

### **SIN IS A PROGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR**

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Anyone who has watched such programs as *Forensic Files*, *C.S.I.*, or *Law and Order* would be aware that many heinous crimes are often preceded by lesser crimes. Many murderers had previous criminal records of domestic disputes, assault, etc. Rapists usually have previous charges of stalking, or voyeurism.

There is a noted progressiveness in such behaviors. The desire may have been filled, at first, by small acts but then the desire becomes harder to satisfy. This same type of progressive behavior is seen in substance abuse as well. Not only does the body build a tolerance, but the mind of the user desires an increased effect from the substance.

This progressiveness is also seen in other areas such as lust for money or power. Surely there are technical names for such behavior within the respective fields of study but one needs not be trained in criminal behavior to understand this concept. Nor does one need to be familiar with the latest psychological studies.

The truth is, sin is progressive. Sin is the deadliest thing on earth. Many sins are acceptable in society, others are specially labeled “a disease” or “an alternative lifestyle.” Whatever the “flavor-of-the-week” is and no matter how common or accepted it is, the end result of sin is the same. “The wages of sin is death”(Rom. 6:23). The early stages of sin seem so innocent, so far from any “serious offense.” “It is just a little white lie” – “no one will ever miss this” – “the end justifies the means,” etc.

For example, a Christian chooses to miss the worship service. The next service time gets closer and he begins thinking, “will someone ask me where I was?” “will I get guilt-tripped,” “I’ll just miss again, I haven’t been feeling well anyway.” Personal Bible study has been crowded out by a busy schedule, prayer life is failing too. It will not be long and that person will likely be blaming those hypocrites in the church or even opposing the church all together. But at the beginning, who would have made such an accusation as, “if you miss one service you will go to hell?” However, by the illustration one should see that it very well could have.

James wrote, “*But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*” (James 1:14–15). In other words, temptation leads to sin which, unless covered by the blood of Christ, results in death.

The murderer probably never thought that first act of violence was that big of a deal. The rapist probably thought giving himself over to those first lustful thoughts would be no big deal. ALL SIN, is a BIG DEAL to God, and all sin can cause us to lose everything. Sin always costs us more than we were willing to pay, and it always carries us further than we wanted to go. It promises what it can never pay.

For Christians, there is another progressive behavior with which we should concern ourselves. We should be striving for perfection. We are all doing one of three things: progressing deeper in sin, we are striving for perfection, or we are sitting still, stagnant and lukewarm. I encourage you with the words of Paul: “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:14).