

The Peace-Stealers Transcription

The Peace-Stealers - James 4:1-7 - Skip Heitzig

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Peace. Celebrities demand it. Pop culture makes it a catchy tune. Activists protest for it. Still, peace seems out of reach. True peace can't be found in, or understood by this world.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

(SINGING) And all we are saying is give peace a chance. All we are saying is give peace a chance.

Give peace a chance.

What a fine, fine day it is today. Welcome to church. Glad that you are here. I do want you to know that we do pray for your peace. I was praying for you this morning, just that God would fill you, your family, all that you are working through, with a sense of His peace that would guard your hearts and minds. And so when we talk about give peace a chance, we're talking about it from God's resources.

So let's turn in our Bibles to James chapter 4. James chapter 4. Did you bring one of these? This bible? Did you bring one? Good, good. Good thing to have at a Bible study -- Bible.

James chapter 4. We all know that war is a fact of life, that as long as there have been humans on the Earth there have been wars on the earth. Simon Jenkins, who's a British author, even noted every generation has its war.

So my dad's generation was a World War II generation. Mine was the Vietnam War. That was really up where my brothers were, my older brothers. In more modern times, the Gulf War, the Afghanistan war. Every generation has its wars.

According to the Wall Street Journal, they said war has shaped the world we live in and it's still shaping many parts of the globe. Now that's a sad truth to contemplate. That people and generations and nations get defined by the wars that they fight.

In the 20th century, it's estimated that 108 million people have been killed in wars. But that throughout history, both soldiers on the battlefield and people who are not on the battlefield, but get killed as a result of war, is 3,500,000,000 people. I know that's just a number for a lot of us, but that is the sad reality. That we, throughout our history, have managed to kill 3,500,000,000 human lives.

Now some wars are more famous than others. All of us could rattle off a list of ones that we know about, but I bet there are some wars you've never heard of. For example, there is a war that's called the Pig War. The pig war was a war in 1859. It was really an argument over a slaughtered pig that nearly led to a full scale war between the United States and England.

So here's how it worked. There's an island off the coast of Washington called the San Juan Island, and at that time it was the home to settlers both from Britain and from America. One day, a pig, a British pig, not that it had like an English accent or anything, but it was owned by the Brits. It was a black boar.

Went rampaging through an American farmer's potato field. And the response was the Americans called the army in. A general was dispatched to assess the situation. He and his troops declared San Juan Island to be US property, all of it. So here you have partly settled by the Brits, partly settled by the Americans, general comes in and says, nope it's all ours.

Well that didn't bode well with the Brits. They sent a fleet of Naval ships to surround the island. I mean that's how close it got. There was a standoff for weeks until they finally settled it. So I just want to say right now that I would hate to be the guy who says yeah I fought in the pig war. It's not like the Big War, the Pig War.

Here's another one called The War of the Stray Dog. I just like the titles. The War of the Stray Dog. There was a long hostility between two nations, Greece and Bulgaria. It came to a head in October of 1925. And what happened is a Greek soldier was shot as he was crossing into Bulgaria chasing his runaway dog.

So they killed him because he had crossed over into their country. OK, that's bad, but what's worse is how Greece responded to that. Greece invaded the country of Bulgaria over that. In fact, it got so bad that the League of Nations had to intervene to stop that invasion and that potential war.

Then I'll throw one more up on the screen just because I like the title of it. It's called the War of Jenkins' Ear. In 1738, a man by the name of Jenkins, Robert Jenkins, he was a British sailor, a Mariner, stands in front of the British Parliament in London with a severed ear. He claimed it was his ear, a decomposing, severed ear.

You know you know sometimes these politicians, that's just so off the chart. Take your ear and have a meeting with it. So he pulls his ear out. He claims that his ear had been severed by Spain, by a Spanish soldier, seven years prior.

So let me just say, if you're holding on to your ear for seven years, you have bigger problems. And he's holding it up and he says that this is done by a Spanish soldier. Spain and England for decades had not gotten along, but they used the incident of Jenkins ear to go to war with Spain. And war was formally declared by the Brits on Spain. War of Jenkins Ear. Crazy, right?

