

“The Cost of Worldly Wisdom (Part 1): The Breakdown of Peace” – James 4:1-6

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Take a Bible and meet me in the fourth chapter of James...

It's great to be back with you. I appreciate the preaching of James Neumeyer and Evan Webster the past couple of Sundays in my absence as I was away for research. I'm hoping to finish my PhD this year and I am certainly most grateful that we have others who can fill in so that I can dedicate some time exclusively to that effort. It's been a long ride. And the program I'm in was not really designed for people who have full time jobs. And certainly not designed with a pandemic in mind. But God is good. And I am progressing, slow but sure.

I initially was going to say some things about the office of elder and the plurality of elders in a church in light of the teachings in chapter 3, but I think I will save that for a later chapter when the language is actually used by James. Today instead we are going to venture into chapter 4. The verses I am going to read to you in a moment will occupy us for more than one Sunday. Indeed, this sermon will be something of an introduction to them as we consider how they relate to what came before them and how they relate to the teaching of Jesus.

So let's jump in. I'll begin reading in the first verse of chapter 4. Follow along as I do. Remember, this is God's Word...

“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, ‘He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us’? ⁶ But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’” (James 4:1-6)

While this is the beginning of a new chapter, these chapter divisions are not original to the text. They were added much later and can sometimes create the impression that an author has moved on to a new topic, when in fact he has not. This is one of those cases.

Last Sunday Evan took us through the end of chapter 3, where James contrasts godly wisdom with worldly wisdom. The fights and quarrels that James describes in chapter 4 are the result of people embracing worldly wisdom, a wisdom that is marked by things like bitter “jealousy” or “envy,” “selfish ambition,” and “disorder” (3:14, 16). This worldly wisdom leads to tension. But notice it is tension in two directions. James speaks of the tension that exists between those that are quarreling (4:1, 2), but he also speaks of enmity with God (4:4).

The fact that James tells his first readers that these hostilities have emerged “among you,” shows that this kind of behavior is quite possible among people who identify as Christians. And this, in turn, shows that it is possible for Christians and churches to operate out of worldly wisdom, displaying more “devotion to this fallen world” than to their risen Lord.¹ This is all the more tragic when we remember that James has already told us that “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father” is marked not only by caring for people in their affliction and keeping “oneself unstained from the world” (1:27). It would appear that James is concerned that

some of his readers are doing the exact opposite. They are afflicting one another out of envy and quarreling because of the stain of worldly wisdom. This is not “*good conduct*” marked by “*the meekness of wisdom*” that James said should be the mark of Christians (3:13). That’s not the mark of peace and peacemaking he spoke of in the verse that comes immediately before our text this morning.

But James has had a lot to say about conflict among Christians in this letter, hasn’t he? You’ll recall in chapter two he spoke of the “class conflicts between the gold-fingered rich and their many poor (cf. 2:1-11).”² There has been earlier indications of anger welling up among their members (e.g., 1:19-20). This is probably why he laid such stress on the destructiveness of speech in chapter 3. He will even bring up labor disputes in the final chapter (5:1-6). So these believers were no stranger to conflicts. And, truth be told, such conflicts are not unusual in church circles. They should be. But they are not. They’re certainly not in our day and setting. “Our individualistic American tradition has been particularly receptive to church strife.”³

But James says that these fights are “*among you*” because of the passions that are “*within you*” (4:1). “*What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?*” Literally the Greek there says, “in your members,” which has led some to ask if he means members in the assembly (i.e., warring passions among different people) or members of the person’s body (i.e., warring passions within a person). I think it is the latter. He seems to be referring to the internal condition of the heart out of which these external conflicts arise. “Selfish passions make believers wage war within themselves, as their desire to serve Christ and neighbor conflicts with the desire to serve self.”⁴ And when we go the way of worldly wisdom, conflict will eventually ensue.

