

# Dealing With Our Sins

by J.R. Miller

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*Dealing with our sins requires courage, self-reflection, and true repentance, leading to growth and the upbuilding of character.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:23

**Topics:** "Repentance", "Grace and Forgiveness"

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## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the courage required to confront our own sins rather than focusing on the faults of others. He highlights the importance of self-reflection and repentance, noting that true sorrow for sin leads to a transformative return to God. Miller illustrates that while we may regret our past mistakes, these experiences can ultimately contribute to our growth and character if we turn to Christ for healing and forgiveness. He encourages believers to learn from their failures and to use them as stepping stones towards a better life, reminding us that divine grace can turn our deepest regrets into sources of beauty and strength. Ultimately, Miller calls for a sincere commitment to repentance and a reliance on Christ's mercy to overcome our sins.

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## Transcript

It takes courage to look our own sins in the face, and to deal with them as we would counsel another to do, if the sins were his. It was one of the old psalm-writers who said, "I thought on my ways." It is not likely, that even he found it an easy thing to do. It is usually very much harder to think on our own ways--than on other people's; most of us do quite enough of the latter. We keep a magnifying-glass to inspect our neighbor's life, a high-power microscope to hunt for specks in his character! But too often, we forget to use our glasses on ourselves, or, if we do, we reverse them, and thus minify every spot and imperfection! The Pharisee in the temple confessed a great many sins--but they were his neighbor's sins and the publican's sins; he made no confession of sin for himself.

Most of us are in the same danger. We like to think of our ways when they are good; it flatters our vanity--to be able to approve and commend ourselves. But, when our conduct has not been particularly satisfactory, we like to turn our back upon it, and solace ourselves meanwhile, by thinking on our neighbor's sinful ways. And here, strange to say, it seems to please many of us best--to find faults and blemishes in their lives and characters, which we point out to others. One of the last lessons of Christian charity which most of us learn--to rejoice with others in their attainments of Christian character, and to be pained and grieved when we find blemishes and stains in their lives.

But it is a brave thing for a man to say, "I will think upon my own ways," and to say it when he knows his ways have not been holy and right--but wrong. It is an excellent thing for us to turn our lenses in upon our own hearts, in order to see if our own ways are right. This should always be our first duty. We should take heed to ourselves, before we try to look after the mistakes of others, and point them out. There is only one person in all the world for whose ways any of us are really personally responsible, for whose life anyone will be required to give account--and that is one's self! Other people's wrong ways may pain us, and offend our sense of right; and it is our duty to do all we can, in the spirit of Christ, to lead our neighbors into better ways; but, after all, when we stand before God's judgment-seat, the only one person in the whole world for whom any of us will have to be judged--will be one's self. Certainly it is most important, then, that we give earnest heed to ourselves and our own ways, while in this world.

Retrospect has a strange power. As we look back upon our ways, they do not appear to us now, as they did when we were actually passing through them. Things that seemed hard and painful at the time, now, as we look back upon them, appear lovely and radiant. There are experiences in most lives, which at the time seemed to be sore calamities--but in the end prove rich blessings. Then, there is another class--things which appeared attractive and enjoyable at the time--which afterward look repulsive and abhorrent. This is true of all wrong actions, all deeds wrought under the influence of the evil passions. At the time, they give a thrill of pleasure; but when the emotion has passed, and the wrong-doer turns and looks back at what he has done--it seems horrible in his eyes. The retrospect fills him with disgust and loathing.

To look at one's ways when we have been wrong--is not by any means a pleasant thing to do. Such looks, if honest, will produce deep sorrow. It is well that it should be so--that regret should grow into sore pain, until it has burned into our hearts the lessons which we ought to learn from our follies and sins. But pain and regret should not be all. The Scriptures speak of the sorrow of the world, which works death. This is a false sorrow for sin, which passes away like the morning cloud or the early dew--leaving no impression, working no improvement; or the sorrow which ends only in despair. Godly sorrow is the pain for sins--which leads to repentance.

The prodigal in the far-off land thought on his ways, and, in his shame, hid his face in his hands, and wept bitter tears over the ruin he had made of his life. But he did more than weep; he arose and went straight home to his father. No matter how badly one has failed, the noble thing to do is, not to sit down and waste more years, in grieving over the lost years. Weeping in the darkness of despair, amends nothing. The only truly wise thing to do is to arise, and save what remains. Because ten hours out of the allotted twelve are lost--shall we sit down and waste the other two, in unavailing grief over the ten? Had we not better use the two that are left, in doing what we can to retrieve the consequences of our past folly?

"We have lost the battle," said Napoleon; "but," drawing his watch from his pocket, "it is only two o'clock, and we have time to fight and win another!" And the sun went down on his victorious army.

No young person, especially, should ever yield to despair; for in youth, there is yet too wide a margin to blot, with the confession of defeat and failure. Even old age, with a whole lifetime behind it wasted--is not hopeless in a world on which Christ's cross stood. A few moments of sincere penitence and true repentance, are enough in which to creep to Christ's feet, and find pardon. Divine mercy is so great, that no one need perish, though his sins be as scarlet.

