



Do The Opposite!

For years I've struggled to do the things most Christians do: read Scripture, pray, attend church, take communion. Always, there is a nagging doubt, a torrent of unwelcome thoughts, an incessant rumination not quelled by loved ones' well-meaning reassurances. Not until many years after the onset of these symptoms did I finally have a name for this struggle: scrupulosity, also known as religious OCD.

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The Journey



Because of the complex nature of the disorder, scrupulosity is generally misunderstood, even in Christian circles—or perhaps especially in Christian circles. It may appear to others as a purely faith struggle instead of a complex psychological disorder. I strongly suspect that, because of this, many people in the church live with undiagnosed and thus untreated scrupulosity.

Add to that the fact that scrupulosity is an understudied subset of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). What resources do exist on the disorder often fall into academic, generalized discussion. By this I mean that the writing is medical and methodical; it is produced by psychologists, psychiatrists, and counselors who have studied scrupulosity. These are immensely important resources and in no way do I discount them. However, very few resources exist that discuss scrupulosity within the Christian context. In addition, stories of personal experience may often be even more encouraging than objective dissertations; it can be helpful for strugglers not only to know the disorder exists, but to know there are people out there who get it.

And so I offer to you this blog, which has a two-fold purpose: First, to share my own experience with scrupulosity. Second, to offer some reflections on scrupulosity and thoughts on what have been helpful tools/encouragements in my own struggle. Both of these reasons are ultimately so that they might prove useful for others, both those who struggle and those who seek to help them. However, I am not a professional. I am still in the thick of the battle of scrupulosity, struggling in the trenches, and while there have been pricks of light here and there, I am by no means cured of this darkness that persists every day.

(Keep in mind, too, that while those with scrupulosity share many similar struggles, the way it presents itself is different for everyone, and thus treatment may look different, too. If you are struggling with scrupulosity, a blog will not be enough to aid you in the battle, and I encourage you to seek professional help. While I hope to offer encouragement in some way, this blog should not be used for diagnosis, prescription, or treatment.)

If you are a fellow struggler, I hope you find on this blog deep encouragement, solidarity, and support for the hardships of scrupulosity, regardless of the particulars. If you do not struggle in this way, I hope this blog can be a useful tool for you to grow in understanding and your ability to walk alongside and encourage others in your life.

Let me begin by honestly admitting this is a daunting task. Though I have struggled with scrupulosity for many years, I find it overwhelming to write about my experience and wonder if it's even worth it. Perhaps it is my struggle itself that makes me think this blog is better off not existing; thoughts berate me as a write that I am incapable of this, a fraud, a true unbeliever who doesn't really struggle with OCD. The disorder is just an excuse, a backup, so that I can keep being a hypocrite.

Anyone in my life whom I suggest this to can see right through it: "That's an OCD thought; that's even more evidence that you have OCD." And they're right. But it doesn't keep the thoughts from coming and causing doubt. I say this merely to illustrate how pervasive and persistent this "doubting disease" is.

So I press on anyway, doing the opposite of what my scrupulous thoughts insist I do. Thank you for joining me!



A Good Place To Start...

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WORKSHEET

WHAT IS
SCRUPULOSITY?





Article Selection



1h ago

The Lie of Infinite Self-Knowledge

There's an implicit belief in those of us with scrupulosity that we are all-knowing, or at least, that we can be. We don't truly believe



by Aubrynn

1h ago

Faith Is Not Certainty

I've often heard well-meaning Christians say something like this to someone facing a decision: "God will make it clear." The



by Aubrynn

1h ago

Stuck in Confession

Do you ever get stuck in confession? Like a stuck tire futilely spinning in mud, you continually confess but never find freedom.



by Aubrynn

1h ago

Following God When You Feel Forsaken

Sometimes it feels like God has forsaken us. We don't hear his voice. We don't feel his presence. We struggle even to see his hand at



by Aubrynn

1h ago

The Basis for Confession

Recently I visited a church with my brother. It's a reformed congregation that uses liturgy to guide and structure its service. When we



by Aubrynn

1h ago

Sufficient in Our Sorrows

What do you do when you pray for healing, and the answer is silence? I don't doubt that God can heal me. I believe his power, ability,



by Aubrynn

1h ago

Trusting in the Absence of Peace

I am intolerant of anxiety. When I feel it building, I try to get to the bottom of it in hopes that I can rid myself of it. One morning



by Aubrynn

1h ago

A Bruised Reed

Faith is not easy. Some Christians may give the impression that it is. We think of faith as certainty, or assurance, or unwavering hope.



by Aubrynn



Grace Abounding In OCD

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Resource Selection

Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners (John Bunyan)

A spiritual autobiography detailing Bunyan's personal struggle, which seems a lot like scrupulosity. This book was simultaneously triggering and encouraging to me; triggering because it brought up specific thoughts and encouraging because it was the first thing I read that made me realize I'm not alone.



