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PHYSICAL SINS AND SPIRITUAL SINS PART 1

Mr. Armstrong explained to God's Church that divine healing involves the **forgiveness of physical sins**. By "physical sins" Mr. Armstrong meant sins that don't involve any moral transgressions. He meant physical actions and negative emotions and ways of thinking that had resulted in the sickness or disease that needed to be healed.

Now after Mr. Armstrong's death 40 years ago the new leadership of God's Church forcefully attacked the concept of physical sins. They claimed that "there is no such thing as physical sins". And they changed the teachings of the Church in this regard. They tried to do away with physical sins by mis-explaining the event which is recorded in Matthew 9:1-8.

During His ministry Jesus Christ healed thousands of people. But there were **only two occasions** in His ministry when Jesus Christ said to someone "**your sins are forgiven**". One of those occasions involved **healing**, and the other occasion involved **immoral conduct**.

In addition there were also **only two occasions** in His ministry when Jesus Christ told someone "**sin no more**". One of those occasions also involved **healing**, and the other occasion also involved **immoral conduct**.

In this article we'll take a closer look at the first of those four occasions. We'll look at Matthew 9 with the "your sins are forgiven" statement, which was mis-explained after Mr. Armstrong's death, in order to justify changing the Church's teaching. The other three statements will be examined in two more articles which will follow this present article.

MATTHEW 9:1-8 and THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

This account is also recorded in Mark 2:3-12 and in Luke 5:18-26, with those two accounts adding some significant details not mentioned by Matthew. Here is the situation:

Mark's account shows that this took place in Capernaum (Mark 2:1). A paralyzed man persuaded four of his friends (verse 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 (verse 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; **your sins be forgiven you**. (Matthew 9:2)

Matthew does not tell us **how** Jesus Christ was able to “see their faith”. The only way faith can be “seen” is by the works that faith produces. But Matthew does not give us any clues regarding “works”. So Mark and Luke provide additional details here.

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)

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.

The four men first carried the paralyzed man to the house where Christ was preaching. That might have been a few hundred yards from where the paralyzed man lived. Carrying a perhaps 150-pound man for such a distance is hard work. Then they carried the man 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 have been responsible for later repairing again.

Everyone in the room would obviously have heard the noise coming from the roof, as these four men were opening it up. And so everyone would have looked up. This was an extremely unusual, but very determined way of gaining entry into a room.

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 had taken them some time to find four suitable ropes. Then they had to lower the four corners of the bed simultaneously, all the while carefully taking the strain so as not to drop the paralyzed man, who, as I already mentioned, may have weighed around 150 pounds.

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

very 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 bring this paralyzed man 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 four men had done.

They had 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)

Notice that all three accounts agree that it was "**their**" faith, plural, that Jesus Christ saw. This refers to the faith of **the four men** who carried this paralyzed man. I think we can safely say that here the pronoun "their" also included the paralyzed man himself, who had motivated the four men to bring him to Christ. So all accounts tell us that **five men had faith**.

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**."

Now the paralyzed man hadn't really come to have his sins forgiven. He had come because he believed that Jesus Christ could heal him. And Jesus Christ obviously knew that the man had come to ask for healing.

So **why** did Jesus Christ forgive **this man's sins**?

We're told that five men had faith, but only one man has his sins forgiven. Why didn't Christ forgive the sins of the four men who also had demonstrated faith? Why didn't Jesus Christ forgive **other people's**

sins? Why did Jesus Christ forgive this man's sins, **without** the man himself **asking for forgiveness**? Normally God doesn't forgive our sins without us having to ask God for forgiveness. So did Christ make an exception for this man?

Look at other occasions when Jesus Christ mentioned that people had exhibited "**great faith**" (e.g. Matthew 8:10; Matthew 15:28; etc.), or when Christ said "according to your faith be it unto you" (see Matthew 9:29) to the two blind men He healed. In those healing situations Christ said nothing about sins being forgiven. So why did Jesus Christ forgive sins here in Matthew 9:2?

In Matthew 7:7 Jesus Christ tells us: "ask and it shall be given". But this man was not asking for forgiveness. **Will God also deal that way with us**, that God will forgive our sins without us having to confess them to God and then without having to ask God for forgiveness? Just **why** did Jesus Christ forgive this man's sins?

Recall also that Jesus Christ plainly tells us:

But if you forgive not men their trespasses, **neither will your Father forgive your trespasses**. (Matthew 6:15)

Here Christ tells us plainly that **forgiveness is always conditional** on us having a specific attitude, one of forgiveness towards other people. But there is no hint that the man had an attitude of forgiveness, or that he was remorseful for the sins he had committed in his life. Yet Christ forgave his sins without the man so much as saying one word.

This is not a picture that is compatible with forgiveness of any of the sins that break the ten commandments.

As it stands, this forgiveness of sins just raises questions.

Now the extreme effort these men put forth to bring this paralyzed man to Christ demonstrated their faith, yes, but it did not necessarily demonstrate an attitude of repentance for in the past having transgressed God's laws.

