

# What Does It Mean To Be A Christian?

A Christian Is A Partaker Of Every Spiritual Blessing



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

# A Christian Is A Partaker Of Every Spiritual Blessings

Learn about the spiritual blessings Christians partake of in Christ

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## Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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**About the author:** My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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**My plea:** It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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What Does It Mean To Be A Christian?

# A Christian Is A Partaker Of Every Spiritual Blessing

What does it mean to be a Christian? Being a Christian means a great deal. Fortunately, God has given us all the information we need to know about what being a Christian really means. As we study His saving message, we discover that a Christian is a partaker of every spiritual blessing.

## ***All Spiritual Blessings Are In Christ***

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God has blessed those who are Christians in many ways. He has blessed the Christian physically (in providing him what he needs in life) and He has blessed him spiritually.

### **Physical vs. spiritual blessings**

There are many ways God blesses us physically. For instance, Jesus promises that those who “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” will be given the things necessary for physical life (i.e. food, drink, clothing), according to Matthew 6:25-34. Certainly, there are many things

that God has blessed us with – often even in addition to the physical necessities of life. James 1:17 says that 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.”

While we should truly be thankful to God for all of the many physical blessings He has given us, we should also realize that these are not the greatest source of blessings for those who are Christians. In fact, God has not promised to give the Christian any more than the basic necessities of life! He has not promised the Christian great riches or physical health due to his/her relationship with Him. Instead, you can read the Scriptures and see numerous instances in which those who were Christians suffered physically as Christians. Some were put into prison. Some were separated from their families. Some were beaten. Some were killed. Therefore, Paul wrote that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).

Though some people may begrudge the fact that God has not promised to bless the Christian with great physical blessings, Christians should rejoice that the blessings he/she enjoys as Christians are not temporary in nature! You see, all physical blessings are only temporary. They will not survive this physical life – and they will not result in true happiness. Instead, the Christian’s greatest blessings are the spiritual blessings that have been provided through Jesus Christ! These blessings will never be taken away from you – at death or prior to death. Instead, you will continue to reap the benefits of these blessings throughout all of eternity (as long as you remain faithful to God).

### **Spiritual blessings are only available in Christ Jesus**

Many of the physical blessings Christians enjoy are also available to those who are not Christians. For instance, Jesus says that the Father “makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). He continues to be the source of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17) – even to those who are not Christians. In fact, Romans 2:4 demonstrates that God often does show His goodness to those who are

not Christians in order that it might bring them to repentance. In fact, it is often those who are not Christians who have the world's greatest possessions and riches.

Yet, while those who are not Christians are often blessed physically, all the spiritual blessings are *only* available to those who are in Christ Jesus. Look at Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." Every one of the blessings which pertain to heavenly and spiritual things are only available to those who are "in Christ." Therefore, they are dependent upon a relationship with God!

Those who are Christians are the ones who have fulfilled the instructions of God in order to enter that relationship and be partakers of those blessings. For instance, consider Galatians 3:26-27: "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Therefore, those who have put Christ on in baptism are those who have come "into Christ." Again, the Christian has now gained access into all of these spiritual blessings that are eternal in nature. They are eternal because they are rooted in the heavenly things of God rather than the things on this earth!

### **These blessings are worth all the sacrifice**

Those who are Christians, therefore, must weigh the opportunity to be partakers of all the spiritual blessings provided in Christ Jesus. Though there will be great sacrifice required of those who are Christians (see Luke 9:23-26, Romans 12:1-2, Galatians 2:20), the eternal blessings in Christ make all of these sacrifices worth it! Rather than building a life upon physical blessings which come and go (offering only temporary happiness), the Christian will be building a life that is based upon the unseen promises of God that offer eternal and true joy!

These spiritual blessings are why Christians during New Testament times were willing to suffer such great persecution – and even be put to death. For instance, consider how the apostle Paul realized that the spiritual blessings that are available in Jesus Christ were worth all of the sacrifice that was

involved in living for the Lord. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 says, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Certainly, these spiritual blessings are so valuable that the Christian should never relinquish them for anything or anyone!