The Doubting Disease (Joseph W. Ciarrocchi)

A helpful explanation of scrupulosity, though not from a Protestant perspective. Most helpful to me was the detailed treatment for OCD, which helped reinforced what I talked about with my counselor.

Can Christianity Cure Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder? (Ian Osborn)

A helpful explanation of OCD in general through the lens of Christianity. Most encouraging for me were the specific examples from the lives of other sufferers such as Martin Luther, John Bunyan, and others.

While the following books are unrelated to OCD/scrupulosity, they have been very encouraging and helpful in reminding me who God is and how he views me, a vital aspect of fighting scrupulosity.



Gentle & Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sufferers and Sinners (Dane Ortlund)

The Heart of Christ (Thomas Goodwin)

God's Grace in Your Suffering (David Powlison)

The Prodigal God (Timothy Keller)

A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23 (Phillip Keller)

This Beautiful Truth (Sarah Clarkson)

Though this book is not about OCD, Sarah weaves her own struggle with it into the themes of the book, reflecting on how it is only the beauty of God's goodness—through the gospel, through his creation, through the arts, through his people, and through every other good thing—that is powerful enough to break through the darkness of our suffering and remind us of hope beyond our imagination.



Prayer in the Night (Tish Harrison Warren)

This book traces the nighttime prayer of Compline to explore the reality of our suffering, our need, and God's presence. It is an honest look at the hardship we all face and the light of God's comfort in the midst of it.

When Darkness Seems My Closest Friend (Mark Meynell)

An honest reflection from a pastor and fellow sufferer on living with depression.



On Getting Out of Bed: The Burden and Gift of Living (Alan Noble)

Though not specifically about scrupulosity, this book was written by someone who struggles with scrupulosity (read his article here). It takes a balanced perspective with both compassion for the struggle and encouragement to look upward and outward, viewing our lives as a gift from God and an opportunity to bear witness to his love and goodness in the midst of our darkness.

Spurgeon's Sorrows: Realistic Hope for those who Suffer from Depression (Zack Eswine)

Another honest book from a fellow sufferer telling the story of another sufferer: Charles Spurgeon.

Surprised by Paradox (Jen Pollock Michel)

This book helped me to see the paradox and mystery at the heart of the Christian faith. As people with OCD, we tend to love certainty and full knowledge, to try to solve every problem, and to be intolerant of any mystery, so it's helpful to be reminded that God invites us to follow him and promises his presence, even in the midst of paradox, mystery, uncertainty, and confusion.



When Strivings Cease (Ruth Chou Simons)

We may believe that we are not only saved by grace, but also kept by grace, and that nothing we can do can change God's view of us, either negatively or positively—but how well do we live out this truth? This book challenged the assumptions I so often make in my day-to-day life about how God views me and what role I play in securing my place in Christ, reminding me of his immense grace.

Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart (J. D. Greear)

Assurance (William Smith)

The first is a helpful guide for lack of assurance, including an exploration of the common evangelical saying, "Ask Jesus into your heart." We with scrupulosity must be careful that such books do not lead to further rumination; however, I found this book's emphasis on Christ's finished work and the objective truths of the gospel to be helpful. The second book is a devotional, which again requires caution but can be helpful as it focuses on Christ's responsibility in salvation.



Your Co-Sojourner

Hello! My name is Aubrynn. Writing has been a lifelong passion, college focus, and career goal. Now, I hope to use it, coupled with my story, to connect other strugglers and their helpers to hope in Christ.

About

My Story

by Aubrynn



Introduction

I don't know exactly when my struggle with scrupulosity began. The timeframe is foggy, and it's hard to keep track of events and timing. The struggle has lasted for at least eight years and has been full of ups and downs, yet there are some noticeable consistent threads and themes. I hope a brief overview of my journey will provide a framework for the rest of the content you'll find here.