Now sometimes there are wars that are fought that are not even against nations, they're not against people. They're a war of things or activities or ideologies. We talk about a war of ideas. We talk about the War on Drugs, or the Cold War. Or here's one war I wish we would bring back is called the Gas Wars from the 1960s when gas, incidentally, was \$0.28 a gallon.

Come on, bring that war back. So it was basically gas stations, you know, lowering the price a quarter of a cent, a half a cent, a cent to compete with other ones so that people would buy gas from them. Then there's the war on terror.

All sorts of wars that are fought, for all sorts of reasons. In James, chapter 4 we have three wars that steal a person's peace. Three wars that are going on right now, all over the world. All three of them are peace stealers. All three of them will make your life miserable. And all three of them need to be ended and when they're ended, the result will be a lasting peace, if they can be ended.

OK, so this is the Book of James, and James was written by, guess who, come on. James. See you guys are Bible students. So James, but the question becomes which James, because the New Testament has a bunch of people named James.

So to just kind of cut to the chase, probably it was written by James, the brother of our Lord Jesus Christ. Or better put, the half brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. You probably know that after Jesus was born-- he was virgin born-- after that, Joseph and Mary had normal relations and had several children that the New Testament names. One of them by the name of James.

So James is writing this letter. He's writing to Christians, Jewish Christians, people who have come to faith in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. And he is writing because, evidently, church people have all sorts of personal problems as well as relational problems. Which is true of any church in any generation. But the theme, therefore, of the Book of James is maturity.

Maturity. He's saying to them "grow up". You need to grow up in certain areas of your life. Warren Wiersbe said "spiritual maturity is one of the greatest needs in the church today. Too many churches are playpens for babies, instead of workshops for adults."

So I remember my three older brothers would tell me to grow up all the time. It was their favorite mantra for me, especially my oldest brother Jim. He would see me act in a certain way and he'd say "grow up!" And my retort was "this is me growing up. This is what kids my age do growing up. So I'm on my way there".

James is telling this church it's time for you to be growing in certain areas. So in chapter 4, we're going to look at the first seven verses, but three wars-- the war among you, the war inside you, and the war above you. And you're going to discover something. All three wars are related to each other.

So first of all is the war among us. Look at how verse one begins. It's the simple question, "where do wars and fights come from among you?" Now that's a good question generally. Where do these wars come from? How do you get a war over a pig? How can you declare a war over a dude who holds an ear up in parliament? And where do these wars come from?

There's an author who decided to try to answer that question. His name is Mike Martin. He's a former British soldier. And he wrote a book called *Why We Fight*. It's a whole book devoted to the reasons people go to war.

Here's one sentence out of his book. He said, "Humans fight to achieve status and belonging." Now, he takes an approach from an evolutionary model, one I don't subscribe to. He talks about biological underpinnings, where people go to war to ensure their own possibility of reproduction. In other words, I want my tribe to keep going, so I'll eliminate other people who would be a threat to that, for that to happen.

The Guardian Magazine, on the other hand, says this, "Warfare provides people with a semblance of psychological positivity in oppressed societies where other outlets are lacking". Now that almost sounds noble. It's like I get it. I see why people will fight for that.

But the article goes on to say, "In most cases, wars are initiated by governments, not by populations". In other words, people don't want to go to war. Their governments get them into this. --"and most of the time, are the result of disputes over resources and land, or of a government's desire to increase its influence and power".

So it's a good question, where do wars come from? But that is really not the question of James. The question of James, he's not dealing with a war in general, or warfare in the world. Notice how he puts his question, "where do wars and fights come from among you?" Now the "you" in James' mind are the believers. Where do wars come from among you Christians?

So scholars or commentators will make note of this fact to kind of give the nuance. You'll notice in verse 1 the difference between wars and fights. See those two words? What they'll say is, wars describes the underlying conflict that you might have with another person, whereas fights are the expressions, you know, the outward expression, the flare-ups, that come. Where do those things come from? Either way, they describe a combative relationship between church members, church people.

