

James 4: 1-3

2

SUBJECT: Getting Things
From God

(Prayer)

10/60

GF

James 4:1-3

Getting Things From God

Subj: Not prayer as complaining, fellowship with God, blessedness, rest
but as asking,

Prayer, real prayer, is not common in the ordinary life of men.

1. The natural man looks upon prayer as a burdensome task.
I Cor. 2:14 ^{The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit for he is foolishness not him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.}

Rom. 8:7 ^{The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; neither does it. For the law of God is the flesh and the law of the flesh.}

2. Unspiritual people look upon prayer as a weariness, to the flesh.
of imitation to an entertainment as to a prayer service.

3. The skeptic looks upon prayer as useless.
Why pray? nothing happens as a result of prayer.

Failure, impotence in prayer is so common in the life of the Christian.

The promise of Jesus in Matt 7: 7-11. Then James 4: 3 & pleading

P. K. K. W. S. "amiss" badly.

The proof we have asked for is in the answer.

f. a man in mathematics, the proof is the answer.

g. a mechanic, the proof is the machine put together correctly, it works.

h) art - such as music - not. then something amiss, wrongly, badly.

~~James 4: 3 "amiss"~~

~~that is to say - to spend in luxury, to waste it unwisely, it is foolish - pleasures.~~ ^{any instrument, because hard, difficult, unacceptable, ineffective.}

(a) Down, early with his eyes open & down

(b) The youngsters at the open in Silver Hall. Hard sounds.

Everything has its laws, ways, working. Contrary to this, disappointed, prayer

22 4:36

{ ὀδυνάω - to spend to waste,
 { ἡδονή - pleasure, self-gratification

man is a creature of abominable events. One selfishness drives
no end.
f. a sea anemone with its multitude, travels always waving.
g. some plants with tendrils, engenders... Antipathy
h. mostly something to work for our advantage

of some plants with leaves like those of the
We seek in vainly something to work for our advantage &
make us a victim of God. Look upon this as another means to
gain our own ends. Why should I care to a God, if He does not
put himself at our disposal? Offense, disappointed of not answer
recalled.

§ 1, 2 these desires lead to wars, murders, flight. yet never satisfied, always full of discontent. This is troubled

never satisfied, although for
we which would not.

Other reason in Scripture of unanointed
- we do not expect this to be answered. Ask with
a blessing. Should ask you to as a great wonder in
mt 9:29 "according to your faith be it done unto you"
mt 11:23, 24

1848
b=dy, many of
widely, a
prayer, answer?
us of petition?
answered.

b. Answer in us

July 11: 25, 54
- lack of sincerity, earnestness.
mostly of Jacob & Daniel, Moses on the mountain. Paul on his knees, in ex.
... Beauty. ...

- ill will, wrong spirit in our hearts.
July 11: 25 And when ye shall pray, forgive us our sins as we forgive them that sin against us."

lna 59:1,2

72 66-18

8 15:7

4. But the great reason - we do not ask. He offered prayer. Ps: 26.
men in danger, as a last resort, pray:

1. 107: 17-31 will men

2. 107: 22-31 manna at sea

But we get to be faith - natural or breathing.

(a) The two children, oft used, late for school. Some call saying. Let us
pray not to late. "No, let us pray - now while we pray."

Another story: "Little Simon says, behind in class, detested - prayer. His
father loved to tell of him. School master used his parents to be on time.
he tried to do so. But father, with the discipline. One morning, though no
fault, at last day just as the clock struck 10. Some for school to open.
I found myself of hand by little by way. Dear Lord, do grant that
may be in time for school. School the lateness of for me prayer.
would not be kind. Long would it, then, have already arrived. The form
curious to see the results - followed. The schoolmaster had found
the key to every way. could not move the book - called for a
hand, smiling to give the door. When the door opened, the little boy
entered in with the rest.

(c) "I got a rabbit - the answer prayer!"

ASK.

mt 7: 7-11 in no way forms - lower in itself.
Please to the end when we do. It never grows tired / ministering, already.
encouraging. "Praying, never wearying." men right along to pray at the
Psalm 6: 6 (c) similar action: my ministering, my prayer.

