

Not Easily Provoked

I. Charity is the cardinal Christian virtue (**1Co 13:13; Col 3:14; 1Ti 1:5; 1Pe 4:8**).

1. **Charity** - 1. Christian love b. Man's love of God and his neighbour, commanded as the fulfilling of the Law, Matt. xxii. 37, 39. c. *esp.* The Christian love of our fellow-men; Christian benignity of disposition expressing itself in Christ-like conduct: one of the 'three Christian graces', fully described by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii.
2. One outstanding characteristic of charity is that it is "not easily provoked" (**1Co 13:4-5**).
3. If we are easily provoked, we are not displaying charity in our lives.
4. Charity is Christian love.
 - A. If we are easily provoked, we have not charity, and we are therefore not loving our brother.
 - B. He that loves not his brother abides in darkness (**1Jo 2:10-11**).
 - C. He that loves not his brother is not of God (**1Jo 3:10**).
 - D. He that loves not his brother abides in death (**1Jo 3:14**).
 - E. He that loves not his brother knows not God (**1Jo 4:7-8**).
5. Being "not easily provoked" is therefore a dreadfully serious topic.
6. Do I have your attention now?

II. What does it mean to be provoked?

1. **Provoke** v. - II. 4. To incite or urge (a person or animal) to some act or to do something; to stimulate to action; to excite, rouse, stir up, spur on. b. *trans.* To stir up, agitate. 5. To incite to anger (a person or animal); to enrage, vex, irritate, exasperate. Hence **provoked**, *ppl.* a., having received provocation; irritated, angry, annoyed.
 - A. **Irritated** *ppl.* - Stirred up, excited (*obs.*); exasperated, provoked, annoyed; stimulated to vital action, etc.: see the verb.
 - B. **Irritate** v. - 1. *trans.* To stir up, excite, provoke, incite, rouse (a person, etc.) to some action. Const. to, into, or inf. *Obs.* (or merged in 2.) 2. To excite to impatient or angry feeling; to exasperate, provoke; to vex, fret, annoy, ruffle the feelings of.
 - C. **Annoyed** *ppl.* - 1. Disturbed by what one dislikes; troubled, vexed, offended.
 - D. **Annoy** v. - 1. *intr.* To be hateful, odious, offensive, or a cause of trouble (to, or with *dat.*) *Obs.* (Last used in 1386) 3. *trans.* To affect (a person) in a way that disturbs his equanimity, hurts his susceptibilities, or causes slight irritation. (Refers to the feeling produced, rather than to the action producing it; hence commonest in the passive to be annoyed: to be ruffled in mind, troubled, vexed.)
2. To be *provoked* means to become irritated, angry, annoyed, or impatient by the actions of others or the circumstances we find ourselves in.

III. It is not always wrong to be provoked.

1. We can be angry without sinning (**Eph 4:26**).
2. God's people provoke Him to anger and wrath (**Deu 9:7; Deu 32:16**), yet God is holy (**1Pe 1:15-16**).
3. Jesus was angry (provoked) (**Mar 3:5; Mat 21:12; Joh 2:15**).
4. We must have a just cause to be angry though (**Mat 5:22**).
5. As pastor is not to be *soon angry*, which implies that he can be angry in certain situations, just not *soon angry* (**Tit 1:7**).

6. If we become angry for righteous reasons, we should not remain angry (**Eph 4:26**).

IV. It *is* always wrong to be *easily provoked* though.

1. As Christians, we must be *slow to wrath* (**Jam 1:19-20; Ecc 7:9**).
 - A. God Himself is *slow to anger* (**Psa 103:8**).
 - B. He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding (**Pro 14:29**).
 - C. A fool gets angry quickly and everyone knows about it (**Pro 12:16; Pro 29:11,20**).
 - D. He that is soon angry deals foolishly (**Pro 14:17**).
2. We must have rule over our spirits.
 - A. He that is slow to anger (not easily provoked) is a strong man (**Pro 16:32**).
 - B. He that doesn't have rule over his spirit is weak and vulnerable to attack (**Pro 25:28**).
 - C. Losing our temper when provoked can cost us big time, as it did for Moses (**Psa 106:32-33 c/w Num 20:10-12**).
 - D. If we don't bridle our tongues, our religion is vain (**Jam 1:26**).
3. The devil will provoke us to sin (**1Ch 21:1**) and will send people into our lives to do so.
 - A. Jesus' enemies tried to provoke Him and cause him to lose His temper and say something He should not have (**Luk 11:53-54**).
 - B. We must follow His example and not render evil for evil (**1Pe 2:23; Isa 53:7; 1Th 5:15; 1Pe 3:9**).
4. Not being easily provoked is suffering long with people (**1Co 13:4**).
 - A. We must be longsuffering with people (**Gal 5:22; Eph 4:1-2; Col 3:12-13**).
 - B. A pastor must especially be longsuffering as an example to the church (**2Co 6:3-6; 2Ti 3:10; 2Ti 4:2; 1Ti 4:12**).

V. *Why* do we become *easily provoked*?

1. Hasty anger rests in the bosom of fools (**Ecc 7:9**).
2. Therefore, to be easily provoked is to act like a fool.
3. It's easy to understand why a person would be provoked when a grievous injustice is done to them.
 - A. But even that is not justified (**Ecc 5:8**).
 - B. Jesus was not provoked at the height of suffering injustice (**Mat 26:59-68 c/w Mat 27:11-14 c/w Mar 15:17-20 c/w 1Pe 2:23**).
 - C. Jesus is our example that we should be in control of our spirits even under the height of provocation.
4. But what about little things? Why are we easily provoked by trivial things? Here are some of the reasons:
 - A. Pride
 - i. We think too highly of ourselves.
 - ii. We get offended if someone else doesn't like our idea or decision, or thinks they have a better one (**2Sa 16:23 c/w 2Sa 17:14 c/w 2Sa 17:23**).
 - iii. We esteem ourselves better than others and think their ideas or actions are stupid, and that irritates us.
 - iv. We get angry quickly when someone doesn't treat us with the respect we think we deserve (**Est 3:1-5**).

