain why I believe this to be the case.

So the next verse says:

When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time *in that case*, he said unto him, **Do you want to be made whole?** (John 5:6)

Notice that this man didn't actually ask Jesus Christ for healing, or for anything else for that matter. In this case **Jesus Christ volunteered to heal the man**. This is unlike any other healing in the gospel accounts. This fact is significant and we should take note of this. There is no evidence of either faith or repentance on the part of this man. But Jesus Christ volunteered to heal him anyway.

The lesson for us here is as follows:

We in God's Church know what God expects from us. We know that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick" (James 5:15). So God expects us to meet God's conditions when we want God to heal us of some or other affliction. For us it is always a case of doing what we know is right and what is expected of us by God (i.e. the principle of James 4:17).

But there are also **multiple millions of people** out there who don't know what is right. They are like the people of Nineveh of old, who could not spiritually discern "between their right hand and their left" (see Jonah 4:11). Multiple millions of people **who suffer today are totally clueless** as to what is really going on, and as to why they are suffering. They don't understand that for every effect there is always a cause. And even though these people are not repentant and don't have faith, yet God reserves the right to **sometimes** intervene for **some** of these people and to heal them of their sufferings.

Notice the man's reply:

The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, **to put me into the pool**: but while I am coming, another steps down before me. (John 5:7)

The man is respectful, but still clueless. He does not answer Jesus Christ's question with "yes please, I do want to be made whole". He only explains to Jesus Christ why he never gets into the pool first after an angel had touched the water. And the man is not actually looking to Jesus Christ to heal him. So there is no faith and no repentance present in this particular case. The man has in fact not met any of the requirements for healing that God sets before us in the Church of God.

Yet Jesus Christ healed this man anyway!

Jesus said unto him, **Rise, take up your bed, and walk**. (John 5:8)

As we find out later, this man had no idea whatsoever who Jesus Christ was. He was typical of the people in the world today ... clueless about Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind. And therefore he also had not anticipated that he would be totally healed like that. The healing came totally out of the blue for

this particular man.

Before we continue with this account, there is a very significant lesson for us in what Jesus Christ did here.

ANOINTING IS NOT FOR PEOPLE WHO DON'T OBEY GOD

Most of us have close relatives and good friends who are not in God's Church, and who make no effort to obey those laws of God that don't suit them (e.g. Sabbath, tithing, smoking, etc.). And many of them are by the world's standards basically good people.

When these close relatives (a parent or a grown-up child or a spouse or someone else really close to us) have a serious health problem, then sometimes we would like to see them anointed and have our minister ask God to heal them. Perhaps these people used to be a part of God's Church, but then dropped out somewhere along the line; and now they no longer live by all of God's laws. But when they are sick then we are very concerned for them.

We believe in James 5:14, and therefore we feel that if only this person who is so close to us can be anointed, **then** they'll be in God's hands. Over the years many ministers have been approached by church members to anoint their non-member parents or spouses or adult children, etc. whose contact with God's Church was very casual and uncommitted at best.

The problem here is that **such uncommitted adults should never be anointed**!

Here is the instruction in James chapter 5:

Is any **among you** afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick **among you**? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: (James 5:13-14)

This is very specifically **an instruction for God's Church**, for those who are a part of God's Church. This is not an instruction regarding how to deal with health problems experienced by people who are not a part of God's Church, and who are not committed to living by all of God's laws. The key expression in these verses is "**among you**"!

The reason why such uncommitted adults should never be anointed for sicknesses is as follows: One major key in having God heal us when we are sick is "the prayer of faith".

And **the prayer of faith shall save the sick**, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. (James 5:15)

While the minister is the one who says the prayer when he is anointing someone, **both parties must have faith** that God will heal. That is why the person being anointed is required to say "amen" at the end of the prayer. The minister must have faith, and the person being anointed must also have faith. But faith must always be grounded on facts, and not on wishful thinking.

Faith must be established on the foundation of 1 John 3:22.

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)

Faith understands that there is never a guarantee that God will answer the requests of those people who do not keep His commandments, and who do not make an effort to do those things that are pleasing in God's sight.

I will tell you categorically that a minister may go through the motions of praying for some uncommitted adult and then anoint that person, but **it is impossible for any minister to pray "the prayer of faith" for any adult who is not trying to live by all of God's laws**!

