



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Catholic Epistle of St. James

Chapter 4

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- St. James asks his readers to consider the source of wars and fights among themselves
- He identifies the problem as their own desires for pleasure which war within themselves
- St. James charges them with adultery for trying to befriend the world which leads to enmity with God, who jealously desires us
- But if they are willing to humble themselves, God is willing to show more grace



Introduction

- St. James therefore counsels them to draw near to God in humble submission
- Then he warns against speaking evil of brethren and judging one another, lest they become judges and not doers of the law
- The chapter ends with a call to make plans with the Lord's will in mind
- Otherwise we boast in our arrogance and sin when we fail to do what we know is good (7-17)

Pride Promotes Strife

(4:1-6)



- Peace has been spoken in Jas 3:18, but the world is full of strife. Why? due to human passions
- Among you? St. James was the bishop of Jerusalem, though a Christian, sometimes he looked beyond the church to his fleshly brethren
- He here seems to address them like another Amos or Jeremiah
- They are due to insatiate desires
- This unsatisfied desire unsatisfied leads to sin

Pride Promotes Strife (4:1-6)



- Sins like murder, or hatred and envy, which are potentially murder
- Even then not obtaining they fight and war in order to satisfy their greed. Still they are not satisfied
- They should have humbly gone to God with their reasonable requests, but the lustful cannot pray
- Some have prayed for the things which would satisfy their lusts, but God hears not such prayers.

Pride Promotes Strife (4:1-6)



- Spiritual adultery: Spouses of Christ who commit fornication with the world
- Since the prince of this world is opposed to Christ
- And the spirit of the world is also opposed
- One cannot love the world and God also
- You cannot serve God and mammon (Mt 6:24)
- The reference is to De 32:1-47, where God's love and jealousy of His people are described

Pride Promotes Strife (4:1-6)



- The spirit that God has placed in us desires us jealously, that is, desires we should not commit adultery with the world
- He wants us to be wholly devoted to God, as those espoused to God in Christ, and even envies the world which has secured our love
- God will give us His grace to enable us to overcome our love of the world
- Pr 3:34 shows that the way to grace is humbleness

Humility Cures Worldliness (4:7-10)



- Submit yourselves to God to secure His grace
- Satan always flees before solid resistance as in the Temptation of Christ (Mt 4:1-11)
- If not pushed back, he presses the attack
- If we wish God very near to us, we must seek to dwell very near to Him
- Only sin keeps us afar off, so cleanse your doings and purify your hearts of evil thoughts (double mindedness)

Humility Cures Worldliness (4:7-10)



- Mourn over your sins and sincerely repent of them
- In the sight of the Lord: as continually in the presence of Him
- The tree, to grow upwards, must strike its roots deep downwards
- So man, to be exalted, must have his mind deep-rooted in humility
- Lift you up: in part in this world, fully in the world to come

Do Not Judge a Brother (4:11-12)



- To speak evil is to make harsh judgments
- The royal law requires love of a brother, and when this law is thus violated by a harsh judgment the law itself is condemned
- When a man sets himself up as a judge, he is no longer a humble and faithful doer of the law
- The law giver is God, the Almighty and the Judge
- How arrogant when you judge your fellows, and steal from God His authority

Do Not Boast About Tomorrow (4:13-17)



- Shall we guess on an uncertain future?
- The foolishness of laying plans as if we could command life is exposed
- Who knows that he will have a tomorrow, since life is like a vanishing vapor?
- The proper way is to submit everything to God's will. It is arrogance and evil to boast like this
- If you know now how to do the right and yet not doing it, the sin is greater because of knowledge



Conclusion

- Where do wars and fights find their origin?
- Why do some not receive what they ask for?
- What does St. James call those who would be a friend of the world?
- Whom does God resist? To whom does He give more grace?
- What counsel does St. James give to those tempted by the world?
- Why should one not speak evil of a brother?



Conclusion

- What other reasons does St. James give for not judging one another?
- Why should we be careful about the planning?
- With what qualification can one make plans for the future?
- Of what is one guilty when plans are made without considering the Lord's will?
- Of what is one guilty if they know what is good, but fail to do it?