



ing with one another in love” (Eph. 4:2) so that those willing to face this “greater judgment” don’t become so discouraged by the difficulty of the work that they stop teaching and simply become silent. Jesus told His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send

out laborers into His harvest” (Matt. 9:37-38). May we hold up the hands of those who are so moved by their love of God, His word, and that harvest of souls in need of hearing the gospel that they are willing to teach, even in the face of this “stricter judgment”—“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:15). .



enough to correct us. We need experienced teachers to sharpen us (Prov. 27:17). We need brothers and sisters, who may not be teachers but love God’s word and want to see us grow and stay ever true to the sacred oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11).

When this happens, we must always strive to be “longsuffering, bear-

Faithful Sayings Issue 24.13 March 27, 2022

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ISSUE  
**24.13**  
March 27, 2022

# Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF  
THE OL-  
SEN PARK  
CHURCH OF  
CHRIST

**Services**  
Sunday: 9:00 AM  
9:30 AM  
10:30 AM  
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

**Elders:**  
Patrick Ledbetter  
Brady McAlister  
Jeff Nunn

**Deacons:**  
Ben Hight  
Blake McAlister  
Walker McAnear  
Sam Nunn  
Lance Purcell  
Justin Smiley  
Trevor Yontz

**Evangelist:**  
Kyle Pope

## “Stricter Judgment”

By Kyle Pope

The third chapter of the book of James begins with a sobering warning to those who would be teachers. It reads, “My brethren let not many of you be teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (James 3:1, NKJV). Those who teach in spiritual matters face the staggering realization that every word they utter will be scrutinized, weighed, and evaluated those who hear us, but the Holy Spirit leads James to reveal that those who teach will also receive a “stricter judgment” from God.

*Why is this the case?* We know that Scripture teaches that as Christians you and I must “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). Paul told the Romans, “each of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12). So why then should the one who labors to teach others receive a “stricter judgment” from God? Perhaps because in the wisdom of God He has chosen to utilize the human voice in the proclamation of His message. While it is true that anyone can pick up a Bible and read it for himself and come to know the truth (cf. Eph. 3:4), sadly many people will never do this until they are convinced they need to do so. The Holy Spirit led Paul to note this in asking the question, “how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14). The

problem is that people often listen and blindly follow whatever someone they respect tells them. Although we will stand before God as individuals, the teacher has a serious impact on the beliefs and actions individuals choose to accept. A teacher can lead a soul to truth and faithfulness, or plant the seeds of error and falsehood that lead to the condemnation of a soul.

### The Meaning of “Stricter Judgment”

What exactly does it mean that teachers will face a *stricter judgment*? The word translated “**stricter**” is the Greek word *meizōn*, the comparative adjective of the word

*megas* meaning “great.” This is literally a “**greater judgment**” (YLT, GLT). The old King James Version put it “**greater condemnation,**” but that makes it sound as if the warning is only to those who are condemned as a result of false teaching. While the Greek word *krima* translated “judgment” can mean condemnation, it is derived from the verb *krinō* meaning “to determine” or “to judge” (Thayer). Not every teacher will be condemned unto eternal punishment, but every teacher will face a *greater* judgment of their words than those who do not teach.

This greater judgment may involve several things taught in the New Testament. First, it is clear that Jesus taught the seriousness of causing others to sin. Jesus warned, “**Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!**” (Matt. 18:7). The teacher who introduces a thought process to a listener that leads to sin becomes the one “**by whom the offense comes.**” If our speculations or acceptance of questionable opinions leads others into sin, we certainly will face a “**stricter judgment**” for the sinful fruit our words have produced.

In a similar way, Scripture reveals that Paul was so concerned not to lead another person to stumble into sin that he taught the Corinthians, “**Give no offense, either to the Jews**

**or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved**” (1 Cor. 10:32-33). Our words might not lead to overt sinful acts, but they could lead to discouragement and turning someone away from faith—which is sin. The teacher must never shape his teaching so as to appeal to the “**itching ears**” of his listeners (2 Tim. 4:3). At the same time, he must never speak (or act) in such a way that he tears down the faith of his listeners through his own selfish desires. For this, he too will surely face a “**greater judgment.**”

Finally, Jesus taught that all souls must give account before God on the Day of Judgment for “**every idle word**” they have spoken (Matt. 12:36). Our words can lead to our justification or to our condemnation (Matt. 12:37). This may be one of the reasons James warns that all disciples should be “**swift to hear, slow to speak**” (James 1:19). The teacher must make it his work to speak. He is to seek opportunities to lead others to the truth, but the more he acts on these opportunities the greater the opportunity is to utter *idle words*—“**words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers**” (2 Tim. 2:14). The simple quantity of words spoken by teachers will certainly demand a “**greater judgment**” from God for the words the teacher speaks.

### So Why Should Anyone Teach?

Considering these things, why would anyone ever choose to teach? Let’s think for a moment about what would happen if *no one* ever taught! Who would believe? Remember Paul’s question?—“**How shall they hear without a preacher**” (Rom. 10:14). Paul knew well the seriousness of this “**stricter judgment.**” He spoke of it (at least in part) as “**the terror of the**

**Lord**”—but went on to cite it as the very reason he sought “**to persuade men**” (2 Cor. 5:11). Paul declared to the Romans, “**For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!**” (1 Cor. 9:16). Today, this same necessity of conviction motivates men in our day, old and young alike, in spite of this “**stricter judgment**” to preach sermons, teach Bible classes, and work to bring lost and dying souls to salvation in Christ.

Will there be times that a teacher makes a misstatement or has a flaw in his reasoning? Certainly. This is why we often need souls like Aquila and Priscilla who. These dear souls, after hearing shortcoming in the teaching of Apollos, had the courage and love necessary to take him aside and explain the word of God to him “**more accurately**” (Acts 18:26). Teachers desperately need this! We need older and wiser souls who love us