- v. The solution to this? We must hate our pride (**Pro 8:13**), humble ourselves (**Jam 4:6,10**), realize what we *really* are (**Rom 12:3; Rom 7:18**), and esteem others more highly than ourselves (**Rom 12:16; Phi 2:3**).
- B. Weakness of character
- i. We are insecure and feel inadequate, and therefore respond with anger when we are questioned or challenged to attempt to silence our critic.
 - ii. This happens to such a person when his beliefs are challenged (**Act 19:23-28**).
 - iii. When we despise instruction or reproof we are acting as fools (**Pro 1:7; Pro 23:9; Pro 15:5,12; Pro 13:1**).
 - iv. The solution to this? We must accept our weaknesses and receive others' questions, challenges, or reproofs as opportunities to grow in knowledge and wisdom (**Pro 9:8-9; Pro 17:10; Psa 141:5**).
- C. Selfishness
- i. We are more concerned with ourselves and our needs than we are with the needs of others and get easily provoked when others ask us for something when we are trying to satisfy our needs or desires.
 - ii. The solution to this? We must learn to deny ourselves and put others' needs before our own (**Rom 12:10; 1Co 13:5; 1Co 10:24; Phi 2:4**).
 - iii. Prefer v. - I. 1. a. *trans.* To put forward or advance, in status, rank, or fortune; to promote (to a position or office of dignity). II. g3. *trans.* To put or set in front or before. Obs.
- D. Spoiledness
- i. We want what we want when we want it and we don't want to wait for it.
 - a. Our parents or grandparents had to spend *a few hours* going to the library to research something, and we get furious if a webpage takes *a few seconds* to load.
 - b. Previous generations lived *their entire lives* without air conditioning, and we get irritated if ours goes out for *a few hours*.
 - c. The pilgrims had to spend *weeks* traveling across the ocean to get to America, and we get irate when our *six hour flight* to Europe is delayed by *a few hours*.
 - ii. The solution to this? We must learn to be content and thankful for what we have (**Heb 13:5; 1Ti 6:8**).
- E. Unthankfulness and ungratefulness
- i. We are not thankful (like reprobates - **Rom 1:21; 2Ti 3:2**) for what we have and we therefore get irritated instead of suffering small provocations.
 - ii. For instance, if a man is not thankful and grateful for the wife God has given him he may get easily provoked by her actions or statements.
 - iii. If parents are not grateful for the children God gave them, they may be easily provoked by their childishness and immaturity.
 - iv. The solution to this? We must learn to have an attitude of gratitude (**Psa 100:4; Col 3:15**).
- F. Unmercifulness

- i. We are not merciful and understanding (like reprobates - **Rom 1:31**) when someone does or says something that we deem stupid or annoying and we allow ourselves to be provoked.
 - ii. We think that people should know better and we get impatient when they don't live up to our standards.
 - iii. Husbands need to watch out for this and remember that their wives are the weaker vessels (**1Pe 3:7**).
 - a. Husbands must not be bitter against their wives (**Col 3:19**).
 - b. Husbands are to rather love and cherish their wives and entertain a great affection and regard for them, not be easily provoked by them (**Eph 5:25,28-29**).
 - c. Love v. - 1. a. *trans.* With personal obj. or one capable of personification: To bear love to; to entertain a great affection or regard for; to hold dear.
 - d. Cherish v. - 1. *trans.* To hold dear, treat with tenderness and affection; to make much of.
 - iv. The solution to this? We must learn to show mercy rather than judgment to people if we want God to show mercy to us (**Luk 6:36; Jam 2:13; Mat 5:7; Psa 18:25**).
- G. Lack of love, compassion, and respect
- i. We get easily annoyed and angry with people because we don't love and respect them as we should.
 - ii. We show more respect to strangers than we do to our spouses, children, siblings, parents, and brethren. This should not be so.
 - iii. The solution to this? Be compassionate and courteous (**Rom 12:10; 1Pe 3:8-9**).

VI. Steps to take to overcome being easily provoked

1. Recognize and admit you have a problem (acknowledge your sin) (**Psa 32:5; Psa 51:3**).
2. Confess your sin to God and get specific about it (**1Jo 1:9; Psa 51:4**).
3. Forsake your sin (**Pro 28:13**).
4. Tell God you will do it no more (**Job 34:32**), which will help you to control your tongue and be slow to wrath (**Psa 39:1-3**).
5. Ask God for help to overcome your sin of being soon angry (**Heb 4:15-16**).
6. Stop making excuses.
 - A. Nobody makes you provoked: you choose to be.
 - B. Sin is a choice (**Isa 65:12**).
 - C. When a provocation comes, you can choose whether or not to be provoked.
 - D. The excuse, "he made me so mad", or "she irritates me so badly" doesn't work.
7. Learn to catch yourself as soon as you feel the urge to be provoked and flee the lust as soon as it happens (**2Ti 2:22**).
8. When you fall and lose control of your spirit, repeat the process (**Pro 24:16; Psa 37:23-24**).
9. This is a process that will take time to learn (**Pro 4:18**).

VII. There is one thing that we should be easily provoked to do: good works (**Heb 10:24**). I hope this sermon has done just that.