

Proverbs Week #160 (14:29)

He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly. (Proverbs 14.29 NAS95)

So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?" (Genesis 4.3–6 NAS95)

There are many reasons why we might become angry. We know what came after this interaction between God and Cain. Cain had words with his brother Abel and killed him. Sometimes when we are angry we take that feeling and turn and hurt others. Cain's folly led to the death of his brother.

It happened as they were coming, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments. The women sang as they played, and said, "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on. (1 Samuel 18.6–9 NAS95)

As Saul heard the women singing victory songs he became very angry. They were singing his praises (Saul has killed 1,000s) but when they sang the next line (David has killed 10,000s) the feeling of triumph became anger. We tend to think of anger as that burning feeling when we are really upset. Uncontrolled anger can have a damaging effect beyond just its initial feelings. It can cause us to forget what we know to be true and create in us long lasting displeasure or hatred towards God and others.

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city. (Proverbs 16.32)

A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression. (Proverbs 19.11)

Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, for anger resides in the bosom of fools. (Ecclesiastes 7.9)

This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. (James 1.19-20)

How do we learn the skills to be "slow to anger," to "overlook a transgression," or not to have anger as a permanent resident in our bosom? I think we can learn many things as we study Paul's description of love.

Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, (1 Corinthians 13.4–5 NAS95)

In the middle of his description of love Paul says love "is not provoked." The NIV translates this Greek phrase as "is not easily angered." What fills love with such great understanding, wisdom, and skill? The student of Wisdom has learned to be kind and to recognize the feelings and attitudes of jealousy. This pupil has built habits in their life that recognize improper pride; they don't boast about themselves. This disciple of Yeshua has learned not to seek just their own pleasures but also those things that are important to others. They forgive. In building up this "understanding," the mature disciple is well equipped to face those things in life that might cause untrained people to be easily angered. May God fill us with His Spirit and teach us these ways; His ways.