

IN OUR STUDY OF JAMES, ~ WE ARE STUDYING THE MAJOR SECTION THAT COVERS ~ 2:1 - 3:18.

AS WE KNOW, ~ CONSISTS OF FOUR MINI-ESSAYS ~ IN PROVERB FORM.

▶▶ We have finished our look at the first two mini-essays.

▷▷ James' warning against favoritism ~ 2:1-13.

▷▷ And ~ his argument that ~ faith without the tangible evidence of its reality ~ is not saving faith, ~ 2:14-26.

TODAY, ~ WE'LL TURN OUR ATTENTION TO JAMES' THIRD MINI-ESSAY.

A TREATISE ON HUMAN SPEECH, ~ IN 3:1-12.

▶▶ Much like 1:22 ~ where James instructed his readers to be doers of the word, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ in 3:1 he gives advice ~ on what they should not become, ~ teachers.

▶▶ But ~ what is interesting ~ is the fact ~ that the initial command ~ ¶¶

▷▷ does not become the main point of the next section.

▶▶ This is contrary to what we saw in the first two mini-essays.

▷▷ In those, ~ his first statement made up the topic sentence. 1/14 ¶¶

## IOW, ~ ONE MIGHT READILY ASSUME ~ IN READING 3:1 ~ THAT TEACHERS ~ ¶¶

▶▶ is the theme of the next section.

▶▶ But this is not the case.

▶▶ Instead, ~ the advice to avoid becoming teachers ~ segues into a discussion ~ on human speech.

▷▷ The tongue, ~ of course, ~ is used as a metaphor for that.

▶▶ So the real topic in this next section ~ ¶¶

▷▷ is not ~ about refraining from becoming teachers ~ ¶¶

↳↳ but ~ a mini-essay ~ on human speech.

→→ And we'll get into the particulars in just a minute.

## WHAT JAMES IS DOING IN THE STRUCTURE OF THIS MINI-ESSAY ~ ¶¶

▶▶ is moving ~ from the specific ~ to the general.

▷▷ Starts out ~ with an exhortation to teachers regarding speech. ⇔⇔ The specific.

▷▷ Then in [vss 2ff](#), ~ James transitions to the general, ~ instructing all believers regarding speech.

↳↳ The general. [2/14 ¶¶](#)

AS NOTED, ~ 3:1-12 ~ IS A TREATISE ON HUMAN SPEECH.

MORE SPECIFICALLY, ~ JAMES DEALS WITH ~ the power of the tongue ~ and its control.

▶▶ The Bible has much to say ~ concerning the power of speech ~ for good or evil. (Proverbs)

▶▶ This mini-essay by James ~ is the classic exposition ~ of the problem of controlling the human tongue.

▷▷ But we should keep in mind, ~ as we get more into this ¶, ~ that after the example of teachers, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ James will not be referring to how our speech affects others.

→→ But how it affects the individual who is speaking.

¶ OUTLINED.

▶▶ In vss 1-2, ~ James points out ~ the significance ~ of a controlled tongue.

▶▶ In vss 3-5a, ~ shows the controlled tongue ~ is a powerful influence for good ~ out of proportion to its size.

▶▶ vv 5b-6, ~ shows the damage of the uncontrolled tongue.

▶▶ In vss 7-8, ~ he shows the untamable nature of the tongue.

▶▶ And then in vss 9-12, ~ the inconsistency ~ of the tongue.

TODAY, ~ VSS 1-2, ~ THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A CONTROLLED TONGUE. 3/14 ¶¶

▶▶ The power of speech is one of God's greatest gifts to people.

▶▶ And believers must be on constant guard against the perverted use of this mighty gift.

▶▶ James relates the significance of a controlled tongue ~ to the Christian teacher in particular, ~ vs 1.

▷▷ And then to believers generally, ~ beginning in vs 2.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONTROLLED TONGUE FOR THE TEACHER (V. 1)

#### SINCE TEACHERS' WORK IS CARRIED OUT PRIMARILY ~ 77

THROUGH THE USE OF THEIR TONGUES, ~ THE CONTROLLED USE OF THE TONGUE ~ 77

▷▷ is of central importance ~ for the Christian teacher.

▶▶ Fully aware of the teacher's responsibility, ~ James issues a solemn warning, ~ vs 1a.

