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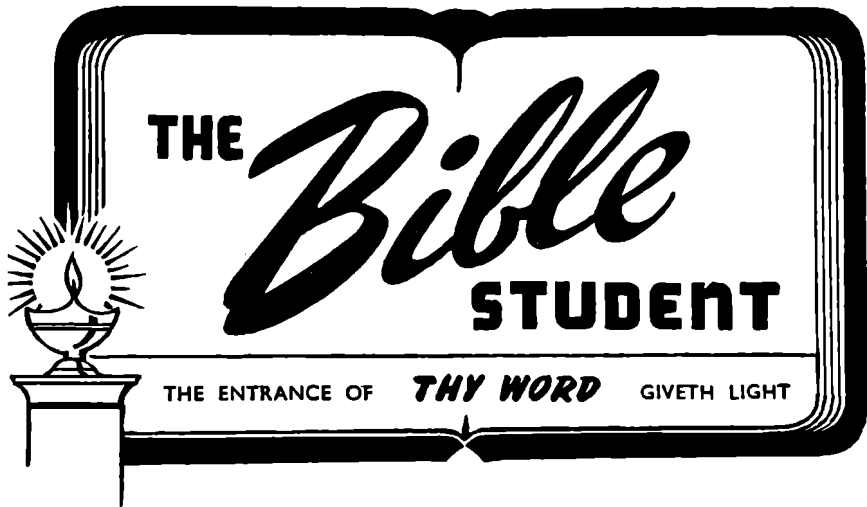
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NEW TESTAMENT WORD STUDIES

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'Irreproachable' (*anegkletos*)

The believer has to live a life before God, before his fellow-believers, and before all men; in each sphere he is, in the purpose of God, to be *irreproachable*. The word '*irreproachable*' is found 1 Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:22; 1 Tim. 3:10; and Titus 1:6, 7. Its Greek equivalent *anegklētos*, is defined as 'irreproachable (especially in private life), blameless' (Soutter). Lias commenting on 1 Cor. 1:8, says 'the construction is "shall make you as men against whom no accusation (no 'charge' = *agklēma*) can be brought".' Here is indeed a high standard set before the believer for his attainment, and it is set in three connections:

1. *It should be the type of life* of one who is recognized as an overseer in the church (1 Tim. 3:10; Titus 1:6, 7). Overseers and deacons should be above suspicion: they may often suffer and be falsely accused but the testimony of their life and behaviour should be such that none may be able to level a charge against them and prove it true. Note: (a) their appointment to service must depend upon their having such a character (Titus 1:6). (b) In that service *their* obligation must be to continue blameless (Tit. 1:7; 1 Tim. 3:10).

Here is no easy standard: it is one which demands constant watchfulness in daily living and serving. Moreover it is one only possible of attainment as there is close communion with Him who is being served. Also it calls for constant reference and obedience to the Scriptures of Truth.

Again, it should be—

2. *The tenor of our life* as lived before the Lord (Colossians 1:22). The reception of the Gospel by these believers had completely changed their lives and their attitude toward God. In brief vivid phrases the Apostle describes the completeness of that change; and the divine purpose of it is stated to be—'*that He might present you . . . unprovable before Him*'. The bringing

of the saints into this high and holy place was secured by that which He did 'in the body of His flesh through death'. In a rare combination of phrases he shows what the whole tenor of the believer's life ideally is and ultimately will be as presented before Him.

It is to be—

(a) *Separate from Evil*: i.e., holy, both in practice and in state of heart. There must be separation. To this end we are ever to strive to be holy 'even as He is holy'. In the fullest sense this will only be realized when we come into the glorified state with Him in the glory. But now our constant endeavour is that 'we may be as we should be.'

Yet this is not to be attained by a mere formal behaviour: rather it is to be the outcome of the new life implanted within us, which in accordance with its own character will turn away from all that is evil. But watchfulness is needed, lest there be temptation to turn to by-paths in which the honour of His name is not upheld, and the truth, as the standard of daily life, is not maintained.