Next, the Greek expression translated as "be of good cheer" actually refers to courage. It is an expression Jesus Christ used **when people were very fearful**. It should be translated as "**be courageous**" or as "**be of good courage**". Jesus Christ discerned that the paralyzed man was also fearful.

So why was he fearful? Very likely he had a guilty conscience regarding **what he had done, that led to him becoming paralyzed**, and Christ's statement was aimed at calming that guilty conscience.

Jesus Christ then followed this statement "be of good courage" with saying "**your sins be forgiven you**

". Now here is what most people miss when they read this.

To the paralyzed man this statement **"your sins be forgiven you" had a very specific meaning**.

It wasn't just a vague, all-inclusive statement that referred to all the sins he had ever committed up to that point in his life. Specifically, it was **not** the same as when we are told "all your sins are forgiven" immediately after we have been baptized. The words are the same, but with the paralyzed man the focus and the application of this phrase "your sins are forgiven" was completely different from those words being said to us in the baptism situation.

This was not a baptism situation!

When Jesus Christ told this man "your sins are forgiven", that had **a very specific impact** on the paralyzed man's mind. He didn't nod and say to himself "right, now I've got a new start in life". He didn't think that his thoughts of lusting and coveting, and perhaps not always having been truthful, etc., had now been forgiven. Those things were simply not on his mind at that point.

Note also that Jesus Christ did not use the word "all". Christ did **not** say "**all** your sins are forgiven". No, Jesus Christ only said "your sins are forgiven", and implied is that **the paralyzed man knew exactly which sins Jesus Christ was referring to**.

This statement had a very pinpointed focus for this man. It referred to **some very specific** but unidentified **sins**. And the man himself knew exactly which "sins" Jesus Christ was referring to. And that knowledge enabled him to overcome fear and then be courageous. That forgiveness made it possible for the man to be courageous, even though he was still paralyzed. It made it possible for him to overcome fear and feelings of guilt.

The man was remorseful for some very specific conduct or actions that had brought on his paralysis. That conduct may not have been "a sin" from a spiritual perspective, but **on the physical level** it was some action that he should not have been involved in. On the physical level it had been a transgression, something none of us should do, **whatever it may have been**.

The man's remorseful attitude for what he himself had done was evident to Jesus Christ. The man's faith was proof that he was remorseful. Christ's statement "your sins are forgiven" told the man that **God accepted his remorse** for whatever foolish conduct had led to his paralysis. And that knowledge set the man's conscience at ease.

Jesus Christ was not trying to "show off", to impress the scribes and Pharisees with His powers. Christ's statements here were **a direct response to the situation** that confronted Christ: a paralyzed man, who had **a guilty conscience**, and who was very remorseful for engaging in the foolish conduct, that led to him becoming paralyzed. So in His opening statement Jesus Christ first dealt with the man's guilty conscience.

Now the critical and evil attitude of the scribes, in response to Christ's statement, did not surprise Jesus Christ, because He knew their thoughts (verse 4). Christ was intending all along to heal this particular man. But Christ also anticipated their critical response. And therefore He took this specific approach to healing this man. It is not that Jesus Christ would somehow not have healed this man if the scribes had not responded with this critical attitude. Christ simply used this specific approach here in response to this man's remorseful attitude, and to teach us one more lesson at the same time.

Now we come to the flawed reasoning that was employed in trying to do away with "physical sins". Here is how that **flawed reasoning** goes:

When Jesus Christ **forgave this man's sins**, the man **was not yet healed**. Therefore (supposedly!) healing does not involve forgiving so-called "physical sins".

Have you ever heard that line of reasoning? Did you believe it? I ask this question because that is **an incredibly stupid and illogical line of reasoning**! But it is an example of the classical type of reasoning Satan uses to deceive us.

Here's the problem.

This line of reasoning equates forgiveness with healing. But forgiveness of sins and healing are two completely different things. Forgiveness of sins and healing can never be equated. Here is the process.

1) Sins always cause **problems**.

2) Sins also always reap **penalties** from God.

3) So sins are **the cause for penalties** from God.

4) And sins always incur **guilt** before God.

5) **Forgiveness of sins** only applies to the matter of **guilt** before God.

6) Specifically, forgiveness of sins **removes the guilt** before God.

7) But forgiveness of sins **never removes problems and penalties**.

8) **The only penalty** forgiveness of sins removes is **the 2nd death**.

9) All other problems & penalties have **nothing to do** with forgiveness.

10) To remove other problems/penalties **requires additional actions**.

11) But those additional actions are **never spontaneous** with forgiveness.

12) Forgiveness of sins **can never undo** the problems created by sins.

We know this is true in our own lives. We live our lives in the world. Then in our 20s or 30s or later we come to repentance and are baptized. And at that point **all our past sins are forgiven**. But in our actual living circumstances **nothing changes after baptism**. **All the penalties** (plus consequences from accidents that were not our fault) that we incurred during our lives up to that point in time **stay with us**.

