



Life & Death: Bits and Rudders (James 3:1-4)

A Tongue of Fire

“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does **not stumble in word, he is a perfect man**, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put **bits in horses’ mouths** that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by **a very small rudder** wherever the pilot desires.” James 3:1-4 NKJV

James 3:1-4

- ☑ *“My brethren, let not many of you become **teachers**, knowing that we shall receive a **stricter judgment**.” James 3:1 NKJV*
- ☑ **Context: everyone but especially teachers**
- ☑ We are about to receive a dire warning about a particular human faculty. And what follows applies to every person who ever lived.

- ☑ However, James draws special attention to those who take on the role of using this faculty on a professional basis.
- ☑ And when I say professional, I don't mean the individual must necessarily be getting paid to do so.
- ☑ I'm more interested in anyone who has been inserted or has inserted themselves into a position of "oracle for God."
- ☑ Others see them as some type of authority, and as such give their words more weight.
- ☑ What they are saying must be true because they are so good at saying it.
- ☑ **Stricter Judgment**
 - ☑ Every person will be held accountable for what proceeds out of their mouth, but those who hurt others or lead others astray will be judged more harshly.
- ☑ **Keeping your word!**
 - ☑ In our previous KEM sermon we emphasized the commandment and the critical nature of being true to your word and fulfilling every vow you make.
 - ☑ We also explored the devastating effects of breaking your promises on eight different facets of life. See: [Oh What a World it Would Be, if...](#)

☑ **Causing others to sin...**

- ☑ “Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. **Woe to the world because of offenses!** For offenses must come, **but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!** “If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.”

Matthew 18:4-9 NKJV

- ☑ You are better off drowning in the ocean or cutting off your own body parts than you are if you cause others to sin! You think Y’shua considers this serious? Watch your words!

☑ **Making bad disciples!**

- ☑ ““Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **For you travel land and sea** to win one proselyte, and when he is won, **you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.**” Matthew 23:15 NKJV
- ☑ When you are a leader or teacher, you’d better be careful what you lead others into. You will be judged more harshly!
- ☑ **Bad Teachers; Harsher judgment!**
- ☑ ““For both prophet and priest are profane; Yes, in My house I have found their wickedness,” says the Lord.” Jeremiah 23:11 NKJV
- ☑ **Pastors and Prophets who stumble in word...(Note: read all of Jeremiah 23 for a full account of such atrocities)**
- ☑ ““**Woe to the shepherds** who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!” says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: “**You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them.** Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,” says the Lord.” Jeremiah 23:1-2 NKJV
- ☑ “Thus says the Lord of hosts: “**Do not listen to the words of the prophets** who prophesy to you. **They**

make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the Lord. **They continually say** to those who despise Me, 'The Lord has said, **"You shall have peace"** '; And to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, 'No evil shall come upon you.' "" Jeremiah 23:16-17 NKJV

☑️ ""**Therefore behold, I am against the prophets,**" says the Lord, **"who steal My words** every one from his neighbor. Behold, I am against the prophets," says the Lord, **"who use their tongues** and say, 'He says.'" Jeremiah 23:30-31 NKJV

☑️ "Behold, I am against those **who prophesy false dreams,**" says the Lord, "and tell them, and **cause My people to err by their lies** and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all," says the Lord." Jeremiah 23:32 NKJV

☑️ These leaders are using their words to lead others astray. *"Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment."*

☑️ **An oracle for God...**

- ☑ Especially egregious is when you use your tongue and claim it is **God's tongue**—when in fact it **IS NOT!**
- ☑ ""“So when these **people** or the **prophet** or the **priest** ask you, saying, ‘**What is the oracle of the Lord?**’ you shall then say to them, ‘**What oracle?**’ I will even **forsake you,**” says the Lord. “And as for the prophet and the priest and the people who say, ‘**The oracle of the Lord!**’ I will even punish that man and his house. Thus **every one of you shall say** to his neighbor, and every one to his brother, ‘What has the Lord answered?’ and, ‘What has the Lord spoken?’ **And the oracle of the Lord you shall mention no more.** For every man’s word will be his oracle, **for you have perverted the words of the living God,** the Lord of hosts, our God. **Thus you shall say to the prophet,** ‘What has the Lord answered you?’ and, ‘What has the Lord spoken?’ But **since you say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’** therefore **thus says the Lord: ‘Because you say this word, “The oracle of the Lord!”** and I have sent to you, saying, “**Do not say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’** ” therefore behold, I, even I, will utterly **forget you and forsake you,** and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and will cast you out of My

presence. And **I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you**, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.' "" Jeremiah 23:33-40 NKJV

- ☑ **Let's break this down (and again, please read the entirety of Jeremiah 23!)**
- ☑ these **people** or the **prophet** or the **priest** ask you, saying, '**What is the oracle of the Lord?**'
- ☑ Both the leaders and those being led are going to be accountable to the true prophet—Jeremiah. No one is off the hook!
- ☑ '**What oracle?**' I will even forsake you," says the Lord. "
- ☑ Be careful for what you ask? You may not like the answer!
- ☑ And **as for the prophet and the priest and the people** who say, 'The oracle of the Lord!' I will even punish that man and his house.
- ☑ Again, everyone will be held accountable. If you have God's word but instead insert your own words, every man, will be held personally responsible for his words.

