

# A Mind About Sin

*The Godly Mind*

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Well, we're happy to have everyone here again as we gather together to study God's word. Thank you for being with us on a wonderful week in the life of our church as we continue to look to Christ for all that we need, look to him in his great sufficiency, and look to him in his word.

We're in the middle of a series that we've titled "The Godly Mind," and for those notetakers in the audience, tonight's message is titled "A Mind About Sin." The past two weeks we've seen that a godly mind is centered on Christ as the Savior, and it understands a mind that is set upon God as the sovereign in his providence and over the problems of life, and those messages are most likely available in the lobby if you haven't had those yet. Tonight we're going to see a mind about sin and what I want to do, this is a pretty simple message, really, at least I intend it to be. We're going to see that a godly mind, a godly heart, has a two-part response to sin and I want to just lay these things out for you in very simple terms. You know, we are all going to deal with sin in our lives at one point or another, either in the realms of our thoughts and imaginations or in things that we've said or things that we've done, and we're going to find ourselves needing to respond to sin in a godly way, and part of the way that you set your heart in the right direction is to have a right mindset about sin in the Christian life and this would apply even to those who do not know Christ. This is the response that you would make to Christ himself as he calls you in the Gospel, so this is very practical.

What is it about a mind about sin? How should our minds think and respond to sin? Well, first of all, let's say this: we need to have a mind that is settled on repentance from sin. That's our first point tonight. A mind about sin, a godly mind has an attitude of repentance from sin and this is fundamental, it is basic, it sets the tone and frames your response to everything else. And in a non-technical way I would define repentance this way, a non-technical way: I would say that repentance is an informed and a fundamental rejection of sin. An informed and a fundamental rejection of sin. And not only in general, it's not as we've said on Sunday, it's not just that we hate the sins in the world around us, we hate the sins in society, more fundamentally, we are talking about our approach to our own sin, the sin that dwells and remains in our own heart, and that we have a fundamental rejection of sin in our own heart.

Now the concept of that is simple in form but here is the problem that you and I have: is that we have a tendency to like our sin, we have a tendency to love our sin, and we need to develop a mindset that hates sin for sin's sake; that hates sin not simply for the consequences that it brings, that hates it not simply for the shame that it might bring to us, but we hate sin because it is an offense to God. It is a violation of his holiness. It is a treason against our Sovereign whom we say that we love and we trust. So sin is a violation of God. It is a violation of his holiness. It is a violation of the love that saved us at Calvary. So we have to have that vertical perspective on sin to fundamentally reject it, that we would love God and fear his holiness far more than we would love our sin. So repentance is our fundamental attitude toward that even if we struggle at times along the way.

We can consider repentance in three aspects. I'm going to give you three aspects of repentance. These are things that we've talked about some in the past. There are kind of three dimensions to repentance that I would want you to have clear in your mind and repentance starts, first of all, with a knowledge of sin. A knowledge of sin. There should be none under the sound of the teaching of God's word for any length of time, that carry about any illusion or delusion about being a pretty good person, about being somebody that's going to go to heaven because the good outweighs the bad in your life. This is fundamental but, you know, here's the thing: we not only tend to love our sin or want to guard it or protect it, the fact of the matter is that you and I tend to have a pretty good opinion of ourselves. We like ourselves. We think highly of ourselves and we need to come to grips with the testimony of Scripture, the testimony of God, about how God sees us.

The Bible repeatedly declares that all men are fallen and guilty. Ecclesiastes 9:3 says, "the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives." The testimony of Scripture does not commend us for our basic goodness. Scripture does not commend us as being pretty good Joe's. Quite to the contrary, it says that our hearts are full of evil. Jeremiah 17:9, desperately sick, desperately wicked. Romans 3:12, all have turned aside. Isaiah 53, giving similar language, each of us has turned to his own way. There is an aspect that is fundamental to our existence that we have turned away from the God who made us and we have turned away and we walk in rebellion against him, especially as unbelievers but at times even as believers. So a godly mind starts with that fundamental cornerstone in its self-assessment. In myself, I am not someone pleasing to God. In myself, I have fallen short of his glory.