We see this in the New Testament when the disciples would get caught up fighting over who should be the greatest in the kingdom (Luke 9:46-48). We see these quarrels spill over into many of the earliest churches as well. Paul had to correct the Corinthians on the vain competitions about the use of spiritual gifts in their public gatherings (1 Cor. 14:23-40). He even has to shame them for suing each other in the public courts (6:1-8). Paul warned the Galatians that if they continued to “*bite and devour one another*” they could eventually be “*consumed by one another*” (Gal. 5:15). The Ephesians had to be reminded to cultivate unity in their setting (Eph. 4:1-14). And even in Philippi, a church that Paul seemed most fond of, a couple women are publicly singled out and called to unity (Phil. 4:1-3).⁵ So this was a problem in the early church as well. Robert Plummer remarks,

“Where two or more gather together, there will eventually be conflict. Because of our remaining sin nature, even Christians will inevitably sin against one another. The question, then, is not whether Christian communities will experience conflict. The question is, how will they respond?”⁶

How we respond is of utmost importance. Why? Because the types of conflicts that so many churches are known for are not the sort that bring glory to the Lord. They are a mark of shame that we bear. It’s destructive. And it’s counterproductive to the mission we have been given. And one of the major reasons they exist is because we, as individuals, are not very good at diagnosing the source of our conflict. We are always pointing the finger at someone else, when James is saying, in verse 1, that our problem is inside us. “The war in the heart” explains most “wars in the church.”⁷ And if we can see this, then it just might foster confession among us and a greater degree of humility within us. And notice, that’s where James is taking us, for by verse 6 he is quoting Proverbs 3 to his readers to remind them that “*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*”

But before we look ahead, I want to look back today. This fighting among Christians is owing, James says, to “*your passions...at war within you,*” but in context he has already described at least some of those warring passions as the mark of worldly wisdom. Again, the end of chapter 3 is instructive. He told us that worldly wisdom is marked by “*bitter jealousy and selfish ambition*” and “*disorder and every vile practice.*” It’s the opposite of the wisdom from above which is marked by “*meekness*” and is “*pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.*” It’s the mark of “*those who make peace.*” Worldly wisdom makes fighters in the church. Godly wisdom makes peacemakers. Worldly wisdom encourages

us to dig in our heels. Godly wisdom encourages us to see that we may be the problem and desperately pray, “Oh God, in what ways is sin in my heart contributing to the conflict? Where is my pride, anger, and defensiveness on display?”⁸

I want you to flip to the left in your Bible and meet me in Matthew 5. As is so often the case, I think James is interacting with the teaching of Jesus in this section. I’ve told you before that some consider the epistle of James to be a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, which Jesus preached. There are so many points of contact between Jesus’ teaching there and James’ teaching throughout this letter. For that reason, it may be helpful to compare the two from time to time, and I want to do that today. James has been showing us that worldly wisdom can seep into the church and cause conflict. Well, how would godly wisdom engage that situation? James is about to tell us. But before we see that, I want to use the remainder of our time considering the teaching of Jesus in the matter. I want to show you what, according to Jesus, godly wisdom looks like in the context of church conflicts. To do that, let’s look at something here in Matthew 5. This will help us better understand James.

Notice that in verse 21, Jesus begins to talk about anger. He says the following...

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.” (Matthew 5:21-22)

Now Jesus is engaged in a certain degree of hyperbole here, but so was James. Remember James said, “*You desire and do not have, so you murder*” (James 4:2). Most people don’t believe that there were actually members of the congregations murdering each other. But it was clear to James, as Jesus makes it clear here, that there is a connection between anger and murder. We don’t have time to cover that this morning. But look at where Jesus goes next...

Verse 23, begins with the word “so” or “therefore” (depending on your translation). That’s important because it clues us in on the logic that’s built into Jesus’ teaching here. He’s about to spell out some of the logical implications of what He just taught. If there is a connection between murder, unrighteous anger, and contempt in that the same sin is behind each, then how should that affect the way we live? That’s what verses 23 through 26 are getting at. They’re giving us some practical implications of what He taught in verses 21 and 22. Jesus is giving us wisdom “from above” (cf. James 3:13-18).

Look at what Jesus says, starting in verse 23...

“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison.²⁶ Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.” (Matthew 5:23-26)

So what we see here are two illustrations—the first dealing with our relationships “in house” (i.e., with other believers) and the second dealing with relationships “in the world” (i.e., with those who don’t share our faith). Before we explore both of those, we have to notice the subtle shift that has occurred.