Physical health problems we had before baptism are still with us after baptism and after the forgiveness of all our sins. **Messed up marriages** and interpersonal relationship problems we brought upon ourselves are still with us after baptism. The consequences of **foolish financial decisions** we had made are still with us. Our **employment circumstances** are not changed by baptism and the forgiveness of our sins.

We can deal with all of these problems after having our sins forgiven. But after baptism and the forgiveness of our sins, the sorting out of such problems in our lives requires additional actions on our part. Forgiveness didn't remove our health problems. But then we can ask God for healing, and be anointed by a minister of God, and that additional action is going to deal with the health problems that were not affected by the forgiveness of our sins.

Consider a simple analogy.

You need to get somewhere in a hurry and you just take my car without asking me first. Then you have an accident and damage my car. And then you are very sorry and bring my damaged car back to me. So I am not particularly happy with what you have done. But when you express that you are really sorry and will never again take my car without my permission, I say: **that's okay, I forgive you**.

But my forgiveness **doesn't repair the damage** you caused to my car, does it? You are still responsible for repairing my car. So in spite of my forgiveness for your actions, you are still going to incur a financial responsibility for having my car repaired.

Forgiving your actions and repairing the damage you caused are **completely unrelated**. They have nothing in common. The only thing my forgiveness of your actions does, is that it enables us to continue to have a good friendly relationship, which would not be possible if I didn't forgive you.

So with the forgiveness of sins and healing:

The forgiveness of sins removes our guilt before God. The forgiveness of sins removes the penalty of the 2nd death from us. That removal of guilt enables us to have a good relationship with God. But whatever physical consequences our sins incurred, they will all still be with us after our sins have been forgiven. If we were sick before our sins are forgiven, then we will still be sick after our sins are forgiven. And then we can engage in additional activities (e.g. asking for anointing, improving our diet, etc.) to deal with the sickness. But the forgiveness of our sins by itself has nothing to do with healing.

So when Jesus Christ forgave this paralyzed man's sins, the man was still paralyzed. **We can't expect anything else!** The forgiveness did not heal him. Don't let that line of reasoning fool you. Healing is not

the purpose of the forgiveness of sins. The purpose of forgiveness is **the removal of guilt**, not the removal of consequences.

We might note that in the previous chapter of Matthew, Jesus Christ had healed another man of the palsy, and that was also in Capernaum. That man was a servant of the Roman centurion in the area. See Matthew 8:5-13. At that occasion Christ said nothing about forgiving sins.

I might add one other factor to keep in mind. With all of the healings Jesus Christ performed, **this is the only occasion when Jesus Christ forgave sins before healing the person**. With no other healing did Jesus Christ say anything about forgiving sins. So in those situations healing was not dependent on the person's sins being forgiven.

Let's continue with what Jesus Christ then said.

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)

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 the same thing**!

Christ did not say that the forgiveness of sins is equal to healing a person. Christ simply presented a comparison of **the degree of difficulty** for **two different things**, both of which are impossible for human beings to perform. But **both of these things are easy for God to perform**. And the implied point here is that either one of these two things can only be done by the power of God.

Now Christ had already performed one of these two things (i.e. forgiven sins), which only God can do. So when Christ then performed the 2nd thing, **it proved that Christ must be God**. And by doing the 2nd thing (i.e. healing the man) it proved that Jesus Christ also has the power to do the 1st thing (i.e. forgive sins).

Let's look at the next two verses in Mark's account.

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)

Christ is saying: doing one thing only God can do (heal the paralyzed man) proves that Christ can also do the other thing (forgive sins) that only God can do.

Again let's be clear:

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 also has the power to forgive sins. Can we see that?

The question is: **how** and **why** does healing prove that sins have been forgiven?

Jesus Christ has **the power** to forgive sins. But there is only one way that this healing could **prove** to us human beings that sins have indeed been forgiven. Only one way! Do you know what that one way is?

The only way this healing could actually prove that sins have been forgiven is **if the sins** that have been forgiven **were the cause** of the sickness involved here! The only way this healing could prove that sins have been forgiven is **if the forgiveness of certain sins is a prerequisite for healing** in certain situations! As in: the removal of a cause is the start of solving a problem. Otherwise healing does not prove that sins have been forgiven.

If the sins that were forgiven involved the 10 commandments (i.e. sins of killing, stealing, lying, coveting, adultery, etc.), then this healing could not prove that sins have indeed been forgiven. Why not? Because such sins are never forgiven without a clear indication that the person is indeed repentant.

Furthermore, if sins of this nature (breaking the 10 commandments) were forgiven, then this paralyzed man's spiritual condition would (theoretically) have been equal to, or even ahead of all 12 of the apostles, none of whom were fully repentant at that point in time. Judas was not repentant, and even Peter only repented fully immediately after he had denied Jesus Christ three times.

If the paralyzed man's sins of breaking the 10 commandments were forgiven, then he absolutely had to become a disciple right there, because Christ was giving him his one and only opportunity for salvation. Understand that **any person whose sins of breaking the commandments God has forgiven can never end up in the 2nd resurrection**. For all such people the only options are: either the 1st resurrection, or the lake of fire.