▷▷ Not many of you should become teachers, ~ my brothers. ⇔⇔ Teaching God's word.

THIS IS NOT AN ATTACK UPON ~ the office of the teacher ~ or the teaching function.

▶▶ You'll notice that ~ James at once identifies himself ~ as a teacher.

▷▷ Includes self ~ in statement that ~ teachers will be judged with greater strictness.

▶▶ Rather, ~ he is likely seeking ~ to restrain the rush to teach ~ on the part of those not qualified. 4/14 ↓↓

THE DIRECT ADDRESS, ~~~ "my brothers," ~ indicates ~ that James is talking ~ to believers.

▶▶ The issue is not ~ heretical teachers ~ who need to be removed from teaching.

▶▶ And it is not ~ the rejection of false teachers seeking opportunity ~ to spread their views.

▶▶ Rather, ~ in addition to restraining the rush to teach by those not qualified, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ James was also probably seeking to curb the danger ~ ¶¶

↳↳ of talkativeness, ~ of reckless statements, ~ of superficial rhetoric, ~ of abusive language, ~ and of misleading assertions ~ ¶¶

→→ on the part of some aggressive believers ~ who were vocal in their opinions.

FURTHERMORE, ~ IT COULD BE ~ THAT JAMES WAS ALSO IMPLYING ~ ¶¶

▶▶ that believers ~ should not become teachers ~ too quickly.

▶▶ I.e., ~ without considering such a choice ~ very seriously.

▷▷ Not just any old book.

LIKEWISE, ~ IT COULD ALSO BE THAT HE WAS IMPLYING ~ that a would-be teacher ~ ¶¶

▶▶ needs to have ~ the right motives ~ for becoming a teacher.

▷▷ Briefly put, ~ is the motive for wanting to teach God's word ~ for self-glory ~ or for God's glory? 5/14 ¶¶

IN VS 1b, ~ JAMES NOTES ~ THE REASON ~ for his solemn warning ~ to would-be teachers.

FOR YOU KNOW ~ THAT WE WHO TEACH ~ will be judged with greater strictness.

▶▶ Overall context is human speech. ⇨⇨ So here refers to speech.

▷▷ For you know ~ that we who teach ~ will be judged with greater strictness ~ for what we teach.

▶▶ The future tense, ~ will be judged, ~ looks forward ~ to the time when, as teachers, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ ~ for ~ rewards ~ or the loss thereof.

▷▷ 2 Cor. 5:10 (NIV), ~ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, ~ so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, ~ whether good or bad.

▷▷ And in Rom Paul tells us that ~ each of us will give an account of himself to God.

JESUS' FIERY EVALUATION OF US TEACHERS ~ will be according to the principle ~ ¶¶

▶▶ that ~ increased influence ~ means ~ increased responsibility.

▶▶ The greater the impact upon others, ~ the greater the accountability.

▶▶ Jesus said, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ When someone has been given much, ~ much ~ will be required in return; ~ and when someone has been entrusted with much, ~ even more ~ will be required (NLT). 6/14 ¶¶

▶▶ Teachers have been ~ entrusted with and given much.

▷▷ And, ~ by virtue of teaching, ~ can have the greater impact on others ~ 77

↪↪ and in greater numbers ~ than non-teachers.

▶▶ Those who undertake to speak as God's messengers ~ 77

▷▷ will be held strictly accountable ~ for what we taught and said.

JAMES SHOWS US ~ THAT GOD TAKES THE TEACHING OF HIS WORD ~ very seriously.

▶▶ And so should we!

▶▶ To take up the mantle of teaching ~ is definitely ~ not something ~ 77

▷▷ to take up lightly, ~ to rush into, ~ or to do for the wrong motives.

▶▶ One should not aspire to such a role unless confident ~ that he is properly prepared ~ 77

▷▷ and is a reliable instructor of God's truth.

AS NOTED, ~ IN VS 2, ~ JAMES RELATES THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONTROLLED tongue ~ for believers in general.

JAMES STARTS OUT IN VS 2a with, ~ For we all stumble in many ways.

MANY WAYS ~ DENOTES ~ THE VARIETY OF WAYS ~ in which we stumble. 7/14 11

▶▶ In order ~ to draw more attention to the fact ~ that people stumble ~ in a variety of ways, ~ 77

▶▶ James puts the word ~ many ~ at the beginning of the sentence ~ for the sake of emphasis.

