



The Believer's Inheritance



*What Does It Mean
To Be An Heir Of God
And A
Joint Heir With Christ?*

by
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INTRODUCTION

Rom 8:16-17 “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.”

We need to rightly divide the Word of Truth regarding being an heir of God and being a joint/co-heir with Christ. A word that we can use to describe what an heir will inherit is the word, “heirship.” The definition of the word heirship is, “the state, character, or privileges of an heir; right of inheriting.” The Bible teaches that the state and character of every believer’s inheritance is not the same. Let’s examine the following questions regarding heirships as taught in the Word of God:

1. What does the Bible say about heirship or inheritance?
2. What is the Biblical and scriptural basis for heirship?
3. What would be the distinction between heirship and joint- or co-heirship?
4. Can a portion of your inheritance be forfeited, according to God’s Word?
5. Is inheritance connected to spirituality, faithfulness, and/or obedience?
6. Can a believer not rule and reign with Christ as a co-regent?
7. How do heirships relate with the doctrine of ranks?

In the above reference, we see the distinction of being merely an heir and a full, joint-heir, or co-heir with Christ, because one is a free, unconditional gift, while the

other is conditional upon suffering, endurance and faithfulness. We will look at the scriptural distinctions as we examine other Biblical passages in this tract.

These differences have a connection to the following scriptures which refer to the doctrine of rewards in the Bible. The purpose of this tract is not to cover in detail the doctrine of ranks or rewards, but following are some scriptures to review in that regard:

I Corinthians 15:23 – Ranks/order

I Corinthians 15:41-42 – Different glories

Philippians 3:11 – Out-resurrection

Hebrews 11:35 – Better resurrection

II Timothy 2:12 – Ruling & reigning

Revelation 22:12 – Rewards

I Corinthians 9:24-27 – Race & prize

As you will see, the above scriptures all connect with the doctrine of ranks in the resurrection, and relate to this tract.

HEIRSHIP

Galatians 4:6-7 “Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.” (NIV)

When do we become an heir? The moment we believe and accept Christ as our Savior, we become a child of God and an heir of God. This is a free gift without any conditions. Just as children are heirs of their parents, believers are children of God; therefore, believers are heirs of God, simply by virtue of their birth into God’s

family.

Ephesians 2:8-9 “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*”

This occurs freely by grace, apart from any works. Salvation (and thus, heirship) is a free gift of God. Being an heir is a gift that has no relationship to works or rewards. Rewards and works go together. (**I Corinthians 3:8**) Salvation is separate and apart from works.

Romans 3:28 “*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.*”

Heirship is simply by virtue of birth. We receive Christ as our Savior, and we are born again spiritually, into the family of God. We are justified by faith, as the verse says. We see that Jesus challenged Nicodemus to be “born again” in order to see the Kingdom of God.

John 3:3,7 “*Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.... Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"*”

There is no suffering, obedience, or works involved in being an heir. (**John 6:47**) No perseverance or special rewards are seen with becoming an heir. (**II Timothy 1:9**) Simple faith in Jesus was the issue for Nicodemus. (**Luke 7:50**) All that is required is faith and acceptance of Jesus. (**John 5:24**) One must accept Jesus to be saved, or to become an heir of God. (**John 3:31**) This is an unconditional gift of God; an unconditional birth into God’s family. (**Titus 3:5**)

JOINT-HEIRSHIP (or Co-Heirship)

Joint-heirship, however, is not an unconditional gift for every child of God; it is a reward for faithfulness to God. In conjunction with becoming a joint-heir with Christ, we see conditions or qualifications, and the idea of “winning the race.” Not all believers will be joint-heirs with Christ.

***1 Corinthians 9:24-27** “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”*

In this passage, which Paul wrote twenty-five years after having been saved and becoming an heir, we see him talking about the possibility of being disqualified. He spoke about finishing his course and being victorious. Paul was pressing toward the finish line of life, eager to complete his course with joy. Consider the following from the Word of God:

***Philippians 3:14** “I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

***Acts 20:24** “But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy.....”*

Paul knew he was saved. (**1 John 5:11**) He knew he was an heir of God, and yet he was concerned about being a co-heir with Christ based on enduring and suffering, obedience, faithfulness, perseverance, merit, and worthiness.

Rulership is seen with the position of joint-heir. Do you see the difference? Do you see the distinction? Do you see victory and special honors bestowed here?

1 Corinthians 2:10 “But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.”

Let’s go further and dig deeper:

INHERITANCE

Spiritually, there is a difference in salvation and rewards. There is a distinction between salvation and a full inheritance. Salvation is different from ruling and reigning with Christ as a co-regent.

In the natural realm, do we not see babies, children, young adults, and full-grown adults? Do we not see the wise and the unwise? Do we not see those in the family capable of running the family business and those incapable, without the skills or knowledge of how to run the family business? Do we not see the mature and the immature?

