

A Closer Walk With God

The Blessings and Responsibilities of Being a Disciple of Christ

INTRODUCTION:

- I. How many of us fully comprehended what a wonderful blessing it is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?
 - A. In our first lesson in this series "A Closer Walk With God" we talked about what it means to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.
 1. However, in this lesson let's take a brief look at just some of the blessings and responsibilities we have as a disciple of Christ.
 2. The reason for doing this is simple.
 - a. Our service to Christ will be far more productive, and infinitely more enjoyable, when we fully grasp the significance of the many blessings and responsibilities we have as a disciple of Christ.
 - B. Time doesn't permit us to look at every blessing and responsibility.
 1. Therefore, let's look at just three blessings we should enjoy, and then talk about the corresponding responsibilities that go along with those blessings.

Body:

- I One of the most obvious blessings of being a disciple of Jesus Christ is having God as our heavenly father.
 - A. Just look at some of the blessings He gives us.
 - 1. God provides us with everything that is both good and perfect. All we have to do is simply ask, and if it's in keeping with His will, He will grant it to us.
 - a. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told His disciples:
Matthew 7:7-11 – *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?
10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"*
 - b. James, the Lord's brother, also had something to say about the good gifts God gives His children: **James 1:17** – *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes*

down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

- c. How many wonderful gifts does God still wish to give us – if we would only ask in keeping with His will for our lives.
2. He not only freely gives us everything that is good and perfect, our God also provides comfort in all our afflictions.
 - a. One of the most comforting and reassuring passages in the entire Bible is this one written by the pen of the apostle Paul:
2 Corinthians 1:3-4 – *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*
 - b. Notice how Paul describes our God as the "*Father of mercies and God of all comfort*" (**v. 3**) – meaning He is not only a God of grace and mercy, He is the one and only source of comfort during times of trouble and tribulation.
 - c. Not only that, but Paul also said God "*comforts us in all our tribulations*" (**v. 4**)
 - d. "*All*" means all – there is not a single trial or tribulation that cannot be comforted by our God.

3. Furthermore, we never have to worry about God abandoning us:
Hebrews 13:5-6 – *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"*
 - a. I believe the reason so many feel God has forsaken them is because they were never content with what God had already given them.
 - b. They grew dissatisfied with the blessings God provided, and began asking for something more to their liking – something they felt would bring them more happiness.
 - c. And, when they asked God to give them what they desire, and He didn't respond, they felt God was being unfair – or perhaps had even abandoned them.
4. There is another blessing of God we don't always see as a blessing – the fact that He chastens us when we need correction.
 - a. **Hebrews 12:5-11** – *And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is*

there whom a father does not chasten

8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9

Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

- b. Have you ever experienced the chastening of the Lord at a time in your life when you needed correction?
 - c. It wasn't done because God wanted to punish you and make you suffer for your sin and rebellion as much as it was to show you how much He still loves you in spite of your sin and rebellion.
 - d. When God chastens us as His children, it's His way of saying He loves us and wants to see us live a life that will ultimately allow us to receive the reward of heaven.
5. The apostle John summed up the blessings we receive from God this way:

- a. **1 John 3:1** – *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God.*
 - b. What an honor and a blessing it is for God to call us His children.
- B. And yet, coupled with these blessings are some responsibilities we have toward God, our Father.
1. First, we must be willing to do God's will in every area of our life – or as James tells us: **James 4:7** – *Therefore submit to God.*
 - a. Submitting to God first requires us to humble ourselves – to empty ourselves of all pride and stubbornness.
 - b. And there's a good reason why we should do this. By first humbling ourselves we make it possible for God to exalt us and to give us His providential care and protection.
 - c. **1 Peter 5:6-11** – *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. 10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect,*

establish, strengthen, and settle you. 11 To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever.

2. Not only must we be willing to submit ourselves to God, we also need to draw near to Him.
 - a. **James 4:8a** – *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*
 - b. Just as any father experiences joy when his children want a close loving relationship – when they want to be near him – our Father in heaven likewise experiences joy when His children draw near to Him.
 - c. How do we draw near to God? James tells us at least two ways: **James 4:8b** – *Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*
 - d. What does it mean to "cleanse" our hands?
 - (1). Speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God told the people of Judah: **Isaiah 1:16-17a** – *"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil. . ."*
 - (2). The only way we can put away evil from our lives is to wash ourselves of all uncleanness – to purify ourselves with the cleansing blood of Christ.
 - e. And what does it mean to "purify" our hearts?

(1). It means to get to the root of our spiritual uncleanness – which is the heart itself.

(2). It's one thing to be cleansed by the blood of Christ, but unless we purify our hearts by getting to the root of sin, we will simply be a "repeat offender."

f. So, to truly draw near to God we need to be washed and purified – washed outwardly, and purified inwardly.

g. For Christians, that comes by repentance and confession of sins: **1 John 1:9** – *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

II. We are not only blessed by having God as our Father, we also have innumerable blessings by having Jesus Christ as our Lord and High Priest.