Verses 21 and 22 were dealing with expressions of *your* anger, *your* contempt for others. But starting with verse 23 the focus shifts to the anger that *others* feel toward you. Do you see that? And do you see how that affects the flow of Jesus’ argument here? As another writer explains, “The reasoning goes this way: If it is good *for us* to refrain from murder and murderous attitudes, then it is also good to prevent murderous attitudes *in others*, if

possible. That is, we should love [others] enough to act to remove their murderous dispositions toward us.”⁹ In other words, the wisdom that Jesus gives here is peace-making. He is telling His followers:

We Must Do Our Part in Extinguishing Anger in Others by Pursuing Peace

So what does that look like in practice? Well, look at the first scenario, which deals with our relationships with other believers, in verse 23—“*if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you...*” Let’s pause for a second and clarify a few things...

First of all, “*offering your gift at the altar*” is referring to a common Jewish experience in that day, where you would take a sacrifice to the Jerusalem temple, probably for a sin offering. The altar mentioned is the temple’s altar. So Jesus imagines a scenario where you have come to the temple with your sacrifice and as you are preparing your offering you remember someone who is upset at you. That someone is called “*your brother*” here, but that’s not limited to some biological relationships. It’s a reference to another believer, male or female. So that person who you have upset comes to your mind, while you are at the altar getting ready to make an offering to the Lord, and what does Jesus say you should do? Verse 24—“*leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*”

The rhetorical effect of that verse is lost on us because our backgrounds are so different from those in Jesus’ original audience. Try to consider what He just said from their perspective. Chances are you would have been from Galilee and the person who you’ve upset is probably from the same place. So what Jesus just required of you is to take the animal that you were about to sacrifice, bind its legs, leave it at the temple in Jerusalem, travel a few days and around 80 miles back home to Galilee,¹⁰ pursue peace and reconcile with that believer you have upset, then travel that same distance back to Jerusalem, wait in line at the temple again to finally complete your offering, and then, when you are done, you can make the commute a fourth time and head back home!¹¹ This isn’t a pull out your cell phone in the temple parking lot to apologize to someone before you go to the altar scenario. This is a go to incredible and seemingly irrational lengths to work things out with your fellow believer before you give your worship to God scenario. This is radical stuff!

It’s a ridiculous illustration, but it’s an effective way to make Jesus’ point. Reconciliation, from God’s perspective, is that important. It’s that urgent. It doesn’t matter how challenging it is to pursue. It doesn’t matter how much it inconveniences you. Jesus wants you to do all you can to repair those relationships that sin has splintered.¹²

Now, I can already hear the objections running across your mind. Some of you are thinking, “Yeah, that guy is mad at me but I didn’t actually do anything wrong. I didn’t sin against him. He’s just mad at me!” We’ve all experienced that, right? Jesus experienced that more than anyone. He never once sinned, but people were constantly mad at Him for things He did, didn’t do, or taught. People took offense when none was given. He would have spent every hour of every day pursuing peace with people if every grudge someone held against Him was addressed. John Piper makes this point well in one of his books. He writes:

“Someone always had something against Jesus. There was never a moment of his public ministry when someone was not offended at him. If he had not been allowed to worship before approaching all these people individually to be reconciled, he never would have worshiped. So it is with most of his representatives throughout history. They have always had irreconcilable adversaries. In fact, Jesus warned us that we are probably not being his faithful followers if ‘all people speak well of you’ (Luke 6:26). Rather, ‘Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!’ (Luke 6:22).”¹³

That's a really good point. So surely Jesus doesn't mean that every illegitimate thing that someone else is holding against us requires this same sort of altar-leaving attention.¹⁴ So Piper concludes that the issue related to legitimate offenses.

That's probably true, but I still think He's deliberately ambiguous.¹⁵ There may still be times when you have done nothing wrong and a brother is upset at you because of some misunderstanding on his end, but you could assuage his anger by humbling yourself and pursuing peace even though you are indeed innocent. If that's the case and anger is truly as dangerous and destructive as Jesus describes, then why wouldn't you take those steps? As one commentator puts it, "even if we believe ourselves innocent or consider the problem trivial, if enough tension exists that we remember it and it troubles us, we should stop and seek reconciliation."¹⁶

