

practicing the devil's methods, the church members choose to follow God's law of love. They forgive the man and encourage the community to forgive. Or a gunman kills five Amish girls in a schoolhouse in Pennsylvania, but the Amish family forgives the gunman and even assists his family in their grief. This deescalates the violence and brings healing to hearts, minds, and souls.

Satan revels in instigating evil and then inciting outrage in the offended, provoking them to attack the evildoers with his methods. We don't forgive, don't love, don't seek to redeem the offender—we don't follow Jesus' words to love our enemies and pray for those who abuse us (Matthew 5:44). Satan deceives people into seeking to punish, destroy, dominate, control, and forcefully eradicate wrongdoers—and the cycle of violence perpetuates and spreads. Sin takes over more and more hearts.

Inflicting punishment doesn't renew hearts—only God's grace can do that. That's why we must stop looking at the sin, stop focusing upon the injustice, stop ruminating over our outrage—and instead fix our eyes on God, His law and methods of love, and our Savior Jesus Christ. It is by beholding Him that we are changed (2 Corinthians 3:18). We become like what we spend time viewing and meditating upon. When we spend our time watching the news cycle—the perpetual beholding of injustice, deceit, exploitation, and wrong—it incites more fear in us, which tempts us to stop the evil by using the methods of evil. We spiral downward into ever-increasing depths of selfishness and fear.

But God is calling us to break the sin-cycle, the violence-cycle, the corruption-cycle—to free our hearts from fear and selfishness. When wronged (and we have all been wronged), when outraged (and we have all been outraged), when wounded by evil (and we have all been wounded), turn away from the evil and fix your eyes on Christ! Contemplate the life of Jesus. Admire Him, rejoice in His acts of love, bask in

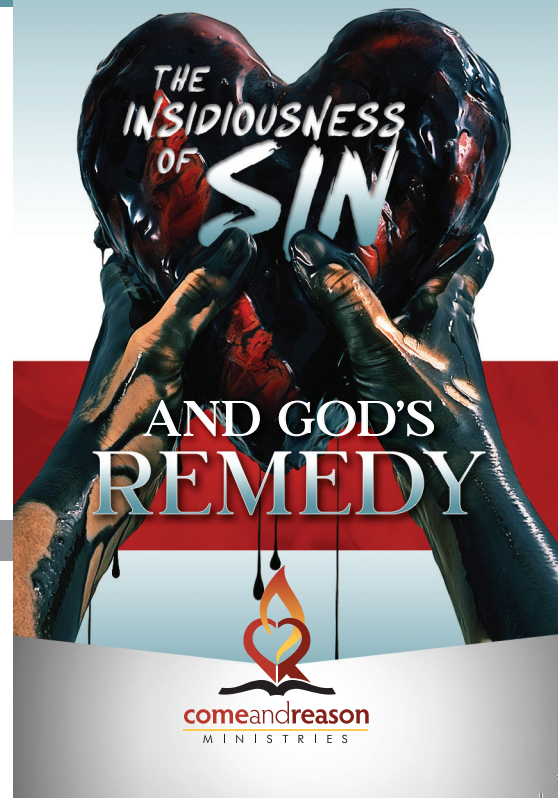
His truth, be immersed in His presence, be renewed by His character, and drink deeply of the healing waters of His truth and love. This is God's remedy to wash away your pain, heal your wounds, and cleanse you from all fear, guilt, shame, anger, bitterness, and selfishness.

Then you will be able to go out into this evil and corrupt world and "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27, 28 NIV84). Sin is insidious, but where sin abounds, God's grace and healing abound all the more!

Written by Timothy R. Jennings, M. D.



Do you want to know more about God's law of love and how He can heal you from sin and sinfulness? Visit comeandreason.com



Sinfulness is the state of being out of harmony with God and His law of love. It is a condition characterized by fear and selfishness, qualities that drive our carnal natures and lead us into acts of sin.

But why are sinfulness and sin so bad? Let's take a look . . .

1 Is It a Sin for You to Be Tempted?

Temptation to sin comes in two primary ways: from *outside* yourself and from *within*.

Merely being tempted from the outside does not damage your heart and mind, nor is it evidence of being unrighteous. Adam and Eve were tempted while sinless. The temptation itself did not defile them, but believing the lie and acting in self-interest did defile them.

Being tempted from within, from your own feelings of fear and selfishness, is not

an act of sin, nor is it evidence of an unrighteous character. Jesus was tempted in every way just like you are, yet He was sinless. Being tempted from within is evidence of the condition of sinfulness, but it is not a sin.

It all depends on the choice you make when tempted.

2 What Happens When You Sin?

However, damage to your heart and mind always occurs when you say “yes” to temptation.

When you identify with, long for, and pursue sin in your mind, even if you don't actually carry out the sin, it corrupts your character. While this corruption can remain hidden from people, it is never hidden from God. You are either being healed from sinfulness—having His law of love written in your heart by the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 8:10)—or you are solidifying sinfulness in your heart.

And when you do sin outwardly—such as steal, assault, molest, deceive, betray, ruin reputations with lies—you not only damage your own soul, sear your conscience, and corrupt your character, but you also plant a seed of sin in the heart of the victim. If that seed is not healed by God, it can take root in the victim, bringing forth more corruption through fear and selfishness, and lead to more acts of sin.

This is why one of Satan's main strategies is to get people—especially those who reject God's love and truth—to sin against other people. Not only does sin increase a sinner's own guilt and shame, but it also infects their victims with fear and selfishness. Satan then further uses these seeds to tempt innocent victims to seek to eradicate evildoers through his own sinful methods, which further corrupts the victims. Sin sets off a chain reaction of evil.

This is the insidiousness of sin.

3 How God Heals You from Sin and Sinfulness

Let's consider this scenario:

An innocent man is killed by the police, and the response of some is to riot—leading them to destroy innocent people's property and even injure them. These innocents then become fearful, leading them to further cycles of hate, resentment, retaliation, and violence. Satan has succeeded in getting the people who were sinned against to engage in their pursuit of eradicating evil by practicing his methods—lies, violence, vengeance—and to actually feel good about what they are doing.

But now let's consider the following:

A racist gunman goes on a shooting spree in a church in South Carolina, but instead of