The best gift is, undoubtedly, from, we cultivated the duty at 7 prayers
The Holy Spirit teaches. the word comes.

To pray is to open our hearts to Jesus. He is all we need. 1 Cor 1: 30
I pray has two parts - Answer. Answer. child ask
act. pray. Father pray.

Visit you in a library, sent up a book, read it to your father. This
read on and to all households here, fully. All parish, personality.
But! Agony, expectant eyes, looking up in long wait...
The helpless soul - helpless look into our presence Jesus...

Always an answer.

Sometimes refused, to withdraw the request.

Moses sent 3: 23-27

Jesus Matt 26: 39

Paul 1 Cor. 12: 7-9

But take it to the Lord - lay it all before him. ASK.

5. Asking is the rule of the Kingdom. Never uttered.
 Jesus - one who is in the family, but. But the rule not relaxed for him.
 Mt 2:8 and, in...
 Samuel - if a chosen man is to prosper, Samuel must please for it
 Eliph - you said rain, but Eliph must pay for it
 David - 20 years up, Jesus too desired, but David must pay for it
 David - you were in the world, but David must pay for it.

Things necessary for the church which we cannot receive
 but for repeated prayer.
 - our budget
 - holy presence of God
 - peace with God
 - with ability, just by power
 - with pleasure, in the world, in the world, in the world.
 { They struggle - a few - and then they
 But the power, the God. Comfort comes
 no real spiritual communion with God.

2. All the promises, promises for us.
 In 6:6:6 Samuel was not two years ago, yet "no"
 Here 12:4 Only Jacob at David, yet "no"
 And 13:5,6 Spoken to Jacob. yet "no"

How much this is all to do with a church
 Eph 3:20 alone all that we ask a church
 Abraham asks for Isaac. now giving Isaac's age
 Jacob asks for bread, Isaac says 28:20 but Isaac is not
 Solomon asks for wisdom. now given all the rest
 David asks to sit on David's throne. now given the kingdom
 They ask for remembrance. only...
 David asks for a line down. by faith the line is not up.

D 10/74

D 6/60

2/91

*If we do it right we have
to use the instrument in a correct way*

Getting Things From God

"Yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:3).

BY W. A. CRISWELL

James, the Lord's brother and pastor of the church at Jerusalem, is writing about why we do not get things from God. He speaks of prayer not in the sense of communion or fellowship or a surrendered yieldedness to God, but as an instrument, a means of receiving things from the hand of God. How do you do that?

First, let me say that most people do not even try to pray. Prayer is extraneous to their thoughts and to their lives. To the natural man prayer would be a burdensome task. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

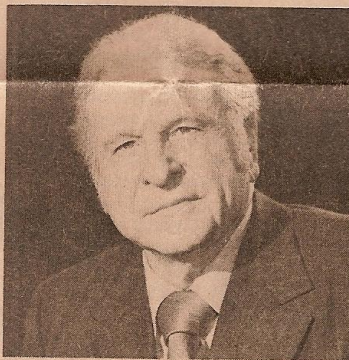
The same inspired apostle Paul wrote in Romans 8:7, "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And he said further that "the flesh cannot please God." So to an unspiritual man, to a natural man, the man of the flesh, the carnal man, prayer is extraneous and is looked upon as a burden and a tedious task.

EVEN in our churches you will find that same holdover from our old carnal nature. To many, prayer would be a wearisome assignment. I can see that in how people respond to an invitation to come to dinner, an invitation for entertainment—they will be there. But when they are invited to pray, they find other places that to them are more alluring and attractive. And of course to a skeptic, an unbeliever, prayer is absolutely impertinent. It has no meaning whatsoever. Prayer is nothing to an unbelieving world.

