

HHBC



James

3: 1-4

TEACHERS & FACTORS IN STUMBLING

James 3: 1-4



1 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.

3 Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well.

4 Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires.

5 So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.

8 But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.

9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;

10 from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

11 Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?

12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

James 3: 5-12



HAL MOLLOY'S OUTLINE OF JAMES W/ EMPHASIS ON **TEMPTATION:**

1. Temptation to express a swift, negative response & verbalize wrath [hair trigger] [1:19-20]
2. Temptation to be Hearers only of the Word & not Doers of the Word [1:22-25]
3. Temptation to Criticize Others [1:26-27]
4. Temptation to Show Partiality/ Favoritism [2:1-13]
5. Temptation to Boast of Our Faith without Works [2:14-26]
6. **Temptation to Misuse & Not Restrain the Tongue [3:1-12]**
7. Temptation to Walk in Human v. Divine Wisdom [3:13-18]
8. Temptation to Quarrel and Enter into Conflict [4:1-3]
9. Temptation of Friendship with the World/Cosmos system [4:4]
10. Temptation to be Proud [4:6]
11. Temptation to Not be Submissive to God [4:7-10]
12. Temptation to Judge Others [4:11-12]
13. Temptation to Make Decisions Apart from the Lord [4:13-17]
14. Temptation to Hoard Wealth & Live in Pleasure [5:1-6]
15. Temptation to Be Impatient and Complain [5:7-11]



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James 3:1

A Cautionary Word to teachers of the word:

1. **‘Let not’** – is an imperative command. “Don’t even start to become teachers’ is the Greek flavor of the command; as opposed to: “Stop doing the thing you’re doing’ [MCCALLEY]
 - a) Note: do not ***ginomai*** a teacher; come into existence, a new state of being a teacher . . .
2. **WHY** should the brethren not aspire to become teachers?
 - a) There was a mass rush of men becoming teachers in the early church; many were trying to get on the bandwagon
 - b) The ***prestige*** of being a ‘teacher’ as in Mat. 8: Then a scribe came and said to Him, *“Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.”* In the Jewish law-based faith, a teacher was a Rabbi- had a following- the Rabbi had a great place of honor and importance. Then, at Pentecost: was a migration to a new thing: the ***church*** - which didn’t have long, involved rabbinical requirements. And so: many prestige seekers were flocking there. [MCCALLEY]
 - c) Example: *‘For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions. I Tim 1:6,7*



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James 3:1

The Rush to the Office of Teaching in the Early Church had some big problems:

3. Examples of Some of the problems:
 - a) *'For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.'* Titus 1:10,11
 - b) *'But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.'* 2 Pet. 2:1
 - c) *'Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head,'* Col 2:18,19a, *all examples of the rush to become 'teachers' but having the wrong motivation/doctrine. Not serving in humility and love...*
4. The stricter Judgment associated with Teaching:
 - a) It is evident why James says there is a stricter judgment for teachers. The teacher must adhere to sound doctrine (e.g. Paul's admonition to Timothy) With greater responsibility comes greater accountability from God



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James 3:1

The 'Stricter Judgment'

- 'stricter' – ***megas*** meaning ***greater*** . . . Greater in things like mass and scale
- 'judgment' - ***krima***: a sentence; decree
- Is the judging in regards to good or bad? Ie: Is it judging in a penalty sense [***bad sense***], or judging the work of teaching w/ a view towards letting it remain as gold, silver after being tried by fire? [***good sense***]
- **HERE IS A BRIEF DOCTRINAL EXERCISE** below: related to 'incurring a stricter judgment'
- It cannot mean: 1. The Tribulation judgment: *we're not there*, 2. the Judgment at the End of the Tribulation, 'Sheeps and Goats' judgment; *believers aren't there either; that is judging unbelieving nations*, 3. the Great White Throne judgment: *definitely not there & further, we aren't 'the dead'*
- ***It Could mean:*** the Bema Seat judgment of I Cor. 3:12+: '*Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*' This is 'judgment' in a **GOOD** sense
- Best interpretation is likely: the judgment relates to no formal judgment, but a general statement of God judging a man's teaching as to: **bad doctrine vs. sound doctrine**, or **righteous intentions vs. bad**