Jesus taught, you can turn to Matthew 5. Hopefully that portion of your Bible is well worn by now as we have looked at the Sermon on the Mount so often. But Jesus taught that spiritual life begins with a declaration of spiritual bankruptcy. Chapter 5, verse 3 says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." A godly mind and this is what we're trying to cultivate, you know, we're kind of walking through this series together letting the word of God disciple us really is what we're trying to do here, is to just let the word of God for some of us review basic things, for others perhaps cultivating, for young people cultivating fundamental convictions about the way that we think. Jesus says that the poor in spirit are the ones who alone will inherit the kingdom of God. So the godly man, and remember we're going to walk through a whole perspective here this evening, the godly man, the godly woman, understands in a fundamental way that he, that she, is not fit for God's presence. That God is high and holy and separate from sinners. That he is lofty. Holy, holy, holy, as Isaiah said, as it says in Isaiah 6 would be more accurate to say. And we realize deep in our hearts, deep in our thinking, "Who I am is not fit for that. The great majesty of God is something that transcends me. He is separate. He is high. He is lofty. He is holy. He is perfect. And whatever else I say about my life, I ain't that. I'm not high. I'm not lofty. I'm not holy. I have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. I have sinned in my thoughts, my words and my deeds."

A godly man understands that and accepts it and confesses it rather than – watch this – rather than denying that, Scripture says, in fact look over, this is so fundamental, look over at 1 John, if you would, kind of seeing the positive point that I'm making from the opposite negative direction. 1 John 1:8 toward the back of your New Testament. After Hebrews, James and the letters of Peter. You see, you're not even a Christian if you don't confess this. 1 John 1:8 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." And verse 10 of 1 John 1, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." So what we're saying here is the infrastructure of a godly mind starts with a recognition and a confession open and unqualified of sin. "I'm a sinner." Your good works and your religion do not fit you for God. There is nothing that you can do about that in yourself and you cannot repent. Here's the point for this evening: you cannot repent and fundamentally reject sin until you have a thorough going understanding of the fact that you yourself are a sinner. You are a sinner by nature and you sin by choice as well. So repentance starts with this knowledge and understanding of what the Bible says about your nature, about your inner man, and repentance agrees with God in what is said there. It says, "That's true of me."

J. C. Ryle, I'm going to quote him a lot this week and next week. Let me just say this. I should have brought the book. J. C. Ryle's book "Old Paths" is a book that I cannot recommend to you highly enough. It is the most profound discussion of the basics of Christian life and of Christian thought that I think I have ever read. It is immensely pastoral. It is immensely evangelistic and it is a book that every one of you would benefit from to go out and to get that book, especially the edition published by Banner of Truth. The formatting is much more readable. But "Old Paths" by J. C. Ryle is a book that I recommend so very highly to you and I'm quoting from it here in what I'm about to say.

"True repentance begins with the knowledge of sin. The eyes of the penitent man are opened. He discovers to his surprise that in thinking himself a good sort of man, that he has been under a huge delusion. He finds out that in reality he is wicked and guilty and corrupt and bad in God's sight. His pride breaks down. He sees that he is neither more nor less than a great sinner. This is the first step in true repentance." So there is this fundamental understanding that rejects everything that the world would say to you about yourself. You know, "You deserve a break today," that we need to have self-esteem and think good thoughts about ourselves. That whole idea of cultivating self-esteem in people and in young people from the earliest age, works in diametric opposition to what the truth of the Gospel is.

