

James 4:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

Analysis

Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. You desire (epithumeite, ἐπιθυμεῖτε) and do not have; you murder (phoneuete, φονεύετε) and covet yet cannot obtain; you fight and wage war. James uses hyperbole to expose the seriousness of unchecked desires leading to violence, literal or metaphorical. They do not have because they do not ask God.

Reformed thought urges prayerful dependence rather than grasping. Lust leads to destruction; prayer leads to provision aligned with God's will.

Historical Context

Economic scarcity and persecution tempted believers to compete ruthlessly. Some may have colluded with oppressors, effectively 'killing' brethren by betrayal. James redirects them to prayerful dependence rather than violent ambition.",

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Where are you striving violently—literally or relationally—to obtain something?
2. How can prayer redefine your desires?
3. Who has been hurt by your grasping that needs reconciliation?

Interlinear Text

ἐπιθυμεῖτε καὶ οὐκ ἔχετε φονεύετε καὶ ζηλοῦτε καὶ
Ye lust and cannot have ye kill and desire to have and
G1937 G2532 G3756 G2192 G5407 G2532 G2206 G2532

οὐκ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε οὐκ
cannot G1410 obtain ye fight and war cannot
G3756 G2013 G3164 G2532 G4170 G3756

ἔχετε δὲ, διὰ τὸ μὴ αἰτεῖσθαι ὑμᾶς
have yet because G3588 not ask ye
G2192 G1161 G1223 G3361 G154 G5209

Additional Cross-References

John 16:24 (Parallel theme): Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

James 1:5 (Parallel theme): If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

John 4:10 (Parallel theme): Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.