Are you ready to bring this close to home? Me neither, but let's do it any way. In our context, sin is just as present and it's present in the church as well. We are all sinners. We are all broken people who, if left to our own devices, will break every relationship we have. That's true in church too. So if Jesus tells them that it is more important to pursue peace with the believer who is angry with them than it is to present an offering at the altar, then the implication for us is that God is more concerned with you working it out with your fellow believers than He is with you going through the motions of worship in church. Pursuit of reconciliation is prioritized over these acts of worship. In fact, your worship very well could be a sham from God's perspective, if there is hostility in your heart towards someone in another pew or if you stubbornly refuse to pursue peace with one of these brothers or sisters.¹⁷

Listen, I tell you this often but I'm going to say it again, at the heart of the Gospel message is a story of reconciliation between you and God and unreconciled believers don't advertise the Gospel very well and may obscure it in the eyes of others. So there are missional implications to your disobedience when you fail to pursue reconciliation. When the lost world sees that happening in the church and those walls of pride and division going up—the "*fights*" and "*quarrels*" that James speaks of—it gives them the wrong impression about the Gospel. It makes it look impotent, when in fact it is the power of God for their salvation. But it looks as though it's not even powerful enough to enable Christians to work through petty differences. Churches split. Congregations crumble. Business meetings deteriorate. And the lost world can't see in us the reconciling power of the Gospel. What a tragedy!

What a tragedy to say to the world that we were great sinners in need of a great Savior and Jesus is that great Savior who laid His life down for us on a cross and rose from the dead to reconcile us to God apart from anything we did to deserve it, but then in the next moment act as though our fellow Christian doesn't deserve to be shown mercy and forgiveness. What a tragedy to declare with our lips that God's anger towards us has been removed because of the grace of God in Christ, but then to live our lives as though we are entitled to hold anger and grudges towards others. That's ludicrous. That displays a lack of understanding of the Gospel. And ultimately it's a worship problem. Why? Because we pursue peace with others (even when it's not deserved) because God pursued peace with us (even though we didn't deserve it). If we claim to have peace with God, how can we not pursue it with others? If we are not engaged in such pursuits, it's a worship problem on our end. It's a spiritual immaturity problem. And it's time to start ingesting more of the Gospel so that we can grow up in the ways of the Lord.

I'm convinced this is a problem for all of our relationships, not just relationships in church. We live in a Facebook culture where we can just "unfriend" people when they say the wrong thing or tick us off. We move when we don't like our neighbors. We find new friends. A new team. A new wife. A new husband. It's easy to jump around in our day. Then we get married and we are not equipped to forgive, because we never have had to. The marriages that work, the ones that have the deepest and strongest ties of love, are the ones that have had to learn forgiveness. And you don't learn to forgive well without deep relational wounds. But most people don't have enough patience for that. So instead of peacemaking they throw in the towel or emotionally check out of the relationship. That is worldly wisdom. That's not the wisdom from above that James calls us to.

The same thing can happen in church relationships. There are people in churches who would rather go to a different church than do what Jesus is talking about here and pursue peace with their Christian brother or sister. This happens all the time. This is going to shock some of you, but sometimes people in church do mean things. What? Shocking, I know. But it's true. Even with pastoral staff. That's because we aren't perfect. We are all dealing with sin. We all have passion warring within us (James 4:1). If you stay here long enough we will light you up too. That's everywhere. And when it happens (and it will), the solution is not to pack it up and go somewhere else. No, the solution is found in obedience to the teaching of Jesus. It's always found there. But when we are offended we don't always look there and so we make decisions without considering their implications.

What does this choice say to the world about the Gospel? About the worth and value of God's children? What does it teach my children? Is it any wonder why the newest generations have so much trouble seeing the value of church and corporate worship and Christian community, when for years their parents have been teaching them through their actions that those relationships don't really matter that much when it gets inconvenient or difficult? Have we inadvertently taught them that other things are more important, like athletics or sleeping in or getting our way above all else or whatever? And we wonder why generations of kids don't see the value of investing their lives in a healthy Christian church when they are no longer under our roofs. The ripple effects may be larger than we imagine. So we really need to take seriously what Jesus is saying here.

Do we really expect God to honor our exiting when we have failed to take seriously His teaching? Does walking away from brothers and sisters because we don't have the heart for peacemaking honor the Lord? Do you think the Lord will honor that choice? What if God did that to us? What if He just said, "Okay that's it. That's got to be seventy times seven by now. I'm out." No, the beauty of the Gospel is that He doesn't do that. And we don't have to either. Really you don't. Jesus' way is better. And I know everyone seems to be doing it in churches everywhere, but don't make me bust out the "if everyone jumped off a bridge, would you"" argument your momma always used. It's worldly wisdom.