1 John 3:22 clearly tells the minister that obedience to God's laws is a requirement for receiving answers to our prayers. So when we know that the sick person is not really living by God's laws, then we can't really have faith that God will heal that person. Faith must always be based on facts.

So we can pray **wishfully** that God will heal an unconverted adult who makes no attempt to live by all of God's laws. But we categorically cannot possibly have faith that God will intervene for an unconverted adult. We cannot have godly faith in something that is contrary to God's Word ... and all those people who make no effort to live by all of God's laws are living contrary to God's Word.

In addition to that, this unconverted person who wants to be anointed (or whose church member relative wants that person to be anointed) also very obviously does not have real faith that God will heal him. Sometimes the person may have a desperate, fervent hope that God will heal him; he may convince himself that God will surely heal him; but that is nothing more than wishful desperate thinking for someone who is not putting God's laws into practice in his own life! That kind of thinking is not based on the principles found in James chapter 2.

Yes, a man may say, you have faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works, and **I will show you my faith by my works**. (James 2:18)

But will you know, O vain man, that **faith without works is dead**? (James 2:20)

To state this quite bluntly:

When uncommitted adults are anointed for health problems by a minister of God's Church, then that is nothing more than **a meaningless ritual** before God!

[**Comment:** I have thus far used the expression "uncommitted adults" rather than the expression "unconverted adults" because the commitment to live "by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (see Matthew 4:4) is really the key. When people start to attend God's Church and **seriously commit** to living by all of God's laws, then they may not yet be baptized. But they are on the right track, and their minds don't harbor any resentment or hostility towards the laws of God and towards God's whole way of life. With that attitude such people certainly have access to being anointed for sicknesses, even though they may not yet be baptized. So when I from here onwards occasionally use the expressions "unconverted people" and "unconverted adults", then I do not mean adults who are not yet baptized but who are attending God's Church and who have made a firm commitment to live by all of God's laws. By "unconverted people" I am in this context referring to people who make no attempt to live by all of God's laws and who choose to not be a part of God's Church.]

Anointing is a benefit that is simply not available for such unconverted people. Neither the unconverted person himself, nor the minister who has been called can have a godly faith that God will indeed heal the unconverted person. **Anointing is not something "we give a try"** or "we give a shot" or "we may as well try just to be sure".

Anointing is basically restricted to those who are eligible to take the Passover (access to anointing

includes our children for whom we are still responsible, and also adults who are in the process of submitting their lives to God). **Adults who are not eligible to eat the broken bread at the Passover** (except for those adults identified above), **are also not eligible to be anointed for health problems**.

Think about this. If an adult with a totally carnal mind is not eligible to eat the broken bread at the Passover, which broken bread represents access to divine healing, why would God possibly give that adult access to divine healing at other times of the year, by accepting that this carnally-minded adult may be anointed with an appeal to the broken body of Jesus Christ?

Anointing an adult for health problems represents access for that adult to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which sacrifice is represented by the Passover. So a still carnal adult who is not eligible to take the Passover cannot somehow "sneak in the back door" by nevertheless being anointed for specific health problems, and in that way persuade God to heal him. That just doesn't work!

God healing someone in response to being anointed represents access to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and that access to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is represented by being eligible to take the Passover.

So ... carnal adults who are not eligible to take the Passover should never be anointed for health problems.

Please note!

I am not saying that we cannot ask God to heal unconverted adults!

I am only saying that such individuals should not be anointed.

This is where we get back to the man in John 5 who had an infirmity for 38 years. Here is the point:

1) God has made divine healing available **to His own people** as one of the "benefits" of committing our lives to God (see also Psalm 103:1-3).

2) And for His own people God has instituted **a specific format** we are to follow when we ask God to heal us. That format is spelled out in James 5:14-16. It consists of: calling a minister, praying in faith and being anointed, followed by healing and forgiveness in those cases where we ourselves carry some responsibility for our health problems.

3) **Now God has not made any commitments to intervene in the lives of unrepentant people.** There is no promise that God will heal unrepentant people. However, that does not mean that God Himself cannot choose to intervene in the life of any human being anywhere on earth! God always reserves the right to intervene whenever and wherever God chooses to do so, based on factors that we are not aware of.