Now when we come to ourselves, we who are Christians, and have been baptized into the faith and belong to the household of God, we also find frustration in prayer for we ask and we do not receive. That seems such a diametrical contradiction to what our Lord wrote. You read Luke's account of it in his 11th chapter. Matthew makes it a part of the Sermon on the Mount, and our Lord said in Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it shall be

given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Then he added, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

So we ask and we get nothing. That is why the apostle writes this passage. We do not have because we do not ask. And we ask and receive not because we ask kakos, we do not ask correctly. God has put this world together in such a way that it runs according to certain principles and certain laws. If we



W. A. Criswell

obey those principles and those laws we find a response, a return; but if we do not, we do not find a response and we do not find a return. It has to be done according to the way God set it up, and to tell whether or not we are obeying the law, being obedient to the principle of God. If we have a problem in mathematics, the answer to whether or not we did it right is the sum of it. Is it correct? If we had a machine, the answer to whether the thing is put together right or not is whether it does what we want it to do. Does it run and does it produce?

SO IT IS in the matter of prayer—of getting things from God. If we do it right we have to use the instrument in a correct way. If we get what we want, we have to do it in the way God set it up. No matter what kind

of an instrument or how effectively it may be put together, if it is not used correctly, then it will not work right. For example, when our grandson, Cris, was a baby he was in a high chair eating at the table. He had a spoon in his hand, and he was trying to eat with the spoon turned upside down. Did you ever try to eat with a spoon turned upside down? It is the opposite of what you want. It does not scoop up. You have to turn it up to make it scoop up. So I took his little hand and turned the spoon up, but, sure enough, he turned it backside up again and tried to eat, cramming it into his mouth. The spoon was made to be used one way, and any other way does not work.

Now all the things in God's universe are like that. He put it together in a certain way and when we follow that way and follow those principles and those laws, it works beautifully. But when we do not do it that way, when we do not follow the principles and the laws of the Lord, then we follow into ways that lead to frustration and defeat and sometimes abject despair.

So the apostle, writing here about prayer, says: (1) we do not have simply because we do not ask; and (2) when we do ask, we do not receive because we ask badly that we may consume it wastefully, spending it on our own personal pleasures. All of us are made pretty much alike and apparently there is no limit to our wanting. If we have two cars, we want a third one. If we have one, we want a second one. If we are affluent enough to have a beautiful townhouse, we would like to have one also out in the country. If we have a million dollars, we want two. If we have \$500 million, we want a billion. That is the way humanity is. We are just made that way.

SO JAMES says that in our praying, we do not get much of what we ask for because we use God. Why should there be a God, we say to ourselves, if He cannot be used? So we use Him and we ask in order that we may consume what we ask for on our own selfish pleasures.

The scriptures reveal to us many reasons why we ask and do not receive. For one thing, we do not expect it. We ask without any expectation of our prayer being answered. The Lord told a man one time that according to his faith, would it be done

to him. Sometimes we ask indifferently. We do not agonize. The Lord spoke of that when He spoke of our importunity in prayer—to pray, to ask, to ask again and again.

Sometimes we do not get our answer because we have harshness in our hearts toward others. The Lord said that when we pray, if we have anything against our brother, we are to forgive him, and ask him to forgive us.

Then sometimes our prayers are not answered because of sin in us. The psalmist said if we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us. Isaiah 59:1, 2 says, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." So these things interfere. They come between us and God.

BUT JAMES also says there are times when we have not because we ask not. We just don't take it to God in prayer. We do not make it a matter of prayer. We rush into the day ourselves, make decisions for ourselves and leave God out of it. Then we wonder why life can be so frustrating and disappointing. You know, it is a marvelous thing how God can be moved to answer if we just ask Him. I stumbled into this thought in Psalm 107. The psalmist talks about a man who is sick unto death and in his extremity he prays. Then he talks about a mariner, a sailor in a storm, and in the agony and terror of the hurricane and a boat about to sink, the man prays. And in both instances the man is heard. God heard him and saved him. Then the psalmist wonders why we do not take our needs to God in prayer.

Recently I came across the story of a sweet little boy. He was a German lad and was so devout—he loved the Lord and he prayed often. His father and mother were very dilatory, but the little boy was devout. The pastor would speak of him in praise for his godliness and holiness. The headmaster of the school had told the children to be sure they were always on time. So the little boy sought to be on time when he went to school. One morning, on account of his parents, the little boy could not get away, and when he walked out the door to go to school, the clock struck the time that he was to be there. It was a long walk from his house to the school house and the little fellow bowed his

head and prayed aloud, "Oh, Lord, don't let me be late for school."

