

I. THIS IS A CITY WITH A COMMUNITY COLLEGE, A COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL, AND 5 OTHER SCHOOLS, INCLUDING PINE HILL. THEREFOR WE HAVE A LARGE NUMBER OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS IN OUR MIDST.

A. **How many of you are teachers?**

1. What led you to make this career decision?
 - a. (Ask one or two members...)
2. What makes you a good teacher?
 - a. What is your criteria?
 - b. How many of us teach in this church? I could not find anyone over two years to teach our Adult Sunday Class.
3. My senior year in college my inner circle of buddies tried to convince me I was making a wrong career choice: You are not cut out to be a minister. You should go into teaching, they told me over and over again.
4. 30 years later a retired couple in our church invited me over to their house and asked me to talk with their grandson and his fiancée who wanted to become missionaries
 - a. They told me they wanted to go overseas and teach.
5. I looked at this attractive young couple so obviously in love. Then I said, You have to be nearly crazy to want to be missionaries. And it is even worse if you want to be a teacher! I continued talking with them; I finally told the couple, There can be only one reason someone would ever do this. You have to have a calling from God.
6. That beautiful young lady eventually entered another career. She felt called by God to become a pediatric cardiologist. Jill is a very fine doctor in Carmel, California.

B. **Paul insists that the gift of teaching is one of the special gifts of the Spirit to the church in that unparalleled fourth chapter in Ephesians.**

1. There Paul takes different approach to the gifts of the Spirit.
 - a. Each gift is an office in the church,
2. Listen to what Paul says is demanded in the office of teaching:
 - a. (1st) It is *the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...@4:1-2).*
 - b. (2nd) so that we will not *be tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men and women, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles (14)*
 - c. (3rd) *to build up into unity, @knowledge @d fullness. @*
 - d. (3rd) Rather, speaking the truth in love, (so) we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...@15-16).
3. This calling and this warning applies to each gift, each office of the church,

Paul says, and I notice in Ephesians 4 that teaching is the last gift mentioned in the list of 5:

- a. apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, *teachers*
4. Notice also that all of these offices taken together as a unity are given the specific responsibility of speaking the truth in love and growing up into Christ Jesus.

C. ***Jesus was often addressed simply as Teacher.*** = @

1. So our Lord must have regarded any teacher with very high deference, just like the Jewish and early Christian community did
2. Dr. Peter Rhea Jones, himself a seminary professor at Mercer University in Decatur, Georgia, observes that Jesus noticed that too often places at the head table, choice seats in the synagogue, even public greetings with titles were highly coveted by successful educators. It provided a powerful incentive to seek a role in education in the first century.
 - a. To be addressed as Teacher, or Rabbi, was a big deal!
3. In the 10th chapter of Mark Jesus is solicited by a man as Good Teacher,
 - a. yet Jesus refuses the title, *Why do you call me Good = ; no one is good but God alone.* = @
 - b. Good, or AGATHOS, has the sense of that which or leads us to, or teaches us eternal life.
 - c. People who are good are like God, their behavior must be perfect!
 - d. Agatha = a good name for a woman who teaches.
4. The bottom line, says Jesus, if you are going to be a teacher, you must not only talk the talk, but walk the walk. Not many of us can do it.
 - a. My sister Mary and I were in the same French class in high school, she in third year French, myself in second year. To my humiliation we had French at the same hour in the same classroom! Our teacher was Madame Bagdeance. Mme Bagdeance had her own version of capital punishment. She could grab us by the ear and twist it and pull us out of our chairs; she threw chalk and chalk erasers from the front of the room with a deadly aim. That woman hit us with a ruler that never broke, just reverberated the harder she whacked us. I guess our principal believed she possessed great instructional skills in the French language, but she was not a good teacher.

II. JAMES WARNS US, NOT MANY OF YOU SHOULD BECOME TEACHERS. @

A. ***He gives two reasons for this:***

1. you know that any one who teaches shall be judged with great strictness. @
 - a. Shall be @ this is an absolute certainty:
 - b. We will be judged with a higher standard in human courts;
 - c. Even more so by the heavenly courts, by God = s standard or what is called good. @
 - a. Strictness or KRIMA @ Greek, a heavier judgment. @

2. Look at how the courts have thrown the book at any teacher who has abused, taken advantage of a student, cheated in state-mandated testing.
3. In the church, one of the first defrocked ministers in the US church was a seminary professor at Princeton Seminary in New Jersey back in the 1890's a distinguished scholar by the name of Charles A Briggs,
 - a. Briggs, a professor, and his uncle, a former student, had dared to question the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy at the Princeton Church, based on tools of textual criticism and comparative language studies. Charles Briggs was not defrocked by the teaching community, but by an overzealous General Assembly meeting in 1893 of Presbyterian Church in the USA.
 - b. 30 years later, 1927, the General Assembly said they had erred, and they rejected completely the doctrine of inerrancy.
 - c. Today the name of Charles Briggs is listed as a co-author of the authoritative Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament.
4. We Presbyterians in our new Form of Government have done at least one good thing. We have restored the old terminology of the office of the minister as a teaching elder.@(page 2)
 - a. Ordained ministers are identified as having primarily the spiritual and ecclesiastical duty of teaching, the others governing the church.
 - b. Look at the exhaustive examination we put before candidates for the ordained ministry. Years ago it was much more extensive.
 - c. It is a tragedy whenever elders, deacons, ministers are installed in office with a cursory examination or little preparation.
 - (1) I have had more than one officer come up and say, I was elected and put in office without learning anything about my responsibilities.
 - d. For expediency we ordain church officers with no training, no preparation, no warning about the heavy responsibilities of their great office and the Biblical warning that they shall be judged with stricter judgment.@

