

—Phil 4.4-7—

Lesson 1 – Understanding Anxious Care

- I. *How can we tell* when our cares and worries are excessive and inordinate?
- A. When it's more for earth than for heaven, more for the outward man than for the soul, more for the things of time than for the things of eternity. In Mt 6.33 Christ makes clear that our carefulness should be for the things of eternity and we should leave to God the things of time. But when these are switched, it's inordinate. When we care more for riches than grace, more to adorn our bodies than the health of our soul, more to avoid suffering than sin, more about an interest on earth than an interest in Christ, then it's forbidden carefulness.
 - B. When it hinders us from enjoying what we have so that our minds are so busy with getting, ordering, and keeping outward things that we can't rest or sleep in the enjoyment of what we already have.
 - C. When it indisposes us for holy duties. When we can't break through the crowd of these thoughts to pray to God or hear from God in His Word, they are too many. When these keep us from drawing near to God or from approaching Him with cheerfulness, heartiness, entirety of mind and affection, or make us come with our loins ungirded, our souls dragging in the dirt of the world, and sweeping the dust after them, and raising a cloud of it, so that we can't discern well where we are or what we're doing, whether with God or with the world, whether we're minding Him or it, or rather lose sight of God, where He's most seen and enjoyed—in the means of grace in His house, this is intolerably excessive.
 - D. When it's distrustful, arising from our not trusting God, or takes us off from depending on Him, Isa 7.2; 2Chr 20.20. When the soul thinks not itself sufficiently secured by the promise or providence of God, when he doubts the Lord is able, or whether the Lord is willing, to provide for him and his, or to secure his concerns, or to dispose of all his affairs for the best, and so doesn't commit his way to him, but will look after it himself, and employs his thoughts anxiously about it, as though otherwise it wouldn't go well, this is sinful and excessive carefulness.
 - E. When it hurries you to the use of unlawful or suspected means. It's excessive carefulness that pushes men on in such a course as is either evil, though they think it good, or good, though they think it evil. When they're so careful to keep what they have, that they'd rather pang their conscience than lose it, or to get more, that they'll take a course that they can't justify, or to get out of troubles, that they'll go out by some way that the Lord never opened. Like Rebekah and Jacob, so determined to have the blessing that they'll lie to get it, or like Saul, so determined to have the victory that he'll offer the sacrifice on his own and then go to the witch at Endor.
- II. Now let me show you the reasons why God's people should not be taken up with such an anxious carefulness about the things of this life, Mt 6.24-34.
- A. It's useless and won't help you. There's no more way to increase or secure your outward concern than there is to add a cubit to your height, Mt 6.27. Worry is not the way to wealth. Rather, blessing comes from the Lord, who gives His people plenty, rest, and comfort in it, though they never lose any sleep in seeking it, Ps 127.2.
 - 1. You say, He blesses diligence. True, but He never blesses this carefulness. This carefulness is the way to lose what you have and what you get; it's the way to make it or the comfort of it wither, to curse it to you or your children, and to endanger it instead of secure it to you.
 - B. It's needless. Why? Because as Jesus says, your Father knows already what you need, Mt 6.32. All that you're tempted to be careful about is cared for already, by One who can infinitely better look after it than you can. If all the creatures in heaven and earth should faithfully engage themselves to care for your concerns, wouldn't you think that a sufficient discharge of all your cares for yourself? But you have unspeakably more! That God who is unspeakably more considerable than all the creatures in the world has engaged Himself to take care of you, to see that you lack nothing that's

good and that nothing will befall you but what's truly best for you, and to take such good care of all this, that you don't have to. And is not your carefulness needless now? He is the all-wise, all-mighty, all-sufficient, and infinitely merciful God. Cast all your cares upon Him, 1Pet 5.7. Just consider:

1. What He'll do for you, Phil 4.19.
 2. What He's done for you already, Mt 6.25. You had no care when you were in the womb, and He took care of you. How much more will He do so now? You don't need to have any more care for earthly things now than you did in the womb.
 3. What He does for others, Mt 6.26, 28-30; Ps 104.16-18, 21, 27-28; 147.8-9; 1Cor 9.9.
- C. It's heathenish, Mt 6.32. It's the character of a heathen to be anxious about the things of this life.
- D. It's hurtful.
1. It'll disoblige God and take Him off from caring for you, Jer 17.5-6. If you won't trust God with your affairs then He'll be obliged to leave them in your hands so you can see how costly such anxiety is. If you don't cast your burden on the Lord but are determined to carry it, then He'll likely let you fall under it. Either way, you'll have no assurance that your feet won't slip and fall under the pressure. And when you disoblige the Lord, it's a greater damage than your and all the world's carefulness can make up.
 2. You lose what you have, or at least the comfort and benefit of what you have, because carefulness will eat it all up, 1Kgs 21.4.
 3. It'll keep you from being the servants of Christ, so far as you give way to it, Mt 6.24. The more anxious you are about outward things, the less anxious you'll be to serve the Lord.
 4. It corrupts the whole soul and life, Mt 6.22-23.
 5. It hinders the efficacy of the ordinances and spoils the use of them. Cares of the world choke the Word, making it unfruitful, Mt 13.22. Moreover, it spoils our prayers and thoughts about heavenly things because it crowds them out.
 6. It keeps us from joy in God and disturbs our peace, 1Tim 6.9-10, 17-19.
- E. It's very sinful and reveals much evil still in the heart of God's people.