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Religious Scrupulosity - Gospel Peace for Moral Obsession

Thank you for being here this morning as we continue our 10 week study called Transformed by Truth. The title for our lesson this morning is Religious Scrupulosity - Gospel Peace for Moral Obsession. Before you get up and leave thinking that this lesson will not be very helpful, please fasten your seat belts and stay in the plane. I think what we are going to learn this morning will be both challenging and encouraging as I explain what religious scrupulosity is and how God uses His word to help people who struggle with it.

This past week I got together with another pastor for lunch. He has been serving the Lord in the local church for over 40 years. He is someone I highly respect who pastors in other part of the city. After we ordered our food at McCallisters and I avoided ordering the sweet tea, which is glorious at McCallisters, we sat down and began talking about life and ministry. He asked me how things were going at the church and I told him about this ten week class that we are doing called Transformed by Truth and why we are doing this class. The goal of this 10 week study is to equip you to be able to use Scripture the right way to glorify God in your life and then to help people you love use the Scriptures to glorify God in their life. As John Piper says, "Sanctification is a community project."

I told him that this morning I am going to be teaching on Religious Scrupulosity. **He looked at me with a look on his face that suggested I probably should have ordered the sweet tea.** He has been in ministry a long time and had never heard of this thing called religious scrupulosity. I showed him some resources that have helped me understand what it is and what the Bible says about how to address it. As we were getting ready to leave after lunch he asked me again for

the name of this study this morning and he got out a notebook and I tried spelling it for him - scrupulosity.

When Gary and I mapped out what to cover in this ten week class, this was not one of the original topics. Helping people with trials - Check. Helping people resolve conflict biblically - check. Applying the gospel to sinful anger - check. Religious scrupulosity - This class was going so well, what were you thinking, Pastor B?

Well, let me begin with some resources so you at least know I am not making this up. A couple of men that I have learned from that I am going to be quoting throughout this lesson are Mike Emler, who serves as a biblical counselor through CCEF and did a talk a while back called *Scrupulosity - When Doubt Devours*. Also, a pastor named Brett Osterbeg who pastors down in Texas wrote a booklet called *Scrupulosity - Gospel Peace for Moral Obsession* (The title for our lesson. The most helpful thing I read part of in preparation for this lesson is a book by a pastor named Jared Mellinger called *Think Again: Relief From the Burden of Introspection*. Very very helpful book. I put all of those resources in your notes if anything I say this morning leads you to want to do further study.

What I want to do is to **define** religious scrupulosity so we get a better idea of what we are talking about. Then I want to **describe** what it might look like for a Christian to have this problem and then I want to finish with what **devotion** to Christ looks like when you have this problem or you are helping someone else who does.

A definition followed by a description followed by how to maintain devotion to Christ when religious scrupulosity sets in:

1. **Defining Religious Scrupulosity**

Religious scrupulosity is also called Religious OCD. One of the challenges of helping people biblically is that we live in a world of labels. Most of you have heard of something called OCD, right? Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

When we think of people with OCD tendencies we think of someone who obsesses over something to an unusual degree. Someone with control issues. In this case someone who has a hard time controlling their thoughts. **Someone with religious scrupulosity is a believer who obsesses over their spiritual condition to an unusual degree.**

A biblical counselor named Michael Emler describes obsession as “a persistent thought, impulse, or image that you find intrusive, inappropriate, and anxiety producing.” Closely related to these obsessions are correlating compulsions. Emler defines a compulsion as “ritualistic behavior or mental processes to temporarily neutralize or reduce the anxiety associated with your obsession.”

For example I read this from a man who listened to a sermon on Hebrews 12:15-17 that sent him spiraling spiritually. He writes, "I had to take time off of work because it consumed every waking hour of my thoughts. I would spend entire days just searching the internet about the unforgivable sin, apostasy, repentance, hypocrisy, etc. A lot of stuff I came across were writings by Puritans such as Thomas Watson, A.W. Pink, John Colquhoun and various others who wrote about things like true vs counterfeit repentance. While I read these things in my never ending attempts to seek reassurance (as scrupulosity makes you do), they actually served to fuel my scrupulosity and make it even worse. They go into so much overwhelming detail in trying to differentiate between someone who has true repentance/faith/spiritual life/love of God, and someone who only has counterfeit repentance/faith and is just afraid of hell and not truly sorry for their sins. Reading them made me doubt every feeling and intention of my heart, and wonder if my wicked heart may be deceiving into thinking I'm truly saved when in fact I'm not. I wondered how these authors could even have assurance if there is such a fine line between genuine faith and someone who is self-deceived."