A significant key here is also that Jesus Christ told this man to "**go home**", in other words, go back to the way you have always lived. The "go home" instruction is somewhat of an opposite to the instruction "**follow Me**". Why? Because anyone whose sins of breaking the 10 commandments have been forgiven **must** follow Jesus Christ, or end up in the lake of fire! After forgiveness of those sins **there is no longer any choice** between being in the first or second resurrection. The only choice after such forgiveness is either the first or the third resurrection.

Having our sins of lusting and coveting, etc. forgiven by God puts enormous pressure on us! **For us it is now or never!** And that would also have been the case for that paralyzed man, if his sins of breaking the ten commandments had been forgiven.

But there is no indication in the Bible, none whatsoever, that this man became a disciple. Perhaps he did? But there is no evidence to support that. And as I have already pointed out, Jesus Christ did **not** say "follow Me". Instead, Jesus Christ said "go home". That was not an invitation to become a disciple.

So to recap:

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 some connection between those two things.

Now **that "connection" is not that they are similar, because they are not similar**. The forgiveness of sins and healing are two completely different things. However ...

All sins have many consequences. And **a certain category** of sins will in some instances, though **not necessarily always**, result in sicknesses and other health problems. In such situations **those sins become the cause** for the health problems. In such situations some people end up with health problems, while others who are doing the same things don't end up with any health problems.

So when a certain category of sins becomes the cause for health problems, then **those particular sins must first be removed** before divine healing can take place. Forgiving those particular sins removes the cause for the health problems, and with the cause removed, it then opens the way for divine healing. Divine healing requires the cause for a health problem to be removed. **If the cause is not removed, then in those cases there can be no healing**!

Now this particular category of sins cannot involve the breaking of the 10 commandments! It can only apply to sins that do **not** involve the 10 commandments.

Here are **some random examples** to illustrate that the identical actions or events don't always produce the same health problems in different people.

1) Of all the people who **eat sugar**, some end up with dental problems, and other people eating the same amounts of sugar don't get dental problems.

2) People can **jump out of trees** (or off a roof). When they do so, some people will break an arm or a leg, while other people doing exactly the same jump don't break any bones.

3) Some people who **drink too much** alcohol drive and have serious or even fatal accidents. Other people who drink the same amount also drive and don't have accidents.

4) Many people have in the past accidently eaten **poisonous mushrooms**. Of those people some then died, while others did not die.

5) Some people who have very **stressful working conditions** develop some or other chronic disease.

Other people in the identical stressful conditions don’t develop any health problems.

6) Of all the people who **smoke**, some develop lung cancer or some other disease, while other people who smoke the same amount don’t get sick in any outwardly discernible way.

7) Of all the people who live on a **junk food diet**, some develop health problems, and other people on the same diet don’t develop any health problems.

8) Some people **fall off a horse** and sustain serious injuries, while other people fall off a horse without having any injuries.

9) Some people who are **exposed to toxic fumes** and toxic water develop major health problems, while other people exposed to those same conditions don’t experience any health issues.

10) Many people engage in **dangerous work or sport activities** that result in some people becoming paralyzed, while most other people who engage in the same activities don’t ever become paralyzed.

11) Some people become sick when they **miss a lot of sleep**. Other people who miss the same amount of sleep don’t become sick.

12) Some people who have **a guilty conscience** come down with some or other psycho-somatically induced health problem, while other people with a guilty conscience don’t experience any health problems.

13) People can eat the same meal, and some may develop **food poisoning**, while others don’t experience food poisoning.

14) Some people get sick when they **eat pork or sea food**, while other people can eat those same things without getting sick.

15) Some people develop sicknesses when they are **vaccinated** for certain things, while most other people don’t develop those sicknesses after receiving the same vaccinations.

16) Some people who undergo **operations** die in the process, while other people who undergo the same operations don’t die from those operations.

17) Some people take **illicit drugs**, like fentanyl, opium and heroin, and then die, while other people take those same illicit drugs and don’t die.

18) Some people commit **adultery** and suffer serious consequences in their lives, while other people commit adultery without any discernible negative consequences.

19) Some people who are exposed to **a tornado or a hurricane** die, while other people exposed to those same storms don't die.

20) Some **medications** make people sick (see the list of potential side effects in the descriptions of medicines), while those same medications don't make other people sick.

As I said, this is **a random list** of things that cause health problems for some people, but not for many other people. You may think of some additional points to add to this list. Now whether some of the things in this list are "sins" depends on how we define the word "sin".

So let's clarify what God in the Bible means by "sin".

THE BIBLICAL MEANING OF SIN

The Hebrew word for sin in the Old Testament and the Greek word for sin in the New Testament have the 100% identical meaning. So we'll focus on the Old Testament Hebrew word, realizing that this explanation also applies to the New Testament Greek word.

The cause for an incorrect understanding of the word "sin" **lies with the English language**. Our English word "sin" always, without exception, implies **some form of guilt**! So if there is no guilt, then in English there cannot be any sin.