4) **Jesus Christ's totally unsolicited intervention** in the life of this unconverted man with an infirmity for 38 years, which intervention appears to have been motivated primarily by a feeling of compassion for that man's suffering, proves that **God may choose to heal some people even though those people have not yet submitted their lives to God**. In this context keep in mind that, while Jesus Christ healed this one man at the pool Bethesda, there also "lay a great multitude" of people there (i.e. perhaps anywhere from 50 to 100 people?) who were not healed by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ **very selectively** healed this one man at that occasion.

5) So we can certainly pray for the healing of unconverted adults. We too can be moved by feelings of compassion for people who suffer, even if they are unconverted. However, in praying for unconverted

people to be healed by God, **we are not to follow the same format** that we use in approaching God for converted members of God's Church.

6) So **the requests we make** for converted sick people and for unconverted sick people **are the same**: in both cases we ask God to heal the sick people. **But the format for these two situations is different.**

7) **For converted members of God's Church** we call a minister and ask the minister to pray for and to anoint the sick person. In this process "the prayer of faith" is a key component.

8) **For unconverted adults** we follow a different format. We recognize that these people don't really have access to the things that are represented by the Passover (i.e. forgiveness of sins and healing). So we don't ask a minister do any anointing. And there cannot be a "prayer of faith". Instead in this situation we express in prayer **a fervent wish** for God's mercy and compassion. This type of prayer is **like Abraham pleading with God** for mercy for Sodom, if only there were a few righteous people in Sodom. See Genesis 18:23-32. **Abraham was extremely earnest in his appeals to God**, but it wasn't a prayer of faith because Abraham knew that the people in Sodom were very wicked. So Abraham's requests were wishful.

9) **The fervency** with which Abraham presented his appeals for Sodom is something we can and should emulate when we pray for the healing of unconverted adults. Just because we can't have faith that God will indeed heal some unconverted adult **doesn't mean that we can't plead for God's intervention in that person's health problems** with the same fervency that Abraham displayed in pleading for Sodom. And having done that, we then leave the matter in God's hands, even as Abraham had to do.

10) So the format here is that **we pray privately** and without any anointing taking place. And we can certainly ask our minister and others to pray for this unrepentant person as well. We follow the format that Jesus Christ spelled out:

But you, when you pray, **enter into your closet**, and when you have **shut your door**, **pray** to your Father who is **in secret**; and your Father who sees in secret **shall reward you openly**. (Matthew 6:6)

These are Christ's instructions that we are to follow when we pray for other people and for ourselves. When unrepentant people are sick, then it is a matter of **privately praying for people**, rather than publicly praying with people.

However, here is what we need to understand:

Persuading God to intervene and to heal an unconverted adult does not depend on following a specific format that includes anointing. Persuading God to intervene really depends on presenting sound and logical reasoning to God, as to why God should intervene for this unconverted person. Think of King David asking God to spare the life of the first child of Bathsheba, where David tried to reason with God, appealing to God's mercy.

So when we ask God to heal some unconverted adult, think of God responding to us with: "okay, tell Me **why** I should heal this unconverted person. Give Me some good reasons."

That's what Abraham did, present good reasons to God. So when we pray for the healing of some unconverted relative, **we need to give God some reasons** why God should answer our request. And if the reasons we present to God are good, then that also increases the likelihood of God intervening for the unconverted. Regarding Sodom, consider that God agreed to every one of Abraham's requests, all the way down to finding at least ten righteous people (Genesis 18:32). God actually accepted all of Abraham's reasoning in this instance.

11) For someone who is not really involved with God's Church and who is not trying to put all of God's laws into practice, God **may** extend mercy and compassion in such cases, in response to our prayers for the healing of the unconverted. That's what we learn from Jesus Christ offering to heal this man from the infirmity he had suffered for 38 years. But it is never a case of somehow increasing the odds of God healing such an uncommitted person if that person was anointed by a minister, as opposed to that person only being prayed for privately by a minister and/or by anyone else, without any anointing being involved.