One of my favorite psalms, Psalm 133, there's only three verses in that psalm, and that's not why it's my favorite psalm, but it begins this way. See if you remember this, "behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity".

It's a good psalm. The opposite is also true. Behold how bad and how unpleasant it is when brethren don't dwell together in unity. Where instead of extending the right hand of fellowship, they want to extend the right fist of fellowship. Not good. Unpleasant. Not helpful.

But here's what you need to know. Conflict among God's people is not new. It's been going on a long time. I could take you all the way back to Genesis chapter 13 where Abraham and Lot are at odds with each other, the patriarchs, because their herdsmen had strife between them. And they were at odds with each other over land rights and water rights.

I could take you to the New Testament. In the New Testament the disciples of the Lord Jesus argued. Remember what they argued over? Anybody remember what do they argue over? Who would be the what? Who would be the greatest in the kingdom.

They're arguing over who's going to have the top dog seat in the kingdom. I'm sure that it started out sort of a jocular conversation, like they're making fun of Peter. Peter snores. He's not going to be on top in the kingdom. I will be. I lean my head on Jesus' chest, that's John. You can throw Thomas out, he doubts everything. He won't be the greatest.

But it eventually got into a heated argument, so much so that Jesus himself had to intervene. So those are the cream of the crop. These are the disciples. Peter and Paul argued among themselves.

According to the book of Galatians, Paul said concerning Peter, "I withstood him to his face". So there's Paul getting in Peter's grill. Thank God, you're all Jewish over here with that group, but you're all Gentile over with that group. We're kind of playing the hypocrite.

They had a disagreement. They had an argument, as did Paul and Barnabas. In fact, the Galatian church itself had problems. Paul wrote to the Galatians, and notice that there's biting and devouring among these people, just nitpicking, short-tempered. The Corinthians competed in spiritual gifts publicly. They were taking each other to court.

Now the reason I'm bringing all this up, and there are many more examples of God's people not getting along in history many, many more. The reason I'm bringing it up is because some of us have this romanticized idea of what the early church was like. I hear this all the time.

We need to get back to the purity and the simplicity of the early church. Ever heard that? Anybody who says that needs to bone up on church history a little bit. Because when you do, you go oh they're kind of like us.

Like church of Corinth, church in Galatia, that's New Testament. That goes way back. So when people romanticize the early Church-- it was so pure, it was so awesome-- you know that's the 'good old days' mentality, and I've discovered that the good old days is just a combination of a bad memory and a good imagination.

So the church is not a society of perfect people. We the Church are a society of forgiven people, redeemed people. But yes, this is an area where we need to grow up in. Because, when it comes to getting along, even among ourselves, we can act very immature. Let's look at the immaturity of this church. Go down now to verse 11. And we're going to get back, but go down to verse 11, because it fills in some of the color, lets us know what's happening.

So look at verse 11, "do not speak evil of one another". OK so that was going on. "Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you're not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?" So now we know what is going on.

There's some bad-mouthing going on. There's some back-biting going on. There's some back-stabbing going on among these dear saints of God. James brings this out. He's indicting them because of it. It's pretty straightforward language. But I want you to notice that in his indictment he also gives the solution

to the war that is among us.

So let me offer you some advice. If you're struggling with getting along with people in your life, let me give you a few steps to end wars among us. First of all, this is very practical, always make it a family matter. If it's with a brother or sister, it's a family matter.

In fact, you'll notice that he says do not speak evil of one another brethren. That's the plural for brothers and sisters. "He who speaks evil of a brother and judge's a brother", so brethren and brother, brother.

What is he doing? He's saying, I just want to remind you that we're part of the same family. So keep that in mind, if you're arguing with another believer, that's a brother. That's a sister. It's more than just a client, more than just a customer, more than just a neighbor, more than just a mother-in-law, more than just a son-in-law, more than just a weirdo-in-law. That's a brother in Christ, a sister in Christ.