From an English language point of view:

You cannot possibly be sinning if you are not actually doing something wrong, or have some kind of wrong or immoral attitude. You cannot be innocent of any transgressions and yet be a sinner. If you don't transgress any laws, then you are not a sinner, from the English language point of view. That is how we understand the word "sin" in the English language.

But this is simply not true for the Hebrew and Greek words translated as "sin"!

The English language word "sin" and the biblical Hebrew and Greek words translated as "sin" **don't actually have the identical meaning**. That is a bit of a problem.

The Hebrew word sets **a far higher standard** than just not doing anything that is wrong! Yes, all the things that involve transgressing and breaking laws are sin. All rebellion is also sin. But there is more to the concept of "sin" in the O.T. Hebrew language.

According to the meaning of the Hebrew word for sin, we can be sinning even when we don't transgress any laws. We can have a good attitude and still be guilty of sinning. That is a much stricter standard than merely not breaking any laws. But this isn't really compatible with the meaning of "sin" in the English language.

Put another way, our English word "sin" covers a large part of the meaning of the Hebrew word for "sin". But **the English language simply does not have a word that refers to the additional applications of the Hebrew word translated as "sin"**. For this reason we have to coin our own expression to address those parts of the Hebrew word for "sin" that are not covered by our English word "sin".

But here is something we should keep in mind:

When we are sinning with a good attitude, when we are sinning without breaking any laws, then **there is also no moral condemnation from God for those particular "good attitude sins"**. In the Bible those particular sins are included in **the category of "sins not unto death"**, meaning sins that don't automatically incur the death penalty from God.

If any man see his brother sin **a sin *which is* not unto death**, he shall ask (God), and He (God) shall give him life for **them that sin not unto death**. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. (1 John 5:16)

Clearly 1 John 5:16 (a sin which is **not unto death**) and Romans 6:23 (the **wages** of sin **are death**) are not speaking about the same sins. And we can't use the one Scripture to bash the other Scripture into submission.

"Sins not unto death" **don't involve a wrong attitude** towards God. Sins not unto death involve converted Christians with a good attitude. Sins not unto death may involve a certain degree of ignorance on the part of the converted person. Or such sins may involve trying one's best to do everything right, but still falling short, because of still being in the learning process.

Notice also that these "sins not unto death" **can** actually "**be seen**" by other people. Now other people can only see outward actions. But other people cannot see the thoughts and the innermost feelings of someone else. In other words, "sins not unto death" are not sins of the mind; they are sins that consist of outwardly discernible actions.

Consider also John's next statement.

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

John starts by saying that "all unrighteousness is sin", and implied is "sin unto death". And then he repeats the statement "there is a sin **not** unto death". What John is implying is that all forms of

“unrighteousness” never qualify as “sins not unto death”. So **sins not unto death do not involve any “unrighteousness”**. Now Psalm 119:172 tells us that all of God’s commandments are righteousness.

My tongue shall speak of Your word: for all Your commandments *are* righteousness. (Psalm 119:172)

In other words, all forms of breaking God’s commandments amount to unrighteousness. And so any breaking of God’s commandments does not qualify for the category of “sins not unto death”. Or put another way, there are some sins that don’t involve breaking any of God’s commandments.

That brings us to the Hebrew word that is translated as “sin”.

Now the meaning of the Hebrew word for sin is fairly well known amongst people in the Church of God, and obviously also by scholars of biblical Hebrew. The correct meaning has been mentioned many times in the past. It is pretty straightforward.

The Hebrew word translated as sin refers to a man with a bow and arrow shooting at a target. If we want to define sin, then we should consider the following scenario: the target is **100 yards away**, and it is **the size of a golf ball**, and the bow does not have any calibrated sights. In other words, it is a target that is **impossible for any human being to hit with every single shot**!

In this situation the word “sin” means “**to not hit that target consistently with every single arrow**”.

So here is the point:

God tells you: go ahead and hit that target with your arrow. So you have a good attitude, you are converted. And you do your absolute best to hit that target. And maybe some of your arrows even land within a few inches of that target. But you don’t actually manage to hit the target, let alone hit it every time.

Now in a human competition you would very likely be the winner with those shots within a few inches of the target. You would be lauded as a highly skilled marksman with your bow and arrows.

But with God you are still sinning, because you didn’t actually hit the target, let alone hit it consistently. You had a good attitude and such sins are not unto death. They are due solely to a lack of skill and ability. There is no wrong attitude involved. Your desire to please God is good, and God will recognize that good desire on your part. And **for such sins there is no condemnation from God**. There is only **the recognition** that **perfection was not achieved**.

Recall Jesus Christ’s instruction:

Be you therefore **perfect**, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

In the Greek text the verb translated as “be” (i.e. “esesthe”) is in the **future** tense. So it really means “**become you therefore perfect**”. In other words, we need to be striving to become perfect. That is **a developmental process** that will take time. But it also shows that ultimately God will only accept individuals who are perfect. Perfection is the goal we are to aim for.

And as long as we have not yet achieved that goal of perfection, so long the word “sin” still applies to us, even when we don’t break God’s laws. And that means that it still applies to me, and to you, and to everyone else.