Now, having realized the nature of these blessings and the opportunity to partake of them, let's spend some time considering the blessings God has made available to those who are in Christ Jesus.

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## ***Forgiveness Of Sins***

Forgiveness of sin is available to those in Christ Jesus. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). Though God has made His grace and His mercy available to all mankind (i.e. Titus 2:11), only those who are Christians actually receive the forgiveness of sins.

### **The need for forgiveness**

To fully appreciate the spiritual blessing of having your sins forgiven, you need to have an accurate understanding of the dangers of sin. First, understand that sin occurs whenever you violate God's law. It is identified as "lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). Therefore, sin can occur any time you do what God instructs you not to do or when you do not do what He tells you to do.

Why is the forgiveness of sin so important? It is important because sin *always* separates the sinner from God. Isaiah 59:1-2 demonstrates that it is your sin that has "separated you from your God" and has "hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear." God is perfectly holy and blameless (1 John 1:5). Therefore, the separation that has resulted between you and God is not God's fault. He is not the one who left you. You are the one who separated yourself

from Him whenever you committed unrighteousness (since all unrighteousness is sin, 1 John 5:17)!

Romans 6:23 says that this spiritual separation from God (a spiritual “death”) is what you have deserved (earned) because of your sins. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Therefore, the Scriptures demonstrate that you can even be dead while you are living (1 Timothy 5:6) – because if you are living in your sins you are spiritually separated from God (dead). Ultimately, if you experience physical death while you are dead spiritually, you will experience everlasting separation from God in Hell. Therefore, Revelation 21:8 refers to this place as “the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Then, you need to understand that (since this is what you earned by your past sinful conduct) you cannot do anything to earn or deserve the forgiveness of your sins. Instead, without Christ, you were hopelessly lost in your sin, “having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). You were entirely dependent upon the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the mercy of God!

## **How God forgives**

Ephesians 2:13 says, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” God is the one who has made the only sacrifice that is sufficient to take away sin and make the forgiveness of sins possible. He is the one who sent His only begotten Son into this world so that you might not perish (in your sins) but that you could have everlasting life (as the result of being forgiven of your sins), John 3:16! Therefore, it is by the shed blood of Jesus Christ that “remission of sins” is offered to all (Matthew 26:28). But, what does it mean for the Christian to be forgiven of his sin through Jesus Christ?

When God forgives sin, He forgives it completely – with no trace remaining to be counted against the Christian. Isaiah 1:18 pictures the forgiveness of sins by saying, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.” Furthermore, Hebrews 8:12 (quoting from Jeremiah

31:31-34) references God’s promise to forgive sins under the new covenant. He said, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

Also consider the language of Acts 3:19: “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Pay particular attention to the phrase “blotted out.” Other translations do a better job with this expression than the *New King James Version* does. For instance, the *New American Standard Bible* translates this expression, “wiped away.” It is my understanding that the original meaning of this expression had reference to the practice of creditors charging their debtors. The debts would be recorded on tables covered with wax. Then, when those debts were paid, an instrument would be used to smooth the wax so that no trace of the debt would remain. This is the way God forgives the sins of the one who becomes a Christian – there is no trace of it that remains (see also Matthew 18:21-35)!

Look at 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 as an example of this. “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

These individuals had been guilty of the sins of fornication, homosexuality, drunkenness, theft, etc. – things which should have prevented them from being part of God’s kingdom. And, it would have *if* they would not have found the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ. These individuals (according to Acts 18:8) heard God’s word, believed, and were baptized. Therefore, they had their sins washed away through the blood of Jesus Christ, were set apart from their sins, and were made pure in God’s sight!

## **The result of forgiveness**

Using the Corinthians as an example, you can see the result of the way in which God forgives sins!