Anointing was not established as a procedure for people who are not involved with God's Church! Here is why:

In the context of anointing someone, the anointing oil represents **God's holy spirit**. God's spirit is available to people who have truly repented and who have submitted their lives to God. But **God's spirit is not available to the unrepentant**. This means that we should not do something (i.e. anointing), that symbolically represents God's spirit being "poured out" on someone, to someone who is unrepentant, because God's spirit is very clearly not available to unrepentant people. Anointing is limited to those people to whom God has given access to His spirit. **Can you understand why unrepentant adults must not be anointed when they are sick?**

12) Furthermore, probably the most important factor in such a situation of ill-health is **the mind of the sick person**. If the person has a rebellious attitude towards God, then it is almost guaranteed that God will not heal that person, no matter how much we may pray for that person. God never responds positively to a rebellious spirit.

But now comes the catch for those people who are healed by God.

Healing is never a freebie! Did you know that?

If God does indeed intervene and heal an unconverted adult, then there is also a very serious consequence, which we see in the incident with this man who had an infirmity for 38 years. If God in our age heals an unconverted person, then God also says to that person: "you are made whole; **sin no more**, **lest a worse thing come unto you**" (John 5:14).

In other words, **divine healing brings** a certain amount of **responsibility** with it. This applies to anyone and everyone who is healed by God's intervention, including the thousands who have been healed at one time or another during the past 60 years.

So let's now get back to John chapter 5.

CONTINUING WITH THE ACCOUNT

Let's look at verse 9.

And **immediately the man was made whole**, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath. (John 5:9)

So the man is healed after suffering for 38 years. But he is not even repentant, and neither did he have any faith in Jesus Christ. When he is confronted by people who object to him carrying his bedroll, the man didn't even know who had healed him.

And he that was healed did not know who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in *that* place. (John 5:13 AV)

So a little later Jesus Christ found this man privately, in order to give him a clear message and warning.

Afterward Jesus **finds him** in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, you are made whole: **sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you**. (John 5:14)

The Greek verb translated as "finds him" indicates that Jesus Christ made a very specific effort to find the man again. Jesus Christ went looking for the man, to give him a warning.

The threat "lest a worse thing come upon you" is a clear warning. It tells us that the man's infirmity had been caused by sins. The expression "sin no more" means "**don't you ever again do those things that caused your infirmity**".

This form of admonition by Jesus Christ also makes clear that the man was **unrepentant** and **without real faith**! That is not the way Jesus Christ ever spoke to repentant people who had real faith.

The reference to "lest a worse thing come upon you" means that this healing had **increased the man's responsibility** and accountability before God! So **this healing** wasn't a freebie at all; it **had some strong strings attached**. In this case it was a matter of the man having become more responsible to avoid doing whatever he had done 38 years earlier that led to his infirmity.

We should note that this is the only person who was healed by Jesus Christ and then given such a threatening warning. **No other healed person was ever warned with "lest a worse thing come unto you".** This was an extremely serious warning, precisely because the man was unrepentant and also had no faith at all in Jesus Christ. The only reason Christ healed the man was because Christ knew how long the man had already suffered, and Christ was moved with compassion for the man.

The lesson for us is:

Whenever God does something for us, then that intervention by God in our lives always requires a greater commitment from us. **When God heals us**, then we are expected to take greater care of our health than we had done before we got sick and were then healed. **When God gives us favor** with people, then we are expected to conduct ourselves in a way that doesn't foul things up and destroy relationships. **When God blesses us financially**, then we are expected to use those blessings wisely and not rashly spend it all so that we once again end up in financial difficulties. **When God gives us protection** from dangers, then we are expected to do our part in avoiding foolish and dangerous conduct.

Can you see the principle here?

Stated another way: whenever we need to be bailed out by God in any area of life, then God expects us to **in future use more care** to avoid later needing to be bailed out of the same circumstances once again. That is basically what the admonition "**sin no more**" in John 5:14 refers to.

When God forgives us any sin, if after that we once again go back to that sin, then "a worse thing" will come upon us. **After forgiveness subsequent penalties for the same transgression will always be greater.** That is what this man needed to grasp.

Now the fact that Jesus Christ healed this unrepentant man shows that **we can certainly pray for unrepentant adults who are sick**, and ask God to heal those people. And God may choose to do so.

But we can never pray "a prayer of faith" because God has not promised to heal the unrepentant.

