

Integrity In The Old Testament

The Old Testament never teaches that after the Fall of Adam and Eve there was any person who lived in a state of permanent sinless perfection (see Genesis 8:21, 1 Kings 8:45, Psalm 51:5, 53:1-3, 130:3, 143:2, Ecclesiastes 7:20 and Isaiah 64:6). Therefore, it is little wonder no sinful human has ever been justified or declared righteous by obeying the Law of Moses (see Galatians 2:16 and Romans 3:20). But note the Old Testament does have much teaching on blamelessness or integrity.

The blameless or those walking in integrity can be described as people of faith who cannot be blamed for wrongdoing or committing sin because:

- they have turned from their known sins.
- the specific known and unknown sins they have committed have been cleansed and forgiven by God and
- they are determined to obey God's known will.

Blamelessness or integrity under the Abrahamic Covenant

In Genesis 17:1, Abraham was commanded by God to be blameless: *“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.’”* Such blamelessness was linked here with walking with God.

Abraham was not permanently sinlessly perfect. He twice told part-lies because of a fear of dying (see Genesis 12:10-13 and 20:1-2) and he inherited Adam's sinful nature. Also Abraham was raised by his father Terah to be a worshipper of pagan gods (see Joshua 24:2).

Abraham was not under the Mosaic Covenant and did not have the written Mosaic Law to reveal God's will. Nor did he have written complete Old and New Testaments. But God commanded him to be a person of integrity according to the revelation of God's will he had through the Holy Spirit and his conscience.

Blamelessness under the Mosaic Covenant

The Mosaic Covenant and Law instructed believers living under it to be blameless before the Lord. Deuteronomy 18:13 commands: *“You shall be blameless before the Lord your God.”*

David's integrity or blamelessness before God

In 2 Samuel 22:24 and Psalm 18:23, David said he was blameless before God. 2 Samuel 22:24 states: *“I was also blameless before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity.”* David wrote this even though earlier he had committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her

husband (see 2 Samuel 11:1-27). Therefore, David did not see blamelessness as a state of permanent sinless perfection in this life.

David understood blamelessness partially in the sense of what he wrote in Psalm 51:1-11. With a truly repentant heart, he confessed his sins of adultery, murder and so on in relation to Bathsheba and her husband (see verses 1-4), admitted his own inherited sinful nature (see verse 5) and then asked for the cleansing and blotting out of his sins.

Another aspect of being blameless before God is setting one's heart to obey His will. Psalm 15:2 uses the word "**integrity**" and relates it in verses 3-5 to doing God's will in practical living.

Psalm 19:12-13 relates being blameless to:

- being cleansed of our secret faults or sins hidden from our awareness and
- not committing deliberate known sin.

Psalm 19:12-13 states: "**...Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression.**"

Some churchgoers think that because of David's adultery and murder, he must have had a liberal compromising attitude to known sin all of the time of his walk with God. They believe David loved God but was a rascal who never at any time lived a life of integrity or blamelessness.

But such a view of David is contrary to 1 Kings 15:5: "**because David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite**" and 1 Kings 14:8: "**...My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only what was right in My eyes**" and 1 Kings 9:4: "**Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you...**" Psalm 78:72 refers to David: "**So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart...**"¹

Integrity, God's mercy, faith and abandoning sin

In Psalm 26:11, David links his integrity before God to God's *mercy*: "**But as for me, I will walk in my integrity; redeem me and be merciful to me.**"

In Psalm 26:1-4, David links his integrity to trusting God and walking in His truth: "**Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the Lord; I shall not slip. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart. For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth. I have not sat down with idolatrous mortals, nor will I go in with hypocrites.**"

Proverbs 20:7 says, "**The righteous man walks in his integrity**". This verse is referring to those who are righteous by God's grace through faith. The *fruit* or *result* of their faith in God

¹ In Psalm 25:6-11, 40:10-12 and 103:8-14, David referred to his sins and God's mercy and forgiveness towards him. David was not permanently sinlessly perfect. But he did walk in integrity.

is their walking in integrity. They are not righteous because of their integrity. Instead their integrity is a *sign* of their *living faith*.

