

The Dark Side is made up increasingly by wild horses who have no discernment. Their inventory of ideas has been developed by the faculty of the Cosmic Academy's curriculum with its "doctrines of demons" (2 Timothy 4:1).

The absence of establishment viewpoint in the souls of the benighted is only exceeded by the vacuous inventory of doctrinal viewpoint. The contest that is afoot is being engaged on the battlefield of thought and the Lord's army is rapidly losing its population of **πρόμαχοι** (*prómachoi*): "front rankers" in the Invisible War.

How the Lord will manage the eventual outcome of this struggle for power remains to be seen, but verse 10 above confirms this:

(1) "Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but (2) "he who trusts in the Lord, unfailing love shall continuously surround him."

What is it that assures the unfailing love of God for those in His army and which would also equip those who are candidates for "many sorrows"? The "trappings of bits and bridles to hold them in check" (Psalm 32:9).

To pursue this idea, our study now turns back to James 3:2 and its illustration of how to overcome the influence of the tongue mentioned in:

**James 3:2** For we all fall into sin in many ways. If anyone does not sin in what he says, he is a mature believer, able to restrain his tongue by bridling his entire body with his volition. (EXT)

James continues this discussion on horses in:

**James 3:3** Now if we put bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. (NASB)

James's illustration of how people are able to maintain control of their sin nature starts with the ability to control their bodies. To do so, James goes to the horse to illustrate.

We have learned that the horse responds to human commands including touch, words, and tack. Now let's learn how all these things come together when one saddles him up, mounts, and rides.

1. James accurately points out that with a bit in a horse's mouth, man can control the animal's entire body. The bit is actually a part of the bridle. The bit is the noun, **χαλινός** (*chalinós*) which means "to loosen."



2. The bridle in the context of James 3:2 is the verb, **χαλιναγωγέω** (*chalinagōgēō*). There is no specific word for the bit since it is a part of the bridle.
3. But the key to controlling the horse is that part of the bridle that is inserted into the horse's mouth. It is made of steel and fits at the very back of his mouth. This area is very tender and when the rider pulls on the reins the bit presses into this area causing the horse to react.
4. The rider's control of the horse's movements is initially done by the bridle to which the reins are attached. Pulling on the reins causes the bit to compress against the back of the horse's mouth and he turns to the left or right, slows or halts as the rider dictates.
5. However, the horse does not like to have something inedible put into his mouth so the procedure to insert the bit starts by standing slightly off to his side. Holding the bit in the palm of the hand you press on the horse's mouth while pulling on the reins.
6. This action needs to be done quickly. To do so slowly make you vulnerable to being bitten. With the bit in place, the horse is going to do exactly what you want him to do by means of the bit and control of the bridle.
7. If the bridle is too tight then the horse is distracted by the pain and can become uncontrollable if not loosened. The loosely adjusted bit allows the rider to get on the saddle.
8. How one sits in the saddle becomes the next technique in controlling the horse. The rider must get comfortable; bouncing around up and down is very distracting to the horse.
9. The reins are generally to be kept down low just above the withers. The control of the horse begins with the bit and bridle so he will obey the rider. James points this out in verse 3, "We put bits into horses' mouths so that they will obey us and we direct their entire body as well."
10. The verb "obey" is the present middle infinitive of **πείθω** (*peithō*). Why put bits in the horse's mouth? He will obey us, and we can control his entire body. The bit in the mouth results in total obedience.
11. By nature, the horse always follows the direction of his head. If you want him to move straight ahead then relax the reins, if you want him to turn left pull left with the reins, and the opposite if you want him to go right.
12. This is what James means by the phrase, "we direct their entire body." This example is given following the statement in verse 2 which sets up the illustration provided by the bridle, the bit, and the horse.

**James 3:2** For we all fall into sin in many ways. If anyone does not sin in what he says, he is a mature believer, able to restrain his tongue by bridling his entire body with his volition. (EXT)

13. This expanded translation ends with the noun, “volition.” This word is not in the original text but is made clearly evident by the phrase, “If anyone does not sin in what he says.”
14. If what a person says is not sinful, then he has used his volition to express an objective comment. How does this man’s volition avoid sinning in what he says? He consults his stream of consciousness to recall a working object that results in him expressing either establishment or doctrinal viewpoint.
15. What has this man actually done? He has made a mental attitude decision to express a positive statement rather than a negative one. How is this demonstrated? By the use of the tongue to respond to the guidance of resident doctrine.
16. The word bridle includes the bit and reins. It is the bit that allows the horseman to control the movement of the horse with the reins. When the reins are adjusted in a certain way, the bit causes the horse to respond accordingly.
17. If the bit is allowed to significantly separate from the back of the horse’s mouth, it is possible for him to use his tongue to push the bit forward at which point the rider has potentially lost control of the horse.
18. This illustrates the circumstance when the believer goes negative and responds to the trends of his sin nature. This is made evident by the expression and often the commission of verbal sins, engage in human good, and worse, evil.
19. Whereas the bit is what controls the horse, it is the reins of the rider that determines how the horse is to respond. Likewise, it is the volition that expresses what the believer thinks, but its content finds its origin in the working objects of his inventory of ideas.
20. Principle: The horse is a big, strong animal who has volition to do as he wishes, however he is easily controlled by the influence of the bit.
21. The bridle in sync with the bit controls the horse. It is doctrine in the soul that controls the entire body of the believer. Therefore, man who controls the horse, is like the horse in this sense: man has his own idea while God has another. Doctrine in the soul results in both man and God being in sync.