A godly mind starts with an understanding and a knowledge of sin and an open confession of it. And I would ask you, not that we are going to open this up for testimonies although it's very tempting to do that, to just call a couple of people out by name and say, "Would you stand up and would you confess this about yourself openly before men, I am a guilty sinner in the presence of God." And would you stand up and say that without any reservation or mental qualification in it, but just to say, "Yes, that's me. I am a sinner guilty before God, deserving of condemnation." You see, the repentant mind, the godly mind has abandoned self, has abandoned any claim to goodness or merit. This is fundamental to godly thinking. It is fundamental to true humility. And it is fundamental to giving God the glory that he deserves. If you think that there are elements of goodness about you that invite God's favor upon your life, you're going to have thoughts of God that are far too low and thoughts of yourself that are far too high. You see, the godly mind that confesses himself to be a ruined and guilty sinner now on the receiving end of the grace of God, has a high view of God, recognizes that his salvation could only be by pure undeserved grace, undeserved favor, kindness beyond all deserving, so that God is praised and glorified and by comparison his thoughts of himself become increasingly small. The repentant godly mind says with John in John 3:30, "He must increase and I must decrease," and fundamental to that is a knowledge and an understanding of sin.

So, my friend, do you confess yourself to be a sinner? Do you know yourself to be a sinner in the way of which we speak here tonight? Do you forsake any claim upon the goodness of God to you, any claim of the mercy of God that he owes you nothing? That the reality is, and here's another thing, it's one thing to say God owes me nothing. That's true, that's good, we should say that, we should know that. There is another step to this knowledge of sin that says not only does God not owe me anything, the truth of the matter is that in my sin I deserve to go to hell. People will say, people will gladly say, "Well, yeah, I'm not perfect," but the godly mind would go all of the way and say, "What I really deserve in myself is I deserve

condemnation because I have sinned against a holy God." And a godly mind understands that, thinks that way, and makes it the starting premise from which she thinks about everything else.

And this is why, you know, just to continue to ramble here, this is ultimately fundamentally why when a person understands the depth of his sinfulness, he has no problems whatsoever with the doctrines of grace; that God chose us, elected us, that we are totally depraved, it was unconditional election that is the ground of our salvation, that Christ died for sinners, the grace that drew me to Christ had to be irresistible because I was dead in trespasses and sins. The godly mind does not buck against, does not resist the doctrines of grace because he understands that in his sin he never would have come to God in the first place. And ultimately when you find people that are hard and resistant to the doctrines of grace, you will find that they have a shallow and superficial view of sin. Without question that's the case. So ultimately, the course that you choose and the course that people go in theology is going to be traced back to the way that they think back to this most fundamental issue.

Now, there's a second aspect of repentance from sin. There is the knowledge of sin, secondly, repentance involves a sorrow over sin. A sorrow over sin. I would put it this way: for the godly mind, the discussion of sin is not simply an abstraction. It's not a theoretical debate to the godly mind. It's not something that can be bantered back and forth as if we were historians discussing which President was the greatest, and it's an abstract discussion with no personal application deep in our heart. No, the godly mind recognizes his own sin. Remember, this is what we're talking about. It's not simply sin in the abstract, we are talking about the godly mind saying, "This is my sin and I know and understand and confess that." The godly mind also grieves over sin. It brings sorrow to him.

You should still be in the Gospel of Matthew 5. Look at verse 4 where Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Now, Jesus is not talking simply about earthly mourning over an earthly loss. He could not possibly be talking about a simple horizontal grief that is directed toward earthly circumstances or an earthly loss. He couldn't be talking about that because – think with me – not everybody that mourns here on earth finds comfort in Christ. He's not talking about a comfort that everyone who mourns the loss of a loved one, for example, finds comfort because that's just not true. What he's talking about instead are those who are mourning over their sin. Verse 3 talks about how he is addressing those who are poor in spirit. In verse 6, he's addressing those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. And the mourning, the sorrow, is over a recognition of what I lack. I lack the righteousness of God. I hunger after that. I want that to be true and it grieves me that I fall short of his glory. You can recognize a godly mind when there is godly sorrow over sin.