Consider three additional points regarding the result of forgiveness.

(1) Forgiveness of sins results in the restoration of fellowship with God. When you lived in your sin, you were separated from God (in a state of spiritual death). However, when you have your sins forgiven, you return to fellowship with God. 1 John 1:5-6 says, “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.” Now, having your sins forgiven, you are walking in the light of God’s holiness and partake of all the blessings that He makes available to those who are in fellowship with Him (as we are studying in this lesson)!

(2) There is no condemnation in Jesus Christ. Romans 8:1 says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” Whenever you lived in sin, you were under the sentence of condemnation to eternal punishment in Hell. However, now that you are forgiven of your sins and walking in the light of God’s holiness (no longer pursuing the sinful desires of your flesh), you are under *no* (absolutely zero) sentence of condemnation!

(3) You have been set free from your sin. Look at Ephesians 1:7 again. It is in Christ that you “have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” The word “redemption” indicates the releasing that is brought about through a payment of ransom. This payment of ransom was provided by the blood of Jesus Christ. Therefore, as Romans 6:15-23 demonstrates, the Christian had previously been enslaved to sin (which led to spiritual death); but, now he can be set free from his sin and become a slave to righteousness (which leads to eternal life in Heaven)!

## ***An Eternal Inheritance***

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Those who are in Christ Jesus have been given an incorruptible inheritance. Ephesians 1:11-12 says, “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.”

### **Adopted as a child of God**

There are many types of inheritances spoken of throughout the pages of God’s word. Certainly, mankind has placed great importance on leaving an inheritance to one’s descendants. In fact, Proverbs 13:22 even says, “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children.” So, while an inheritance is certainly a valuable thing, there is no inheritance that even approaches the inheritance God has made available for those who are His children.

Just prior to identifying the inheritance that is obtained by those who are in Christ (Ephesians 1:11-12), Paul said that those who are in Christ have been adopted as sons (Ephesians 1:5-6)! Certainly this adoption as sons is essential to being heirs of the Almighty Father! In fact, read Romans 8:14-17.

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

Prior to becoming an adopted child of God (when you were living in your sins), you were a child of the devil. For instance, Jesus told some, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44). They were children of the devil because they were living according to the

devil's desires. They resembled him. 1 John 3:10 says, "In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother."

Though you were required to give up practicing sin and live in a way that was holy and blameless in the sight of God (Ephesians 1:5-6), you could not make yourself right with God and deserve to access the inheritance He provides for His children. Instead, you were dependent on God adopting you (which He accomplished through Jesus Christ)! Now, God did not adopt you because you were worthy to be His child and gain His inheritance. Rather, He has adopted you because He loved you and had pity on you. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

## **Eternal inheritance in Heaven**

Now, as an adopted child of God (who is now determined to live according to God's ways of holiness), you have gained access into the inheritance of your Heavenly Father. The Creator of all the universe. The one from whom all blessings flow. The one who dwells in the Heavenly city that is beautiful beyond human comprehension.

This Heavenly Father now calls you His heir – and a joint heir with Jesus Christ, provided that you are willing to suffer with Him (Romans 8:17). This eternal inheritance that is promised is the salvation of your soul and the reward of eternal life in Heaven. 2 Timothy 2:10 demonstrates that Christians will "obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." 2 Timothy 2:11-13 continues, "This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

Consider what 1 Peter 1:3-9 says about this wonderful inheritance that is reserved in Heaven for you (as a child of His): "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from

the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls."

## **Hope while on earth**

This eternal inheritance of Heaven has been promised and is "reserved" for you. However, you do not yet experience the joys that are awaiting you. Now, as was true about the Christians Peter wrote this first epistle to, you are being tested. Your faith is being put to the test through various means – and you are demonstrating whether you are truly dedicated to glorifying and honoring your Heavenly Father while you live on this earth. Yet, you use the hope of this promised inheritance (promised by a God who cannot lie, Titus 1:2) as an anchor for your soul to keep you faithful to God through the temptations, trials, and persecutions of life on this earth (Hebrews 6:19).