However, it can be a pleading and a reasoning with God, along the lines of how Abraham reasoned with God regarding Abraham's request to spare Sodom. **God is willing to listen to sound reasoning.** And we need to grasp why such requests cannot include anointing unrepentant people with oil. We cannot give unrepentant people symbolical access to God's spirit.

And above all, we need to understand that if God chooses to intervene and to heal such an unrepentant relative or close friend of ours, then that healing places much more responsibility on our unrepentant relative or friend than was the case before the healing took place. When God chooses to heal an unrepentant person, then that is somewhat along the lines of giving that person a witness. And it certainly has consequences. This is something that we seldom seem to understand.

The admonition "sin no more lest a worse thing come unto you" applies to every single individual who is divinely healed by God. I can think back over the past 40+ years where God did heal certain ministers and certain church members, who then subsequently turned away from God, and the latter end was worse for them than things had been before God had healed them. Perhaps some of you also know individuals in that type of situation: people who had been healed by God only to later leave the Church of God. Divine healing always makes us more accountable to God.

Let's now look at the second instance of "sin no more".

"SIN NO MORE" AND THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY

This account is found in **John 8:3-11**. It is only recorded in John's Gospel. Let's look at the context.

This incident took place early in the morning on a Last Great Day during Christ's ministry. The Pharisees had schemed to have one of their own followers seduce a married woman. So when their own man was having sex with this married woman, they swooped into the room and held the woman in custody. Their own man conveniently disappeared into the shadows. The woman had clearly been set up by the Pharisees because they wanted to find fault with whatever judgment Jesus Christ would make.

As already stated, this all occurred on the Last Great Day. And this woman caught in adultery actually represents all the people who will come up to physical life in the second resurrection. They are all resurrected guilty before God. Important to understand is that the people in the second resurrection will not all be automatically repentant.

However, they will all be confronted with their sins before God. Some will repent and some others won't repent. This ties in with a point I was making earlier.

In the context of the analogy of being wounded by an arrow, I mentioned that in many cases **problems remain even after the cause of those problems has been removed**, much like the wound remaining even after the arrow has been pulled out. This principle also applies to the people who come up in the second resurrection.

Satan was the original cause for their sins, because Satan is the great tempter. But even after Satan has been removed, the problems Satan caused will in many cases continue to fester. Even though Satan is bound for the second time just before the second resurrection takes place (Revelation 20:10-12), yet the problems Satan created during the first lifetime of the people who come up in the second resurrection will in many cases continue, much like a wound that continues to exist even after the arrow has been

pulled out of it. This is because in the second resurrection they will come up with the same frame of mind which they had at the end of their first lives, the mind that was tuned to Satan's ways.

In this account here in John 8 Jesus Christ first dealt with the accusers in such a way that they couldn't get out of there fast enough. Then the woman, who represents the vast majority of all people who have lived since the flood, is left without any accusers. So now Jesus Christ asks the woman a question:

When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, **Woman,** where are those your accusers? has no man condemned you? (John 8:10)

The point here is that in the second resurrection anyone who is inclined to be critical of anyone else in the second resurrection will very quickly have his own sins pointed out, **with the distinct possibility of those sins being made public should that be necessary**. That's the message of Jesus Christ writing with His finger in the dust on the ground (see John 8:6). So within a very short time there will be no accusers around.

That means that for every single person in the second resurrection their past guilt will be strictly between them and God. All of them will be guilty, but not yet condemned. And they will have the opportunity to appeal to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to have their past guilt forgiven.

Here is the next verse.

She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, **Neither do I condemn you**: **go, and sin no more**. (John 8:11)

Here there is no threat of something worse coming along if she did continue to commit adultery. She is not condemned, but neither are her past sins forgiven. That is something we should take note of.

That concludes our examination of all four incidents. So now let's consider some comparisons.

COMPARING THE TWO MEN

Both of these men were not able to walk, with one fully paralyzed and totally dependent on other people for help, while the other man could only get around very slowly and only with extreme difficulties.

The paralyzed man who had been let down on his bed through the ceiling (Mark 2:4) was healed and also had his physical sins forgiven. He was not in any way given a warning or admonition. Rather, he was encouraged by Jesus Christ to be courageous. He is also the only man in the gospels to ever be addressed by Jesus Christ as "son". He is also credited with having real faith in Jesus Christ.