So this mourning describes an agony. This mourning describes an inner pain that accompanies the recognition of sin. And those of you that have been Christians for any length of time, that love Christ, you know something about the piercing sorrow that comes when you have sinned against Christ. You say, "Oh, oh, how did I do that?" And you grieve over it. Sin in your life is not something that you can casually brush aside, it stops you in your tracks in some way or another and you recognize, "I'm not right and that bothers me. It grieves me to be a sinner. It grieves me to have sinned against my God." So repentance is an attitude of mind that confesses sin to God with a sense of sorrow, with a sense of regret and remorse.

In Luke 18:13, you don't need to turn there. You remember the publican and the tax collector praying together in the temple. The publican was praying to God like this, "I think thee, O God, that I'm not like other men. I tithe and I do all these righteous things. I give 10% of all that I have." And Jesus said, contrasting that attitude of pride with the tax collector in Luke 18:13, he says, "the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'" There is this attitude in true repentance that is vertically directed; that it's not that you know that I am a sinner that bothers me preeminently, it's the recognition that I have sinned against a holy God. And repentance looks vertically and cries out to God for mercy, "God, be merciful to me the sinner!" He was so heavy laden over his sin that he wasn't even willing to look up to heaven and the inner agony that he felt needed a physical release so he was beating his chest with his fist. "God, be merciful to me! This hurts, Lord! I want to pound it out if I could!" So his grief over sin was so great that he had to release, it had to express itself physically.

Now I'm not saying that every aspect of your repentance every time you are repenting has to be to that extreme, but there should be something, there is something in the godly mind that not only acknowledges sin but rejects it and finds it unacceptable, that finds it distasteful, that finds it something to be pushed away rather than embraced. That's the sorrow, the agony over it and as I said on Sunday, the kind of repentance that we're talking about here is not found in the political opposition to abortion or homosexuality, it's sorrow over your own personal sins. "God, I did that. I said this. I thought that and it grieves me, Lord."

Again, J. C. Ryle says and I quote, "The heart of a penitent man is touched with deep remorse because of his past transgressions. He is cut to the heart to think that he should have lived so madly and so wickedly. He mourns over time wasted, over talents misspent, over God dishonored, over his own soul injured. The remembrance of these things is grievous to him. The burden of these things is sometimes almost intolerable. When a man so sorrows, you have the second step in true repentance." So there is this knowledge of sin, there is this sorrow over sin that marks true repentance and true repentance is a cornerstone of the godly mind.

Now let me give you a third aspect of true repentance here and that is found in the forsaking of sin. The forsaking of sin. The godly mind and the sorrow that is generated over sin, there is an inner momentum that works on the will of the man, on the will of the godly woman, that causes him, causes her, to actually turn away from sin in service to God.

In Matthew 5:5 and 6, it says, "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Whereas before there was a desire and a love and an enjoyment in sin, whereas before there was a seeking out after it, the godly mind, the repentant mind, has rejected that, has turned its back on that and is now drawn in another direction toward the righteousness of God. The godly mind, let's put it this way, the godly mind has no desire to engage in discussions about how much sin can I get away with and still be a Christian? The godly mind wants nothing to do with a false presentation of Christianity that says you can live absolutely any way that you want and it's okay, the blood of Jesus covers it all. No, the godly mind wants nothing to do with that because the godly mind genuinely desires righteousness. The godly mind is not looking for a theological cover that would allow him to claim the name of Christ and simultaneously live in his sin and enjoy it. No. That's not what he does.

That's not godly thinking and think about it, it could be no other way. You know, godly is an adjective or an adverb, whatever we're using here to describe the mind. We're talking about a kind of mind that resembles the mind of God, right? A godly mind. That's what we're talking about. That's the way we framed it here. Now what is God if he is not righteous? What is God if he is not holy? What is God if he is not perfect? What is God if he is one who is of eyes too pure to tolerate any evil? Well then, a godly mind is going to have the same disposition toward righteousness and against sin that God does and here in Matthew 5:6 you see Jesus pronouncing a blessing, the favor of God on those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

So repentance produces this desire for holiness in the heart. Jesus called for that change with the rich young ruler in Luke 18:22. He had before him a man in his self-righteousness and he said, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." Well, his sin was a love for his material possessions and he wasn't willing to forsake it and Jesus puts the finger on this man and says, "This is what you need to do, you need to forsake all of your possessions and come and follow me," and the man wasn't willing to do it. He walked away grieved because he was a man who had many possessions.