A man nearby overheard the boy's prayer and he thought it foolish. It had already struck time for the boy to be there, yet he prayed God would not let him be late for school. Out of curiosity the man followed the boy just to see what would happen. You know what happened? The headmaster of the school had put his key in the lock and somehow had turned it the wrong way, and he jammed the lock. He could not get the door open. They called for a locksmith, the locksmith had finished his work, and the door opened and the headmaster and the students walked in just as that devout little boy arrived! Isn't that blessed? Ask, Jesus says. Make it a matter of prayer. Ask.

"**ASK**, and ye shall receive." Jesus does not say we have to study a book about it. We do not have to be learned. We do not have to have a doctor's degree. We do not have to have a diploma in theology. Just as we talk to our own father, so the Lord invites us to talk to Him. The high and mighty, the low and menial, all of us—just ask.

Sometimes God will say no. When Moses pled with the Lord to let him go over into the promised land, God told him to speak no more about the matter. The answer was no. When the Lord prayed, "Father, let this cup pass from me," God said no. And the Lord died on the cross. When Paul asked the Lord to remove his thorn in the flesh, God said, "No, my strength is made perfect in weakness; my grace is sufficient for you."

God may say no, but God's rule and God's principle is that we ask. In Psalm 2:8 we read, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." But it says, "Ask."

Even the Lord Jesus was to pray. It was the purpose of God to bless all Israel, but Samuel had to pray for the blessing. It was the purpose of God in the days of Elijah to send the rain, but Elijah had to pray for it. When Daniel read in the prophet Jeremiah that after 70 years God was to visit His people and they could return home, Daniel still had to pray for it. It was the purpose of God to save the gentiles and He raised up Paul to preach the gospel to the gentiles, but he had to pray for us that we might be saved. That is the way God has put it together.

WHY DOES NOT God just do it anyway—without our asking? I do not know. I just know that the principle and rule and program of God is that I ask Him. That is the way God makes it work. No stewardship program in any church will ever succeed if the people involved do not pray. Children will not grow up to pray if parents do not pray for them and teach them to pray. So it is with the spirit of our churches. If we would feel God's presence, we must ask Him in saving grace to walk among us, to sit by our side, to live in our hearts. If we do pray, God will give us above all that we ask or think.

*Sometimes He may say "wait"
He will answer*

Why does not God just do it anyway — without our asking?

The apostle Paul closed his prayer in Ephesians 3 with these words, "Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

"Above all that we ask or think"—if you ask, God will do above all that you ask for and all that you could even dream for.

Abraham asked God for Ishmael. The Lord was pleased and said, "I'll make Ishmael a great people"—all those Arab people. But He gave Abraham more than he asked for. When he was 100 years old and when Sarah was 90 years old, God gave him Isaac.

ABOVE ALL that we ask or think. Jacob said, "Lord, if you'll just give me raiment and food and bring me back home, I'll give the tenth to you." When God brought him back to Bethel, Jacob was enriched immeasurably. Solomon said, "Lord, give me wisdom," and God gave him everything else besides. When the transgressor, the thief on the other side of the Lord Jesus, prayed, "Lord remember me," Jesus said to him, "Today, this day, you'll be with me in paradise." When the prodigal son came back to his father saying, "Father, I'm not worthy to be called your son. Just make me one of these menial hired servants, send me out in the field and just give me the wages of a hired hand," the father said, "Bring the finest robe and put it on him, and put a ring upon his finger, and kill the fatted calf, for this my boy was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." And they began to rejoice.

Above all that we ask or think. **Ask Him.** Make it a matter of prayer. "Lord, I don't know the decision to make in this." Ask Him. James says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God, that giveth to all men liberally." "Lord, I have a problem in my life." Take it to God. "Lord, I've got troubles or I have needs." Take it to the Lord. He will answer. You will have a new life and a new hope and a new uplift in your soul. There will be a heavenwardness, a Christwardness in you that you never knew before if you will just ask.

W. A. Criswell is pastor of First Church, Dallas. This article on prayer was written at the request of the Baptist Standard.

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