Therefore, though you once were without hope and without Christ (Ephesians 2:12), you now have the "living hope" of the eternal inheritance in Heaven (1 Peter 1:3-4)! Whenever you live with the full hope of the things God has promised to His children, you can endure anything that life will throw at you – through Jesus Christ who gives you the necessary strength (Philippians 4:13)! As a child of God, you need to know that there is "victory through...Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). Therefore, you must "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Your labor is not in vain in Jesus because those who "die in the Lord" are blessed – as they "rest from their labors, and their works follow them" (Revelation 14:13)!

As a child of God, you have now been granted the right to enter through the gates of the Heavenly city and partake of the tree of life! Revelation 22:14 says, “Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.” Allow the hope of gaining access into the Heavenly city to keep you true and steadfast in your service of God throughout your life on this earth!

## ***Joy And Peace***

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There is both joy and peace that results from being in Christ. Romans 5:1-2 says, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

### **All things work together for good**

To be able to understand the true joy and peace that you have as a Christian, you must first recognize that it is based upon all of the other spiritual blessings that result from having fellowship with God – and that it is not dependent upon any external factors. You see, any type of “joy” or “peace” that is based on something temporary is not true joy and peace because it can be taken away from you by some external factor!

Instead, the kind of true joy and peace that you can have in Jesus Christ is based on the unwavering promises of God! Therefore, since your hope is in the promises of God, you can find joy and peace in any and every circumstance you find yourself in – even when your earthly conditions are not ideal. For instance, after saying that there is joy and peace in Jesus (Romans 5:1-2), Paul said that Christians can “glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Romans 5:3-4). Similarly, James said that you can “count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience” (James 1:2-3).

This is because everything works together for good for the child of God! “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). This is *not* a promise that everything will turn out for the good *physically* for the Christian. Instead, this is a promise that everything will turn out for the good *spiritually* for the Christian. Therefore, no matter what you go through during the course of your lifetime, you know that God’s promises are true – and you will receive the everlasting home in Heaven if you are faithful to Him! Then, as you endure difficult situations throughout your lifetime, you simply can know that all of these situations will only make you stronger in your faith and in your service to the Lord – because there is nothing and no one who is strong enough to separate you from the love of Christ if you are faithful to Him (see Romans 8:31-39)!

### **Rejoicing in Christ**

The joy that is available to you is the joy of being a child of God and a partaker of all the spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus! It is the joy of knowing that, no matter what happens in your life, you know that God is pleased with you and you will spend eternity in Heaven! Whenever individuals were obedient to the gospel of Jesus Christ, they went on their ways rejoicing, having received the forgiveness of sins and become heirs of God through Jesus Christ (see Acts 8:39; Acts 16:34).

Notice how the apostle Paul encouraged his brethren to rejoice in Jesus Christ. Philippians 4:4 says, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” Now, this instruction (by itself) is enough to teach you about the true joy you should have in Jesus Christ. However, you also need to consider the context of this passage. Namely, it appears as if Paul wrote the book of Philippians while in Rome as a prisoner. So, even though Paul was being persecuted for the cause of Jesus Christ, he tells his brethren to rejoice! Likewise, whenever Paul and Silas were in prison in the city of Philippi, they were still found praying and singing hymns to God – and all the prisoners were listening to them (Acts 16:25).

As a child of God, you can live your life truly rejoicing with “joy inexpressible and full of glory”



because you know that you will receive “the end of your faith – the salvation of your” soul (1 Peter 1:8-9).