We're part of the same family. We have the same Savior. The same Holy Spirit that lives in me lives in you. And because of that, I refuse to fight you. I won't fight you. "I wanna fight." I won't fight you. I'll fight for you. I'll fight with you, given the right battle, but I will not fight you. Because as long as you make it a family, matter how can you? So that's the first step, make it a family matter.

Second, get off the judge's seat. That's sort of James point here, isn't it? You make yourself a judge. Now follow James' impeccable logic. He says, "don't speak evil of one another brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you're not a doer of the law, but a judge". And then look at this. There's one lawgiver. There's one judge, and it ain't you.

There's one judge, and that's God, and he's not giving his position away to you. There's only one. Now, what does James mean when he says all this? Here's what he means. The essence of the law is summed up in one word. What is it? Love.

Jesus said, if you love your neighbor as yourself, if you love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, that's the summary of the law. So when you slander someone you violate love. And when you violate love, you are violating the very core essence of the law.

And when you act like a judge you are usurping God's authority as the law-giver. See that's his logic. It's just brilliant logic. So James is not telling them to stop evaluating people, because we must. He's not saying don't use discernment in situations, because we must. He's just saying stop condemning people.

So make it a family matter, get off the judge's seat. Third tip, use your mouth to heal and not to hurt. You know that's a decision we can make before we leave this room today. From now on, I'm to use these lips more to heal than to hurt.

Look at the context of verse 12. Says there's one lawgiver one judge, it's capital L so it's referring to God, who is able to save and to destroy. Think for a moment of the power a judge has in a courtroom. A judge by his or her words can save or can destroy. Can say, as the gavel goes down, innocent or guilty, acquitted or condemned. That's a lot of power. You can save or you can destroy.

So just like the words of a law-giver or a judge can do that, so our words have great power. We can save. We can destroy. You know you've heard me talk about D.L. Moody in the past, for years right? Dwight Lyman Moody, the founder of the Moody Church in Chicago, a century ago or so, also a great evangelist.

There's one thing about D.L. Moody that people noted, he was not a polished speaker. He was not a highly-educated individual, like a lot of clergymen at the time were. He's sort of like a simple person, packs a punch, you know, street level kind of a guy. So he didn't always say things perfectly, and people noted that and often criticized him because of that.

Now he was not naive. He understood that people were talking smack about him, so he addressed it. Look at what he said, "you may find hundreds of faultfinders among professed Christians; but all their criticism will not lead one solitary soul to Christ." That's powerful.

"I never preached a sermon yet that I could not pick to pieces, and I find fault with. I feel that Jesus ought to have a far better representative than I am. But I've lived long enough to discover that there's nothing perfect in this world. If you're waiting until you find a perfect preacher or a perfect church I'm afraid you'll have to wait till the Millennium arrives."

First of all, can I just make note that he believed in a Millennium, a literal Millennium. Way to go D.L. Moody, old dead guy that I really like. But what he's saying here is powerful. Here's what he's saying, he's saying, look, they're criticizing, I'm evangelizing. They're pouting, I'm preaching. They're using their words for evil, I'm using my words for good. And that's why I say use your mouth to heal and not to hurt.

We could do that. We could decide we're going to do that. Well no man can tame the tongue. You're right, but you're filled with the Holy Spirit. You're filled with the Holy Spirit. This can happen. You could use your mouth to preach the gospel. You could use your words to encourage people. You could use what you say to bless, to instruct, to equip, to inspire. So that's the war among us.

But there's a second war. In fact, the reason for the first war is because of the second war, and that is the war inside of us. Let's look at what he says. He says "where do wars and fights come from among you?" We already went through that. Now he answers it.

"Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?" Now when he uses the term "in your members", he's not saying in your church members. He's talking about in your body. The bodily members of your person. The different parts of your body, your makeup, that are vying for attention and affection. That's what he's talking about.

And then he continues, "you lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight in war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask amiss, that you might spend it on your pleasures." Let me sum that up and then pick it apart.