A. Just look at what it means to call Jesus "*Lord.*"

1. Our Lord rules over all the kings and rulers of the earth.

a. John introduced his letter Revelation with these words about Jesus Christ: **Revelation 1:4-5** – *Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.*

- b. I might be concerned about what goes on in world or national events, but I certainly don't worry them because I know Jesus Christ is still in charge: **1 Peter 3:21-22** – . . . *Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.*
 - c. And yet, as majestic and powerful as Jesus is as Lord over heaven and earth, He still calls us "family": **Hebrews 2:11** – *For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren. . .*
- B. And as our High Priest, Jesus does so much for those of us who are truly His disciples.
- 1. Jesus is very unique as our High Priest because He understands all our strengths and weaknesses: **Hebrews 2:17-18** – *Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*
 - 2. And because He understands us so well, we can find grace and mercy when we come to this High Priest: **Hebrews 4:14-16** –

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

3. And the reason we are able to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need is because our High Priest intercedes for us – He speaks to God on our behalf: **Romans 8:34** – . . . *It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.*
 4. In fact, our High Priest does one better – He is always able to intercede for us because He lives forever: **Hebrews 7:23-25** – *Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. 24 But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*
- C. However, there are some responsibilities we have toward Jesus Christ, our Lord and our High Priest.
1. Because He is our Lord – our Master – we must do as He says.

- a. **Luke 6:46-49** – *"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? 47 Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. 49 But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."*
2. But then, we should have no problems keeping His commandments – assuming we truly love Him.
 - a. Jesus said keeping His commandments is our way of expressing our love for Him: **John 14:15** – *"If you love Me, keep My commandments."*
 - b. Jesus went on to explain that keeping His commandments enables us to remain in His love for us: **John 15:9-10** – *"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."*

3. Furthermore, our High Priest didn't simply offer animal sacrifices as priests did in Old Testament times, He offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sins. We should be grateful for that sacrifice
 - a. **Hebrews 9:13-14** – *For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*
4. And since He offered Himself to redeem us from our sins, He expects us to remain faithful to Him.
 - a. **Hebrews 12:1-2** – . . . *let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

III. We not only have God as our Father, and Jesus Christ as our Lord and High Priest, we also blessed by the Holy Spirit who does so much for us.

A. There are many blessings associated with the Holy Spirit.

1. He is able to work in our lives because He dwells in us.

- a. **1 Corinthians 3:16-17** – *Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.*
2. Brethren have debated for generations about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit – does He literally dwell in us, or does He dwell in us through the medium of the Holy Spirit inspired Word?
3. I think Paul settled that debate when he wrote to the Ephesians as said *"be filled with the Spirit"* (**Ephesians 5:18**), and then told the Colossians to *"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom"* (**Colossians 3:16**).
 - a. To have the Word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom is the same as being filled with the Spirit.
4. This enables the Holy Spirit to make intercession for us as children of God.
 - a. **Romans 8:26-27** – *Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

5. Therefore, through the indwelling power and influence of the Holy Spirit we are able to conquer the influence of the flesh.
 - a. **Romans 8:11-14** – *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors — not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

6. Through the indwelling power and influence of the Holy Spirit we can be strengthened in a very unique way.
 - a. **Ephesians 3:16-17** – *. . .that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love. . .*

7. As a result we can not only experience the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, we can also live every day under the Spirit's influence.
 - a. **Galatians 5:22-25** – *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23*

gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

B. However, having the Holy Spirit do all this for us means there are some things we must do in return – some responsibilities we have to fulfill.

1. Because the Holy Spirit dwells in us:

- a. We must keep the temple of God holy. Once again, as Paul wrote in: **1 Corinthians 3:16-17** – *Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.*
- b. We must remain pure so that we can glorify God even with our own bodies: **1 Corinthians 6:18-20** – *Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*

c. We must constantly keep our mind set on spiritual things:

Romans 8:5-6 – *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

2. The only way we can do all this is to be armed as soldiers of Christ, and wear the whole armor of God – making absolutely certain we take with us the *"sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."* (**Ephesians 6:17**).

CONCLUSION:

- I. There are so many more blessings and responsibilities we could talk about.
 - A. But perhaps these three will help us better appreciate what a blessing it is to be a disciple of Christ.
 1. Being a true disciple of Jesus Christ – a follower of Jesus Christ, an adherent to His teachings, and an imitator of His character – enables us to have God as our Father, Jesus Christ as our Lord and High Priest, and the Holy Spirit as an indwelling power and influence.

2. But coupled with those wonderful blessings are the responsibilities of obedience, faithfulness, and submitting to the will of God, the commandments of the Lord, and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
 3. Failure to fulfill these responsibilities has dire consequences:
Hebrews 3:12-13 – *Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*
- B. All these blessings are yours to enjoy if you're also willing to accept the responsibilities of being a true disciple of Jesus Christ.
1. If you're not a true disciple of Christ, you can become one right now by coming to Christ in faith and repentance, and by being baptized into Christ for the remission of all your past sins.
 2. And if you are a disciple of Christ, but haven't faithfully fulfilled your responsibilities, you can change all that right now by coming back to Christ in genuine godly sorrow and repentance, confessing your sins to God, and being once again cleansed by the blood of Christ.