That quote shows how religious scrupulosity works. It usually begins with a noble intention to glorify God, but then a thought comes into the person's mind that becomes an obsession and then the person feels compelled to deal with it and the more they try and deal with the problem in their own way the worse it gets. **This is why a puritan writer named Richard Sibbes refers to scrupulosity as a "heavy affliction."** Every believer to some degree struggles with intrusive thoughts, but people suffering from scrupulosity struggle with intrusive thoughts to an extreme degree.

Jared Mellinger, in his helpful book called *Think Again: Relief From The Burden Of Introspection*, writes:

“Introspection is the act of looking inward. When we introspect, we are observing ourselves and reflecting on our thoughts, emotions, actions, and identity. Some of us are more introspective than others, and that is certainly not a bad thing. The Bible commends self examination and self reflection (2 Corinthians 13:5).

But most of us lean toward extremes. Some people never study themselves; others constantly study themselves...many of us are familiar with the problem of too much introspection. Our minds wander to our responsibilities, our spiritual growth, our appearance, or some other aspect of our lives. **We spend excessive amounts of time evaluating ourselves. We overanalyze the things we say and do. We constantly second-guess ourselves and fear we might be making the wrong decision in life.**

As parents, we fear we are doing something or not doing something that will end up ruining our kids. We draw comparisons with other parents and their kids. On social media, we pursue the validation that comes from likes and favorites and shares. In our appearance, we are discontent with how we look.

Our daily awareness of sin, weakness, and ineffectiveness leaves us disheartened. **Self accusations are relentless. We go through the day largely unaware of the beauty that God sees in us and in our good works.** Then we go to bed at night exhausted, with false guilt and real guilt jumbled together, with our hearts and minds flooded with the experiences of the day, and with the general sense that we are failing in a lot of things. We need help."

Someone struggling with scrupulosity is always examining their heart and most of the time dealing with an excessive amount of accusations. In Romans 2:14-15 the apostle Paul describes the conscience and how Gentiles who do not have the law still have a conscience. Paul writes in Romans 2:14-15, "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them."

Someone with religious scrupulosity has thoughts that are constantly conflicting and most of them are in the accusation category. Constant inner accusations.

A final definition for what we are considering this morning before we consider a description. Mike Emlet defines scrupulosity as, "Intrusive (spontaneous, unbidden, unwanted) and obsessive (persistent, recurring) thoughts and doubts about moral-spiritual issues, which produce distressing levels of anxiety and the quest to rid oneself of that anxiety, usually by one or more of the following patterns: performing compulsive behaviors, engaging in mental rituals or by avoiding triggering situations."

Here's an illustration - When you get a mosquito bite and it itches what do you do? Sometimes you scratch it and then what happens? You get immediate relief. But shortly after what happens? The itch gets worse. Then what do you do? You scratch harder and you get momentary relief again. But then what

happens - The itch gets worse. The only way to tolerate the itch or for it to go away is what? **Stop scratching the itch. That's uncomfortable.**

Mike Emlet, "Similarly, the only way out of the cycle of scrupulosity is to tolerate the anxiety without resorting to compulsive behaviors." It may be helpful before we move to a deception to think of what we are talking about as an inordinate moral or spiritual obsession that leads to certain behaviors that make the problem worse.

Those are some definitions. Here are some descriptions:

2. Description of Religious Scrupulosity

Here are a couple of examples of what religious scrupulosity looks like for those who struggle with it:

“Brandon gave up playing the piano because when he plays well, he is overwhelmed by the fear that he is stirring up ungodly pride. Alicia, who grew up in a strong Christian household and professed faith at a young age, is plagued daily by the persistent thought that perhaps she is not saved after all. She seems immune to the encouragements of family and friends who point out the fruit of the Spirit in her life. “Yes, but you can’t know my heart,” she insists. Serena ruminates for hours about the answers she gave to others’ questions throughout the day. She wonders, “Was I truthful? Was I completely accurate?” Graham has become a virtual recluse because every time he ventures out of the house, he feels compelled to share the gospel with every person he meets—bank tellers, restaurant servers, supermarket cashiers—anyone and everyone. The persistent thought “Share the good news!” is ruining his life and his marriage. He feels obligated by passages like Romans 10:14 and Matthew 28:19.¹ He asks, “How do I know for sure I’m not the one God wants to bring the good news to that person?”