Well, think about it this way, beloved: whatever the Spirit of God through his word brings to convict you that is sinful in your life or is something that you love more than Christ, repentance says, "I'll forsake that. I'll let that go for the sake of following Christ. I will not tolerate," the godly mind says, "I will not tolerate any affection in my heart that is greater than my love and loyalty and obedience to Christ. There is nothing that I will do, there is no avenue of profit that I will accept. If an avenue of profit is sinful, I reject it. If there are relationships that are sinful, I forsake and walk away from them. If there are attitudes or beliefs that I have had deeply rooted in my mind and Scripture shows me they are wrong, I'm happy to forsake the

unbiblical beliefs," rather than arguing with Scripture and trying to reconcile the two. You see, there is a fundamental principle in the godly mind that says, "I want to forsake anything that is displeasing to God. I want to forsake anything that holds a higher affection in my heart than Christ himself does."

So this call to repentance comes from Christ as an imperative. He said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." What he does, what Christ does for every man, what the call of the Gospel is on every man, woman and child, is to abandon your earthly priorities, abandon your earthly sin and come and follow me, and there is this recognition of the priority, the preeminent Lordship of Christ, that the godly mind says, "Yes, that's what I want. I want to be under his authority. I want to follow him. I want to abandon the world that I might have Christ." You see, friends, as we let God's word sift us here today and perhaps for some of you young people, what I'm about to say gives you a good test of whether your faith in Christ is real or not. You see, true repentance does not simply want to escape from hell. A fear of condemnation certainly can be a motivating aspect in repentance and we should fear that as part of our overall fear of God, but true repentance wants something more than that. True repentance wants to be delivered from the power of sin in his life. A godly mind doesn't simply want not to go to hell, it wants the positive righteousness of Christ. It wants to live in obedience. It wants to have Christ and his righteousness as that which manifests his existence. So for the godly mind, true repentance is a forsaking of the world and a forsaking of sin altogether, not simply the punishment. It wants to be free from the power of sin.

The Apostle Paul called men to turn from sin in this way. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Acts 26, in verse, we've got time and we are all friends here, let's look at verse 12 and just let the Scripture kind of lead up into the passage that I particularly wanted to focus on. Paul is relaying his conversion on the road to Damascus and testifying to what happened at that point and in verse 12 he said, "While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you.'" So stop there for a moment. Paul has met Christ now and his response to Christ was, "Who are you, Lord? Who are you, Master?" There is intrinsic in that a recognition of the authority of Christ and a submission to it.

Now here's what I want you to see in verse 18 in terms of what the message is that he was sent out with, "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." So, King Agrippa," verse 19, "I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance." Forsake your sin. Come to God in repentance and perform deeds that are in keeping with that. That was the message that Paul went out and proclaimed. There is a knowledge of sin. There is a sorrow over sin. There is a forsaking of sin that is present in true repentance. The godly mind understands that and embraces it, understands it and accepts it and says, "This is the life that I want to live. This is my fundamental disposition toward sin. I recognize its reality. I confess its presence in me and I forsake it. I reject it even if I'm still going to struggle and wrestle with it going forward. I will wrestle against it as a foe rather than embrace it as a friend."

Again, J. C. Ryle, "The life of a penitent man is altered. The course of his daily conduct is entirely changed. A new King reigns within his heart. He puts off the old man. What God commands, he now desires to practice, and what God forbids, he now desires to avoid. He breaks off sharply from bad ways and bad companions. He labors however feebly to live a new life." You see, in the godly mind, in the repentant mind, there is a recognition that the life is now under new ownership. There is new management in place and there is a desire to set aside that which we formerly loved and to embrace the authority of Christ, not to buck against it. To love him. To submit to him and to have our life be a manifestation and a reflection of our love and gratitude for everything that he did for us at Calvary. The repentant mind, the godly mind

would have it no other way and the godly mind begins to see these things more and more clearly and goes in that direction in its heart.