- ☑ Thus **every one of you shall say** to his neighbor, and every one to his brother, 'What has the Lord answered?' and, 'What has the Lord spoken?'
- ☑ You are also all responsible to warn you neighbors what will happen if anyone dabbles in own-word-itis, the disease of loosing out of your mouth what is not from God!
- ☑ **And the oracle of the Lord you shall mention no more.** For every man's word will be his oracle, **for you have perverted the words of the living God**, the Lord of hosts, our God.
- ☑ Cease and desist: Stop claiming your words are God's words NOW! What you are speaking is perverted and not from Yahweh!
- ☑ **Thus you shall say to the prophet**, 'What has the Lord answered you?' and, 'What has the Lord spoken?' But **since you say, 'The oracle of the Lord!'** therefore **thus says the Lord: 'Because you say this word, "The oracle of the Lord!"** and I have sent to you, saying, **"Do not say, 'The oracle of the Lord!'** "
- ☑ Now to the leaders: Since you insist of saying that your words are God's words, when the clearly are not, I have a special consequence for you!

Remember: *“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.”* James 3:1

- ☑ **therefore behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you and forsake you**, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and will cast you out of My presence. And **I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you**, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.’”
”” Jeremiah 23:33-40 NKJV

- ☑ You will be forgotten—an everlasting disapproval and rebuke.

- ☑ *“For we all **stumble in many things**. If anyone **does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man**, able also to bridle the whole body.”* James 3:2 NKJV

- ☑ **We all make mistakes...**

- ☑ Every day we make errors, some inadvertently and some on purpose. This is the human condition. This is not an excuse. We are empowered by God to NOT make those errors. It is however a process, a sanctification process. Think of it like this: you are pure in God’s eyes and you are working on living up to how He already sees you.

- ☑ **Work out your own salvation...**

☑ “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;** for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” Philippians 2:12-13 NKJV

☑ It should be obvious, but let me emphasize it anyway. You do not in any way work out your own eternal redemption. That is 100% in the hands of Yahweh through the ONE and ONLY mediator between God and man, Y’shua. His work alone is the cause of your eternal redemption. Think of it like this: you were kidnapped by sin and death, became their slave, and had no way to pay the ransom for yourself. Then Christ comes along and pay the ransom for you, something you had zero power nor ability to do for yourself!

☑ **He did His part, now you do your part!**

☑ “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that **not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,** not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works,** which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:8-10 NKJV

- ☑ “For **there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus**, who gave Himself a **ransom** for all, to be testified in due time,” 1 Timothy 2:5-6 NKJV
- ☑ Grace and redemption are a gift, now live like you have them and are grateful for them. And there is **ONLY ONE** who possesses that gift to give away!
- ☑ Here in Philippians, however, Paul is referring to your temporal wellbeing, your sanctification process—being made holy. You must walk out this life yourself, with access to his power as the wind in your sails. He redeems you and then you should live like it!
- ☑ **His power; you use of that power!**
- ☑ “and what is the exceeding greatness **of His power toward us who believe**, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ **when He raised Him from the dead** and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,” Ephesians 1:19-20 NKJV
- ☑ “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is

tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, **receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.**” I Peter 1:6-9 NKJV

☑ “as **His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness**, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been **given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature**, having **escaped** the corruption that is in the world through lust.” II Peter 1:3-4 NKJV

☑ You have access to the power that raised Christ from the grave. Be joyful no matter what is happening at the present time; focus on the ultimate outcome (your redemption) and all of a sudden the trials of today will not seem so bad!

☑ **No excuses along the way...**

☑ “What shall we say then? **Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!** How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” Romans 6:1-2 NKJV

- ☑ Sure you are covered when you make mistakes, but that is no excuse to make mistakes!
- ☑ **A higher standard—you've heard it said, but...**
- ☑ **““You have heard that it was said** to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ **But I say to you** that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.” Matthew 5:21-22 NKJV
- ☑ **““You have heard that it was said** to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ **But I say to you** that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Matthew 5:27-28 NKJV
- ☑ “casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,”** II Corinthians 10:5 NKJV
- ☑ Y’shua takes it up a notch; it goes beyond your actions. Sin begins in the mind and proceeds out of the mouth. You are called to bring every thought captive and bridle that tongue of yours.
- ☑ **If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man!**

☑ “**how much more shall the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, **cleanse your conscience** from dead works to serve the living God?” Hebrews 9:14 NKJV

☑ “For **the law**, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, **can never** with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, **make those who approach perfect**. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? **For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.**” Hebrews 10:1-2 NKJV

☑ Perfection is not just measured by deeds. A man must not even sin in his own mind and therefore not loose anything unworthy out of his mouth!

☑ “Indeed, we put **bits in horses’ mouths** that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, **they are turned by a very small rudder** wherever the pilot desires.”

James 3:3-4 NKJV

☑ **Object Lesson**

☑ The steering mechanism of large powerful things can consist of very small parts.

- ☑ These guiding forces, once they have asserted their influence, can direct substantial forces, which then gain great momentum.
- ☑ Be careful how you steward this awesome and frightful responsibility.
- ☑ **Mediate on this...**
 - ☑ It takes just a few miles per hour of directional steering winds (global winds or trade winds) to turn massive hurricanes in a specific direction.
 - ☑ It takes a small spark or match to start a forest fire that burns million of acres of forests and destroys thousands of homes.
 - ☑ The cost of light winds and small sparks: countless billions of dollars.
 - ☑ **Average Global Wind Speed:** 7.4 miles per hour
 - ☑ **Average Trade Wind Speed:** 11-13 miles per hour
 - ☑ **Preview:** “Even so **the tongue is a little member** and boasts great things. **See how great a forest a little fire kindles!**” James 3:5 NKJV

NEXT TEACHING

Life & Death: The Tongue (James 3:5-12)