16. We resume our study of verse 2 with its second sentence, "If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man." That allowed us to then introduce the word "bridle" and its association in this context not with a horse but the human tongue. The horse's bridle serves as a good illustration.

17. The sentence that begins the verse is an accurate statement. The truth is that "we all stumble in many ways." The word stumble is the present active indicative of the verb, πταίω (*ptaíō*): "to err, offend, fail in one's duty; figuratively, to fall into sin."

18. **Principle:** All believers fail and sin. The idea that we do not is an irrational assumption making the proponent oblivious of the truth. Uncorrected by rebound it eventually drifts into reversionism.

19. Many believers who are veterans in doctrine get comfortable when they learn to avoid sins of the flesh, but when it comes to sins of the tongue, they remain ignorant of the fires they can ignite.

20. Therefore, advancing believers can live a life free of most overt sins, but not when it comes to criticizing, judging, belittling, accusing, gossiping, or demeaning others. It makes no difference whether the claims are true or not, Matthew 7:1–2 prohibits the behavior with discipline being directed to the accuser not the accused.

21. However, the primary culprit is not the tongue. No one says anything that does not first originate in the soul. It is culprit #1. Then volition makes the decision to verbalize what is thought which is culprit #2. On some occasions, the sin of the tongue results in retaliation by the one being criticized.

22. Consequently, the tongue, which is a small member of the body, can be used to control the whole body. The tongue spreads the fire, but it is the soul that ignites the flame.

23. Therefore, the conscience plays a major role in this process. The spirit-filled believer is enabled to inculcate divine guidance through Bible study.

24. This information is acquired by positive volition to its teaching. It is retained in the *kardía* and available for consultation. But volition must make the decision to consult and then apply pertinent doctrine to the circumstance.

25. When the individual overrides his conscience, he volitionally ignores divine guidance from his doctrinal inventory. Instead, he opts for behavior patterns typically associated with sin, human good, and evil. Sins of the tongue often assimilate this entire trifecta.

26. This brings us back to our previously observed first-class condition of the conditional particle, εἴ (*eí*): "If and it is true." This is followed by the statement "any believer does not stumble in what he says."

27. The word "stumble" is preceded by the negative conjunction οὐ (*ou*): "not." Therefore, he uses his conscience to recall the doctrine against gossiping and volitionally refrains from doing so.

28. This is followed by the phrase "in what he says," the noun λόγος (*lógos*). It is often translated, "word," but is expanded in various uses. For example, here the person is "*not* forming words that are harmful when he says them."

29. In this context, *lógos* refers to his decision *not* to utter critical words. His silence indicates restraint by his conscience to not utter things that may be harmful to others.

30. This use of *lógos* refers to verbal discourse, however, it is canceled by the negative particle *eí* meaning he did not say anything at all.

31. This believer refrained from committing a sin of the tongue. How did he accomplish this? He had doctrine in his soul which his volition consulted, resulting in him remaining silent.

32. What was the inventory he consulted? The principles and doctrines in the edification complex of his soul in concert with pertinent doctrine.

33. He was able to apply restraint because his conscience advised him to remain silent. By remaining mute, his body, specifically his tongue, was bridled, *chalinagōgéō*.

34. This leads us to the apodosis of this first-class condition. The sentence begins with the protasis, "We all commit sins. <u>If</u> **[protasis]** anyone does not sin in what he says with his tongue, <u>then</u> **[apodosis]** he is a perfect man."

35. The word "perfect" is the adjective τέλειος (*téleios*) and it refers "to being fully developed in a moral sense."[1] This "moral sense" defines the fictitious person of the illustration, the noun, ἀνήρ (*anḗr*): an adult male.

36. Morality is involved here, but it goes further than that. In context, we have an illustration of a "mature" man. Therefore, the man, *anḗr*, is an adult, yet this noun goes beyond mere adulthood. It describes a gentleman whose doctrinal inventory characterizes him as a mature believer.

37. What the "mature believer" is enabled to do is "bridle his whole body." Why is the soul not the thing bridled here? Because the issue being discussed is volition which is constantly under assault by the body.