God sets this high standard because God will not accept anything that is not perfect. 99% correct is not good enough to avoid being identified as “sin”. In the presence of God everything will be 100% correct. But **our sincere efforts** in this present life, which only achieved 90% in certain ways, **do not draw any condemnation from God**. However, having something only 90% or even 99% right is not something that God will have in His Kingdom. In God’s Kingdom the standard for everything is 100% perfection.

So let’s keep in mind that God is the One who established the concept of “**missing perfection**”, and then called that concept “**sin**”. **In Hebrew** “sin” defines God’s standard, not our human standard. **In English** the word “sin” defines our human standard. God is the Creator of everything, and therefore **God’s standard** also **applies to everything**, be it spiritual or be it physical. Nothing is exempt from God’s standard.

Now in any training program perfection is not what we start out with. **Perfection is the goal** or destination of that program. Perfection is what is to be achieved by the end of that program, while recognizing that in the process there will be imperfections that will have to be worked out.

We human beings are currently in the training program to become sons and daughters of God. The goal of that program is perfection, as Jesus Christ stated in Matthew 5:48. But in the course of this training program all our imperfections have to be dealt with. And as long as we are still physical mortal human beings, so long imperfections (read “sins”) will be with us.

Now in our case, the focus of our training program is **perfection of the spirit**. If perfection is ultimately achieved on that level, then all other “imperfections” can be easily sorted out by God. But we need to understand that perfection of the spirit **must be achieved**, before God will change us into immortal spirit beings.

By “perfection of the spirit” I am referring to **the spirit in man** becoming totally and unconditionally submissive to God’s rule. This applies to every area of our lives. Now this submission of the spirit in man to God’s authority will manifest itself not only in our **actions** and our **conduct**, but also in **the way we use our minds**. God can see all the thoughts and intents of our minds (see Hebrews 4:12). Nothing is hidden from God. How we use our minds is the most important aspect of our training program.

God needs to know with absolute certainty **how we will use our minds**, if He gives us immortal life in His Family. God must know that we reject all of the ways in which Satan uses his mind, and the negative moods and emotions that go along with Satan's ways of doing things. If we in our minds are not always going to be in 100% agreement with God's standards and God's ways, then God will not have us in His Family.

Getting back to God's definition of "sin":

The breaking of God's laws constitutes **sin on the spiritual level**. So one way to describe this in English is to call these sins "**spiritual sins**". Spiritual sins always involve **the human mind**. They always involve wrong attitudes towards God and towards God's ways of doing things. These sins, if not repented of at some point, are "sins unto death", because they will lead to destruction in the lake of fire. If we miss the target in dealing with God's laws, then we are showing God that we don't really agree with God's standards. These are the sins for which "the wage" is death (see Romans 6:23).

In this group of "spiritual sins" we also have **certain sins** that **don't break** any of **the ten commandments**. For example:

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

The person who neglects to do the good he could be doing, is not breaking the 10 commandments, and he is not breaking any other laws. Yes, I know, we can reason that he doesn't love his neighbor as himself, and in that way is breaking God's laws. But he's not breaking any laws directly, **yet he is guilty of sin**. God will not have individuals in His Family who are not motivated to do good, when they have the opportunity to do so.

Let's consider another Scripture:

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)

A person who is doubting is not breaking the 10 commandments, and he is not necessarily breaking any other laws. His lack of faith doesn't break laws, **yet he is guilty of sin**. God will not have doubters in His Family. Such doubting individuals will end up in the lake of fire.

But **the fearful**, and **unbelieving**, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in **the lake which burns with fire** and brimstone: which is **the second death**. (Revelation 21:8)

The **fearful** aren't breaking God's laws, yet **they are guilty of sin**. They are not guilty because of breaking any laws or commandments. They are guilty of sin because they use **their minds** in ways that are totally unacceptable to God. Now consider this:

We human beings don't feel sorry for adulterers or violent murderers. But we almost spontaneously **feel sorry for people who are fearful**. And we try to help such people. **God**, on the other hand, looks upon the fearful, if they don't change, as sinners, and **will throw them into the lake of fire**. Now what does this contrasting response between God and us tell us?

It tells us that **our standard** for sins is not the same as **God's standard** for sins. It also tells us that sins can be present even when no laws are broken directly.

(By the way: we really should help people who are fearful and try to encourage them. But we also need to realize that fearful people must face and deal with their fears. That is something we cannot do for them.)

The **sins of the human mind**, except for coveting, are not directly addressed by God's laws. Sins of the mind don't necessarily break any stated laws. But they certainly are "**sins unto death**", if not repented of. In addition to doubting and being fearful, sins of the human mind include such things as: pride, arrogance, resentment, holding grudges, unwillingness to forgive others, bitterness, etc., all of which are sins unto death.

Again, we see that sins include much more than just the breaking of God's laws. All these mental attitudes are contrary to the way God uses His mind, and contrary to the way God wants us to use our minds. That contrariness is sufficient to exclude **people with such minds** from the Family of God. We can call this category "spiritual sins", if only to distinguish it from a different category of sins. And almost all of the time when we see the word "sin" in the Bible, it is this category that is being spoken about.