## **Peace that surpasses all understanding**

Prior to becoming a child of God (when you were living in your sin), you had made yourself an enemy of God. James 4:4 says, “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” You had made the decision to live your life contrary to the will of God and serve a different master. As an enemy of God, you were separated from all the spiritual blessings available through Jesus Christ and were headed for certain everlasting punishment through the vengeance God will show to His enemies (see 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

However, having now “been justified by faith,” you “have peace with God” through Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). Therefore, you are now in a state of friendship and harmony with the Almighty God. And, as a child of God, the quality of this peace is enduring and beyond all human comprehension. Philippians 4:6-7 says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

You no longer must be terrified of the consequences of your sins because you have found forgiveness of those sins through Jesus Christ, thereby avoiding all condemnation those sins would require. Now, you have been given the opportunity *not* to perish but *have* everlasting life in Heaven (John 3:16)! Therefore, you “may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’” (Hebrews 13:6)!

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## ***Prayer***

As you go through life on this earth, God has not left you alone as you fight your battles against the

devil and his army! Instead, God has promised that the “effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16).

## **The blessing of prayer**

Prayer is the avenue God has provided His people to be able to communicate with Him (note that He communicates with mankind through His written word). It is the way you (as a child of God) can communicate with your Heavenly Father, through your Mediator (Jesus Christ), and with the help of the Holy Spirit! All of these have an essential role in prayer – and demonstrate how much they care that your prayer is heard by God!

Through prayer, you are taught that you can find help in times of need. Having Jesus Christ as your Mediator and High Priest, you can “come boldly to the throne of grace” and “obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16)! Regardless what troubles you are experiencing during your life, you can find help by coming to the Almighty God in prayer! He is able to relieve your burdens, provide strength for the weak, help you out of temptations, provide according to and beyond your needs, etc. What a comfort and a blessing to know that help is available to you when you approach the Almighty God in prayer!

Through prayer, you can express your praise and adoration of God. Hebrews 13:15 says, “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” Certainly one way that we can praise God with our lips is through the avenue of prayer (just as David often did in the Psalms). Included in praising God through prayer would also be expressing thanksgiving for all things (Colossians 3:17).

Through prayer you can find the forgiveness of sins. Being a Christian does not mean that you will never sin again. In fact, the Bible demonstrates that you can sin so as to fall from the grace of God – even after you have become a Christian (see Acts 8:14-24 and Galatians 5:1-4). Thanks be to God that He has provided the avenue of prayer, through which His children can confess their sin to Him and ask Him for forgiveness – appealing through their Advocate with

the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (see Acts 8:22 and 1 John 1:8-2:2)! Without this avenue of forgiveness, you would (once again) be hopelessly lost in your sin.

Through prayer you can cast all your cares upon God. You will not be exempt from the cares and concerns of this world. You live in this world and are subject to the various temptations, trials, and persecutions this life will throw at you. However, you can take great comfort in the fact that you are not alone in this world! You can truly find joy and peace in the fact that God cares for you and He hears your prayers. Therefore, He invites you to cast “all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). Philippians 4:6-7 (again) says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

## **The power of prayer**

One of the main reasons prayer is such a tremendous blessing is because of the power in prayer. Again, James 5:16 says that the “effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Another translation (the *English Standard Version*) says, “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” This great power that accompanies a righteous person praying is demonstrated in verses 17 and 18 in Elijah. The passage says that “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.”

Other passages also indicate the power of prayer. For instance, in John 15:7, Jesus says, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” Similarly, Matthew 7:7-8 says, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” This is a general principle of prayer. Other passages also teach that your prayer must be according to the will of God and must be in

faith. Prayer is not some kind of “Aladdin’s lamp” to receiving things you can spend on your own desires (see James 4:3). However, none of this detracts from the true power of a righteous person praying to his Heavenly Father!

Still other passages demonstrate that those who are not children of God should not expect the same opportunities and blessings in prayer. Again, James 5:16 says that it is the prayer of the *righteous* man that is powerful and accomplishes much. 1 Peter 3:12 also says, “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” Furthermore, a man in John 9:31 said, “Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears them.” Though God can choose to hear any prayer He desires to hear (being Omniscient and Omnipresent), those who are Christians are the only ones who have the promised blessing of prayer!

