

Let Not Many of You Become Teachers

In the New King James Version, the English word “stricter” is only used one time. In James 3:1 it states, *“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment”* (James 3:1). At first it seems that James is trying to keep people from becoming teachers! He warns that all of those who choose to be teachers are going to be under a “stricter” judgement. In Hebrews 5:12, a majority of the Hebrew brethren are condemned because they had been Christians for long enough that they should have been teachers. Hebrews 5:12 requires all Christians grow and mature into teachers. The two appear to be pulling Christians into two different directions. Once again, the writings of James seem to be in direct conflict with the writings of another inspired writer! The resolution is simple.

The word here translated as “stricter” is the word “meizon.” This word is translated in other versions as “greater.” The original idea was not one of strictness as in a bias against all teachers, but the idea that they have the most to answer for because of the maturity and talents they had received. This same word is used in John 15:13, *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.”* The most love a person can possess, is to be willing to give their life for their friend. The most responsibility a person could possibly have as a Christian is to teach others.

In I Corinthians 3 Paul writes, *“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire”* (I Corinthians 3:11-15). The Corinthians were divided amongst themselves. They had lost sight of Christ and began to follow preachers instead. This is where these verses come in. Paul reminded them that there is only one foundation, Christ. All preachers and teachers build on that one foundation. In the day of Judgement, every person will answer for how they have spent their time on earth. Those who were obedient inherit heaven, those who refuse to eternal destruction (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). “A man's work” are those he converts. As in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), everyone will answer for how well they were stewards of all they have been given, including how they taught others and spread the gospel. As Paul points out, some of those one converts will stand in the day of Judgement, those of the gold, silver, and precious jewels. Other converts are made of wood, hay, and straw. Under fire the first group is strengthened and refined, the second group is burned and destroyed in the same fire.

When the second group is burned, Paul states that the man who helped in their conversion will *“suffer loss.”* Once again, he will be accountable for those he taught. This accountability is not based on their salvation but in how they were taught. This is the point of James 3:1. Following verse one, Paul enters into a discussion of the tongue. There is no greater responsibility of a Christian than teaching others. A Christian,

as pointed out in Hebrews 5, as they grow and mature begins to have more responsibilities. Even though one would have more to answer for, every Christian has the responsibility to grow and along with that comes the accountability to teach others the way to heaven.