A biblical counselor named Cody Newcome provides a real life counseling situation with a lady named Tracy. Cody is a biblical counselor at the church she attends in Colorado. Here is how she describes what Tracy was dealing with and how she was responding:

"Tracy's mom called me one fall afternoon desperate for me to meet with her 30-year-old daughter. The main presenting problem was Tracy's overwhelming fear that she was going to lose her salvation and be condemned to hell. The previous year Tracy had experienced the horrors of being a teacher at a school shooting. In the wake of that difficulty, she was under severe stress and pain at home with multiple miscarriages and a marriage to a harsh, controlling and unfaithful husband.

The first time I met with Tracy she cried and shook the entire time we met together. She told me of the words she hears all day long and throughout the night of condemnation, telling her that she is going to hell because she had committed the unpardonable sin. Tracy was so overcome by these fears and the frequency and intensity of them that she had not slept in days.

By God's grace and through His help, I was able to discern early on that Tracy was suffering with OCD. The OCD was manifesting in extreme and foreboding intrusive thoughts of a spiritual nature (sometimes called Scrupulosity or Religious OCD). Those who suffer with this form of OCD will often experience obsessions, which fuel their fear that they have sinned, have lost their salvation, or are going to hell. **Common among this struggle is a morbid introspection that looks intensely on one's own spiritual condition and dwells on and believes Satan's lies and accusations instead of looking to Christ.** Such was true for Tracy, and as the weeks progressed so did the obsessive thoughts which consisted of hearing blasphemes in her head all day and night long. She was convinced she was going to hell and the fear of separation from God and His wrath increased. Before we could have much fruitful time in counseling it was

imperative that Tracy get some sleep and so the first goal was that she sees her doctor for help in this regard."

People who struggle with religious OCD or scrupulosity don't only struggle with matters connected to sin and salvation. It is broader than that and can include a moral obsession over anything that comes into the mind. A pastor named Brent Osterberg who has a seminary degree and a doctorate in expository preaching from the masters seminary opens up about how this has been a challenge for his life. **Struggling with scrupulosity can and often does connect back to assurance of salvation, but it also includes irrational thinking about basic things in life.** Brent writes:

"It was several years ago when I first began to detect this kind of struggle in myself. My family and I were undergoing a big transition, which placed us in California for a summer so I could receive some specific ministry training. During this season, fear began to grip my heart in the form of obsessive questioning of my own personal holiness and responsibility as a Christian.

On one memorable occasion that summer, my family spent the day at Disneyland from open to close. At the end of the night as we were being herded toward the exit with all the other guests, we zipped into a store to grab a few last-minute souvenirs for some friends. As my wife went to pay, I stood over to the side to keep an eye on the kids who were asleep in their strollers. At that time, I noticed that someone had spilled a drink on the floor near me. I thought about cleaning it up, but we were going to be leaving any minute, so I decided against it.

When my wife returned, we rejoined the wave of people moving out of the park, but a thought stood defiantly at the forefront of my mind - "If someone slips on that spill, they could get seriously hurt...**and that would be on you, because you neglected to clean it up.**

Although I tried to shake it off, it seemed like this persistent thought wouldn't leave until I went back and mopped up the mess. So, that's exactly what I did. Going against the massive flow of traffic, leaving my wife and kids to wait for me in the dark with a flood of people surrounding them, **I went to appease the oppressive thought that seemed like it invaded my mind.**

I don't have to tell you how foolish it as to put my family in that position, **but to me it felt like the only right thing I could do.** This experience, among many others that summer, is what the Lord used to propel me into His Word to find hope. I praise God that He has made this search fruitful for me, and the same can be true for your counselee's who struggle in the same way."

