

## Moving Forward: What Holds Us Back -- Anxiety, Pride, and Self-Deception

### **Introduction -- the Complexity of Sin**

1. A tendency to have a rather simplistic view of sin.
2. Understanding the complexity of sin and evil in human beings taken over by psychologists.
3. This is contrary to the complex understanding of human sin in Augustine, Luther, Calvin, etc.
4. We need to have an understanding of the complexity of sin, if we are to apply the Gospel to it more accurately and so move forward into what God would have us to be.

### **Psalm 8 Responsive Reading**

Leader: Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Response: You have set your glory in the heavens.

Leader: Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies,

Response: to silence the foe and the avenger.

Leader: When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,

Response: the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

Leader: what is mankind that you are mindful of them,

Response: human beings that you care for them?

Leader: You have made them a little lower than the angels

Response: and crowned them with glory and honor.

Leader: You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet:

Response: all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

All: Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

### **Anxiety & Sin**

1. Human beings are extraordinary (“When I consider your heavens . . .”)
2. Human beings are weak, dependent, and very limited (“What is man that you are mindful of him?”)
3. Human beings sin by seeing far and yet refusing to admit their dependence on God.
4. The ability to view the whole but also see our own weakness is the root of anxiety.
5. This ability is the occasion, though not the cause, of sin. We fall in love with ourselves like Narcissus because of our amazing abilities, but we forget our weakness and dependence. This is egotism and pride.
6. The proper response to all this is trust: “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after

all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them” (Mt. 6:31–32).

7. The sinful response is to imagine ourselves greater than we are and forget our finiteness and dependness: “Then he said, “This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. 19 And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry”” (Luke 12:18–19).

## **Varieties of Anxiety**

### *Acceptance*

-Will others abandon me?

-Will others consume me?

-What is my status with others, am I on the inside or outside?

Sinful Response: I should always be accepted, revered, admired, and appreciated.

### *Security*

-Will I have what I need?

-Will those I love be OK?

-What threats could harm me?

Sinful Response: I can escape my weakness and dependence and be secure.

### *Meaning*

-Is my life significant?

-Can I understand this situation?

-Is my understanding of reality correct?

Sinful Response: I have figured everything out, and my ideas are always the best ideas.

### *Power*

-Will I be able to do what I need to do?

-Will I make harmful mistakes?

-Can I get the things done I need to?

Sinful Response: I should be immune from mistakes, failures, and weaknesses.

## **The Connection Between Anxiety and Sin in the Bible**

Anxiety is not in itself sin, but when it is not referred to God, it can become sin. Sin is also occasioned by anxiety. You can see this in a variety of passages from Genesis and Exodus.

- Genesis 3:5 - “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”
- Genesis 11:4 - Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

- Genesis 12:11–13 - As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are. 12 When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will let you live. 13 Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.”
- Genesis 16:1–2 - Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; 2 so she said to Abram, “The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.”
- Genesis 37:4 - When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.
- Exodus 1:9–10 - “Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. 10 Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.”
- Exodus 14:5 - When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, “What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!”
- Exodus 16:3 - The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”  
Note with
- Exodus 17:3 - But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?” Note this verse with v. 4. This is the response of faith.
- Exodus 32:1 - When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, “Come, make us gods[a] who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.”

### **How does anxiety keep us from moving forward?**

1. It tempts us to egotism -- make ourselves bigger than we are.
2. It tempts us to injustice toward others.
3. It sucks out all our margin for service and better things.
4. It makes us want to fix on something as our solution or our scapegoat
5. It makes us react rather than think. These reactions can sometimes be helpful, but they are often not. We need to be able to think carefully about how we interact with people.