(b) *Secured from corrupting influences within*. The believer is to be 'without blemish'. Nothing that would mar the fair character of those whom Christ will present to Himself, will be seen in the coming day (1 Jn. 3:2). While perfection is not possible while here in the flesh, yet the ideal is one for which to strive both in himself personally, and in the assembly of which he forms a part. We mourn that there is so often to be found that which mars the vision that others see of us, when there should be seen nothing but what is fair and gracious and lovely—the reflected beauty and grace of Christ the Lord Himself, who by His Spirit dwells within.

But in *that* day there will be no blemish. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be . . . (yet) we shall be like Him'! How we long for that day! But until then we should seek to show forth His likeness without a blemish so that others may see His beauty in us.

(c) *Sure that no accusation can be sustained against our manner of life—'unreprovable'*. Many an accusation, even perhaps many a slander, may be levelled against the Christian. But the point is, can such be proved true? Surely no believer living in close

fellowship with his Lord will give any cause for such accusations: we must be '*unreprovable*'.

(d) *Sustained before HIS scrutiny!* Our daily life is to be without blemish and unreprovable '*before Him*'. It might be that my life would pass the imperfect scrutiny of men, but what of that of the Lord? It is only as I abide in Him that that will be possible, and in that day shall I not so stand? Yet, be it said, that the life should be so lived as not to quail before His scrutiny now; and the Apostle shows us how. It is to be a life without tricks, turns, or twists. It is neither to waver, wilt, nor wobble, as is shown in verse 23.

3. *The Trueness of life seen in the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Cor. 1:8). The Apostle's desire is that the Corinthian believers should be '*unreproveable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*'. In order that this should be so he prays that in their lives and testimony:

(a) *No gift will be wanting.* He writes to correct, to beseech and to instruct so that they should come behind in no gift, that all that God would give them for the maintenance of Assembly testimony and edification of the saints, should be theirs.

What a delightful thing to see God's gifts so manifested and so in use in a body of believers! Nothing being stultified by man's organization, or by evils being condoned, but all going forward in perfect harmony with the Lord and with one another! This, perhaps, is an ideal rarely realized, yet one to be reached out after.

(b) *No hesitancy in awaiting that Day;* and, be it noted, not awaiting for something for oursevels, whether reward, or something else; but awaiting something for our Lord—His revelation and His Glory. He will be manifested before wondering worlds, acclaimed as Sovereign and obeyed as Lord. It is something for Him, for which we long and wait. But we must patiently await His time, that time determined by Him in the exercise of sovereign right. And as He comes, how shall we stand? Irreproachable! Such is the Apostle's prayer. To stand irreproveable then, we should seek to be irreproveable now.

(c) *No lack of assurance* for '*He shall confirm you unto the end*'. The ability to do this is His, and, as we yield to Him and walk before Him, His confirmation will be manifest. The certainty of it should win our confidence and evoke a purposeful activity, dedicated to the furtherance of His glory. Such confirmation will tend to strengthen the resolve to go forward in His name; it will strengthen the character of the believer, as well as the inner consciousness of his communion with God; and this will continue 'unto the end', when the need of such will no longer arise as he will be 'at home with the Lord'.

'MINE OWN VINEYARD HAVE I NOT KEPT'

In that inimitable Idyll of love, the Song of Solomon, (which, by the way, calls for very real spiritual insight to truly appreciate and enjoy) the Bridegroom apostrophises the Bride as 'a Garden enclosed' (Heb., 'barred'—to all but Himself). Further down in the same chapter (4: 15) He says of Her: 'Thou art a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and flowing streams from Lebanon' (R.V.)

It is a thought that many a sacred writer has taken up and applied to the heart of the believer. Whilst some have pointed out that the title of Bride is not applied in Scripture to the individual Christian but to the Church as a whole; it still remains blessedly true that the relationship between the individual and Christ is one of such intimateness that it is comparable only to that between Bride and Bridegroom. And after all, what is true of the Bride as a whole must of necessity be true generally of each member composing the Bride. So that, if Christ finds such delight in His Bride as expressed in the words quoted above, He finds the same delight in the individual believer's heart—to Him it is a fragrant garden, wherein He may find those rare 'spices' of the Spirit that give Him great delight.