Even though the life is so utterly wrecked, its nobility so destroyed, its powers so wasted--that on earth it can never be anything but a shattered ruin--it may still become radiant and beautiful in the blessed immortality which Christian faith reveals. Life does not end at the grave. Its path sweeps on into the eternal years, and there will be time enough then to retrieve all the wasted past. Someone speaks of heaven as the place where God makes over souls. Even lives wasted and marred on earth, turning to Christ only in life's old age--may find mercy, and in heaven's long, blessed day--be made over into grace and beauty.

But no wise and careful seaman will run his ship twice on the same rock or reef. Even a child will not be likely to put his hand into the flame, a second time. We should learn by experience in living, and should not repeat the same folly, mistake, or sin over and over. Every error we make should be marked, and never made again. Thus we should use our very failures as stepping-stones by which to climb to a higher, better life.

Nothing comes of thinking on our ways--if we do not turn from whatever we find to be wrong. Godly sorrow works repentance. A few tears amount to nothing--if one goes on tomorrow in the same old paths. Someone says, "The true science of blundering, consists in never making the same mistake twice." This rule applies to sins as well as to mistakes. The true science of living--is never to commit the same sin a second time.

But even this falls short. We are not saved by negatives. We can never go to heaven by merely turning from wrong ways. True repentance leads to Christ--and into his ways. It is the man who forsakes his wicked ways, and his wicked thoughts, and returns to the Lord--who is abundantly pardoned. When there is this kind of repentance, it does not matter how black the sin is. Even Christ does not undo the wrong past, and make that which has been done--as though it had never been done. It never can be made true--that the thief did not once steal. But grace may so make over a marred life, that, where the blemish was, some special beauty may appear.

"The oyster mends its shell with a pearl." Where the ugly wound was--there comes, with the healing, not a scar--but a pearl. The same is true in human souls when divine grace heals the wounds of sins. Sins that we truly repent of, become pearls in the character. It is the experience of all who grow into Christ-like nobleness, that many of the golden lines of their later lives, have been wrought out through their regrets and their repentings of wrong-doings.

Someone says, "The besetting sin may become the guardian angel. Yes, this sin that has sent me weary-hearted to bed, and desperate in heart to mourning work, can be conquered. I do not say annihilated--but, better than that, conquered-- captured, and transfigured into a friend; so that I, at last, shall say, 'My temptation has become my strength; for to the very fight with it--I owe my growth in grace.'"

An old man sat thinking, one day, about his past, recounting to himself his mistakes and follies, and regretting them, wishing he had never committed them, and if there was some way of undoing them. He took his pen, and on a sheet of paper made a list of twenty things in his life of which he was ashamed, and was about to seize an imaginary sponge, and rub them all out of his biography. He was thinking how much more beautiful his character would have been at the close of his years--if these wrong things had never been committed. But to his amazement, as he thought of wiping out these evil things, he found, that, if there were any golden threads of beauty running through his life, which had been woven into the web by the regrets he had felt over his wrong-doings; and that, if he should wipe out these wrong acts, he would

at the same time destroy the fairest lines of nobleness and worth in his present character. He learned in his meditation that out of his sins and follies--he had gotten all his best things--the painful regrets, the wise lessons, the true repentings, and the new life which followed.

There is a deep truth in this record of experience; it is, that even our mistakes and sins--if we leave them, and find our way to Christ--will be transmuted into growth and the upbuilding of character. "We can so deal with the past--that we can make it give up to us virtue and wisdom." "We can make wrong--the seed of right and righteousness; we can transmute error--into wisdom; we can make sorrow--bloom into a thousand forms, like fragrant flowers."

If we truly repent of our sins, then, where they grew with their thorns and poison seeds, there will be in our lives trees and plants of beauty with sweet flowers and rich fruits. Our very slips and falls--if we rise again, and, in lowly penitence and sincere return, creep to the feet of Christ--become new births to our souls. His tender grace heals the wounds our sins have made, and restores our lives to strength and beauty! But it must never be forgotten, that Christ alone can thus save us from our sins--and transmute their evil into good. This wondrous alchemy, exists only in the Savior's cross and blood. Left to itself, sin works death; but, brought to Christ, the poison is destroyed, and death is changed to life.

In every life, there are mistakes and sins. The holiest men do not live perfectly. The strongest are liable to fall in sudden and unexpected temptation. The wisest will commit grave errors and follies at some time. We should know well in such cases how to deal with our sins. They must not be simply excused, and left lying in the path behind us, while we hurry on; nor must they bring despair to our hearts as we sorrow over them; they must be sincerely and heartily repented of, and forgiveness for them sought at the feet of Him we have offended and grieved. Then we must rise from disaster and defeat--stronger, purer, and nobler through Christ, victorious over our own sins, and a conqueror over our own defeat!

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