There were sporadic times throughout my childhood where I doubted my salvation, but these periods of doubt only lasted days to weeks and were soon resolved for a time. However, when I was thirteen, the doubts came again and seemed to stay for good.

I failed to understand what I was going through. I viewed my doubt as the antithesis of faith, my struggle primarily as sin, and myself as far from the Lord. This produced discouragement, lack of peace, and even more doubt, and so the cycle continued. A swirl of "what ifs," one after the other, in a sea of uncertainty with no definitive landing. Was I a Christian, or wasn't I? It seemed the jury was still out, and every little thought, deed, or motive seemed to scream I was doomed, a constant nagging that perhaps I'm not saved.

Every obsession came as a new twist on the same central theme: am I saved? When one fear began to weaken in my mind, another took its place. I had general doubts about God's existence; doubts about Jesus' person and divinity; sudden urges to blaspheme; fear of committing the unpardonable sin; worries over the warning verses in Hebrews; and a vague sense of doom, with the threat of hell and judgment always in my mind. I would compulsively confess or pray for salvation, even dozens of times in a day; seek reassurance from others, even when I knew what their answer would be; frantically research certain questions, even though I already knew enough to give an unprepared speech on the topic; and avoid Scripture and prayer, which only ramped up the thoughts.

These obsessions would produce differing reactions in me, from a vague sense of dread underlying everything I did to intense anxiety that often resulted in panic attacks or extreme fatigue. In all of these doubts, there was neither the desire to reject Christ (or even displease him) nor an indifferent stance toward belief or unbelief, and yet I assumed my heart intent through it all was evil, twisted, and devoid of good.

I was able to go about my days with little outward signs but near-constant inner turmoil. Other people usually didn't notice, and I am not naturally bent toward unsolicited sharing. At my worst, I'd wake up in the mornings and immediately feel a weight on my chest. I'd go through my day with a two-track mind, outwardly focused on the task at hand while inwardly consumed in anxiety and rumination. I struggled with fatigue and felt that no matter how long I slept, it never seemed to curb the tiredness I felt throughout the day. At my best, I was able to focus more freely on the task at hand, but there was often a nagging in the back of my mind to pay attention to the thoughts that convinced me I was doomed.

Diagnosis

About five years into this more difficult season, I discovered my experience has a name and is shared by many others. This realization came when I stumbled upon a talk given by CCEF faculty member and counselor Mike Emlet, in which he talked about religious OCD/scrupulosity (you can find it here). It had caught my attention because in the description were the exact questions I'd struggled with for so long: "Am I saved? Have I committed the unpardonable sin?" I bought the talk for a few bucks and listened. I felt completely understood. It was as though someone had seen right through me and provided a cup of cold water for my thirst. There was no resolution to my uncertainties, but at least here was an answer to the why behind them.



I wasn't just crazy. I wasn't just weak in faith. My brain was a part of the struggle, too. Suddenly I was offered an alternate perspective, one that didn't revolve around what I saw as my sinfulness and hard-heartedness, but one that took into account my whole being as body, mind, and soul.

Though the talk helped, I realized in the following months that I needed professional help. I was able to get an appointment with a specialist, who agreed that my symptoms were consistent with the experience of scrupulosity. I'll be honest—I expected three or four sessions with this counselor to do the trick and straighten me out! It took one session to convince me otherwise: I was so entrenched in these patterns of compulsions and so ensnared by these obsessions that it would take a lot longer to learn how to manage them. Though it has in many ways been life-changing, counseling is more than a few pieces of advice to straighten me out, more than logical arguments with which I can counter the intrusive thoughts and doubts.

Today

Daily life with scrupulosity doesn't always look like panic attacks, sudden urges to blaspheme Christ, or persistent images of hell, as it has in the past. Instead, it often looks like guilt at not reading the Bible, confessing too many times "just in case," and thoughts of hypocrisy every time I sing in church or even listen to Christian music. Though I've seen much improvement in my OCD symptoms in the last three years, I have not gained any greater assurance.

The only constant has been the nagging fear that I'm not saved. Daily I have condemnatory thoughts about my standing with God; no matter the form they take, even if they aren't so explicit, this is always the fear at the bottom of them. I can't read Scripture without anxiety. I can't pray without obsessing. I can't go to church without doubts.