Growing up in Tyler, Texas we had a chuck-e-cheese. **It was kind of like Disneyland for a 6 year old without Mickie or the roller coasters.** I loved chuck-e-cheese. There was a game you could play to try and win some tickets called whack a mole. You put your quarter in and you grabbed a little stick and then this little mole would pop his head up and you would whack him on the head and then another one would pop up around the same time and you would wack him and then it would increase so there were lots of moles and lots of whacking.

Someone with religious scrupulosity has a very hard time with their thought life. Their soul is troubled to an unusual degree. Their inner struggle is a major battle that seems to never let up and never goes away. Their soul does not reflect the word of David who wrote in Psalm 131:2, "But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me." That's not how it is with the person I am trying to describe. Their soul is the opposite of weaned - They are constantly worried about the state of their soul or some sin they may have committed or are committing to an unusual degree, even if everything points to the fact that they are saved, they do love Christ and the Holy Spirit is producing fruit.

They only see the negative and never see the positive.

Mike Emler, "Nearly all people have bizarre intrusive thoughts. It's what we do with them that counts." For someone struggling with scrupulosity their mind races to worst case scenarios about themselves and often times about their sin and their salvation.

If anything else this morning you take away from this lesson, it is a reminder that what is happening on the inside of a believer is a really big deal. We live in a fallen world with fallen bodies. We shouldn't be surprised by intrusive thoughts. We shouldn't be surprised that sometimes we think bizarre thoughts. Most Christians become really good at ignoring intrusive or bizarre thoughts, but someone with religious scrupulosity can't ignore them. It's kind of like a fish who can't ignore the lure. A scrupulous person obsesses over intrusive thoughts to an unusual degree. They have to track them down and spend an inordinate amount of time wondering where they're coming from and trying to find peace or calm in the midst of their stormy soul.

3. Devotion to Christ for those who struggle with scrupulosity

Notice again the title for the lesson - Religious scrupulosity - Gospel Peace for Moral Obsession. The gospel is one message with many applications. How does the grace of God help someone who wrestles with their thoughts about sin or salvation or something silly that they make into a big deal for little or no reason?

Jered Mellinger wrote a chapter on this in his book Think Again: Relief From the Burden of Introspection called from introspection to Christ-pection. In the chapter he begins a sentence with, "The goal of the gospel." Anytime someone begins a sentence with, "The goal of the gospel" my spiritual antenna goes up Mellinger writes:

“The goal of the gospel is not to make me feel good about myself. The secret to happiness is not found in our view of ourselves; it is found in our view of Christ. Fulness of joy and pleasures forevermore will never be found through introspection. Self revelation is not an end in itself. We do not long to behold self; we long to behold God. We do not pant as the deer for the flowing streams of self knowledge; we thirst for the knowledge of Christ. Jesus does not pray that we would see *our* glory, but that we would see *His* glory (John 17:24).”

On August 7, 2012 a man named Tony Reinke, who writes for a ministry called Desiring God, wrote an article called the Purifying Power of Delight in Christ. In the article he writes about a Scottish preacher named Robert Murray McCheyne. He includes a quote from McCheyne that goes like this, "For every look at yourself, take ten looks to Christ." That's wise counsel. The reason we look inward is to know what to look for in Christ.

There are several trademarks of someone who struggles with scrupulosity - a desire for control (They don't deal well with ambiguity), condemnation (They often see themselves more as sinners than saints), and comparison (They often compare their spiritual condition or spiritual giftedness with others and feel worthless).

How does the gospel help people living in that world?

a. Control

Throughout the gospels we read about who Jesus is and we see His deity on display as He casts out demons, controls storms, heals the sick, raises the dead and forgives sin. Jesus is not a nobody - He is Immanuel, God with us. After He died on the cross what happened? Three days later He rose again. Just like He said He would.

