

Integrity In The New Testament

Described

Having integrity refers to being blameless before the Lord. Being blameless before God means He can find nothing to blame in our attitudes, plans, purposes and actions as believers. Integrity does not mean a state of permanent sinless perfection.

Integrity or being blameless before God explained

One of the most neglected topics in many modern churches is the Biblical teaching on integrity or blamelessness. At a time when there is a liberal compromising attitude to known sin among many Evangelicals, Charismatics and Pentecostals, there is an urgent need for much preaching and teaching on integrity.

Tragically, some seem to regard integrity as a form of legalism. They think integrity and God's grace are opposites. They do not realise God's grace leads to integrity. Let us examine the New Testament teachings on integrity.

Not perfect but living blamelessly under the New Covenant

Philippians 3:12, James 3:2 and 1 John 1:8 make it clear no New Covenant believer will be sinlessly perfect in this earthly life. Because of this fact, many Christian leaders and churchgoers seem to regard living a very sinful carnal Christian life as being normal. But the New Testament does not support such a compromising view but instead teaches us to live lives of integrity or blamelessness.

2 Peter 3:14 states: *"...be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless."* In the original Greek, the expression *"be diligent"* above is a form of the word "spoudazo". "Spoudazo" means "be zealous or eager, take pains, make every effort".¹ In Greek, the expression *"without spot"* is a form of the word "aspilos" which means "spotless, without blemish"² or "being without that which might mar one's moral character".³ In Greek, the word *"blameless"* in 2 Peter 3:14 is a form of the word "amometos" which also means "unblemished".⁴ Being unblemished means being without fault or blame in character and behaviour in God's view.

Philippians 2:14-15 says: *"Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."* Here Paul reveals believers can be blameless in this earthly life.

¹ Bauer, page 763.

² Ibid, page 117.

³ Louw and Nida, page 746.

⁴ Bauer, page 47.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:10, he spoke of the blameless behaviour of Silvanus, Timothy and himself among the Thessalonian believers: ***“You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe.”***

In 1 Timothy 3:10, Titus 1:6 and 1:7, Paul wrote of deacons and elders of churches being blameless *now* in this life. In 1 Timothy 3:2, he referred to pastors *now* and in 1 Timothy 5:7 to widows *now* living blameless lives. Being blameless is not something which only occurs in heaven.

Because being blamed results from disobedience to God’s will, being blameless in a New Covenant sense means:

- confessing and turning from *all* our known sins through God’s grace and faith in Jesus Christ.
- receiving God’s cleansing of us from our known and unknown sins and
- sincerely aiming to obey all known aspects of God’s revealed will by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are saved by faith and not by some perfect form of being blameless. But it is God’s will we be blameless.

Being blameless is a *result* or *fruit* of God’s grace and our faith. But being blameless is not a condition of salvation.

Differences between blamelessness and perfect obedience to God

A person can be blameless before God but still have sinned often in the past. A blameless person has confessed and turned from their known sins by faith and is sincerely aiming now to obey God’s will.

Being blameless is different from perfectly obeying God. Only Jesus Christ has perfectly obeyed God (see Matthew 5:17 and Romans 3:9-18). Perfectly obeying God involves fulfilling *every single* command of God *every moment* of *every day* of our lives. A person who disobeys just one of God’s commands only once in their whole lives has not perfectly obeyed Him.

James 2:10 shows that someone who disobeys only one of God’s commands is just as guilty as someone who has disobeyed more of His commands. Therefore, Christ's perfect obedience to God was at a higher standard than believers who are blameless before God.

Reputation and character

These days, many churchgoers are more interested in their reputation with other churchgoers and unbelievers than what they are in development of Christ-like character and integrity. In 2 Corinthians 5:12, Paul rebuked those ***“who boast in appearance and not in heart.”*** In Philippians 2:7, Paul said Jesus Christ ***“made himself of no reputation”***.

Reputation is what others suppose we are. Character is what you really are. Reputation is what humans say about you at your funeral. Character is what God records in His memory about you. At Jesus’ Judgement Seat, He will reveal what your character really was.

Smith Wigglesworth said: “*We should be far more concerned about a rich and noble character than we are about a big reputation. Popularity can be bought almost any day for a song and sold for a sparrow, but a noble character is the product of years of divine training and discipline.*”⁵

At present, there is an enormous lack of integrity in the world and even tragically among many churchgoers. For example, there is much exaggeration occurring in the Church in the name of motivation and exhortation.

Such exaggeration sometimes involves outright or partial lying. Multitudes of claims are made and are later found to be false. Supposed revelations and predictions “from God” are given publicly and are then not fulfilled. But no public apology ever is made about these things.

Christians with integrity will publicly admit their mistakes if they give false revelations.

Being blameless before God and having been perfected in Christ

Many Christians do not understand the differences between being blameless before God through His grace in Christ and having been perfected in Christ through His death.

Hebrews 10:14 refers to all true believers being perfected *forever* through Christ’s death: “***For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.***” The writer of Hebrews here is referring to *all* believers – from babes in Christ through to the most relatively mature and from the most carnal through to the most spiritual. So he was saying in God’s view outside the realm of time, all believers have been already made complete forever through Jesus’ death.

Hebrews 10:14 refers to being perfected in Christ in relation to our legal standing in Christ and our identification with Christ.

But being blameless before Christ relates to confessing and turning from *all* our known sins, being cleansed by Him from our sins and sincerely aiming to obey Him by His power. What a glorious and wonderful thing it is for us to be blameless before God in this life!

Bible Study Questions

1. Explain what it means to be blameless under the New Covenant.
2. Which verses show it is possible to live a blameless life now under the New Covenant?
3. What are the differences between our character and reputation?
4. Explain what are the differences between being blameless before God through His grace in Christ and being perfected in Christ through His death.

⁵ Stanley Frodsham, “Smith Wigglesworth, Apostle of Faith”, Elim, London, 1949, page 124.