Next, none of us follow a perfect nutritional diet. All of us are exposed to chemicals that are added to our foods. We're also exposed to food coloring, preservatives, flavor enhancers, pesticide residues, artificial fertilizer usage in growing our foods, synthetic hormones, micro-plastics in our food, stabilizers to increase shelf-life, toxins flushed into our water systems and then absorbed in the food crops we grow, etc. We are talking about multiple thousands of chemicals that are added to our foods.

Now here is what we should consider:

God did not intend for us human beings to add poisons to our air, and to our water, and to the crops we grow, and to the "chemical cocktails" (i.e. foods loaded with chemicals) we produce in our "food factories".

All these things "miss the mark" for what God intends for us human beings to eat and to drink!

All these things which we produce as our "food and drink" **miss perfection** by a long shot! God had not remotely intended for any human being to swallow manmade chemicals, and call those products "food".

Whenever the production of food includes any items that God did not intend for us to put into our bodies,

then that production **misses God's standard** of perfection. Therefore that production amounts to "sin". And sin always has some negative consequences. And when those negative consequences pile up, then it is not infrequent that **sicknesses and various health problems begin to manifest themselves**.

Now those sicknesses and health problems are **not "sins unto death"**, i.e. they don't incur the 2nd death penalty. However, they all shorten our physical lives, and in many cases directly cause the 1st death, the one which is appointed for all human beings, as per Hebrews 9:27.

We can call this category of things that miss perfection "physical sins". **We'll call them physical sins**, because **for the consumer** they don't involve a wrong attitude towards God. They really are something that is forced upon us by a society that is controlled by Satan. They are one expression of Satan's rule as the "god of this present age" (see 2 Corinthians 4:4).

Note!

The only reason why we have to use this term "**physical sins**" is because English does not have a word that covers these additional applications for the Hebrew and Greek words translated as "sin". Without coining the expression "physical sins", in English we are simply not able to correctly express those additional applications, because of the restrictive meaning we attach to our English word "sin". And the same is true for other languages into which the Bible is translated.

People will tell you that the Bible never uses the expression "physical sins". That's correct. But **they don't tell you** that the original Hebrew and Greek words already cover the meaning of "physical sins", whereas **our English word "sin" simply does not include that specific meaning**. So when the Hebrew word translated as "sin" already covers the category of "physical sins", then there is no need for the term "physical sins" in the Hebrew text. The same is true for the Greek text. As already stated, our English word "sin" also does not cover sins, when no laws are transgressed (doubting, fearful, unforgiving, pride, etc.).

Now to be clear:

The list of foods that miss God's standard of perfection **includes many items that I eat and drink**! I live in a city, and like most people today I don't really have the opportunity to produce all my own food. So I buy food items from various shops. And I try to consume as few manmade chemicals as possible. But I do consume some substances in the foods I buy that God did not really intend for us to put into our bodies. And **I suspect that I'll continue to ingest some such substances for the rest of my life**.

(As an aside, I personally don't really trust "Organic label foods". In most cases there is nothing specifically wrong with "Organic", but I don't believe that they are in very many cases "better" than equivalent foods that don't carry the "Organic" label. However, typically they use their label as an excuse to place a far higher price on their products. In many cases they are a rip-off. That practice I disagree with. And **I do not go out of my way to buy "Organic" items**. I mention this so that you don't view this as a subtle promotion for "Organic" foods, because that is not at all my intention. Personally I am quite critical of "Organic foods", and on a worldwide scale there is **a lot of deception** involved with

“organic foods”, something that has been documented repeatedly in TV programs made in Europe. But this approach towards “organic foods” is just my personal perspective.)

Understand that **I am not trying to find fault with people** who consume these manmade substances, because I myself am in the same boat. I am simply trying to present **a realistic picture of our evil world today**! I have no power to change that situation. But I should at least recognize the situation for what it is.

Now God has clearly instructed us regarding the animals we are not to eat. And we shouldn’t eat any unclean animals. And I don’t eat any of them. We are familiar with Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.

But we need to also recognize that **what we have done with our food production** causes **far greater health problems** than are caused by eating certain unclean animals. It is not a matter of comparing these things. It’s a matter of recognizing that **both are bad**! Eating unclean animals is bad. And ingesting thousands of different manmade chemicals is also bad. Both “miss the mark of perfection” that God intends for the human diet.

And that’s another way of saying that before God **both are sin**!

Now God created sicknesses and diseases as penalties for our sins. So when we become sick, then that indicates that **somewhere** along the line some **physical sins have been committed** (i.e. perfection was not achieved) by somebody.

Example:

If we drink water that makes us sick, then we ourselves have not sinned. **We bear no guilt**. But before that water ever reached our faucets, somebody fell short of perfection, meaning **somebody sinned**. In many cases they didn’t sin in a moral sense, but only in the sense of falling short of perfection on the physical level, although greed is often also a part of the picture.