In Matthew 28:16-20 we read about an encounter with Jesus and the disciples after the resurrection and before His ascension back to heaven: Turn and read Matthew 28:16-20 with me:

Matthew 28:16-20

- 16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed! them.
- 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted.
- 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
- 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
- 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Remember who is guiding this conversation? The Messiah is guiding this conversation. Matthew's gospel proves that Jesus is God's promises Messiah. He is the Christ, the son of the living God. How much authority does Jesus have over heaven and earth? All of it. **Where I grew up all means all and that's all all means.**

Why is this good news for the believer? Jesus controls our lives. Our thoughts are not authoritative. Satan is not authoritative. Our feelings are not authoritative. Christ and His Word are our authority and that's great news because those two things never change. God's Word is fixed and our salvation in Christ is finished. Praise God! When it feels like your world is spiraling out of control and your thoughts are accusing you about something remember something - Jesus is in control and He never changes. Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

Another area we get to help people with scrupulosity with the gospel is in the area of:

b. Condemnation

Remember I talked earlier about Tracy. Tracy was the 30 year old lady whose mom reached out to a biblical counselor because Tracy was overwhelmed with fear that she was going to lose her salvation and be condemned to hell. I want to walk you through a step by step plan for how Cody Newcome walked with Tracy through her trial of scrupulosity:

a. Start with bitesized theology pointing the person to Christ

Cody writes about where she started with Tracy after gathering data to find out more about the problem, "Central to all of our counseling sessions was a better understanding of the gospel. She needed help to better understand and accept God's grace and His salvation that comes through faith alone. From early on in her life she held the misunderstanding that she could do something to lose or gain her salvation which perpetuated her obsessive thoughts. She grew in her understanding of her salvation being God's work. We studied Ephesians chapters 1-3 together and she was encouraged to look less at herself and more at Christ and what He has done. We spent time in Scripture to better understand imputed righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21) and how we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and our salvation is protected by God until heaven (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

b. Address wrong views of God with right views of God

Cody started with the gospel and then she moved out into deeper waters. Tracy needed help addressing wrong views of who God is. Cody writes, "Another source of her fearful thoughts was a misunderstanding of who God is. Tracy saw God as a God full of wrath and punishment looking to strike her down. We spent many weeks studying God's character and a better picture of who He is through the life of Jesus. She needed help to understand and accept His grace, mercy and love to her even when she made mistakes.

c. Focus their mind on the promises of God

Then she spent time walking Tracy through God's Promises. "We read verses on God's promises to her in suffering and how He intends to use her sufferings to produce fruitfulness in her life. He promises to walk through her pain and suffering with her and never leave or forsake her. Isaiah 43:2, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you." Moses reminded God's people in Deuteronomy 31:6 that He would be with them as they entered the promised land, "Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."

d. Help them read the Bible with God and not self at the center

She also helped Tracy become a better Bible reader. "Tracy had a destructive habit of taking verses out of context and reading into them her own interpretation. She started learning how to read the Bible as a whole and how to balance with truth all of God's attributes. She needed help to read the warnings and admonitions in the Bible with the promises of His grace and mercy. "

e. Teach them how to deny their inner compulsions the right way

Inner compulsions aren't bad. But the way the Spirit works is not to convict to condemn, but convict to correct. Finally, Cody helped her deny her inner compulsions. "It was important that Tracy better understand OCD and how the cycle was perpetuated by her giving in to her desire to complete compulsions. In an effort to quiet the anxiety and fear brought about by the intrusive thoughts, she would compulsively do things she thought necessary to protect herself from losing her salvation and experiencing God's wrath. This included compulsively confessing sin or looking for reassurance in Scripture numerous times a day. She

slowly and painfully learned to deny the desire to complete the compulsions and instead take God at His word and trust Him for her ultimate protection. This process took months and we set weekly goals for less compulsive behavior. Tracy started to trade her compulsive and ritualistic way of reading the Bible, confession and prayer for a more thoughtful, slow and sincere time with the Lord. Over time this proved to be very beneficial in weakening the intensity of the obsessive thoughts and desire to complete compulsions.

f. Help them relinquish control to the One who is truly in control

Finally, Cody helped her with trusting God and relinquishing Control. "We learned the main thing fueling the anguish of Tracy's obsessive thoughts and compulsions was her desire for absolute certainty and control. She wanted to know for certain that she was forgiven and was going to heaven through her own means of assurance instead of believing God's Word. It brought her momentary assurance to perform well, engage in spiritual rituals, and rely on her own external or internal affirmation of her salvation. At the core of it was a lack of trust in God. She grew in her desire to not seek control and rely on self, but to relinquish and trust God for the promise of her eternal security in Him."