The man with an infirmity for 38 years was also healed. But his physical sins are not forgiven because he was not really repentant, and neither did he have any faith in Jesus Christ. And so this man is sternly warned to "sin no more". Implied is that he is only on probation. There is a clear threat of worse consequences if he goes back into his old sins.

While Jesus Christ healed both of them, He only forgave the sins of the one man. The difference in how Jesus Christ dealt with these two men was due to the way these two men themselves were. **The paralyzed man** had faith in Jesus Christ and was remorseful for what he had done to cause his own paralysis. With that attitude he did not need to be told to not sin again.

The other man was not repentant at all. And so he needed a stern warning, lest he would repeat his former conduct that had led to his infirmity. This case is an example of Jesus Christ healing someone without forgiving that person's sins, because the man was not really repentant for his own part in his physical affliction. Instead of forgiving the man's sins, Jesus Christ healed the man out of compassion because "the man had been now a long time in that situation" (see John 5:6), but then Christ also sternly admonished the man to stop sinning (John 5:14), implying that the man was on probation.

In a sense we might say that this man had been "provisionally healed" without his sins having been forgiven, and **his healing would only become permanent if he heeded the warning "sin no more"**. And then his sins would also be forgiven. But if he didn't heed this warning, then his sins would remain and he would end up even worse off than before.

COMPARING THE TWO WOMEN

Both women had been involved in sins of a sexual nature. One of the women sought out Jesus Christ, while the other woman was brought into His presence.

The woman who anointed Christ's feet with ointment (Luke 7) had her sins forgiven. She is commended for faith. Jesus Christ encouraged her to "go in peace". This woman may very possibly be in the first resurrection. There is no warning of any kind given to this woman.

The woman taken in adultery does not have her sins forgiven. She is only told that Jesus Christ does not condemn her. When she is warned with "go and sin no more", this means that hers is still an open case. There is no evidence of any faith on the woman's part.

COMPARING THE TWO CASES WHERE SINS ARE FORGIVEN

The man whose sins were forgiven went to an extraordinary length to gain access to Jesus Christ (Mark 2:4). He actively sought out Jesus Christ. The same is true for the woman whose sins were forgiven. She went into the house of a Pharisee and expressed very deep remorse for her past sinful conduct. Both of these individuals had faith in Jesus Christ, and then they acted on that faith. With their attitudes there was no need to admonish them or to warn them to not sin again; it was clear that both of them had already made such a commitment.

One lesson for us here is that when we have a guilty conscience, then we need to actively seek forgiveness from God. We must approach God earnestly and with a resolute commitment to change.

COMPARING THE TWO CASES OF "SIN NO MORE"

The man who was told "sin no more" had not come to Christ. Jesus Christ initiated that contact. The same was true for the woman who was told to "sin no more". She also had not initiated the contact with Jesus Christ; the Pharisees had forcibly brought her into Christ's presence.

Neither one of these two individuals had any sins forgiven. Instead, **both received the warning** "sin no more". Warnings are given to people who lack commitment and who are not necessarily sorry for their

past wrong conduct. So for both of them how they would live their lives and how they would conduct themselves in the future was going to be of the utmost importance.

Both were given **the opportunity to change**. And if they did change away from prior wrong conduct, then their past guilt would be blotted out. In a sense, from then on out both of them were living their lives on probation, with the forgiveness of their sins still contingent on them "sinning no more" from then on out. And that also typifies **the people in the second resurrection**, who **will** also **be living on probation**, a period during which their actions and their attitudes will be critically evaluated.

Both cases illustrate that sometimes God may give people warnings on the individual and personal level. Such warnings always increase accountability before God.

Now let's take a look at divine healing.

A LOOK AT DIVINE HEALING

Here in a simplified and somewhat generalized way is what happens in divine healing:

1) All power **comes** from God the Father.

2) God the Father has **delegated** all power to Jesus Christ.

3) This means that everything that **happens** is under Christ's control, who Himself remains in submission to God the Father.

4) Access to all power is **available** only through the name of Jesus Christ.

5) Divine healing **requires** divine intervention in the sick person's body.

