

James 4:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

Analysis

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. You ask and do not receive because you ask amiss (kakōs, κακῶς), spending it on pleasures (hēdonais, ἡδοναῖς). Prayer motives matter. Self-indulgent requests hinder answers.

Reformed prayer emphasizes alignment with God's glory. James critiques utilitarian prayer that treats God as servant of our pleasures rather than Lord to be obeyed.

Historical Context

Some diaspora believers may have prayed for wealth or relief merely to enjoy luxury while neglecting the poor. James echoes prophets condemning prayers divorced from justice (Isaiah 1). Paul's teaching in Philippians 4 about contentment resonates.",

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What current prayer requests might be driven by selfish motives?
2. How can you align desires with God's kingdom?
3. What would it look like to pray for grace to give rather than consume?

Interlinear Text

αἰτεῖσθε καὶ οὐ λαμβάνετε διότι κακῶς αἰτεῖσθε ἵνα
Ye ask and not receive because amiss Ye ask that
G154 G2532 G3756 G2983 G1360 G2560 G154 G2443

ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ὑμῶν δαπανήσητε
it upon lusts your ye may consume
G1722 G3588 G2237 G5216 G1159

Additional Cross-References

1 John 5:14 (Parallel theme): And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

1 John 3:22 (Parallel theme): And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

James 4:1 (Parallel theme): From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

Proverbs 15:8 (Parallel theme): The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Micah 3:4 (Parallel theme): Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.

Job 35:12 (Parallel theme): There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men.

Proverbs 21:13 (Parallel theme): Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

Proverbs 21:27 (Parallel theme): The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?

Mark 10:38 (Parallel theme): But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

Zechariah 7:13 (Parallel theme): Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts:

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