Obsessions and compulsions still comprise much of my daily life and walk with the Lord. I'm constantly looking for any shred of evidence against myself, proving I'm not saved. I know God is good, but I struggle to believe it, and it's as though I'm looking for loopholes in God's promises that I might slip through. I compare myself with other Christians, expecting my journey to look different and also feeling that I'm behind or not "doing it right," whatever that even means. Well-meaning encouragements from loved ones never seem to stick, which means further guilt: "Am I just unteachable and proud?"

I often wonder what a Christian life without scrupulosity would look like, without all this spiritual anxiety. I wonder what it's like to have full assurance. As much as I want this to be the case, I realize it may never happen.

Today, each and every day, I need the continual reminder that the goal is not to live without fear, but rather to live with God in the midst of it. The goal is not more

assurance—though I certainly pray for that!—but more

Jesus. That is a truth I'll turn back to again and again

throughout this blog, because it's a truth I need to hear

every day.

A quick note: If you read this, you may think that scrupulosity is mainly doubting your salvation, but I want to be clear: not everyone with scrupulosity doubts this. It has been the prominent fear and central question in my struggle, but others may struggle with spiritual anxiety, obsessions, and compulsions and yet know they're saved.



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What Is Scrupulosity?



Scrupulosity is best understood when viewed as a subset of OCD. There are some differences in its manifestations, but many of the patterns and characteristics are the same. Let's first take a step back: what is OCD?

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is characterized by obsessions and compulsions. OCD is a mental disorder where obsessions and/or compulsions are frequent, repetitive, time-consuming, and often hinder daily life. Anyone may have obsessive and/or compulsive behaviors from time to time; however, they do not distress them and are not evidence of OCD. The person with OCD is troubled by and often ashamed of their thoughts and behaviors.

The International OCD Foundation defines obsessions as “unwanted, intrusive thoughts, images, or urges that trigger intensely distressing feelings.” Often obsessions take the form of persistent, recurring doubts. Compulsions are “behaviors an individual engages in to attempt to get rid of the obsessions and/or decrease his or her distress” (International OCD Foundation). Often these behaviors appear more like mental rituals or avoidance of obsession-triggering situations. OCD specialists have categorized certain types of OCD: checking, contamination, hoarding, intrusive thoughts, and rumination (Northpoint Recovery). OCD may revolve around areas of one’s life such as relationships, sexual attraction, and religion/faith. For example, some strugglers may find their OCD manifests itself in near-constant rumination and doubt; others may have intrusive, unwanted thoughts such as “what if I’m a pedophile?” (not stemming from a genuine desire or temptation but causing much anxiety). They may feel the urge to check the stove they know they’ve already turned off: “Did I really turn the stove off? What if it’s on and it causes my house to burn down? Maybe I should just check...” This is different than double-checking, like any person may do; this is checking so many times due to your nagging doubt (even though you know you turned it off) “just to make sure.”

Other types of OCD may revolve around tic-like behavior, where one repeatedly looks, touches, taps, or engages in some other bodily behavior until “it feels right.” With this kind of OCD, there is often no obsessive thought directly driving the behavior, but rather an urge or sensation that something needs to “feel just right.” However, it is no less distressing and life-impeding.

The above are merely some common themes; most people with OCD, however, struggle with a combination of different types of OCD, and no two strugglers are identical.

So what, then, is religious OCD (aka scrupulosity)?

It’s a type of OCD that is characterized by obsessive thoughts, doubts, and worries revolving around one’s spiritual life, accompanied by compulsive means of relieving the stress and anxiety caused by such obsessions. Common themes include fear of sinning or being morally wrong or bad, fear of God’s rejection, fear of blasphemy, or fear that one is not saved but eternally damned. Obsessive thoughts, then, may revolve around these fears:

“Am I really saved?”
“Have I committed the unforgivable sin?”
“Maybe I didn’t pray that prayer right—I should do it again.”
“Have I adequately confessed my sins?”
“Was that action a sin?”

Many of these questions in and of themselves are not obsessions; however, they become such when OCD latches on and causes one to obsess over them. Likewise, most people may have thoughts like these from time to time, but they are easily resolved or immediately ignored. The person with OCD cannot do so with such ease.