Here's the summary. The reason there's a war among us, is because there's a war inside of us. It's the war inside of us that is fueling the fires of the wars among us. That's what he is saying. The war inside the heart was fueling the war inside the church. That's the real source, so just keep this in mind. If you're struggling with other people, that struggle could be generated by the struggle within you.

Some of you have no clue what I just said. You're going, struggle, within me? I don't have a struggle with me. I love me. I'm not struggling with me. I love me. I'm my own best friend. I get along fine with myself. I give me whatever I want.

Bingo. Therein lies the issue. Because you'll notice in verse 1, the word pleasure. Do they not-- where do these things come from? Where does the war among us come from? He says "do they not come from your desires for pleasure?"

Very interesting and important word. The word pleasure here is the Greek word hedone. And hedone is the word from whence we get our word hedonism. Ever heard of hedonism? A hedonistic person? It's a philosophy of life that says, my personal pleasure is my highest goal. That's hedonism. I live for pleasure, a pleasure seeker.

Now I'm going to push the pause button. OK, I'm pausing the sermon. Because I want to say something before we get back into this. There's nothing wrong with pleasure per se. God created us with a very amazing, intricate nervous system with pleasure receptors so that we would find enjoyment in life. He did

that. That's how we are created. So there's nothing wrong with enjoyment.

There's nothing wrong with pleasure per se. There's nothing wrong with say, enjoying a fine meal together, or a day in the sun where you feel like on a day like this-- oh, I feel so good, that warmth on my skin. You don't have to feel guilty because of that. A nice barbecue in the backyard, with friends and family. A golf game, especially when you're hitting it really well and you're finding pleasure in that. It's like wow, it went right down the fairway, so good. A healthy sex life in the covenant of a marriage relationship. God created you to enjoy those things.

But when those desires become the passion of your life, that is, they drive us, they control us so that life is one continuous search for pleasure, that's a problem. It's a problem when we become like what Paul described in 2 Timothy chapter 3 those people who are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

When we become like the seed sown that Jesus spoke about in Luke chapter 8, when he said that they were choked with the pleasures of this life. Or when we become like what Paul described in Titus 3 those who are enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. You get the idea, driven by, enslaved by, controlled by.

OK, now pause button off. Let's go to verse 1. Look at the second part of it again. "Do they not come from your desires for pleasure", now notice this, "that war in your members?". The pleasures are waging war inside of you. Those pleasures are like little rebel soldiers demanding satisfaction, and when they do not get satisfied they declare war. That's the war inside you.

When a person is victimized by their own desires, their inner life becomes a battleground. And when that happens, relationships around them get hurt. Because people, at that point, are collateral damage. It's like, I'm sorry but it's all about me right now. I'm sorry that I'm hurting you, but really I want to get my pleasure fulfilled. See so when you are that focused, people around you don't matter. And so you have diminished their importance, and they get hurt.

So the war inside of us is what is causing the war outside of us among us. But look at verse 2 now. He gets a little heavy. You know James is up front, kind of like D.L. Moody, just in your face kind of a preacher. But he says this, "you lust and do not have."

Look at the next sentence. "You murder and covet and cannot obtain." OK, whoa. That's sort of a shocking statement. Imagine having your Friday morning, ladies Bible study group, gather them all in your home in the living room. Well good morning murderers. It's like what? What did you just call me? So he's calling them murderers.

What does he mean by this? Well most people think it's a metaphorical statement. Just like Jesus said, if you hate your brother you've committed murder. He could be that. I'm not going to disagree with that, but some scholars actually believe that he was not being metaphorical he's being actual, being literal.

That there was a case of a church where somebody killed another church member. It became known, it became a scandal. And one of the reasons that caused James to want to write this general letter was because of incidents like that. That's a possibility. I don't know. I can't tell you.

I can tell you that if you were to look up in your Bibles the life of King David, the man after God's own heart, there's a record of how he treated a woman named Bathsheba and her husband named Uriah the Hittite. And if you go look at that story it is almost word for word verse 2 and 3. An adulterer. A murderer. It's like he acted these verses out in real life.