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[1] Walter Bauer, "τέλειος," in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 996 (4).

38.   The principle here has nothing to do with our example of being a "perfect man," yet all four of the English translations use the word "perfect." No human is perfect. Even in James's example, the impact of the illustration is damaged by using the word.

39.   The best English word to translate *téleios* is not "perfect" or "moral," but "mature." It is the mature believer who has working objects in his stream of consciousness by which his volition is enabled to "bridle his whole body."

40.   In Walter Bauer's *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (see footnote 1 above), he translates *anḗr*, "in sense of maturity" when used as the object of *téleios*, translated "perfect" in all major English Bibles.

41.   What best brings out the meaning of the term is "mature believer" who is "able," the adjective δυνατός (*dunatós*): "competent, skilled, capable."

42.   Of these options, in this context the best translation is, "capable." Most believers do not have the capability to "bridle their whole bodies" with their volitions. Here is a definition for "capable":

> **Having capacity or ability; efficient and able. Having the ability required for a specific task or accomplishment; qualified.**[2]

43.   The potential a believer has to bridle his whole body begins with the filling of the Holy Spirit, consistent study of biblical absolutes, and the confidence to rely on these doctrines as absolute truth, trustworthy to be utilized as problem-solving devices.

44.   Question: Are you able to concentrate at Bible class? If so, are you able to understand what is being communicated? If so, do you believe what you understand from Scripture is absolute truth? If so, do you rely on its guidance to bridle you whole body?

45.   Why does the body need to be bridled? Because each and every cell in the body is programmed by the sin nature, each individual susceptible to its lust patterns and expressed in the commission of thought, oral, and overt sins.

46.   How about an example of the mental attitude of a believer who does not have the capability to bridle his own body?

> **Ephesians 4:29**   Let no unwholesome [σαπρός (*saprós*): rotten fish, i.e., "worthless, damaging"] word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification, according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

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[2] *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 5th ed. (2016), s.v. "capable."

47. The word, *saprós*, clearly has to do with the tongue and its enunciations because its source is said to be "from your mouth."

> **The meaning of σαπρός in Ephesians 4:29a may be seen from 4:29b, "but that which is good for edifying where needed." A λόγος σαπρός (*lógos saprós* ["damaging word"]) does not serve the needs of the community. Hence it is unprofitable (idle gossip").**[3]

48. In this verse, the worthless, damaging word is described as "idle gossip." What is communicated may be true, but to spread the information to others is not beneficial since it "does not serve the needs of the community."

49. Our subject in James 3 has to do with the control of the tongue. The first example given by James is "We stumble in many ways." If you don't stumble it is because you have advanced to such a level in your spiritual growth that you are able to bridle your body.

50. Gossiping is the use of the tongue to convey information that does harm to others in the Christian "community." This does not "serve the needs" which is accomplished by the development of integrity in the souls of believers.

51. There are other examples, but no need to browbeat further to communicate the idea James is addressing. James is using the word, bridle, to make his point. It's that long, multisyllabic noun, χαλιναγωγέω (*chalinagōgéō*): "to restrain, govern, or control."

52. This is obviously a compound. The first half of the word is the noun χαλινός (*chalinós*): "a bridle," followed by verb, ἄγω (*ágō*): "to restrain, govern, or control."

53. The principle James communicates by the use of this word is personal integrity. How is personal integrity characterized in Scripture? The application of the Royal Law in James 2:8 which is executed by the commandment in Leviticus 19:18*b*, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

54. The word "love" in Leviticus, and its quotations in the New Testament, is the verb אָהֵב (*'ahav*). In the New Testament it is ἀγαπάω (*agapáō*). In the context of the Royal Law, these words do not refer to familial relationships but rather to the population at large, i.e., "your neighbor."

55. The Hebrew word for "neighbor" in Leviticus is רֵעַ (*rea'*) while in the New Testament it is πλησίον (*plēsíon*). English Bibles translate it with "neighbor," but the better rendering is, "fellow man."

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[3] Otto Bauernfeind, "σαπρός," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 7:97.