Sure there are biblical reasons to leave a church. There are doctrinal reasons. Issues of calling. People relocate. And so on. But do people tend to make those decisions with the glory of God as the goal? Not hardly! But of course it doesn't have to be that way. So seek first His kingdom, not your kingdom. His kingdom. (Some of you are panicking... "Is everyone thinking about leaving this church? What's going on?"...Don't panic. Nothing is brewing. We are just exploring the implications of this text for our day).

And for what it's worth, we are called to pursue peace regardless of who is at fault. Here the focus is on when someone is upset at you, so you may be tempted to think you are off the hook with the anger in your own heart. Nope. Jesus will make that clear in Matthew 18. Matthew 18 covers those scenarios when your brother sins against you. Matthew 5 has more to do with when you sin against your brother. But in both cases *you* are the one who is told to go and pursue peace.

So if you're sitting there thinking, "Well I didn't start this, so I'm not making the first move," you should know that the other person is usually thinking the exact same thing. And so you need to pay careful attention to both of these passages. On the whole, Jesus is saying it doesn't matter who started it. It doesn't matter who has the lion's share of the blame. It's always your move. You're up. Whether you're to blame or they're to blame, it's your move. It's always your move to initiate the peacemaking process (at least your part of that process). So don't sit there and think, "that anger is his problem, not mine." Not according to Jesus. Evidently, that person's anger can be your problem too.

The second illustration makes the same essential point, but now involving relationships with other non-Christians.¹⁸ Not surprisingly we are called to pursue peace with them too. Look at verses 25 and 26—"*Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.*"

Here the context does seem to presume your guilt because of the fact that the judge will sentence you to prison if the matter makes it to court.¹⁹ And once again Jesus calls us to peacemaking. Christians are called to be peacemakers, just like their Lord Jesus. And, by the way, the verb choice of Jesus is interesting here. When Jesus says “*come to terms quickly with your accuser*”, He uses a Greek word that only occurs once in the New Testament and means, “to make friends with.”²⁰ I don’t want to make too much of the word choice here, but it is intriguing to me that he uses this friendship language when describing what you should be pursuing with your adversary.

The principle that the second illustration adds to this is that, generally speaking, the sooner we seek to make restitution and pursue reconciliation, the better. As Charles Quarles counsels, “One should settle things before the anger escalates, before words are uttered that cannot be taken back, or before wounds are inflicted that are painful and slow to heal.”²¹ This is the same principle, by the way, that Paul underscores in Ephesians 4:26, where he instructs us not to let the sun go down on our anger. Deal with it now. Don’t delay. Leave the altar. Settle it on the steps of the courthouse if you have to. But humbly do your part to pursue peace whenever possible.

And that “whenever possible” is important to add. Reconciliation involves at least two parties and the painful truth is that often the other party is not willing to tango. When that happens, reconciliation breaks down. But the Bible is a very realistic book. It accounts for that. Paul told the Romans, “*If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all*” (Romans 12:18). He’s acknowledging that it’s *not* always possible to live at peace with everyone, but we should still try. And he’s telling us not to be the reason peacemaking breaks down. Do your part. Go above and beyond. Do everything you can so that the relationship doesn’t stay broken because you didn’t do everything you could to salvage it and pursue reconciliation.

And when you are tempted to *not* do that, start preaching the Gospel to yourself again. Jesus Christ was a real somebody, God Himself, who became a nobody, so that I, a real nobody, could become a real somebody for the rest of eternity.²² How can I, who has been shown so much free grace, fail to be a gracious person? How can I receive perfect peace with God that Jesus died to provide and fail to even pursue peace with others? How can I consider His costly love for me and then reason that I’ve spent too much of my time and self on someone else? How can I experience the removal of God’s anger from upon me because Jesus took it upon Himself and refuse to repent of my sinful anger toward others? How can I claim to be forgiven by Jesus and not experience the sweetness of forgiveness in my heart for others? No, no. I have been forgiven a debt larger than all the wrongs ever committed against me, so I must let that Gospel truth fuel me and free me to forgive others, and pursue peace with others, and dissolve my sinful anger, and move me to play my part in removing the offense my sin has created in others.