▶▶ We can't see this in English.

▶▶ James could have just made a blanket statement ~ that believers stumble.

▶▶ But by qualifying this assertion ~ with the word "many", ~ 77

▷▷ and placing this information before the verb, ~ 77

↪↪ he draws more attention ~ to the susceptibility of human failure.

→→ As the hymn says, ~ Prone to wander Lord, ~ I feel it.

## THE TENSE OF THE VERB ~ WE STUMBLE ~ INDICATES ~ 77

▶▶ that such experiences of stumbling ~ occur repeatedly in life.

▶▶ That's kind of depressing isn't it?

▷▷ But praise God, ~ that ~ If we confess our sins, ~ he is faithful and just ~ to forgive us our sins ~ and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness; ~ 77

↪↪ that in Jesus ~ we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins

→→ and that ~ Jesus always lives ~ to make intercession for us. 8/14 11



## "WE ALL STUMBLE IN A VARIETY OF WAYS" ~ ¶¶

▶▶ states the universal fact underlying ~ the preceding warning.

▶▶ Teachers are no exception to the truth that ~ "we all stumble."

▶▶ "All" ~ is the strong form of the Grk adjective.

▶▶ And James places it last ~ with great emphasis.

▷▷ Can't see that in English.

↳↳ The statement ~ is not to be limited to teachers.

▷▷ Here James makes the transition ~ to all believers.

▷▷ He is emphasizing that not just teachers stumble, ~ but all stumble.

▷▷ It is true of all humans, ~ including believers.

↳↳ For believers, ~ sinless perfection impossible in this life.

▶▶ It is a universal fact ~ that all sin.

▷▷ E.g., ~ Eccles. 7:20, ~ Surely ~ there is not a righteous man on earth ~ who does good and never sins.

▷▷ And 1 Jn. 1:8 & 10, ~ If we say we have no sin, ~ we deceive ourselves, ~ and the truth is not in us . . . If we say ~ we have not sinned, ~ we make him a liar, ~ and his word is not in us. 9/14 ¶¶

## THE WORD STUMBLE ~ DENOTES A MORAL LAPSE.

▶▶ In its literal sense ~ the term conveys the picture ~ of the foot striking against some obstacle ~ ¶¶

▷▷ so as to cause the individual to trip or stumble.

▶▶ Metaphorically, ~ it denotes the fact of ~ a failure in duty, ~ a mistake that is blameworthy, ~ or ~ a sin.

▶▶ To stumble ~ does not necessarily suggest ~ a fatal fall.

▷▷ It denotes ~ a failure ~ that arrests our progress along the road.

IOW, ~ WE STUMBLE ~ OVER A VARIETY OF THINGS ~ THAT HINDER ~ OUR SPIRITUAL growth.

▶▶ I believe ~ this is the idea ~ behind the author's exhortation ~ in [Heb. 12:1b](#).

▷▷ Let us also ~ lay aside every weight, ~ and sin which clings so closely, ~ and let us run with endurance ~ the race that is set before us.

▷▷ Every weight ~ does not refer to sin, ~ for that follows in the next clause.

↪↪ Some things ~ that are not wrong in themselves ~ hinder us ~ in putting forward our best effort.

→→ So the writer tells us ~ to get rid of them.

▶▶ We are to rid ourselves of anything ~ that hinders our spiritual growth. 10/14 ¶¶

▶▶ Since we are susceptible to stumbling, ~ we need to remain spiritually vigilant ~ ¶¶

▷▷ throughout our lives.

THE ABILITY TO CONTROL THEIR TONGUE ~ IS A MATTER OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE for the believer.

IT IS A TEST OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER, ~ the proof ~ of maturity and self-control.

▶▶<sup>2b</sup> And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, <sup>2c</sup> able also to bridle his whole body.

TO BEGIN WITH, ~ LIKE TO CALL YOUR ATTENTION TO VS 2b.

▶▶ The word ~ perfect ~ does not mean ~ sinless.

▷▷ Again, ~ that's a goal ~ not reached in this life.

▷▷ If James did mean sinless, ~ he would be contradicting himself.

↪↪ Just got through saying ~ we all stumble.