Despite being *undergirded* by *God's mercy* and being a *fruit* of *faith* or *trust in Him*, integrity under the Mosaic Covenant still involved aiming to obey the commands, statutes and judgements of the Law of Moses. The Lord's words to Solomon in 1 Kings 9:4 show this: "***Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgements.***"

In Psalm 101:2-4, David refers to how integrity of heart expresses itself in abandoning all known evil.

John the Baptist's parents

Luke 1:6 refers to John the Baptist's parents: "***And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.***" This verse is not saying John's parents were declared righteous by God because of some supposed perfect obedience to the commandments and ordinances of the Mosaic Law every day of their lives. Romans 3:20 and Galatians 2:16 oppose such an interpretation. Instead, it means one of the following three alternatives:

- they were righteous by God's grace through faith and this saving faith expressed itself in blameless righteous obedience to the Law. In the original Greek, the word "***blameless***" in Luke 1:6 is a form of "amemptos" – the word used in Philippians 3:6 by Paul about his righteousness according to the Law. Note in Philippians 3:4-11, Paul does not say his righteousness according to the Law provided him with eternal salvation. Also, observe someone under the Mosaic Covenant can have a *blameless* obedience to the Law which is *different* from a *sinlessly perfect* obedience to it like Christ had. A blameless obedience involved doing what the Law commanded despite falls into sin which were forgiven through the Mosaic Law animal sacrifices. These sacrifices reflected Jesus' future death.
- they had a non-saving righteousness resulting from their imperfect though blameless obedience to the Mosaic Law.
- they had both a saving righteousness by God's grace through faith plus a non-saving righteousness, the latter resulting from a blameless though not sinless obedience to the Law of Moses.

Paul's blamelessness according to the Mosaic Law

In Philippians 3:6, Paul said he had blameless righteousness according to the Law. Paul was referring here to his obedience to the moral, civil and ceremonial commands of the Mosaic Law prior to his conversion to Christ.

One view argues Paul obeyed the Mosaic Law only according to a *false Pharisaic understanding* of *blamelessness*. This view says Paul did not obey the Law of Moses according to God's definition of completely obeying it.

Matthew 22:37-40, Luke 10:25-28, Romans 13:8-10 and Galatians 5:14 reveal God demands that a complete obedience to all the Mosaic laws *must be a continual real expression of perfect love towards God and other people*. The importance of loving God is mentioned many times in the Mosaic Law – Exodus 20:6, Deuteronomy 5:10, 6:5, 10:12, 11:1, 13:3, 30:6 and 30:20. An external seemingly “complete” obedience to the commands of the Mosaic Law is not complete in God’s eyes because it is not a manifestation of God-inspired love.

Also, note in Romans 7:7-11, Paul reveals he did not obey the Tenth Commandment “**You shall not covet**”. So his righteousness according to the Law was “blameless” only in the eyes of men, not God.

Another view suggests that in Philippians 3:6, Paul was not referring to a false Pharisaic understanding, but to a real blamelessness under the Law. Remember Deuteronomy 18:13 refers to being blameless under the Law. Being blameless under the Mosaic Law is different from being declared righteous through perfect sinless obedience to the Law every moment of every day. Being blameless under the Law is also different from being declared righteous by God’s grace through faith.

Bible Study Questions

1. Describe what integrity means.
2. Does having integrity or being blameless before God mean living in a state of permanent sinless perfection?
3. What verse in the Mosaic Covenant commanded all believers living under it to be blameless before the Lord?
4. How could David say in 2 Samuel 22:24 “**I was also blameless before Him...**” even though earlier he had committed adultery and murder?
5. Why is it wrong to think that even though David loved God, he was a rascal who never at any time lived a life of integrity?
6. Which verses link walking in integrity to
 - a) God’s mercy,
 - b) trusting in Him,
 - c) abandoning all known sin and evil
 - d) and obeying God’s commands and statutes?
7. Explain what Luke 1:6 reveals about John the Baptist’s parents.
8. What are the two views of Philippians 3:6’s mention of Paul’s blamelessness according to the law?
9. What are the differences between being blameless and being perfectly obedient to the Mosaic Law?