Whatever the case, James point is taken. The struggle inside of you is real. But that real struggle is ruining relations around you and ruining your testimony for the gospel. It's all about, I want this and I want this and if I'm not getting what I want. So if you get five people together and they all want what they want only

there's going to be a war in that room. Is that right? There's going to be a war in that room.

I read an article this week I wanted to share it with you. There's a biologist from Purdue University named William Muir. Purdue is in Indiana. He's a biologist. And he was doing an experiment, or doing research, on chickens. Which I know it's a foul thing to research, But-- I wanted to see if you're listening and you are. Chicken, fowl. Good good good good, you're tracking.

OK so he is studying chickens and he decides to find out how they reproduce over time. So he divided these chickens into two groups. Let's call group number one the average chicken group. And let's call group number two the super chickens, the super flock. So he found chickens that were extraordinarily, individually productive and put them all in the same group, and just put regular chickens in the other group and watched them over six generations.

So after six generations of reproduction, this is what he discovered. The first group did just fine. They were plump, fully feathered, their egg production increased, all good. What about the second group? What would you imagine? What he discovered is that all of the chickens in the second group except three were dead. They pecked each other to death. Now I see a quarrel there. Sometimes that happens, you get a bunch of super-achievers together, right? Because it's like, no no no my plan is better. Oh no no you're an idiot. My plan-- and it's like, clash, clash right? That happens a lot.

So, the war among us is, according to James, because of the war inside of us. Now keep following his line of thinking here, because at the end of verse two he says, you do not have, here's something you want, you want, you want, but you don't have it, because you do not ask.

And the implication is you don't ask God. You don't pray about it. You're not talking to God about it. You're not asking God, should I have this, should I not have this? Can I have this?

Verse 3, "you ask and you do not receive because you ask amiss, that you might spend it on your pleasures". Without unraveling that too much, let me just put it to you this way. Selfishness leads not only to wrongdoing, it leads to wrong praying. Because you see, when you're self-focused as an individual, you become self-sufficient. Self-focused people often become self-sufficient. And last time I checked, self-sufficient people don't pray.

I don't need to pray. I got this. I'm strong enough, I'm smart enough. I don't need God to help me on this. This is like easy stuff. Self-sufficient people don't pray. And self-focused people, when they pray, it's just praying sort of all about them. That's the greater point here.

Now let me close this before we move on by saying, whatever it is you think you need and you want in your life, you need to understand that what God wants for you is far greater than anything you could want for yourself. So when it comes to just enjoying life and having pleasure, keep that in mind. Number two, about that, even if following Christ is hard sometimes, the very worst that God has for you is better than the best that the world has for you.

It is. It's better. It's a better plan. So the war among us is caused by the war inside us, but there's a third war and we're going to close with this, and that is the war above us. And oddly, often this really is the issue of war. It's because people are fighting God.

So look at verse 4. "Adulterers and adulteresses!" Again, thank you pastor James, God bless you too! "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world and makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the scripture says in vain 'the Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously'? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

Do you know that a person can declare a war on God? He said, oh yeah an unbeliever can. Sure unbelievers

shake their fists to God all the time. No no no. He's writing to brethren. Speaking to fellow believers. You can declare war on God. You want to know how? You can declare war on God by getting too close to God's enemy.

Fraternalizing with the enemy. When you move from God toward God's enemy more and more, you are in effect, making God your enemy, declaring war on God. And the enemy he's speaking of here is not only the devil but he mentions the world. The world. You probably know, I hope, that when the Bible talks about the world it's not necessarily referring to the world of people. We are to love them. Not referring to the world of plants and animals, we're to enjoy them.

It's the world of ideas. It's the system of values that is opposed to the values of God and his kingdom. That's the world. To be a friend of this world, and notice that he compares friendship with this world to adultery. And why would he do that? Well, simply because we're married to Christ.

Romans chapter 7 says that we are married to Jesus Christ. We are the bride of Christ. He is the Bridegroom of the church. So if you're a friend of the world, if the world is more important and the values of the world are more important to you, then you are making yourself an enemy of God.