▶▶ Perfect here refers ~ ¶¶

▷▷ to having attained the goal ~ of spiritual maturity in the achievement of full self-control.

▶▶ Vss 2b-c could be translated as, ~ ¶¶

▷▷<sup>2b</sup> If anyone does not stumble in what he says, ~ he is mature, ~ <sup>2c</sup> able also ~ to control the whole body. 11/14 ¶¶

▶▶ A believer ~ who has control over his tongue ~ possesses a ripeness and richness of knowledge and character, ~ 77

▷▷ such as may be supposed ~ to mark the full-grown believer, ~ as contrasted ~ with the babe in Christ.

AND THE LORD ~ WANTS US ~ AND EXPECTS US ~ TO GROW UP SPIRITUALLY.

▶▶ 1 Pet. 2:2 (NIV), ~ Like newborn babies, ~ crave pure spiritual milk, ~ so that ~ by it you may grow up ~ in your salvation.

▷▷ I.e., ~ so that you may grow up ~ in regard to your salvation.

▶▶ Author of Heb rebuked his original readers ~ for their spiritual immaturity (Heb. 5:11-12a; NIV).

▷▷ We have much to say about this, ~ but it is hard to make it clear to you ~ because you no longer try to understand. ~ In fact, ~ though by this time you ought to be teachers, ~ you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word ~ all over again.

▶▶ 2 Pet. 3:18a.

▷▷ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

▶▶ And in 1 Thess., ~ For this is the will of God, ~ your sanctification.

▶▶ Believers must ~ continue to grow and mature.

BACK TO JAMES.

▶▶ For the believer, ~ controlling one's speech ~ is a sign of spiritual maturity. 12/14 11

## A BELIEVER ~ WHO HAS CONTROL OVER THEIR TONGUE ~ IS ABLE ALSO ~ 77

▶▶ to control their whole body, ~ James says in vs 2c.

▶▶ Since the tongue ~ is the most difficult to keep under control, ~ as we'll see in subsequent vss, ~ 77

▷▷ victory at this point ~ assures ~ that the person ~ also is able ~ 77

↳↳ to check and to control ~ the activities ~ of their whole body.

▶▶ They are able to control ~ all their members and capacities ~ that sin seeks to use ~ to express itself.

▶▶ The term ~ translated ~ to control ~ denotes that ~ they are able ~ 77

▷▷ to restrain their whole body effectively ~ to prevent its use by sin, ~ 77

↳↳ as well as ~ to guide and direct its activities in desirable [i.e., ~ godly] ways.

▶▶ Briefly put, ~ they have reached the goal of self-control in all areas.

## WE MUST NOT MISS THE IMPORTANT IMPLICATION HERE IN JAMES' WORDS.

▶▶ He implies that the ~ first, ~ hardest, ~ and ~ most important ~ element ~ 77

▷▷ in developing self-control ~ in every area of our lives, ~ is to gain control ~ over our speech.

↳↳ The rest, ~ he seems to suggest, ~ will fall into place ~ relatively easily. 13/14 77

▶▶ And our heavenly Father ~ wants and expects us ~ to develop self-control ~ in all areas of our lives.

▷▷ We see that ~ throughout the NT.

▶▶ E.g., ~ Titus 2:11-13.

▷▷ For the grace of God has appeared, ~ bringing salvation for all people, ~ training us ~ to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, ~ and ~ to live ~ self-controlled, ~ upright, ~ and godly lives ~ in the present age, ~ waiting for our blessed hope, ~ the appearing ~ of the glory of our great God and Savior ~ Jesus Christ.

▶▶ So, ~ in developing ~ self-control in general, ~ we must start ~ ¶¶

▷▷ with controlling our speech ~ in particular.

AND ALWAYS REMEMBER THIS AS WE CLOSE.

PRAISE GOD, ~ WE ARE NOT LEFT ON OUR OWN ~ TO DEVELOP SELF-CONTROL.

▶▶ Remember what Paul says in Phil. ⇔⇔ For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

↳↳ I.e., ~ he gives us the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

▶▶ Praise God, ~ he produces in believers ~ ¶¶

▷▷ both ~ the desire ~ and the enablement we need ~ to live for him, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ including ~ the desire and ability ~ to learn and practice ~ self-control.

▶▶ All glory to him ~ forever and ever. 14/14