## ***Fellowship With Brethren***

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Not only has God provided help for His people through the avenue of prayer, but He has also provided help for His children through fellowship with other Christians. As we have already seen, Christians are part of God’s family (His household – see Ephesians 2:19 and 1 Timothy 3:15). Therefore, not only does this mean that God is your Heavenly Father; but, it means that you have brothers and sisters who also give their lives to doing the will of God.

### **The nature of this fellowship**

The fellowship that God provides between you and your brethren is a special one that is full of blessings. However, many people misunderstand the nature of this fellowship. To many people, this fellowship is a physical fellowship that is enjoyed through sharing physical meals, participating in athletic events, and other physical and recreational activities.

However, the great blessing of fellowship between Christians is much greater than physical

fellowship! This kind of physical fellowship can be enjoyed with any willing participants. Instead, the fellowship (joint-participation) that is shared between those who are Christians is spiritual in its nature. It is *not* joint-participation in physical things or in physical activities, but joint-participation in Jesus Christ!

Look at 1 John 1:5-7: “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

We focused on verses 5-6 previously regarding the fellowship that you can have with God. Now, I want you to focus particularly on verse 7. If you will conduct your life so as to live in fellowship with God, you also have fellowship with others who are in fellowship with God! Therefore, this joint-participation is focused on Jesus Christ. Those who are Christians have joint-participation in the blessings and promises He provides!

### **The blessing of this fellowship**

While many folks prefer joint-participation (fellowship) in physical things (making the church a kind of “social club”), fellowship in these spiritual blessings is greatly to be preferred. Sharing with others in a game of basketball or in a potluck dinner will not (of itself) help to save your soul. However, taking advantage of the spiritual fellowship you have with your brethren will prove to be of tremendous value to your soul!

You see, God knew that His people could easily become discouraged if they were alone. So, He has provided strength and fellowship that is greater than any individual Christian – in the church. Particularly, God has authorized the existence of local churches – and given local churches the responsibility of building up the members in the faith.

Therefore, as you partake of these spiritual blessings in Christ and seek to live for the Lord, you have the opportunity to be encouraged with your

brethren in your mutual faith. For instance, Paul wanted to visit the Roman Christians so that they could be encouraged together in their “mutual faith” (Romans 1:12). Furthermore, when Peter began his second letter, he addressed it to “those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1).

This spiritual fellowship in the mutual faith that is possessed by God’s children also involves spiritual responsibilities toward one another that will help each other live in a way that is pleasing to God. For instance, local churches assemble together in order to stir up love and good works in all the members (Hebrews 10:24-25), Christians are to encourage one another daily lest they be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:12-13), Christians are to bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2), Christians are to attempt to restore their brethren when they turn away from the truth and sin (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20), etc. In all things, Christians are “members of one another” (Romans 12:5) and should be working to help all of the members of God’s family make it to Heaven! As a Christian, you will have access to this wonderful network of like-minded saints!

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## **Conclusion**

As a Christian, you are a partaker of every spiritual blessing that is available in Christ Jesus! Having these blessings ought to encourage you to persevere through any and all trials, temptations, and persecutions of life – knowing that your labor for the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). There is victory in Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57)!

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## **Study Questions**

Are physical *or* spiritual blessings to be preferred? Why?

## **1. Forgiveness**

What is the concept of forgiveness?

Forgiveness from what? What does it mean to be forgiven?

Why is it important to be forgiven of your sins?

Where is forgiveness found?

## **2. Hope**

What is hope?

Hope for what?

Where is true hope found?

## **3. Hope**

Whose child were you?

Who has adopted you? What are you called?

Why were you adopted?

Where is the adoption as sons found?

## **4. Adoption As Sons**

What is joy? List some suggested sources of joy in life.

Why does the Christian have joy?

What does this joy do?

Where is this joy found?