We have to let the Gospel melt the stubborn walls of our hostility. When you put your faith in Christ for salvation, everything God could have held against you justly because of your sin is removed and in its place Christ gives us peace with God, a personal and right relationship with the God of the universe. So imitate Christ. Be a peacemaker. And let your pursuit of peace with others flow from these Gospel realities, because when it does it will be an act of worship greater than any offering you could have brought to the altar. And more importantly, you’ll look like Jesus and thereby you’ll bring glory to God.

I will leave you with three questions that I encountered in another sermon and thought were helpful and recommend a book that has been very helpful in my life when it comes to living as a peacemaker. First the questions:

1. If someone has something against me, is it owing to something I should not have done or should not have said? Is it owing to something I should have done or should have said, but didn’t? In other words, have I wronged someone?
2. If I am to blame, have I taken sufficient steps to be reconciled?

3. If not, am I willing to humble myself and make contact before I come to worship next Sunday?²³

Don't you think God would be pleased, if we honestly asked those questions and obeyed Him this week before worship next Sunday? Because, ultimately, reconciliation is much more difficult than the rituals of our worship. "So", as John Piper once said, "if God gives us the grace to do the harder thing, he will get more glory next Sunday when we come with a clear conscience to do the easier thing."²⁴

If you are looking for help in these things, in pursuing peace with others, then let me recommend a resource. Of course, the most important resource is God's Word. But one book that has helped me understand what God's Word says on these matters and helped me to apply it in practical ways in my relationships is a book called *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Our Conflicts*, by Robert D. Jones. It's thoroughly biblical, incredibly practical, and Gospel-saturated. I'd highly recommend it to you, if you're aware of some relational tension that you know you should be working through.

Let's pray...

¹ Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 182.

² R. Kent Hughes, *James: Faith That Works* (PW; Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 166.

³ *Ibid.*, 165-166.

⁴ Daniel M. Doriani, *James* (REC; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 131.

⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Mature* (Colorado Springs: Victor, 2004), 118.

⁶ Robert L. Plummer, "James," in *Hebrews-Revelation* (ESVEC; Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 271.

⁷ Wiersbe, 120.

⁸ Plummer, 271.

⁹ Doriani, 55. Italics his.

¹⁰ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 203.

¹¹ Cf. Daniel M. Doriani, *Matthew* (REC; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 113; Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 190.

¹² Timothy Keller makes the same point powerfully in "Relationship and the Kingdom," *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

¹³ John Piper, *What Jesus Demands From the World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 231-232.

¹⁴ For example, John Piper understands the phrase, "if...your brother has something against you" to mean "if...your brother has something *legitimate* against you." *Ibid.*, 231.

¹⁵ So also Osborne, 190; Guelich, *Sermon on the Mount*, 190.

¹⁶ Doriani, *Matthew*, 56.

¹⁷ D. A. Carson puts it this way, "Jesus insists it is far more important that he be reconciled to than that he discharge his religious duty; for the latter become pretense and sham if the worshiper has behaved so poorly that his brother has something against him." Carson, 45.

¹⁸ Technically, as Grant Osborne recognizes, "This passage does not say that the 'adversary' is not a believer," nevertheless "the contrast with the previous two sections (where 'brother' is mentioned) hints at this." He goes on to note that "It is a clear mandate throughout the NT that the believer is to maintain a good relationship with the unbeliever. This will be extended in 5:43-47, where Jesus says to 'love your enemies' (cf. Rom 12:14-21), and in 19:19 and 22:39, where he says to 'love your neighbor as yourself' (Lev 19:18; Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8). The purpose of loving the enemy is to 'heap burning coals on his head' (Rom 12:20 from Prov 25:22 = conviction) and to bring them to repentance via good works (1 Pet 2:12)." Osborne, 193.

¹⁹ Notice the emphatic negative in the Greek of verse 26. They will *never* get out until the full penalty is paid. See *Ibid.*, 191.

²⁰ *Ibid.*; Scot McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount: The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 80.

²¹ Charles Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ's Message to the Church* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 114.

²² Timothy Keller, "Law and Love," *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

²³ From a sermon by John Piper called, "Getting Right with God and Each Other," which he preached at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, MN, on March 10, 1996. I rewrote the last question a bit, but to make the same point.

²⁴ *Ibid.*