The obsessions may not even seem to be connected to faith, but still revolve around moral issues: “My failure to pick up that piece of litter on the highway as I was driving by is a sin that proves I am self-centered.” Such an intrusive thought may result in either the compulsion to go back and pick up the trash or a nagging sense of guilt that persists even when you’ve moved past it.

Here is another example of how the scrupulosity cycle may look:

I have the intrusive thought, “Maybe I sinned against that person when I (fill in the blank)” (obsession). This causes much anxiety (response). Some of the ways I may deal with it is by obsessive inward-searching for evidence that I meant the person no harm, over-confessing that sin to the Lord/repeatedly asking him to forgive me, asking others for reassurance that I hadn’t sinned, or repeatedly approaching the person to make sure I hadn’t sinned or to confess. These various compulsions are enacted for the sake of calming the obsession and relieving the anxiety it causes.

Other characteristics of scrupulosity include an ongoing, intense concern for moral purity; an overly-tender conscience; and “fearing sin where there is none” (Abramowitz and Jacoby). It is no wonder scrupulosity is termed “the doubting disease,” because of all the doubts and uncertainty surrounding the sufferer. It is not neutral questioning, where the sufferer is open to all options and simply wishes to get down to the truth; it is persistent, unwanted, distressing, dogged, negative doubt.

There are no clear-cut causes of OCD or scrupulosity in particular, but it may be a combination of brain-based, genetic, and environmental factors.

The Lie of Infinite Self-Knowledge

by Aubrynn

Introduction

There's an implicit belief in those of us with scrupulosity that we are all-knowing, or at least, that we can be. We don't truly believe this. We know that we are finite creatures and that God alone is omniscient. But we functionally believe that we alone have a clear view of ourselves.

I see this all the time in my doubts about whether or not I'm saved. For as long as I've struggled with scrupulosity, those closest in my life have continually reaffirmed the Lord's work in my life. They see my sins and evidence of grace, my weaknesses and my strengths, and their word is consistent: "You are saved." Yet I am so quick to brush off this encouragement! They may see me on the outside, but they don't know the thoughts I've had. I can't take their word for it, because they don't know me exhaustively.

This isn't just the case with assurance of salvation, but also with doubts about even having scrupulosity. I have been professionally diagnosed with scrupulosity (which has been affirmed by those who know me and by myself), and yet I still frequently have the thought, "What if I don't really have scrupulosity?" My doubts trump the wisdom of trusted friends.

I'm slow to take others' words to heart because I think, "They can't know me exhaustively." And it's true. They can't. They're not all-knowing, and they don't understand every contour of my inner thoughts and feelings, actions and motives. But neither can I know myself exhaustively. When I think, "Others can't know me exhaustively," implicit in this statement is the belief that I, and I alone, have true insight into the complexities of my heart and mind. I start to believe that I can know myself exhaustively. But it's also true that though self-knowledge and awareness is a good thing, it is limited. At some point, I must rely on others and, ultimately, God.

Doubting Your Doubt

It's interesting that though scrupulosity is often referred to as "the doubting disease," there's one thing we consistently fail to doubt: our doubt.

When I have the thought, "Perhaps I'm not saved," I don't question it. In fact, I assume it must be true, and everything that seems to affirm this deep fear is taken as truth. This alone should be evidence to me that my thoughts and doubts are not wholly trustworthy. They're not objective, but rather skewed in the direction of self-condemnation and negativity.

Here's an example. I have met numerous people, mostly through this blog, who have honored me with sharing their stories of suffering from scrupulosity. And for every single one of them, I don't doubt their salvation. I've never thought, "Oh man, that person sounds whack—they must not be saved." The same arguments people use for me—"I see the fruit in your life; the fact that you're worried about this means you're saved; I have no doubt for you"—all ring true as I look at these individuals. And yet, it's only for me that I doubt. Sure, they're Christians, but me? Not likely.

When faced with stories so similar to my own, why do I affirm those people's faith and so easily see evidence of grace in their lives, and yet so quickly dismiss such similar evidence in my own life? Why do I fail to doubt the very doubt which scrupulosity causes?

We have good reason to doubt our doubts (and, thus, good reason to question our own harsh perspectives of ourselves).