So repentance brings about a knowledge, a sorrow and a forsaking of sin. You know, another aspect that we could say that going back to the tax collector who was confessing his sin and beating his chest, that in true repentance there is this vertical confession to God that the godly mind in its rejection of sin finds itself drawn to and even compelled, "God, I have to confess this to you. I have to bear forth the sin and the guilt of my soul before my Maker, before my Creator, before my Redeemer. God, I have to lay this before you. I have to flee to the cross. I have to confess this to Christ. I don't want to be this way, God. I realize I have sinned against you, God. I need your forgiveness, God. I need you to change me, God." And there is this God-ward dimension to repentance not simply an idea that I'm going to turn over a new leaf and try to live better going forward. There is a God-ward dimension to it in true repentance.

With that said, the godly mind knows that there is also another aspect to its thinking about sin and these two things should always be wedded together in your mind. Please do not miss what I am about to say. I know for a fact that some of you need the blessing of what we are about to talk about here. You have mastered the sorrow over sin and you've mastered the remorse and the regret of that. You've mastered that but you've found it difficult to move beyond that and you're just kind of stuck in a spiritual quicksand that you continually seem to sink under the weight of. So please don't miss this. The godly mind's attitude in response to sin, there is repentance from sin, joined in the godly mind at the same time, number 2, is faith in Christ. Faith in Christ.

You see, the godly mind not only repents of sin. Think about a coin, heads and tails, two sides of one piece of currency. Well, in the same way, true repentance, true godly repentance is always joined together with faith in Christ. The godly mind not only looks inward and senses sorrow over sin, it looks outward to Christ. It looks outward to the Lord who can deliver. It looks outward to the one who said, "Come to me and I will give you rest, all you who labor and are heavy laden." So there is this twofold dimension of the godly mind toward sin. In one it rejects and forsakes sin, and the other side of it is that it flees to Christ and goes to Christ for relief and for cleansing. Jesus calls men to forsake sin and to follow him.

Look at Luke 9:23. Look at the negative and the positive aspect of his call. In verse 23, "He was saying to them all, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.'" Beloved, I really want you to see the negative and the positive aspects of what Jesus is saying here because it brings clarity to the way the godly mind thinks about sin. Jesus says in verse 23, he must deny himself; he must take up his cross daily and follow me. The cross is at the center of this, this self-denial is at the center of it. He says in a negative way, he must deny himself. He must forsake himself. He must forsake the world. He must forsake sin. If anyone wants to come after me, this must be his attitude toward himself and toward the world. But that's not all he said. He said, "Now come and follow me." There is this positive dimension of coming to Christ by faith. You want to save your life, you'll lose it. That's the negative aspect of it. The positive aspect, you lose your life for my sake, you'll save it. So there is repentance from sin joined with faith in Christ, turning away from iniquity and toward Christ.

In Acts 20, now you can turn to the book of Acts, Acts 20, Paul is speaking to the elders at the church of Ephesus. Acts 20, beginning in verse 18, he said, "when they had come to him, he said to them, 'You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house.'" Here it is in verse 21, "solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks," you see is a universal message, "to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

So the godly mind recognizes more than just a conviction of sin. Oh, mark it, beloved, the godly mind finds by faith in Christ relief for its troubled conscience. It believes, the godly mind believes the biblical truth. It rests in the biblical truth found in, for example 1 John 1:7, "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." The godly mind believes and rests in the truth of Revelation 1:5, he "loves us and released us from our sins by His blood." You see, the repentance from sin is joined with this, you could think about it this way:

repentance is a believing response to what God has revealed about his law and the nature of the guilt of man and the nature of your own guilt. It believes what Scripture has said but it doesn't stop there. It also believes what God has said about what Christ has done on behalf of sinners just like you; that he shed his blood in order to cleanse you, to purchase your redemption, to deliver you from the domain of Satan, to deliver you from the guilt of your sin, to wash you clean so that God could except you fully. There is a balance in the godly mind that says, "Yes, I repent from sin. Yes, I turn to God in my repentance." And joined with that, wedded together in a way that never should be separated is a recognition on the other side the greatness of Christ, the greatness of the Gospel, the greatness of the cross, and says, "I find my relief from sin right there," so that there is a believing response to Christ that trusts him and takes him at his word when he says, "I will receive you. I will cleanse you. The one who comes to me, I will never cast him out." And the godly mind never separates the two. Never presumes on the blood of Christ while clinging to sin in a stubborn way, never sinks into despair over sin without looking to Christ for relief and for forgiveness. And just like a plane needs two wings to fly, the godly mind uses both of these wings to soar. Hear me in what I say, beloved. Are you all listening? True repentance does not – okay, let me say it again – true repentance does not sink into endless introspection over its sin. True repentance hears the promise of forgiveness in Christ and gladly believes his word and rejoices by faith in the Savior. You see, there is a sorrow, there is an agony over sin, yes, for sure, but remember what Jesus said in Matthew 5:4, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." True repentance finds comfort in Christ and that's where the godly mind goes. This is not a flippant response to sin but a believing trust that Christ's promise to receive and cleanse us is true. It can be trusted. It can be believed and accepted and relied upon.

You see, the godly mind, it recognizes its sin, sure, of course. We've already said that. We've established that. I don't have to keep repeating that. But the godly mind does more than simply recognize sin in itself, the godly mind recognizes and treasures and receives and humbly accepts what God has also said that, "Here in my beloved Son you can find forgiveness for all of your sins and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." You see, godly thinking believes everything that God said and for some who are prone to introspection, there is a point at which you need to say, "Enough of my introspection. Enough of my looking within. Yes, I am vile and sinful," and if you look deeper, the truth of the matter is, if you saw it the way God did, you would find more than what you recognize. Get beyond that and come to Christ and believe his promise.

You know, one of the ways, I think the first way perhaps that a person who is questioning his salvation, the first question that you should ask yourself is this. People tend to go, "Well, you know, there are all these tests in 1 John about what a true Christian is." Yeah, that's true but the first question that you should ask yourself is this: do you believe the promise of Christ in the Gospel? When he says, "Come to me and I will give you rest"? When he says, "Come to me, I will never cast you out," do you believe his promise? Do you believe the promise that Christ receives sinners like you? And that by coming to him by faith he will receive and forgive you, do you believe that? No one is a Christian who doesn't somehow believe that. That's the first question you ask. Does your heart leap in affirmation at the proclamation of Christ? That he is the friend of sinners? Do you trust that promise? Look, beloved, your obedience is always going to be imperfect. If you are waiting for assurance until you achieve a level of perfection in your obedience, you're never going to find it because your obedience is never going to be perfect. Your best deeds are marred by sin. So the fundamental starting point of assurance and the fundamental aspect of a godly mind is, "I know who Christ is. I believe his promise and I trust his word completely for peace for my soul. It is in the obedience of Christ, it is in the shed blood of Christ that I find satisfaction that is acceptable to God." The godly mind rests in that.

Our friend Bishop Ryle says this, "True repentance is never alone in the heart of any man." True repentance. "It always has a blessed companion. It is always accompanied by a lively faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Listen to what he says, beloved. This is vital. "Wherever faith is, there is repentance. Wherever repentance is, there is always faith. Just as you cannot have the sun without light, or ice without cold, or fire without heat, you will never find true repentance without lively faith. The two things will always go side-by-side." Then he concludes, "Take heed above all things that your repentance be closely bound up with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. See that your convictions be convictions which never rest except at the foot of the cross whereon Jesus Christ died." Beloved, that's beautiful. It means that in the midst of your conviction of sin, you realize that there is light on a path going forward and that light is



leading you as the stars led the wise men to the Nativity of Christ. The light of the Gospel leads you in the conviction of sin to the cross of Christ and the conviction that you feel over sin should lead you to Christ and to a complete acceptance and trust in what he has said.