B. ***A second reason, or warning that comes from James, is that we all make many mistakes, and the greatest mistake a teacher makes is what? ... not being able to ridle the tongue.***@

1. We are able to master the universe, we walk on the moon, we tame wild animals, but the evil of the tongue infects every inch of life!
 - a. James has an unusual expression for the cosmic reach of its evils.@
 - b. To borrow from the Stoic philosophers and educators of his day, the poison of the human tongue is linked to the doctrine of the great conflagration that returns all things in the creation to fire.
 - c. It is characteristic of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes to vividly contrast the way of the wise with the way of fools, or those who speak wisely and those who speak with forked tongue.@
 - d. Jesus says no one is able to serve two masters at the same time.
 - e. James also refers us to the comparison between one who is good or perfect, the teacher who makes no mistakes in what she says, and the

- way of the evil one or those who speak with cunning and curses.
- f. Remember, good instruction for Paul in Ephesians 4 is a matter of *leading a life worthy of the calling to which you (and I) have been called, with all lowliness and meekness...speaking the truth in love...@*

C. **His 3 parables here are masterful allusions of the sacred calling for all who educate:**

- 1, you are the bit in the horse=s mouth,
2. you are the tiny rudder of a great ship,
3. you are like the forest fire set off by a tiny spark,
 - a. When I lived in southern New Mexico, there was a horrible and destructive forest fire, known as the Cerro Grande Fire. In May of 2000, it burned up a great portion of a national forest in the Jemez Mountains of northern New Mexico. Top-secret US Navy research labs and all of Los Alamos had to be hurriedly evacuated, along with several towns. It was the worst forest fire ever in New Mexico. News print and TV newscasts speculated that possibly these were set by terrorists, by infiltrators who wanted to steal our nuclear secrets. Others said the fire was set by those animal-huggers and unamerican conservationists.It finally was admitted that it was in truth set by (page 3) a National Park Service professional at Bandolier. A controlled burn was to be done every 10 years, near Bandolier National Monument but someone foolishly underestimated the high wind and the severe drought conditions. In truth a controlled burn was counter-indicated. It turned into the National Park Service=s worst nightmare because the truth was not told.
 - b. This New Mexico fire also illustrates the power of the lie, our inability to tell the truth even when we want to.

III. THE CHURCH THEN IS A TEACHER FOR THE WORLD.

A. **What do you imagine was the principal use for the Book of Proverbs?**

1. It was a school manual for young males, particularly those from well-to-do families and from the royal court.
 - a. More than just common sense, it served as a book of instruction on good morals, cosmic order, etiquette, and the wisdom of the day.
 - b. Wisdom Literature in our Bible is for teaching what is good (if you open your Bible to the middle, you will open it to the Wisdom section -the 5 books).
 - c. It does not really occupy itself with matters of eternal life, but life in this world, avoiding the pitfall of the unrighteous or fools.
2. Proverbs, the book of Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Job, focus intently on how we teach with our words, our language, and its effect on our ethics and bodily morality.
 - a. (The exception is the Song of Solomon.)
3. Wisdom Personified is the female teacher of young males, SOPHIA, as contrasted with the woman of the street with loose morals who with her seductive words and behavior entice young men to sample her wares.
 - a. The final chapter of Proverbs speaks of the virtuous wife:
 - b. she extends an open hand to the poor and the needy,

- c. from her mouth she speaks wisdom,
 - d. her tongue is the law of kindness. @
4. The code red warning in James is this: we can never tame the tongue or the body, and it is especially true in our 21st century world.
- a. All the chatter and foolishness we are hearing about health care reform, or "Obama Care!" 95% of it is opinion devoid of facts and truth. My wife tells me to remember that broadcasters on FOX and CNBC are paid entertainers, they are not paid to tell the truth, but to set the passions on fire.
 - b. James warns us about the danger of the popular acceptance of mediocrity of language that our freedom of speech has come to.
5. Thus, bridling the tongue Education-remains a precious gift to so few, those called to the office of teacher.
- a. What is good, and perfect These are treasured gifts which must be protected. They belong to and describe only God. They are not a part of our world. We share in them only through the Holy Spirit.

B. *The ultimate purpose of teaching in the Old Testament was vastly different from the purpose in the New Testament and the Church:*

- 1. In the Old World, it was to learn and keep the Law perfectly.
 - a. Not even the rich young ruler who kept each commandment could do that. As he departed Jesus' presence, Jesus still loved him. (page 4)
- 2. In the New Testament, and in the church, the office of teaching is to lead us to eternal life, to God-like qualities in every-day living.
 - a. To quote Proverbs 10, the wage of the righteous leads to life. @
 - b. For James, and for the virtuous wife in Proverbs, this is inseparable from doing good to all who are needy in the world. ... **[pause]**
- 6. Loving God, serving others, sharing faith @ I wonder how James would fill out his VISION STATEMENT for our own Pastor Nominating Committee. (page 5)

May all of God's children, and especially the teachers, say... Amen! @