

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, **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. **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, **ἄνθρωπος (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.

<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 (*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.

<sup>2</sup> *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”).<sup>3</sup>**

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 (*chalinagōgēō*)**: “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 19:18b, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
54. The word “love” in Leviticus, and its quotations in the New Testament, is the verb **אָהַב (*’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 **רֵעִי (*rea’*)** while in the New Testament it is **πλησίον (*plēsión*)**. English Bibles translate it with “neighbor,” but the better rendering is, “fellow man.”

<sup>3</sup> 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.



56. So, how is the commandment to “love” your fellow man accomplished? Well, we get guidance by observing the definition of love and its coordination with the righteousness and justice of God. Here are some excerpts that define how the love of God is in concert with the righteousness, justice, and omniscience of God:
1. The righteousness of God is the perfect standard of His essence. He cannot compromise His righteousness without destroying His perfect character.
  2. God protects His righteousness with His justice which is the source of both blessing and judgment. God’s justice guards His righteous standards which possess absolute truth.
  3. Therefore, God’s righteousness and justice combine to form the integrity of God which is the synchronized operation of His righteousness and justice.
  4. Righteousness is the *principle* of God’s integrity; justice is the *function* of God’s integrity.
  5. God’s love is an inherent quality of absolute benevolence that does not require inspiration to be gracious, generous, or merciful.
  6. His love always functions in a dispassionate, but benevolent manner.
  7. Omniscience refers to the fact that God knows all that is knowable, confirming that He is never without all the facts regarding the details of angelic or human life or the inner thoughts and rationales of their souls.
  8. Righteousness, justice, and omniscience form the integrity of God. The love of God is perfect because it works in concert with the integrity of God.
  9. PRINCIPLE: The integrity of God is the love of God and the love of God is the integrity of God.<sup>4</sup>
  10. The NET Bible’s translation of Psalm 33:4–5a is interesting because of its expanded translation of the Hebrew and its support for the preceding principles.
  11. Accompanying this passage are four “translator’s notes” that help expand their translation:

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<sup>4</sup> Principles 1–9 are adapted from: R. B. Thieme, Jr., *The Unfailing Love of God*, ed. Robert B. Thieme III (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2009), 6–11.



**Psalm 33:4** For the Lord's decrees<sup>9</sup> are just,<sup>10</sup> and everything he does is fair.<sup>11</sup>

**v. 5a** The Lord promotes<sup>12</sup> equity and justice ...

12. Translators' Note 9: "decrees" is the singular noun, דְּבָר (davar): "word."

**tn 9.** In this context, which depicts the Lord as the sovereign creator and ruler of the world, the Lord's "word" refers to the decrees whereby he governs his dominion.

To translate this "decrees" is fine although "divine decree" would be better.

13. Translators' Note 10: "just" is the adjective יָשָׁר (yashar) which refers to something that remains straight, not deviating to the right or to the left. This depicts the word of God as that which is immutable. "Just" is fine but "integrity" would be better.

14. Translators' Note 11: "fair" is the noun אֱמוּנָה ('emunah).

**tn 11.** "and all his work is in faithfulness."

The footnote is the better translation since His faithfulness is based on His divine integrity which is what certifies the immutability of His Word.

15. Translators' Note 12: "promotes" is the verb, אָהַב ('ahav) and refers to God's "love" for "equity and justice."

**tn 12.** The verb "loves" is here metonymic<sup>5</sup>; the Lord's commitment to principles of equity and justice causes him to actively promote these principles as he governs the world.

The NET Bible's translators view the word "love" here as the divine "promotion" of "equity and justice." This requires us to define these two English nouns.

The first is "equity," which is the Hebrew noun, צְדָקָה (sethaqah): "righteousness," followed by a second noun, "judgment," מִשְׁפָּט (mishpat): "jurisprudence."

<sup>5</sup> "Metonymy. A figure of speech that replaces the name of one thing with the name of something else closely associated with it" (Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 135).



16. The two combined refer to the integrity of God. God's righteous standards are inflexible and are defended by divine justice which prosecutes violations but blesses compliance.
17. At the moment of salvation, the new believer enters into the legal environment of the plan of God. I use the word "legal," to emphasize the new relationship that exists between perfect God and imperfect man.
18. The new believer is saved, in the royal family, recipient of the imputation of divine righteousness, sustained by God's matchless grace, but ignorant of the "rules" he is required to obey.
19. The undergirding and munificent grace of God takes on the new believer, characterized as a child, and teaches him the standards He wishes him to learn, retain, recall, and apply.
20. The only resource for acquiring this information is Scripture. The only biblically approved system by which this information is to be communicated is the pastor-teacher in a local church.
21. The second most important commandment in this growth process is said by our Lord to be the Royal Law which requires the believer to "love your neighbor as yourself."
22. This statement rolls off the tongue but causes most readers to remain vague on its meaning. Yet, this is the second most important commandment the believer is required to keep according to the Lord Himself.
23. In Matthew 22:34–40, the Pharisees approached the Lord in an effort to put Him to the test. One of them identified in the verse as "a lawyer," posed this question, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" Here is the Lord's response:

**Matthew 22:37** "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart [ stream of consciousness ], with all your soul [ volition and conscience ], with all your mind [ categorical storage ].' (Deuteronomy 6:5)

**v. 38** "This is the great and foremost commandment.

**v. 39** "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' (Leviticus 19:18)

**v. 40** "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets [ i.e., the Tanakh ]." (NASB)



24. We have established that the love of God is the integrity of God and that the integrity of God is the love of God. God's attributes are eternal, unalterable, and inviolate. Righteousness is the attribute that certifies the veracity of His standards.
25. Justice is the attribute that guards, defends, and enforces these standards. It blesses compliance with them and disciplines noncompliance.
26. The attribute of God's love functions as an umbrella under which divine integrity is protected. Although righteousness, justice, and omniscience are attributes, the three function as composites that form the integrity of God.
27. Because mankind is fallen, because new believers are born again at salvation but almost totally ignorant of divine policies, standards, and commandments, God administers His relationship with them under a policy of grace.
28. It is under this umbrella that the believer is privileged to function. His first responsibility within this system is to "grow in grace."
29. This is accomplished through spiritual growth inside the evanescent divine power system, i.e., "the bubble," and the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.
30. Plagued by a genetically inherited sin nature with its collection of lust patterns, the believer's spiritual growth is constantly interrupted by personal sin which pops the evanescent bubble, instantly separating him from the Holy Spirit's teaching ministry.
31. Although the believer never loses the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, he does lose His teaching ministry while functioning outside the bubble.
32. Many believers have no concept of status-quo spirituality which describes the filling and teaching ministries of the Holy Spirit.
33. Thus, the struggle to advance in one's spiritual growth is plagued by ignorance of how to achieve and consistently employ and capitalize upon the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit.



34. In the ongoing battle between the flesh and the Spirit, between the volitionally permitted interventions of the sin nature and the intermittent periods inside the bubble, the believer's spiritual growth is negatively impacted.
35. In the midst of these competing systems of power, the believer is required to engage and consistently respond to the commandment, "love your neighbor as yourself"?
36. The word "love" in this passage is initially directed by the believer to God and then secondly to people. Therefore, love is an attitude that is to be directed outwardly to God and man. How love is defined is the challenge.
37. To do this we must start with the divine attribute of love that is part of divine essence. This is best approached by summary principles excerpted below: ▼

### **The Doctrine of Divine Essence**

**Love. God is love whether or not He has a creature to love. His love is an inherent quality that does not require inspiration.**

**There never was a time when each member of the Trinity did not love His own righteousness and the righteousness of the other two persons in the Godhead. The only object ever worthy of God's love is God's own eternal, unchangeable righteousness.**

**God's love is infinite and immutable; divine love does not increase or decrease, expand or diminish. No form of creature sinfulness, failure, vacillation, or rejection can change, effect, or elicit a reaction from God's love.**

**God's love is different from human love, which God does not possess. Even if we understand human love, that is no guarantee that we understand God's love. His love contains no emotion. In God's love there is no deception—only the inviolable demand of perfect truth and integrity—while our love is often blind. Whereas God's love needs no object, our love is not love unless it has an object.**

**Because He is righteous and just, His love is never partial or biased.**

**God's love depends on His integrity and is governed by His integrity. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne" (Psalm 89:14a).<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>6</sup> R. B. Thieme, Jr., *The Integrity of God*, 4th ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2005), 278–79.



1. From these excerpts we are able to conclude that love is completely objective. It functions in association with the divine attributes of righteousness and justice.
2. Righteousness is the guardian of divine justice while justice is the function of the integrity of God.
3. God's perfection involves absolute truth, love, justice, and righteousness. Taken together, these attributes form the integrity of God.

**Righteousness. God possesses eternal, unchangeable, and absolute righteousness. His righteousness in combination with His perfect justice is described as holiness or integrity.**

**Righteousness is the principle or standard of divine integrity. All that God does adheres to this measure of perfection.**

**Righteousness is the guardian of divine justice. All justice is administered from the perfect righteousness of God. (p. 275)**

**The intellect and character of God are perfect; His perfection involves absolute truth, justice, and righteousness.**

**God's very own righteousness is imputed to every believer at the moment of salvation as the target for blessing from God. "He [God] made Him [Christ] who know no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).**

**Justice. God is perfect justice. It is impossible for God to be unfair in the function of divine justice. Divine justice administers the system of divine laws that are compatible with divine righteousness and sovereignty. Justice is the function of the integrity of God. As the Judge of mankind, God's justice renders daily decisions in the Supreme Court of Heaven with regard to all members of the human race.**

**The justice of God administers the penalties and blessings which are demanded by His perfect righteousness. (p. 276)**

**From the moment we are born spiritually dead, the justice of God is our point of contact, and continues to be our point of contact after salvation. (p. 277)**

**(End JAS3-16. See JAS3-17 for continuation of study at p. 161.)**