How did God use His word to help Tracy get spiritual traction in her walk with the Lord? Cody writes, "Through God's faithful care and intervention in Tracy's life, she is in a much better place today. The obsessive thoughts and compulsions have significantly lessened, and she is living with more peace and assurance. As the pressures and stress of life increase so can a recurrence of the OCD struggles, which causes her to cling again to what she knows to be true about the gospel and God's promises to her. Overall, Tracy has experienced relief from the overwhelming despair and hopelessness she was in and has instead learned of God's faithfulness to her and that He alone can be trusted."

We've seen how the gospel of God and the Word of God address religious scrupulosity in the areas of control and condemnation. One more area is comparison:

3. Comparison

Someone whose bent is to look internally and not externally will inevitably be intimidated by people in the church who seem to have it all together. I have sat down with people who struggle with scrupulosity and they will tell me that other people in the church intimidate them because they never seem to struggle with assurance of salvation or living the Christian life. **They are smooth sailers without stormy souls.** They compare themselves with other Christians and feel incompetent.

What this person needs to remember is that though God has given different gifts to the body of Christ, we all have the same Lord and the same Spirit and the same righteousness. Paul reminds the Ephesians in Ephesians 4:4-6, "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Instead of comparing ourselves with other Christians we need to slow down and remember we are all part of the same body. We are all on the same spiritual team wearing the same spiritual jersey called the righteousness of Christ and we all have the same Spirit and the same Scriptures. We have more in common with others we look up to than we think. Same Savior - differing gifts. That's a good thing.

Instead of comparing yourself with other people and putting yourself down all the time that you'll never be like that other person, thank God for His work in that person and thank God for His work in you. What is true for them is true for you.

Philippians 1:6, "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

I am not sure if you know anyone with scrupulosity or someone who needs relief from the burden of introspection. I bet if you popped the hood on the believers at CBC you would find more people than you think who struggle with this, they probably just didn't know there was a name for it. We all need help looking outwardly and not inwardly.

I'll give Jared Mellenger the last word since his book Think Again has been so helpful for me. **"We are not steadfast. We often waiver and fail. Our eyes turn inward; emotions take over, and we are tempted to lose heart. But Jesus Christ is always steadfast. Even when our eyes drift from Him, His eyes remain fixed upon us in love. When our hearts wander from Him, His heart remains set on us. When we are tempted to give up, He assures us that He will never give up on us. And because the object of our faith is steadfast, unchanging, and faithful, we are strengthened for the race, and made steadfast as we look to him. Therefore, lay aside every weight. Look to Jesus. Run with endurance. Consider Him."**

Two passages to close with:

1. 2 Corinthians 11:1-3

What did Paul want for the believers in Corinth? He wanted to see who they belonged to and how to live for Christ. Listen to Paul's heart for those he loved in Corinth from 2 Corinthians 11:1-3, "I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

In this section Paul is addressing the problem of false teachers. False teachers came to these people after Paul claiming to be apostles and yet proclaiming another Jesus. Some of them were accepting their method of ministry and Paul is warning them and calling them back to himself and back to the true Christ. Satan was attempting to draw them away from Christ through wrong thinking about Christ. Satan loves to take what is meant to be simple and make it incredibly complicated.

The scrupulous person needs to slow down and remember who they belong to and ask the Lord for a simple and pure devotion to Christ.

2. 2 Thessalonians 3:5

2 Thessalonians 3:5 is a prayer that we can pray for ourselves and others - "May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ." Instead of our hearts being directed inwardly and constantly spiraling out of control, we can ask the Lord to direct our hearts to what is infinitely better - God's love and the endurance of Christ.

I hope this has been a helpful study. Some of you may have known you have this kind of problem but you didn't know there was a name for it. Can I encourage you? There is hope for the hopeless. Christ Jesus is our hope (1 Timothy 1:1). Our Hope is a Person who loves us and promises to never leave us or forsake us. I'll quote him again:

Jared Mellinger, "The goal of the gospel is not to make me feel good about myself. The secret to happiness is not found in our view of ourselves; it is found in our view of Christ. Fulness of joy and pleasures forevermore will never be found through introspection. Self revelation is not an end in itself. We do not long to behold self; we long to behold God. We do not

pant as the deer for the flowing streams of self knowledge; we thirst for the knowledge of Christ. Jesus does not pray that we would see *our* glory, but that we would see *His* glory (John 17:24).”