So somebody polluted the water that made us sick. Whether agricultural wastes or industrial wastes were allowed to enter our water supply, or whether city pollution found its way into our water, or whether our water was polluted some other way, is really immaterial. The point is that some substances or some disease organisms were allowed to enter our water supply, and we are the ones who became sick.

This would be a case of physical sins having caused our sickness, and we weren’t even the ones who committed those physical sins. Since we were not the ones who committed the physical sins involved in our sickness, therefore **for us** no forgiveness of physical sins is required in this situation. **We are just the innocent victims** of someone else’s transgression, and we had nothing to do with the physical sins that were committed in polluting our water supply.

However, at other times **we ourselves bring health problems upon ourselves**. We eat a diet that

directly causes health problems, and so in time we have some health issue. For example, clogged arteries generally indicate that we ate a diet that caused our clogged arteries. Or we engage in dangerous physical activities (work or sport), and then we suffer a significant injury. Or we don't follow some of the principles that promote good health and then we become sick.

In cases where we ourselves bear responsibility for the sickness or disease or other health issue, then **that requires God's forgiveness for the physical sins we are guilty of**, before God will then heal us. That is the situation James addressed in his epistle.

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

James is addressing the subject of sickness and other health problems (see verse 14). His statement "**if** he has committed sins" is not about sins like coveting, lusting, stealing, lying, Sabbath-breaking, etc. James is **not** speaking about "**spiritual sins**" at all, because James knew that there is nobody who has not sinned in that area of life (see 1 John 1:8-10).

James is speaking about physical sins that caused the sickness. And with the sins that caused a sickness there are always two options: **either** the sick individual himself committed physical sins, **or** somebody else committed the physical sins that caused the sickness. Therefore James had to say "**if** he has committed sins", to cover the possibility that in some cases somebody else had committed the sins.

We have two different situations.

1) When **we ourselves** have caused our own health problem, then we are guilty of not having achieved perfection. Then we are guilty of physical sins, even though we have the right attitude towards God. These sins don't involve any moral responsibility; they only involve ignorance or the inability to achieve perfection. In this situation **we must have those physical sins forgiven** by God, before God will then heal us. And when we are anointed for our health problem, then God also forgives us those specific physical sins.

Sicknesses, diseases, pain and suffering are **the penalty** God has imposed for committing physical sins. Now when a sickness runs its full course, without any divine healing, then the penalty has been paid in full! And then we are well again. But when our sickness or disease is quickly terminated because God has intervened and healed us, then that penalty has not yet been paid. But it must be paid by someone. So in this situation of divine healing **the still unpaid penalty is accepted by Jesus Christ** on our behalf (i.e. for converted Christians and our minor children). And Jesus Christ has already paid that penalty for us, by willingly enduring a brutal beating before He was crucified (see Isaiah 53:5, 1 Peter 2:24, etc.). We are reminded of this every year at the Passover.

2) When **somebody else's physical sins** caused our health problem, then we don't have any guilt for the health problem. So in order for God to heal us, there are no physical sins that we personally need to have forgiven. However God may deal with the people who committed the physical sins which caused our sickness, that has no influence on God healing us. In this case we personally don't need specific

physical sins forgiven before God will heal us.

Now it should be self-evident that anointing does not result in sins of adultery and coveting and stealing and Sabbath-breaking, etc. being forgiven. Anointing for health problems does not bring forgiveness of any spiritual sins! An adulterer cannot ask for anointing and have his sin of adultery forgiven at the same time. No amount of anointing can possibly remove the guilt of killing, stealing, dishonoring parents, adultery, etc. That should be obvious.

The only possibility for James 5:15 is that James was referring to **a category of sins** that causes health problems.

And for lack of a better expression we refer to that category as “physical sins”, because we don’t have a single English word that covers this specific part of the Hebrew word translated as “sin”. On its own our English word “sin” does not include the meaning of “physical sins”.

Coining this expression “physical sins” is fully in line with God demanding perfection in every area of life, though not all areas of life involve moral condemnation for failure to achieve 100% perfection.

Okay, let’s get back to the man who was healed.

Earlier I asked: how and why does this healing prove that sins have been forgiven?

When we ourselves have done things to cause our own health problem, then we are guilty of physical sins. And in that case healing is not possible without those physical sins first being removed. In such a situation forgiveness of physical sins is a prerequisite for divine healing. So the statement “if he has committed sins they shall be forgiven him” by James certainly applies to this particular man. And when this man was healed, it proved that the prerequisite for divine healing must have been met. And then Christ told the man to “go home”.

In conclusion:

This event of Jesus Christ saying “your sins are forgiven you” is a reference to **physical sins**, that had caused the man to become paralyzed, **being forgiven**. The fact that sins needed to be forgiven proves that the man himself had some degree of responsibility for the paralysis that affected him. And Jesus Christ both forgave his sins and then also healed the man. The man had demonstrated great faith, and therefore Christ forgave his sins and then also healed him.

The next article in this series will deal with the woman to whom Jesus Christ also said “your sins are forgiven”.

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