

## ASPECTS OF LOVE

Scripture: 1 Cor 13 vs 4 to 7.

Philip Powell

Part 2. The First Aspect

K.J. "Charity suffereth long"

N.I.V. "Love is patient"

The apostle Paul in this and some following verses, enumerates the several aspects and characteristics of love. He presents love as a quality in the life of a person in whose heart it is implanted and reigns.

This type of person is said to 'suffer long', or be 'patient', as the N.I.V. reads. When someone is being reproached and persecuted by men, for the sake of Christ and his Gospel, then the Christian, in whose heart the love of Christ dwells, is a person who is slow to anger when their patience is stretched. Not quick or hasty to take revenge when affronted; but exercises forbearance, suffers long, bears much, and is ready to forgive.

Love endures slights and wrongs patiently and long, and returns a kindly spirit. It is "slow to anger". Look at the example set by our Lord who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again".

Makrothumeo – (mak-roth-oo-meh'-o)

This word, which means to 'Suffer long' be 'Longsuffering' or 'Patient' needs to be explained, because it is very closely related to the Greek word Hupomone, which is its closest relative.

The word Makrothumeo is stated as the following in Strongs Greek Lexicon:

- 1) To be of a long spirit, not to lose heart
- 1a) To persevere patiently and bravely in enduring misfortunes and troubles
- 1b) To be patient in bearing the offences and injuries of others

The word Hupomone, is translated in Strongs Greek Lexicon:

- 1) Steadfastness, constancy, endurance
- 1a) In the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings
- 1b) Patiently, and steadfastly
- 2) A patient, steadfast waiting for
- 3) A patient enduring, sustaining, perseverance

You can see from the meanings of these two words how closely related they are to each other. William Barclay defines.

Makrothumeo as: 'Patient with people'.

Hupomone as: 'Patient with things'.

I think if we bear in mind the meaning of "charity suffereth long" from the K.J. and "Love is patient" from the N.I.V. we shall not get the two mixed up even though it is easy to do so.

With regard to "charity suffereth long" I have also read that it means to "defers wrath". This is an extremely good definition of the word, because the immediate action most of us are ready to take when confronted by an offender, is to be put on one side. How often we have ignored the instruction stated in the word of God and then been troubled in spirit because we have reacted adversely, and not in accordance with scripture.

William Barclay says this aspect of love relates to 'The attitude of man with Man'.

Before considering certain points, I want to quote what two have said with regard to this aspect of love.

Chrysostom defined makrothumia as the spirit, which could take revenge if it likes, but utterly refuses to do so.

Bishop Lightfoot explained it as the spirit which will never retaliate.

This is very interesting, because according to Aristotle, a Greek philosopher, the Greeks refused to tolerate any injury or insult. To the Greek, the 'big man' was the man who went all out for vengeance. To the Christian the big man is the man who, even when he can take revenge, refuses to do so. "Charity (or love) suffereth long".

Let us now consider that.

1. Longsuffering is the great Characteristic of God.

1 Peter 3 vs 18 to 20.

18 "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water"

2 Peter 3 v9

9 “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”

Even though God is longsuffering, he will not acquit the wicked. His love for the sinner is longsuffering, however we have to recognise that it is the wicked who are the subjects of His longsuffering, they do not become the subjects of his acquitting grace until they repent.

I am sure that the actions of the wicked makes God’s blood boil, and it is this aspect of His love that cools it down, stopping it from boiling over. God has the power within Himself to moderate His anger.

Stephen Charnock in his book 'The attributes and existence of God' says. “The power over Himself is the cause of His slowness to anger, He can sustain great injuries without immediate quick revenge.” He also says “A prince that can bridle his passions is a King over himself as well as his subjects”.

God is always in control of His passions and He can restrain His anger even when under great provocation in which, He could justifiably exercise it. God is slow to anger because he is great in power.

## 2. Longsuffering must be a Characteristic of men and women of God.

It is obvious to me that Paul himself had to come to terms with the various aspects of love. I say this because there was a time in his life when he and Barnabas had a difference of opinion concerning a young man name John Mark. The Acts of the Apostles records the following incident.

Acts 15 vs 36 to 40

36 Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing."

37 Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them,

38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work.

39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus,

40 but Paul chose Silas and left.

For background information on what precipitated Paul to react like this we have to go back to Acts 13 v 13 “now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.”

We have very little to go on from this verse to back up any theory regarding why Paul and Barnabas had a difference of opinion over John Mark. Acts 13 does however give to us a further insight, because undoubtedly, the incident of John leaving the apostles when they were at Perga in Pamphylia was at the root of their disagreement.

At this time in Paul’s ministry it is clear to me that even though he had many outstanding qualities as a disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ, yet still there were areas of his Christian life in which he needed to be strengthened. Having a love for his brothers in Christ was an area of his life that needed attention. What he wrote in 1 Corinthians 13 shows us that he definitely learned that to love with the love of Christ, one had to be someone who was prepared to suffer long. Have a lot of patience with people. Be prepared to put up with the shortfalls in others, not thinking that you yourself are better equipped than they, and so are short with them instead of being patient and suffer their inconsistencies in the same way the Lord did with you before you were more mature.

After many years in the Christian ministry, and experiencing many different hardships at the hands of many people, Paul learned that this aspect of love was an essential characteristic of Christian men and women. Listen to what he wrote in

2 Cor 6 vs 3 to 10

3 “Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed:

4 But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

6 By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

10 As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things”

.

Then in 1 Tim 1 v 16 “Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”

2 Tim 3 v 10 “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience”

Paul wrote what he did in 1Cor 13 v 4 that “charity (or love) suffereth long” because it was a characteristic of God that had had to engrave itself into his own character to help make him a complete Christian.

### 3. Longsuffering is to be evident in the Conduct of a Christian.

Gal 5 v 22 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.”

During the last series I did, which was on the ‘Fruit of the Spirit’ we considered the word ‘Longsuffering’ so it I will only make a brief reference to it here.

What I would like to say is this. If we consider this aspect, as it is seen as a great characteristic of God, and then pattern the way we act and react on the template of His longsuffering, then we shall discover what Paul did, that exercising this characteristic pays off. Barnabas shows Paul the way. He was longsuffering with John Mark, and he had patience with him as a person, which is exercising this aspect of love. Later in life Paul wrote the following about the same young man he had not been very longsuffering with.

2 Timothy 4 v 11 “Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”