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James 3:2

1. **Why does James bring up ‘Teachers’ and teaching in regards to the tongue and stumbling?**
 - a) I started out my study having difficult matching up why James brings up teachers in verse 1, and then proceeds to an eleven verse deep-dive into the power and sins of the tongue.
 - b) Paul says: *Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church, (1) first apostles, (2) second prophets, (3) third teachers, (4...8) then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.* I Cor. 12:27, 28
 - c) Do you see the relationship of the church-body offices to the tongue? And stumbling?
 - d) The reason for the warning to teachers in regards to stumbling (sinning; falling): “The person who speaks much is going to err in his or her speech much. The tongue is the hardest member of the body to control. No one has been able to master it yet except Jesus Christ.” [CONSTABLE]
 - e) The man who is able to say nothing is ‘perfect’ = mature. ‘Speaking one’s mind’ is a virtue in the world; in scripture: **it is a vice** [MCCALLEY]. Your foot does not cause you to stumble, your tongue does
2. Man here is **anēr** not **anthrōpos** - why is that important?
 - a) *anēr; male, boy, husband, fiancé (bethrothed husband)* and *anthrōpos = human-kind in general*



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James 3:2

3. *Note: Does not stumble in what **he says***
 - a) James 2 had a man saying he had faith, James continues the emphasis is on a man speaking
4. A **Perfect** man: is the **teleios** man – spiritually finished-out; wanting in nothing; fully mature
 - a) *We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. Col 1:28*
5. Able to **bridle** his body: **chalinagōgeō** - both to lead by a bridle and to guide; also **hold in check**, restrain. Used only 2x in N.T.: only by James. Used 6x in the Old: II Kings, Isaiah, Psalms, Proverbs, Job
 - a) In the O.T. ‘bridle’ has similar connotations as exemplified in II Kings 19:28: *Therefore I will put My hook in your nose, And My bridle in your lips, And I will turn you back by the way which you came.*
 - b) **Fun & Very Related Fact:** there are 453.6 grams in 1 pound; the average man = 83,916 grams. Average weight of the tongue is 70 g. The tongue is $70/83,916 = 0.000834167$ of a man’s weight. It’s power has an incredible amount of leverage on the well being of the entire body according to James



3 Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. **4** Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. . . .

James 3:3,4

1. Similar Figure of Speech from David:
 - a) *'I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include **bit and bridle** to hold them in check, Otherwise they will not come near to you.'* Psa. 32:8,9
 - b) *I said, "I will guard my ways. That I may not sin with my tongue- I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle - While the wicked are in my presence."* Psa. 39:1
2. 'wherever the *inclination* of the pilot desires: inclination is **hormē**
 - a) '**hormē** - Is a violent motion, a violent impulse
 - b) can we say that the 'strong winds' are the thoughts we have [sinful thoughts, fleshly, unrighteous] and the drive to express them in our daily life is very strong?
3. Who **did not** have this problem? **He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth** Isa. 53



James 3:1-4

Final Thoughts:

The faith of which James writes is a vital force that enables a man to live triumphantly, even to controlling that unruly member, the tongue, by means of which God is so often dishonored and our fellow-men injured. An unbridled tongue is at the bottom of much strife, both in the world and in the Church. Those who profess faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who was sinless in word as in all else, may well ponder the serious admonitions of this “*Tongue*” chapter.

In place of masters in ver. 1 ([James 3:1](#)) we might better read teachers. To be recognized as an instructor of other people is to be in a place of great responsibility. If the teaching given out be faulty or misleading, **none but God Himself can estimate the harm that may accrue to those who receive it.** It is a serious thing indeed to attempt to influence men either for good or for evil. He to whom such a ministry is committed needs to be much before God as to how he fulfils it. Far greater condemnation than that to which his listeners are exposed will be his portion if he fails to teach the truth as God has revealed it in His Word.

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