6) That divine intervention is **achieved** through the power of the holy spirit, which power permeates every cubic millimeter of solid matter, liquid and gas throughout this universe. The holy spirit is present everywhere, including in the matter that composes our physical bodies. The holy spirit is the building block of the whole physical creation (see Hebrews 11:3). God did not create matter "out of nothing". The holy spirit is the building block for the entire universe.

7) Divine intervention for healing was **made possible** by "the stripes" Christ received (see 1 Peter 2:24), to deal with all those sins that did not incur any moral guilt before God. Access to those "stripes" requires faith.

8) To use the power that has been delegated to Him, Jesus Christ does **not need to be present** at the location where that power will be used.

9) Jesus Christ has also **delegated** authority to call on God's power to heal to His ministers, who are to anoint believers "in the name of Jesus Christ".

10) The vital key in divine power being activated to heal a sick person is faith! It is the prayer of **faith** (James 5:15) that **activates the power of God**. And faith has to do with how we think; **faith has to do with how we use our minds**.

11) It is **thoughts** that activate the power of God. In more or less the same way that your thought "I want

to lift my right arm" results in you lifting your right arm, so **God's thoughts** result in specific actions taking place anywhere on earth, or anywhere in the whole universe for that matter.

12) The nerve fibers that link your brain to every part of your body are like the holy spirit throughout all of creation that is linked to the mind of God. And even as your brain sends specific instructions to every part of your body through those nerve fibers, which instructions those parts of your body then carry out, so God sends instructions to every part of His creation via the holy spirit, which instructions are then also carried out at their destinations by utilizing the power of the holy spirit.

13) When we approach God in prayer and ask God to heal us, then **whatever thought God has** in response to our request, that thought is then carried out by the holy spirit at the end destination for that thought. We see God speaking in Genesis chapter 1, and **those thoughts are instantly turned into actions of creation** by the power of God's spirit. In analogy that is somewhat like our brain thinking a thought, which our arms and legs as the end destinations for our thought then turn into action ... we run, walk, work, hit a ball, stir a pot, dig a hole, etc.

14) So Jesus Christ's thought "I will heal you" **results** in the person being healed by the power of the holy spirit. Now obviously, God Himself decides whether to heal someone instantly, or later, or gradually over a period of time, or not at all.

15) God created us human beings in such a way that **everything we think and say and do is controlled by our central nervous system (CNS)**. Our CNS consists of the brain (including the optic nerve and the olfactory nerves, which synapse directly on brain tissue) and the spinal cord. Without the CNS we would not be able to do anything or even be able to have thoughts. We might ask ourselves the question: **WHY** did God design life in this way, so that everything depends on a functioning CNS?

16) I believe that the way life functions on the physical level (i.e. it depends totally on a functioning CNS) is **patterned after God's own life**! Consider the following analogy:

What the central nervous system is to a human being, the holy spirit is to God! In other words, **the holy spirit is in a manner of speaking God's central nervous system**!

For example, a racing driver reacts instantly to changes he sees on the road in front of him. His arms and hands and legs respond instantly to messages that have been sent by his brain. In the same way the holy spirit which is present everywhere in God's creation instantly carries out thoughts that God wants to put into action.

17) We human beings have been endowed by God with the ability to think our own thoughts totally independently of God. A limitation God placed on us human beings is that **our thoughts can only be turned into actions as far as our nervous system extends**; i.e. our thoughts can only be carried out within our own bodies. To effect things beyond our own bodies we must use more than just our thoughts; **we have to use our bodies themselves** to achieve things by working with things in our environment.

In other words, the things we can do within our own bodies by thinking specific thoughts, as well as the things we can do outside of our own bodies by working, God can do both categories throughout His creation, including within our individual lives, simply by thinking specific thoughts.

18) Faith recognizes and freely accepts this power that God possesses, that He can do anything anywhere simply by thinking a specific thought. It is helpful to think of the holy spirit as **God's central nervous system**.

19) Perhaps you have at some point seen a drawing of a man standing with his legs spread out and his

arms spread out above his head? Or the arms may be spread out to the sides? Drawings like that are sometimes used in anatomy textbooks, medical textbooks, etc. Sometimes such drawings are used to present all of the bones and the muscles in the body, which is not our interest here. At other times the drawings are used to illustrate the extent of the central nervous system, and that is what we here are interested in. I have seen drawings like that on quite a number of occasions.