One final word of encouragement for you, my friends, and those of you, again, I feel a particular sympathy for those that grow up in Christian homes. I really didn't, through no fault of my mother, but I wasn't a Christian growing up and whatever. That doesn't even matter. But I'm mindful that for those of you that were born into Christian homes, sometimes you have this sense that, "Do you know what? There wasn't this great big change in my life. You know, there was this external morality all along." Okay, fair enough. And some people will say, "You know, I wish I had a better testimony. I wish I had more sin that I could talk about that I had left behind." You really don't need to think that way. You know, if God had placed you in a Christian home and spared you a lot of the sin that some of the rest of us went through, that's not something to regret, that's something to give thanks for, that your soul hasn't been scarred and injured by the darkness that others had to go through and found themselves in. But I know that for some, they look for a perfection in their repentance or a perfection in their faith and they think, "I can't be a Christian until all of these things are just exactly right." Let me give you a word of encouragement, beloved: your repentance does not need to be perfect in order to be real. Your faith in Christ does not need to be perfect in order to be true saving faith. Don't count on yourself. Don't count on the perfection of your repentance. Don't count on the perfection of your faith as being the ground of your hope. That's not it. The ground of your hope is the perfection of Christ and he receives even weak faith that is truly placed in him as saving faith.

I think often of the woman in the Gospels who had the hemorrhage. She went to be near Christ and she had it in her mind, "If I just touch the hem of his garment, I'll be healed." Well, there is a certain level of inaccuracy and superstition attached in her faith but there was a real reaching out and trusting Christ even though it was mixed with a lot of misunderstanding. And she reached out and she was healed and Christ said, "Who touched me?" And he turns and he finds a woman and she comes forth and she poured out all of her heart about what was in her heart about this and Christ graciously, as he does with every true response of faith to him, says, "Woman, go in faith, your faith has saved you." She was healed of her affliction. Her faith wasn't perfect, it wasn't perfectly informed. She didn't have this deeply cultivated sense of the Triune God as she reached out. She just said, "I know that Christ can heal me and I'm going to reach out to him." And with an imperfect understanding and the weakness of her physical and spiritual condition, she reached out to Christ and that weak faith saved her.

Beloved, your faith doesn't have to be perfect in order for it to be real. Don't hold up some false standard that, "I'm going to get really perfect in my faith and then I'll know I'll be saved." No. No, you just go to Christ and believe his promise and say, "The Lord, the perfect one here in this relationship is you, and in all of my mixed emotions and mixed understandings and all of that, Lord, fundamentally I reach out and I trust you and I receive you." And if you would reach out to Christ like that, he would say the same thing to you that he said to that woman 2,000 years ago, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." So don't look for perfection in your disposition, look for the reality.

The godly mind, the reality is this, the godly mind repents of sin and trusts in Christ. Is that your mind about sin?

Let's pray together.

*Lord, we thank you that in Christ we have a perfect Savior, and though our repentance and our faith is imperfect and faltering at times, we have a Savior who is perfect and unfaltering, we have a Lord who loves sinners and shows kindness to them in mercy. You have done it to us, Lord, you've shown that kind of mercy and grace to us, and so as we discuss these things and as we meditate on them going forward, Lord, we just pray that you would bring these things from your word to fruition and to maturity in our minds. Let each one under the sound of my voice, Father, come truly to Christ for salvation. May those who have been struggling with despair find in a renewed proclamation of Christ the joy that brings hope to their souls. Help those that are struggling with sin, Father. Be merciful and kind to them. Break the power of sin afresh. Let them walk in newness of life. Let there be a settled disposition of repentance in each one of us, forsaking sin, forsaking the world, forsaking all others and embracing Christ alone as our love, as our*

*Lord, as our leader, as our friend, as our brother who represents us in heaven. Father, we are grateful for our salvation. We would have each one here know Christ truly and we pray that you would use what we've discussed here this evening to that great end. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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