

April 4-28-24 – Pastor Kevin Olivier  
**James 3:1-2** – “Let Not Many Become Teachers”

- A. Sometimes when a man first becomes saved out of a life of sin and unbelief, it rather common for him to desire to serve in the church in a teaching capacity.
- B. James stressed the matter of one’s tongue when a man considers becoming a teacher in the church. This isn’t his first mention of this very important part of our bodies. → **Ja 1:19, v26**

Let not many become teachers.	I. <u>THE DESIRE TO TEACH AND PREACH</u> II. <u>A WARNING FOR TEACHERS</u>
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I. THE DESIRE TO TEACH AND PREACH → **v1**

- A. This warning was given because James ministered to some who desired to become teachers in the church.
- B. We must take the warning of James in light of other passages of Scripture that speak to this matter.
1. → **1 Tim 3:1-7**
    - a. The Greek word for “**bishop**” can also be translated as “**overseer.**” This bishop has the same function and the required qualifications as the office of elder when compared to **Titus 1.**
    - b. The OPC Form of Government in its liturgy for a minister’s ordination describes how one man can fit both the offices of bishop and elder: “The person who fills this office is designated in Scripture by different names expressive of his various duties. As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed bishop... As it is his duty to be grave and prudent, and an example to the flock, and to govern well in the house of God, he is termed presbyter or elder” (FOG, XXIII, 14, p.55).
    - c. Those desiring the office of bishop-elder have a wholesome aspiration. It is a “**fine work he desires to do**” (**v1**). Before we can define what this “**fine work**” is, we must first clarify the office of bishop or elder a bit.
  2. Later in **1 Tim 5:17**, Paul made the distinction between ruling and teaching elders when he wrote, “**The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.**”
    - a. If someone has management gifts yet doesn’t desire to teach in any capacity, he might say, “I want to be an ‘overseer’ – a ruling elder yet not a teacher.”
    - b. **1 Tim 3:2** still says he must be “**able to teach**”
    - c. When doing oversight visits, counseling needs will come up. That involves teaching.
  3. James gave this word of caution in **3:1**, saying, “**Let not many of you become teachers...**” Paul encouraged this pursuit, calling it a “**fine work.**” We know that Scripture cannot contradict Scripture, so how do we reconcile James and Paul here?

## II. A WARNING FOR TEACHERS

A. James gave a reason why many should not become teachers: **“as such we will incur a stricter judgment” (v1).**

1. Your typical man or woman who holds to heresy will suffer eternal punishment in hell, yet Jesus warned of a more severe punishment for those who cause others to stumble. → **Lu 17:1-2**
  - a. For those men and women who get up and teach a false gospel week after week for years, think of how many people they have caused to stumble.
  - b. Their torment in hell will be greater.
  - c. Those who willfully teach liberal doctrines they know are contrary to the Word of God should heed Christ’s warning in **Lu 12:47-48**: **“That slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes,<sup>48</sup> but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but a few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required...”**
2. Teachers who commit heinous sins in the church causing others to stumble can be another case James warns about incurring a **“stricter judgment”**.

B. When James said **“we all stumble in many ways,” (3:2)** he included himself along with all other teachers, elders, bishops, and preachers in the church.

C. Getting back to the qualifications for a teacher in the church, James said such a candidate should be able to govern his tongue and thereby have the self-control to bridle or restrain his whole body as well.

→ **v2**

1. This qualification excludes many men from becoming teachers.
  - a. The dilemma here is where do we find a man who **“does not stumble in what he says”**?
  - b. Even the best of pastors stumble in this regard.
  - c. God has a high standard, yet sinless perfection cannot be expected because that doesn’t exist.
    - 1) Only Jesus was perfect and sinless with His lips.
    - 2) For those who put their faith in Him as Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ died to forgive us of our failures to keep God’s law in our thoughts, spoken words, and deeds.
    - 3) Through Him we are forgiven, yet we are also accounted as having the righteousness of Christ by faith.
- c. Next Lord’s Day evening I will preach on what James has to say about the tongue.
2. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown wrote “The office is a noble one; but few are fit for it. Few govern the tongue well (Jam 3:2), and only such as can govern it are fit for the office; therefore, ‘teachers’ ought not to be many.”<sup>1</sup>
3. This is where the similarities with Paul’s teaching on elders and bishops come back into the picture.
  - a. Paul’s listing of qualifications we read earlier in **1 Tim 3:1f** likewise restricts many men from becoming teachers.
  - b. In this sense, both James and Paul agree that an upright yet not perfect life is required for one to become a teacher. That permits only a few to that office.

Review, further application, and conclusion:

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<sup>1</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [\*Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 489).