So imagine you are looking at such a drawing of a man with an extremely detailed representation of the entire central nervous system, with lines that connect every extremity of the body to the brain. The spirit in man resides in the brain.

Now when the spirit in man influences the brain to think any combination of thoughts, like typing this sentence on a keyboard, then instructions are sent instantaneously to the affected extremities of the body, in this case the fingers that do the typing. The fingers, together with every other part of the body, are under the constant control of the brain, which in turn is controlled by the spirit in man, and the fingers are ready to respond instantly to any instructions they receive. You follow this scenario?

In analogy:

The spirit in man within the human brain, which spirit controls the whole body, is like God controlling the whole creation. The spread-eagled body is like the total extent of God's entire creation. The central nervous system that reaches into every nook and cranny of that spread-eagled body is like God's holy spirit. Now in the same way that the spirit in man utilizes the central nervous system to instantly put into action every thought that requires actions, in the same way God uses His holy spirit to instantly produce actions anywhere in His creation.

The control which our central nervous system gives us human beings over our own bodies, based on the central nervous system's ability to instantly turn non-physical thoughts into physical actions, was patterned by God after God's ability to instantly turn God's thoughts into actions anywhere in God's creation, including inside the bodies of any and all human beings.

That is how God divinely heals us!

20) God has endowed us human beings with God-like attributes. God did after all create us in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). But God has placed limits on our abilities. The sphere in which we human beings can instantly turn our thoughts into actions is restricted to the borders of our bodies. **Instantaneous responses to our thoughts only go as far as the skin that covers every part of our bodies** ... see the spread-eagled diagram of a man.

The only way we can achieve anything outside of our own bodies is by actively doing something. For example, to dig a hole, we have thoughts that send instructions to all the muscles in our bodies. The hand responds to those instructions by picking up a spade. The legs respond by walking to the place where we want the hole dug. So we have to pick up something, then walk and then dig, actions which require us to use our own muscles to carry out the instructions from the brain.

For God this situation looks as follows:

God has the thought to dig the same hole we want to dig. But every molecule of air all around, and every molecule in the spade humans use, and every molecule of soil that God wants dug out are all under the direct control of "God's central nervous system", i.e. under the control of God's holy spirit. So for God the thought of wanting a hole dug is enough to have His "CNS" produce that desired effect, and the dug-out hole is instantly produced.

That is why the centurion in Matthew 8:8 could say "speak the word only and my servant shall be healed". That statement is based on God's thoughts being instantly turned into actions by the holy spirit, by God's "central nervous system".

Now the centurion understood **what** would happen, even though he most likely didn't have any idea for the exact details regarding **how** that would be achieved, except that it involved the delegation and the extension of God's power. But that's where **his faith** came into the picture.

That's somewhat like Mr. Armstrong back in the late 1920's understanding the need to keep God's annual feasts and Holy Days, without actually understanding what those observances represent and why God has instructed us to observe those occasions. So Mr. Armstrong kept them on faith. Understanding only came later.

The centurion's understanding of faith was very profound, and he had a clearer grasp of faith than any other person "in Israel" with whom Christ had come into contact at that time.

For a thorough discussion of the centurion's faith see the article entitled "TWO EXAMPLES OF GREAT FAITH".

And that about covers the subject of healing and the forgiveness of sins.

There are a lot of things we can learn from these two pairs of examples in the gospel accounts: the only two occasions when Jesus Christ told someone "your sins are forgiven"; and the only two occasions when Jesus Christ admonished someone with the statement "go and sin no more".

We should understand that God's standard is perfection, and therefore before God sin is anything that falls short of perfection, anything that misses the target of 100%. This applies in both the spiritual realm and also in the physical realm. And there certainly are both physical sins and also spiritual sins, as Mr. Armstrong correctly taught during his lifetime.

All sins have undesirable consequences. Where these two categories of sins differ is in the matter of moral accountability before God. For any moral accountability before God to apply there must always be some component of spiritual sin involved. Missing the target in a physical way as a result of ignorance or a genuine mistake does not carry a spiritual penalty; those are sins that God is willing to "wink at", i.e. where God does not impose any spiritual consequences.

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