

SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The **first question** asked of those who seek to become members of a Presbyterian church is: *Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in God's sight, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope except through His sovereign mercy?* This question points to the fact of sin and what sin does in the lives of people. For a person to become a member of the church, he should know what sin is, that he himself is a sinner, and that sin leads to spiritual death. No one who thinks himself "good" is approaching religious experience prepared to understand or accept Jesus Christ as Savior in the full, Christian sense. What is sin? It is "self" going against the will and the way of God. God made known His will and His way in His Commandments. When we violate the laws of God we are guilty of sin. "Whosoever committed sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). There are two ways of breaking the law: (1) by failing to do what the law requires, and (2) by doing what the law forbids. A man who fails to pay his taxes breaks the law by failing to do what it requires. A man who drives fifty miles an hour in a thirty mile speed zone breaks the law by doing what it forbids. Men violate God's law in the same ways. Paul wrote, "For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom.7:19). Whosoever else may be harmed by it, sin is basically an offense against God. When David had committed a grievous evil against Uriah and his wife, Bathsheba, he prayed to God, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight" (Psalm 51:4). Sin is so offensive to God that He cannot look on it: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:1). Who does sin affect? It touches and damages the life of every person. All who ever lived have sinned except One, and that is Christ Himself. The Bible states very clearly that all are sinners and that all have sinned. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8. See also Eccl. 7:20 and Rom. 3:23). Not only does the Bible tell us we are sinners, but when we are honest with ourselves, our consciences tell us the same thing. Where does sin lead? It always leads to death. Death came to our first parents, because of their sin. All of their descendants have been sinners and have deserved death because of their sins. "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned..." (Rom. 5:12; Rom. 6:23; Ezek. 18:4). Spiritual death means being separated from God forever (Isa. 59:2). In our own strength there is nothing we can do to overcome the evil effects of sin in our lives. We know what we ought to do, but we find ourselves unable to do it. Paul said, "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 7:18). If there is any help for us as sinners, it must come from someone else. Our help comes only from the Lord. There is nothing we can do about sin, but He has already done all that is necessary. We deserve death, but God takes away our sin and gives us eternal life in its place. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).