So this begs the question, how do I know I'm a friend of the world? Well I've jotted down a few general ideas. You know you're a friend of the world when your personal pleasure is more important to you than spiritual pleasure. If that's happening, if you're tending toward that, pretty good indication you're a friend of this world. You know you're a friend of this world when you care more about what unbelieving friends and family think about than what God thinks about you, or knows about you.

Let me put that a better way. You know you're a friend of this world when you care more about what unbelieving friends and family think about than what believing friends and family think about you. And you know you're a friend of this world when you disregard scripture.

Twice in this passage James is quoting scripture. He's referring to Old Testament passages. But if you're the enemy of God or if you're hostile toward God, you don't care what He has to say in His word. That's not important to you. You disregard it. Yeah OK, the Bible's a book God wrote. It's important. Tell me what it means from time to time. I'll listen to it every now and then, but-- they disregard it.

So what's the solution? The solution is verse 7. I love it's so simple. "Therefore", here it is, "submit to God". Isn't that simple? It's not complicated. It's not easy, but it's pretty straightforward. "Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

He's writing to a group of people that have resisted God, and submitted to the devil. Now he's saying, turn that around. Submit to God. And resist the devil. Submit to God because God is fighting for you.

Now, I want you to look at verse 5. We're going to close with this. I'm done, almost. "Or do you think that the scripture says in vain, 'the Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously'?" Now the idea behind that verse is simple. It's this. God is passionately pursuing you.

He's put his Holy Spirit in us because He jealously desires a relationship of intimacy with us. That's his heart. And he proved on the cross He was willing to go to any extent to rescue you.

So if you don't mind, I'm going to close with the movie clip. Can I do that? I know it's church maybe I shouldn't do that. I'm going to say something. Maybe you don't want me to say this. I'm going to talk about a favorite movie, maybe a preacher shouldn't have a favorite movie, but I'll tell you why this is one of my favorite shows. It's about a father who loves his daughter so much, nothing will stop him from rescuing her. And that to me is the heart of God.

So in 2008, this movie came out. It's called Taken. Liam Neeson was a CIA operative. And he finds out that

his daughter is abducted by sex traffickers in Paris, in France. And they're going to sell her. So he flies all the way over to France, inspects the crime scene. He's a CIA guy, ex-CIA guy. So he knows his stuff. He inspects it, finds his cell phone, makes contact with the abductors, and has this conversation.

I don't know who you are. I don't know what you want. If you are looking for a ransom, I can tell you I don't have money. But what I do have are a very particular set of skills, skills I have acquired over a very long career, skills that make me a nightmare for people like you. If you let my daughter go now, that'll be the end of it. I will not look for you. I will not pursue you. But if you don't, I will look for you. I will find you. And I will kill you.

Good luck.

Yeah, yeah. Good luck. They need good luck. You know how the movie ends. He finds his daughter, rescues her. He's beaten up, he's bloodied, but he rescues his daughter. His daughter collapses in his arms and says daddy you came for me. And he said, I told you I would.

That's the commitment of a Father. And look, I'm not advocating take the law into your own hands, go kill people, obviously. But any daughter would love to have a Father like that, who will stand up for her and protect her and go to the ends of the Earth for her.

So I did that because that's a picture of this verse. God's jealous love for you is, I'm willing to take on the devil and all his thugs and go to the cross and get bloodied and beaten because I love you. I love you.

Thank You, Lord. Thank you for Your love for us. Thank You for Your willingness to do that. We celebrate it so often. Today Lord, though, we understand that some of us are struggling inwardly. And the real struggle that's causing the effect to be felt in relationships around us is that we just want what we want, when we want it. We want our own interests to be served.

And that spills out and breaks other things around us, the relationships around us. Maybe what we need to do is realize we could be fighting you, and we need to stop and submit to God, and give this situation, I ask You to work in it. Pray through it.

We have not because we ask not. I pray that our relationship with You would not be about getting what we want, but getting what You want for us, getting what You want through us, getting what You want to accomplish by us in this world that You love so desperately. I pray that we will be ambassadors of that love and of that peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Let's all stand.

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