

"THE EPISTLE OF JAMES"

Chapter Four

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THE CHAPTER

- 1) To gain insight into the source of wars and fighting, even among brethren
- 2) To see the importance and means of befriending God, of not speaking evil of brethren, and planning for the future with the Lord's will in mind

SUMMARY

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. Perhaps exaggerating for the sake of emphasis, he describes their lust and coveting (even murder!) for things they do not have and cannot obtain. It renders their prayers fruitless, for they have selfish motives in mind. Sounding like an Old Testament prophet, James charges them with adultery for trying to befriend the world. Becoming a friend of the world leads to enmity with God, who jealously desires us. But if they are willing to humble themselves, God is willing to show more grace (1-6).

James therefore counsels them to draw near to God in humble submission, with clean hands, purity of heart, and true contrition. 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, for we have no idea what the morrow holds and life is short. Otherwise we boast in our arrogance and sin when we fail to do what we know is good (7-17).

OUTLINE

I. TRUE RELIGION DOES NOT BEFRIEND THE WORLD (1-6)

A. THE SOURCE OF WARS AND FIGHTS (1-3)

1. From within, from desires that war in one's members
2. Such as lust (envy), murder (hate?), coveting, which do not give what one seeks
3. Leading to unanswered prayers, due to selfishness

B. FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD IS ENMITY WITH GOD (4-6)

1. Whoever wants to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of

God

2. Even as the Scripture warns, and not in vain
3. While God resists the proud, He is willing to give grace to the humble

II. TRUE RELIGION DRAWS NEAR TO GOD (7-17)

A. BY SUBMITTING TO GOD'S AUTHORITY (7-12)

1. Submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee
2. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you
 - a. Cleanse your hands, sinners
 - b. Purify your hearts, double-minded
 - c. Mourn and weep for your sins
 - d. Humble yourself before God, and He will lift you up
3. Let God be the Lawgiver and Judge
 - a. Do not speak evil of one another and judge one another
 - 1) Otherwise you speak evil of the law and judge the law
 - 2) Otherwise you are not a doer of the law, but a judge
 - b. When there is really only one Lawgiver who is able to save and destroy

B. BY SUBMITTING TO GOD'S WILL (13-17)

1. We should be careful in making plans for the future
 - a. We do not know what will happen tomorrow
 - b. Life is but a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes
2. Therefore we should acknowledge "If the Lord wills" in our plans
 - a. Otherwise we boast in arrogance, which is evil
 - b. For one to know to do good and not do it, that is sin