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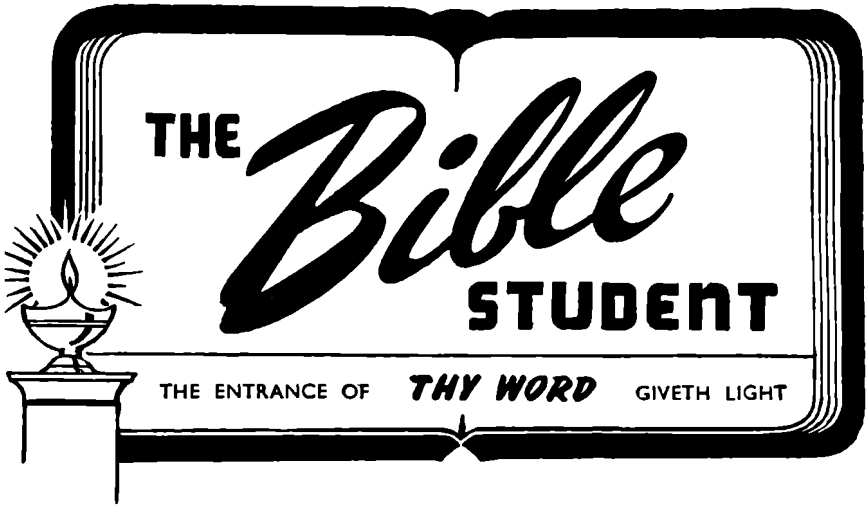
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# NEW TESTAMENT WORD STUDIES

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'Harmless' (*akeraios*)

This word is derived from *à* and *kerannumi*—'the fundamental notion being absence of foreign admixture: hence, immunity from disturbing elements' (Trench). Grimm-Thayer defines it as 'unmixed, pure (as wines and metals); (of the mind) without mixture of evil, free from guile, innocent. In strict usage *kerannumi* denotes such a mixture as combines the ingredients into a new compound—a chemical mixture.' In the N. T. it is found only in Matt. 10:16; Phil. 2:15; and Rom. 16:19. In the last passage it is rendered in the R. V. as 'simple', and in the other two passages, 'harmless'. It denotes that which, being unmixed with evil elements is harmless, devoid of evil or deceit. Godet, commenting on Rom. 16:19, says, 'here Paul wishes to speak of the moral rectitude which, the moment it knows evil, breaks with it, hence the term *akeraios* literally is "not mixed", is free from alloy.'

If we accept Grimm-Thayer's exposition that *kerannumi* 'denotes a mixture which combines its ingredients into a *new* compound', it implies that the new compound has qualities which were not actually found in the separate ingredients. Applying the thought for a moment, if as believers we allow elements contrary to Scripture to affect our character or our teaching, there will arise new features which are contrary to the truth, and detract from a godly Christian testimony. Such a mingling of 'foreign elements' in the personality leads to mixed loyalties, the pursuit of diverse ends, and the dispersal of our powers in futile effort. The ideal we may have once held is lost in a medley of indefinite and contrary purposes.

What then is the real motive of allowing such mixed loyalties or ideals? Is it in order to please others? Is it hoped to escape some of the rigours of the path of separation; to mitigate some of the demands of a holy and sanctified life; to tone down some of the unpleasant features (as far as the flesh is concerned) of narrow dogma? If these be the motives

underlying the admission of such contrary elements (such 'mixture') then it stands self-condemned, and the true believer will know how to turn away such appeals as these elements may seem to have.

Let us note the three passages where this word is used.

I. *In Conflict.* Matt. 10: 16. Believers may be called upon to stand for their faith before governors and kings. How are they to act? Three matters are mentioned,

(a) *Their Record.* Their Lord sends them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. A vivid contrast is drawn between them and those to whom they go; the gentle, harmless, useful nature of the sheep being set over against the cruel, cunning nature of the wolf.

What kind of a record do believers earn for themselves?

(b) *Their Desire.* 'Be wise as serpents, harmless as doves'. Our word here almost approaches the meaning of 'innocence', unmixed with craft or deceit. Even to escape wrongful and unjust treatment, or to obtain freedom from the torments of their persecutors, their way lies, not along the road of compromise nor of mixing deceit and craft with their witness, but of continuing with singleness of purpose to glorify their Lord.

(c) *The Result.* They would be a testimony to such governors and kings, and also to the Gentiles, i.e., the people amongst whom they live (v. 18). The purity of their witness was ever to be kept in view; the clarity of their testimony was not to be clouded by the questionable results of mixed motives. Everywhere they were to be known as Christ's men, walking as He walked and acting as He acted. It would be manifest to their judges that their speech was directed of God, that their steadfastness was maintained in the power of God, and that their serenity was due to peace with God.

II. *In Conscience*—before men: Rom. 16: 19.

(a) *The Record.* 'Your obedience is come abroad unto all men.' While others were causing divisions and acting in

ways contrary to the doctrine the Apostles had taught, these saints could always be counted on for their continued obedience to that which they had learned from the Apostolic teachers. Their staunch loyalty to the truth had become known in many parts and had become an example and an encouragement to others; their stability in the doctrine was a testimony of value to all men and had helped some to cease from their wavering and hesitancy, and to hold fast to the truth also. Their singleness of purpose was in marked contrast to the dividing schisms introduced by some who were easily moved by every new thing taught by heretical leaders.

Where are such staunchness and stability to be found now? Every crop of new 'isms' find ready adherents who, while professing great things, are acting in disobedience to that which they first learned. We need to obey the Apostolic exhortation to 'hold fast that form of sound doctrine which was delivered unto you'.

(b) *The Desire.* 'I would have you . . . simple unto that which is evil'—so simple that there is no attraction in that which is evil, having an attitude of mind that, becoming conscious of the presence of evil, immediately rejects it and withdraws from it.

(c) *The Result.* 'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.' Evil brings disquiet, a lack of harmony in the life, a disturbance of relations with that which is good. In contrast thereto, God is described as the God of peace, but opposed to evil and of that great Adversary who is the incarnation of evil. Satan shall be bruised, overcome and treated as a defeated foe. The promise is given that this shall be done 'shortly.' Now we can rest in the assurance that he is a *conquerable* foe and that the forces of evil shall not prevail.

III. *In Concord*—Before the Assembly. Phil. 2: 15.

(a) *The Record.* 'It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.' The human instrument

may be removed, but God remains and works. As a result within the Assembly there is the call for the exercise of *all 'gifts'*, and to cease from looking only to one man, however gifted he may be. The individual believer being pliable in the hands of God, being ready for Him to use, lends himself to the outworking of His will and pleasure.

(b) *The Desire.* 'Do all things . . . that ye may be blameless and harmless.' They are to avoid murmurings and disputings and so prove that they are devoid of such mixture of evil and selfish thoughts as would disturb the peace and hinder the full working of the will of God in the company of the saints.

This is to apply to all things, and not to chosen activities. In the little things as well as in the greater things, in the less known things as in those more public, the same rule is to operate and so the smooth running of Assembly life will be maintained without the sacrifice of any one of its principles.

(c) *The Result.* 'Holding forth the Word of life.' In this Epistle in particular, the Apostle urges that all should be done for the furtherance of the Gospel, and here also their unmixed motives, their unalloyed character, their singleness of ideal should all tend to a steady holding forth of the Word of Life. Thus would the Gospel progress and be furthered. In similar ways today—there must be the unmixed testimony, the purity of witness maintained and the severance from known evil at all times, so that the Word may be heralded forth without fear, or of giving occasion to the enemy to gain advantage.