

## Emotions, Emotional Distress and Addictions

Sunday School Class  
Trinity Baptist Church

Part Four: Anxiety and Anger in the Life of a Christian (G578-tune 565) (alt. G122)  
Isaiah 35: 3-4

### Introduction

- Anxiety and anger are physiologically and functionally quite similar
  - Both may be elements of the “fight or flight” response (describe)
  - As such both, can serve a useful purpose
  - Both emotions occur in response to some real or perceived threat
  - Both motivate action to address the threat (anxiety by avoiding or escaping the threat and anger by confronting and challenging the threat)
  - As such, both emotions can be thought of as “fire alarm” systems
  - Both can also be “overflow” emotions—i.e., arising in response to excessive levels of stress
- However, both anxiety and anger can stop serving us well, and can come to dominate our lives in very unhelpful ways
- The Bible is very clear that Christians are not be characterized by excessive anxiety and anger
  - Anxiety
    - Prov. 12:25 (anxiety in heart causes depression)
    - Mat. 6: 25-34 (don’t worry about your life...)
    - Phil. 4: 4-7 (be anxious about nothing...)
    - Jn. 14:1; 27 (don’t let your hearts be troubled...)
  - Anger
    - Prov. 29:22 (angry man abounds in transgression)
    - Mat. 5:22 (angry at brother w/o cause—danger of judgment)
    - Eph. 4:26-27 (be angry, sin not, don’t give a place to the devil)
    - Eph. 4:31 (let all bitterness, wrath, anger, etc. be put away...)
- Objectives:
  - Understand the various manifestations of unhelpful anxiety and anger
  - Identify the spiritual solutions for anxiety and anger disorders

### Types of anxiety disorders

- Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)—worry the predominant theme
- Panic disorder—with Agoraphobia
- Posttraumatic stress disorder
- Obsessive compulsive disorder—and OCD-spectrum disorders (BDD, Trich., etc.)
- Social phobia
- Specific phobia
- Persistent health anxiety

## Types of anger disorders

- Anger may be a part of a variety of mental illnesses
  - Intermittent explosive disorder (an impulse control disorder)
    - Outbursts of uncontrollable rage (0-100)
    - Manifests as road rage, spousal or child abuse, etc.
    - 7% lifetime, 4% reported at least three in last year—mostly young men
    - remorse, regret, embarrassment
- Anger may also be part of a personality disorder (e.g., paranoid, borderline, etc.)—everyone else to blame (ego-syntonic) (Archie Bunker?)

## What causes and maintains anxiety and anger disorders?

- Biological predispositions (genetics, temperament, etc.)
- Environmental factors (history of trauma, abuse, etc.)
- Faulty thinking (i.e., catastrophizing, overestimating probabilities, labeling, personal should statements, mind-reading, fortune-telling, etc., etc.)
- Incorrect beliefs
  - “Something bad is bound to happen unless I worry” (GAD)
  - “I’m responsible for the happiness and well-being of others” (i.e., “I must ensure that people I love are not unhappy, angry, etc.”) (GAD)
  - “If I have a bad thought, it means I will act on it” (OCD)
  - “Anxious feelings are dangerous” (PD)
  - “My value as a person depends on what others think of me” (SP)
  - “Elevators (dogs, insects, etc.) are dangerous and will harm me unless I avoid them” (Phobias)“
- Misguided efforts to “get rid” of or control anxious or angry feelings
  - Avoidance (panic—and almost all anx. disorders)
  - Procrastination
  - Worry (GAD)
  - Pessimism (GAD)
  - Reassurance-seeking/checking (OCD)
  - Low self-esteem (social anx.)
  - “Discharging” anger
  - Avoiding confrontation (anger)
  - Social withdrawal (anger, social anx., panic, etc.)

## Spiritual roots of anxiety and anger

- In and of themselves, feelings of anxiety and anger are not sinful
  - Feelings may be the result of a range of factors over which we have little or no control (e.g., our internal “carburetor” setting, conditioned responses, effects of medical conditions, hormones, etc.)
- However, anxious and angry feelings may reflect the outworking of incorrect and sinful attitudes

- Inaccurate and inadequate views of God and his work
  - E.g., Jonah’s angry complaints answered by God with reference to the inaccuracy of his perspective
  - E.g., Job’s angry complaints (ch. 29-31) answered with reference to God’s sovereignty and power (ch. 38 ff)
  - E.g., the psalmists (Ps. 73) angry rant against perceived unfairness—answered with reference to God’s sovereignty and justice
  - E.g., Lk. 8:22-25—the disciples in the boat—Jesus sleeping—they panicked—where is your faith?
  - The basic problem is that we just don’t believe that God is really who he says he is
  - Lloyd-Jones—“faith is defined as a refusal to panic”
- Corresponding overemphasis on the human viewpoint
  - E.g., Mat. 7: 3-5 (specks and planks)—with reference to anger
  - E.g., Gen. 4: 10-12—Moses thinking it had to do with his own eloquence, etc.—“no” God says, “it will be I speaking through you”
  - E.g., Peter walking on the water
- Angry and anxious feelings may also arise from a lack of self-control (Gal. 5:22) inasmuch as we may tend to act on our feelings rather than on faith—thereby putting into motion a vicious spiral of anxious or angry behavior and escalating emotional distress.

### Solutions for anxiety and anger

- Anxiety:
  - Focus on God
    - Prayer, worship, thanksgiving (Phil. 4:6-7)
    - Read and pray through Ps. 46
    - Remind yourself of his inevitable judgment and his salvation (Isa. 35: 3-4)
    - Submit to his providence
    - Stop trying to be in control—humble yourself and cast your cares upon him (1 Pet. 5:6-7) – why? He care for you!
- Anger:
  - Focus on God—he will bring ultimate justice (Ps. 73; Isa. 35)
  - Forgive those who have hurt you as (in the same way) you have been forgiven (Col. 3:12-13) – i.e., freely, undeservedly, etc.
  - Seek quick reconciliation with those who have hurt you (Mat. 5:21-26)
  - Submit to the loving providence of a wise and all-knowing God

Read words of hymn 578—Through the love of God our Saviour, all will be well  
 Read words of “Eye of the storm” Mark Heard