

# ASPECTS OF LOVE

Scripture: 1 Cor 13 vs 4 to 7.

Philip Powell

## Part 9. The Eighth Aspect

K.J.

*Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, **is not easily provoked**, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

N.I.V.

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, **it is not easily angered**, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

K.J.           **Charity is not easily provoked**

N.I.V.           **Love is not easily angered**

I am going to commence this study with a quote from the commentary of Barns on 1 Cor 13 v 5. My reason for doing this is because it expresses quite adequately what Paul is meaning when he says that "*charity, (or love) is not easily provoked*".

Quote:

"This word occurs in the New Testament only in one other place. **Acts 17 v 16**: "*His spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.*" The word properly means, to sharpen by, or with, or on anything, and may be applied to the act of sharpening a knife or sword; then it means, to sharpen the mind, temper, courage of any one; to excite, impel, etc. Here it means, evidently, to rouse to anger; to excite to indignation or wrath. Tindal renders it, "Is not provoked to anger." Our translation does not exactly convey the sense. The word "easily" is not expressed in the original. The translators have inserted it to convey the idea that he who is under the influence of love, though he may be provoked – that is, injured – or though there might be incitements to anger, yet that he would not be roused, or readily give way to it. The meaning of the phrase in the Greek is, that a man who is under the

influence of love or religion is not prone to violent anger or exasperation; it is not his character to be hasty, excited, or passionate. He is calm, serious, patient. He looks soberly at things; and though he may be injured yet he governs his passions, restrains his temper, subdues his feelings." (end of quote)

The Greek concordant translates the Greek word used by Paul as 'incensed' so it translates the text as "*love is not easily incensed*".

I think we all know what it means to be provoked or incensed. The problem is highlighted in the word used by the translators to help us, which is the word "*easily*". We have to admit and be honest about this, because no matter how hard we try, there are times when we find it very difficult to hold back our anger or frustration over something.

I believe what we need to look at is this. We need to see what the things are that we can be preserved from when 'love' at its best is permitted to find freedom in the life of the Christian.

Notice here the words "*love is not*". We could concentrate our thinking on what **love is**. However, Paul is not saying here what **love is**, he says what it "*is not*".

Let us see what things we and others are preserved from, because "*love is not easily provoked*". Let us begin by asking the question.

### **What is love not easily provoked to?**

From my own short investigation into the meaning of this I have discovered that most commentators relate it to anger.

This is probably because, as I have already said, the only other time we find this word in the N.T. it is connected with anger. **Acts 17 v 16**. "*His spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.*"

Strong's Lexicon has the following shades of meaning to the word "provoke". They are. To irritate, provoke, arouse to anger, to scorn, despise, to make angry, to exasperate, to burn with anger

I think it will be good to examine what happens when someone is "provoked" and gives way to their feelings. Lets us see what anger produces and the damage it can cause.

Anger destroys, and it destroys on two fronts. Firstly, it gradually eats away at the person who feels the anger, and destroys their feeling of affection and love. Secondly, it destroys the relationship we have with the individual we directed our anger towards.

#### **Acts 15 vs 36 to 40**

*36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.*

*37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.*

*38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.*

*39 And the contention was so **sharp** between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;*

*40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God*

The word I want you to notice, in this reading, is the word '**sharp**'. The Greek word for this is from the same root as 'provoke' '**Paroxusmos**', meaning 'contention, to provoke unto, inciting, incitement, and irritation'.

Look at the damage caused to the relationship of Paul and Barnabas by this incident. In the previous chapters we read how close they had become. I do not think anyone would have conceived, or even the thought that something could have damaged their relationship, and yet the contention between them became so '**sharp**' over the issue of John Mark that their friendship seems to have become irreparably damaged.

There are lessons to be learned from instances like this. If we are to avoid such things happening to us, it is important for us to look at instances in scripture, and learn from them so that the pitfalls of the past will not be repeated in the future.

If we become "*easily provoked*", the feelings of others are hurt, and it is hard to make amends after hurting the feelings of someone. We do not read of Paul and Barnabas ever accompanying each other, or even being in the company of one another ever again. Let us make sure our love for each other "*is not easily provoked*".

I am not saying that you will not, at some point, find that things can become sharp between you and someone. I am not going to bury my head in the sand, and ignore some of the very clear facts of life, but what must never be allowed to happen, is that the contention gets so severe to the point where irreparable damage has been caused.

We have to apply to our lives what the scripture teaches, and it definitely states that love, is one of the aspects we have had deposited in us by the Holy Spirit, so that we should not be "*easily provoked*".

If we do allow someone to incite us to act in a way that is outside the conduct of how a Christian should behave, it can take away our peace; it can also take away our joy.

I feel that the apostle Paul is defining here the very best way for any of us to live and conduct ourselves as Christians.

Listen to the Scripture in relation to Jesus as put by the apostle Peter, it says in **1 Peter 2 v 23** *“Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously”*.

Jesus, even though He had every reason to react in a just manner because of what was being done to Him, responded in a way that was totally against the usual action of someone being ridiculed.

On the cross, when being punished for the sin of the world, He said. **Luke 23 v 34** *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots”*. He was being unjustly treated, but did not react in an adverse way against His accusers.

Here are some quotes from ‘Gathered Gold’ by John Blanchard.

- *“It is Better to swallow angry words than to have to eat them afterwards”*.
- *“Anger is just one letter short of Danger”*.
- *“When you are in the right you can afford to keep your temper; and when you are wrong you cannot afford to loose it”*.

From my own observations I note that there are many things we are confronted with that can actually stir us up, set us on edge, and cause us to do something we afterwards regret.

The whole purpose of us looking at these *aspects of love* is so that our lives can be shaped by Gods word. Providing we take the word of God at face value and then apply it to our lives we shall not become involved in committing acts of folly which we will afterwards regret.

For instance, in **John 18 v 25** we note Peter was provoked it says, "*As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not".*

Once the impact of what he said dawned upon him, I am sure he would have regretted saying such a thing.