

27. When a large enough population of these deviants gains ascendancy, then our nation will have reached critical point. What and where it occurs is yet to be seen. Hopefully, order can be restored, but the absence of thought in the souls of so many advises the policy of keeping a low profile.
28. In the meantime, we continue focusing our attention on the power of the Word which is necessary for functioning properly in the hostile environment of the devil's world.

**James 3:1** Fellow members of the royal family of God, stop the process of many of you by assuming the office of pastor-teacher, knowing that we shall take to ourselves a more severe execution of judgment. (EXT)

**James 3:2** 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. (NASB)

1. In verse 2, James takes up the problem of the human tongue. It is quite the multifaceted organ located on the floor of the mouth. It aids in swallowing. It has taste buds which are able, in concert with smell, touch, texture, and temperature, to detect salt and sweet at the tip, bitter at the base, and acid or sour along its borders. In humans, it may be trained to form words, express thoughts, both good and bad, and trained to do so in any language.
2. James begins the second verse with a statement no objective person would disagree, "For we all stumble in many ways." To confirm the point, he states the impossible, "If anyone does not stumble in what he says he is a perfect man."
3. The sentence begins with the first-class condition of the conditional particle **εἰ (eí)**: "If and it is true." This is followed by the statement "anyone does not stumble in what he says."
4. This sets up a conclusion based on an assumption: "he is a perfect man." Who could that be? No one! James illustrates with a fictitious person.
5. He goes on to contend such a man is "able to bridle the whole body as well."
6. **PRINCIPLE:** If a person can bridle the tongue, then he may consistently bridle his volition as well. The word "bridle" is the aorist active infinitive of the verb **χαλιναγωγέω (chalinagōgēō)**: "to bridle; lead, direct, govern, restrain, or control."
7. What is the application of the word "bridle" here? Here's what the English dictionary reports:



**Bridle.** A harness, consisting of a headstall, bit, and reins, fitted about the horse's head and used to restrain or guide the animal. To control or restrain.<sup>4</sup>

8. To illustrate, James uses the bridle, a device which guides, controls and restrains a horse. Horses come in different sizes, from Shetlands, whose height is about 40 inches, to Belgian, Shire, and Clydesdale stallions who go as high as 18 hands (six feet).
9. Details on the control of a horse are important to understand since James compares the mouth of a horse to the tongue of a human. If the generally large animal like a horse can be controlled by a bit and bridle, what will it take to do the same for man? Let's learn about the horse first.

**Training and equipment.** Communication with the horse is rendered possible by the use of the bit and the aids. The rider signals intentions to the horse by a combination of recognized movements of hands and legs, using several articles of equipment. By repetition the horse remembers this language, understands what is required, and obeys.

**Bits.** There are several types of bits, including the snaffle, the double bridal, and the Pelham.

The simplest is the snaffle. It consists of a single straight or jointed mouthpiece with a ring at each end of the reins. The snaffle is appropriate for preliminary schooling.

**Bridles.** The bridle is a set of straps that makes the bit secure in the animal's mouth and thus ensures human control by means of the reins. The upper portion of the bridle consists of the headpiece passing behind the ears and joining the headband over the forehead; the cheek straps run down the sides of the head to the bit, to which they are fastened.

**Aids.** The principle features of a horse's mentality are acute powers of observation, innate timidity, and a good memory. To a certain extent the horse can also understand. Schooling is based on these faculties, and the rider's aids are applied accordingly. The natural aids are the voice, the hands through the reins and the bit, the legs and heels, and the movement of the rider's weight.

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<sup>4</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 5th ed. (2016), s.v. "bridle."



Horses are easily startled. A good horseman will approach them quietly, speaking to them and patting them to give them confidence. The rider's voice and its tone make a useful aid in teaching a horse in its early schooling to walk, trot, canter, and halt.<sup>5</sup>

10. The bit is the part of the bridle that goes into the horse's mouth, the rear of the bit presses against the back of his mouth which is very tender. In addition, the reins are attached to the bit so that when the rider pulls back on them, it causes pain. Pulling back the left rein causes the horse to turn left, visa versa for the right.
11. As noted above, there are other ways to control a horse by the use of the rider's legs and how he sits in the saddle. James's illustration emphasizes the bridle which includes the bit.
12. To illustrate, James describes a man who does not stumble in what he says because he is able to bridle his tongue and his whole body as well.
13. How does he do this? Volition! He makes good decisions from a position of strength. What is his position of strength? Maximum doctrine resident in the soul which he consults as the working object of his decision-making processes.
14. This resource is the result of consistent spiritual growth that has, over time, constructed an edification complex in his soul:

**Foundation:** Salvation: Received by faith alone in Christ alone.

**1st Floor:** Operation Z: Spiritual growth under the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

**2d Floor:** Dispensations: Knowing what time it is & the uniqueness of the Church Age.

**3d Floor:** The 10 problem-solving devices.

**4th Floor:** Spiritual self-esteem & application of PSDs 7 & 8.

**5th Floor:** Spiritual autonomy & the copacetic spiritual life.

**6th Floor:** Spiritual maturity & occupation with Christ.

**7th Floor:** Lifestyle of the invisible hero & invisible impact.

15. This brings us back to the introductory first-class conditional clause, "if anyone does not stumble in what he says." This references the tongue.

**(End JAS3-15. See JAS3-16 for continuation of study at p. 151)**

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Edward Casolani, "The Horse and Horsemanship: Training and Equipment," in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia*, (2010), 20:652-53.



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 (ptaiō)**: “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 *kardia* 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, **εἰ (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. **If [protasis]** anyone does not sin in what he says with his tongue, **then [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.”<sup>1</sup> This “moral sense” defines the fictitious person of the illustration, the noun, **άνήρ (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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<sup>1</sup> 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 *anēr*, “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.<sup>2</sup>**

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 (*sapρός*)**: 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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<sup>2</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 5th ed. (2016), s.v. “capable.”