(End JAS3-19. See JAS3-20 for continuation the study at p. 191.),



22. Principle: The believer is like the horse who follows his mouth. What the tongue of the believer says, reveals the content of his soul.

**James 3:3** Now if we put bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. (NASB)

1. The verse begins with the conditional conjunction **εἰ (ei)**: “if” which is a first-class condition confirming the statement in context is true. It is followed by the continuative particle **δέ (dé)**: “now.”
2. The example James presents is the tacking of a horse beginning with the bit, a part of the bridle mentioned in verse 2. This bit is going to be put into the horse’s mouth. The verb “put” is the present active indicative of **βάλλω (ballō)**. This is a customary present which indicates that the action occurs regularly. The horseman always starts by inserting the bit into the horse’s mouth.
3. The bit is among the things that influence the horse. There are other techniques having to do with how one sits in the saddle, the use of the legs and feet to apply pressure, hand movements on the withers, etc.
4. These techniques enable the rider to control the horse. The use of the reins directs the horse in the way the rider would have him go. How he rides the horse can be as effective in guiding the animal as do the reins.
5. These techniques result in training the horse how to “obey the rider.” The verb “obey” is the present middle infinitive of **πείθω (peithō)**. There are several applications of this verb including “persuade, convince, or induce.” Here it is best translated, “to obey.”
6. The middle voice indicates that the horse makes the volitional decision to obey while the infinitive associates the horse’s obedience with the influence of the bit.
7. The bit’s influence results in the horse’s entire body obeying as well. A little bit in the small corner of his mouth controls the entire body of the horse. It is from that small device in that small corner that enables the rider to control the horse’s entire body.
8. As we have learned in our analysis, a person who is able to communicate with a horse in the horse’s language can make friends with him. Once the horse learns to trust the person, he can be controlled by that person’s body language.

9. This camaraderie can lead the horse to accepting the person as a rider, even bareback. But communication by the rider with the horse must extend to management of the horse while mounted.
10. That relationship is abnormal. According to what is normal requires training but with the assistance of bit and bridle. Even then the horse's tendency is to go where he wants to go. Only the bit can change his mind about that.
11. These tendencies clearly indicate that the horse has volition and until he is convinced otherwise, he will go his own way. The bit is what trains a horse to do what his rider demands, and he will respond accordingly every time.
12. Consequently, he is trained to obey because he obeys his mouth's reaction to pain. Whatever direction he has a mind to go can be quickly changed by pulling on a rein. The rider with a rein directs the horse in the way he should go.
13. The word for this in the NASB is "direct," the present active indicative of the verb **μετάγω** (*metágō*): "to direct or bring from one direction to another, to guide (lead to another place)."<sup>1</sup>
14. "Direct" is a good translation because to change the horse's mind to go in another direction requires the infliction of pain and he uses his volition to make the exchange from pain to comfort.
15. The bit and bridle control the body of the horse; one's inventory of ideas controls the body of the human. The horse uses his volition to comply with the wishes of the rider. The human uses his volition to comply with the wishes of his sin nature or the standards of his culture.
16. The human can use the bit and reins to control the horse since he follows his tender mouth. According to James, the believer follows his mouth because what he says is the expression of his inventory of ideas.
17. And when the tongue of the believer is unbridled with no self-imposed bit to tone it down, what he says exposes into the clear light of day the content of his soul.
18. Therefore, what a person says is the real indicator of what he thinks and the more he talks the more he exposes who he really is.
19. Bits in the horses' mouths allow their riders to train them to obey. Volition in consultation with the conscience, which is the soul's means of accessing what he thinks, is how a believer controls his entire body.

---

<sup>1</sup> Walter Bauer, "μετάγω," 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), 638.



20. In the wild, horses communicate with each other through body language. If you understand their body language, then you have insight into how they think. When you learn how to present your body to a horse, you can make friends with him and with that knowledge train him.
21. I think an excerpt from a horse expert best illustrates this principle:

I looked through binoculars at a herd of wild horses. They seemed close enough to touch. I could see subtle shifts of their eyes, ears, tongue. These were pure movements, untainted by human intervention. That day I would watch for eight continuous hours.

And then I saw an extraordinary sequence of events. A light bay [reddish brown and black mane and tail] colt was behaving badly. He was about twenty months old, I guessed, with a vast amount of feathering around his fetlocks and down the backs of his legs, and a mane running down well below his neckline. He took a run at a filly and gave her a kick. The filly cowered and hobbled off, and the colt looked pleased with himself.

Then he committed another crime. A little foal [one less than a year old] approached him, moving his mouth in a suckling action to indicate he was no threat but subservient. Just a foal. That cut no ice with the colt; he launched himself at this younger cousin and took a bite out of the foal's backside. The bay colt was a terrorist. Immediately after the attack, he pretended nothing had happened; he went neutral, as though trying to avoid blame. (pp. 19–20)

Each time he behaved badly, the dun [grayish-yellow coat with black mane and tail] mare—the matriarch—weaved a little closer to him. I became certain that she was watching for any more of this behavior. She showed no apparent sign of interest, but she had left her station and was edging closer to him all the time.

The mare witnessed about four such episodes before she finally made her move. Now she stood within twenty yards. Still, the cream-colored colt could not help himself: he launched at a grown mare, grabbed the nape of her neck, and bit down hard.

The dun mare did not hesitate. In an instant she went from neutral to full-blown anger; she pinned her ears back and ran at him, knocking him down. As he struggled to his feet, she whirled and knocked him down again. While this chastisement unfolded, the other members apparently took no notice.