1. The "doubting disease" will always bring doubts to mind. This may seem simple or obvious, but it's something I frequently forget: I have scrupulosity. I don't know who first coined this term, but scrupulosity has been referred to as the "doubting disease." There will always be more doubts. But that is the nature of scrupulosity, indicative of your suffering and not your heart. Remembering the struggle is a helpful first step in walking through it.
2. Our doubts don't tell us the full story. Our doubts might rightly reveal sin in our lives, but they miss the sanctification. They rightly point out our need for Jesus, but they also infer that his grace is just beyond reach, unattainable.
3. Our doubts also don't always tell us the true story. They see sin where there is none. They interpret areas of sin and weakness as evidence of our standing with God or our moral character. The narrative they paint is bleak, graceless, and Godless.

Our default is to believe what our minds are telling us. You might not be a Christian? Well, ruminate on that thought a bit and see if it rings true! (If you have scrupulosity, the negative will always ring true from your perspective.)

I'm not saying that you are completely untrustworthy and unreliable, or that you should devalue every thought you have. You are made in the image of God and, yes, most likely a Christian, so you have the means of grace to discern your actions. I'm merely encouraging you—all of us—to remember the nature of this struggle and to be aware of this negative tint to our perspectives. I also want to encourage us to give the same scrutiny to our doubts as we do to the matter our doubts are attacking. For example, if we are questioning whether we're saved, we should question too the validity of that doubt. Just because we have a thought or doubt doesn't make it right or true.

Trusting Others' Judgment

So how do we know if a particular thought is true? After we identify that we're struggling with scrupulosity and begin to doubt our doubts, there are two means by which we can weigh this.

The first is trusting others' judgment of us. I think others can see in us things we fail to see in ourselves. It's why we need people to confront us when we're hardheaded and try to justify our unrighteous actions. It's also why we need people to confirm and commend us when all we see is the negative.

This doesn't mean they are always right. Just like you, the people in your life don't see things fully or clearly. Yet we are called to rely on the body of Christ, and here is a very tangible way to rely on them.

Take to heart what others say about you. If someone who is godly and well-respected seeks to encourage you with the fruit they see in your life, hear them out. Give the same validity and weight to their perspective of you that you give to your own self-condemning perspective.

Trusting God's Judgment

Ultimately, there is only One who sees us clearly. Our scrupulous perspective is skewed, others' perspectives may be clearer but still incomplete, yet our Creator sees all and nothing slips his notice.

This might sound counterintuitive to you—it certainly does to me! Isn't God's judgment the very thing we fear? Isn't that the very basis for our doubts, the thing we're trying so desperately to avoid facing?

Yet our thoughts about God's judgment are negative, too. What do we ultimately believe about God? Do we believe that he is quick to anger, ready to pounce as soon as we slip up, and eager to pour out his wrath? Or do we believe that he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love (Exodus 34:6)?

Mike Emlet, who has written and spoken about scrupulosity at ccef.org, has referenced 1 Corinthians 4, and it's been such a helpful idea that I'll paraphrase his thoughts here. In this passage the apostle Paul writes that in the matter of his own faithfulness, "I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted" (vv. 3–4). He isn't saying, "I don't care, and it doesn't matter." He is saying that as far as his own self-knowledge goes, his conscience is clear. (Of course, our consciences are anything but clear when they erroneously accuse us all day long.) Yet Paul says, "It is the Lord who judges me." Ultimate responsibility lies in the Lord's hands. And when the Lord brings to light what is hidden and discloses the purposes of the heart (v. 5), what is it that Paul says? That each will receive his commendation from the Lord—not condemnation! This boggles my mind and blows up my often negative conception of God. God knows what is in man, yet since we are in Jesus, we will receive not condemnation, but commendation.

Regardless of where you stand with the Lord, whether you fear condemnation or expect commendation, this shows something about God's heart. There is so much he could condemn us for. Yet he has condemned his own Son so that we may be commended. This is no trigger-happy, removed, exacting God.

We cannot have ultimate certainty. By choosing to devalue our scrupulous thoughts, we're always taking a risk, and that risk can feel like death. But there's no other way. We cannot attain certainty or full self-knowledge, and even if we could, our scrupulous minds would never be satisfied and would always come up with some other doubt.

This lack of certainty is another opportunity for us to turn to he who alone is all-knowing. When tempted to think that responsibility lies within ourselves, we remember that our safety lies ultimately in another. When we come to the end of what we can know about ourselves, our salvation rests in he who knows us perfectly and completely and yet still loves us.