To distinguish further, let’s look at being an heir and joint-heir from the vantage point of the Apostle Paul as regarding the unsaved and saved. Furthermore, he draws distinctions between believers.

1 Corinthians 2:14-3:3 “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For “who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.”

“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still

not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?"

We see clearly in the above scripture where Paul stated that there are four kinds of people:

- The unregenerate or unsaved person (natural man)
- The carnal believer, who is a babe in Christ
- The carnal believer, who is willfully rebellious
- The spiritual believer, who judges all things.

John and Paul both made these distinctions among believers; we should, as well. This is essential to seeing the truth of heirships.

The spiritual Christian judges heirship and joint-heirship as a part of the "all things" that are judged. In Paul's writings, we see the carnal and spiritual believers. Paul wrote to the believers at Corinth and told them they were carnal. (***I Corinthians 3:3***) They could not even judge incest or drunkenness in their assembly. They could not judge carnality!

The carnal believer is preoccupied with earthly things, not the heavenly. Yes, these carnal believers at Corinth were heirs of God, in that they had put their faith in Christ and have a basic secure inheritance. But they were not yielding and surrendering to the Lord. They were walking "*after the flesh*", according to ***Romans 8:5-7***. They were "*carnally minded*" and yet they were heirs of God.

In ***I Corinthians 9:24-27***, Paul said that everyone runs, but only one wins the prize. Everyone runs, but not everyone qualifies and finishes the course. Running and finishing the course are two different aspects of the race in the natural realm, and they are in the spiritual, also.

When Paul says, "*...lest, when I have preached to*

others, I myself should become disqualified,” he was not afraid of being disqualified from eternal life, but from the prize and the crown. So it is with us.

Acts 20:24 *“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself,* so that I may finish my race with joy.....”*

Paul wanted to be a co-heir with Christ; this was his heart’s desire and his constant aim, but this Pauline doctrine has practical applications at every level of our lives.

Erwin Lutzer uses the following illustration in one of his books on running and runners:

“Imagine an official firing the gun to start the 100 meter dash, and the runners all heading in different directions! A sun-lover runs toward the west, another fond of mountains, runs toward the east, and a third heads toward the sea. Each would be expending maximum energy, but none would win the race. Only those headed toward the finish line would qualify for the prize.”

Philippians 3:14 *“I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

Paul was pressing toward the finish line to be a joint-heir with Christ.

OLD TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATIONS

Romans 4:2-3 *“For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”*

Look at Abraham: When was he justified? When did he believe? When did he know the Lord? All this happened in Ur of the Chaldees. Abram was justified in Ur of the Chaldees. In **Hebrews 11:8**, we read that he left Ur; he obeyed and he went out.

At a practical level, he went out seeking the heavenly vision. He could have been justified and still stayed in Ur, and that's all he would have known. But he went forth and was obedient. He laid hold of his full inheritance, and we know he became a very wealthy man. He became the friend of God, and the "*father of the faithful*."

Hebrews 11:8 "*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.*"

Rewards for obedience are promised to overcomers. Acts of obedience were required for Abraham to receive his full inheritance. He was faithful and he was obedient, and he merited what he received by those works. See also:

Matthew 16:27

Revelation 22:12

II Timothy 4:8

Abraham became an heir of God when he was justified in Ur, and then he went out to receive his inheritance in Canaan.

Furthermore, we see two heirships with the Israelites. We see leaving the old and entering the new. The Israelites were in bondage in Egypt. Egypt is a type of the world from which they were delivered.

Did they put the blood on their doorposts in Egypt? Did they put their faith in Jehovah? They became heirs when they sprinkled the blood on the doorposts – they

believed God.

They followed Moses and passed through the Red Sea. They were delivered from Pharaoh and from slavery and bondage and cared for and protected in the wilderness by miracle after miracle. This was a part of their inheritance.

Were they offered a fuller inheritance in the land of Canaan? Did they all receive the fuller inheritance they had been offered? Did they enter into the land flowing with milk and honey? Or did they die in the wilderness? Their full inheritance was in Canaan. The full inheritance was something to be acquired through obedience; and yet, we know most never received that full inheritance because of their lack of faith.

We know that Caleb and Joshua entered into the land to receive their full inheritance, but the rest fell short because of their unbelief. The Bible says they died in the wilderness.

We can fall short of a full inheritance. We can be an heir without receiving all God has promised to us. We can be an heir and yet not be a joint-heir with Christ.

BIBLICAL QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGE

This brings us to sobering questions:

- Can a Christian forfeit a part of his inheritance?
- Can a Christian deny the full inheritance?
- Can a Christian fail to value his/her inheritance?
- Does a carnal believer forfeit his rewards?
- Are there levels of rewards and ranks?

And what about the Judgment Seat of Christ?

II Corinthians 5:10 *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”*

The text says both good and bad works will be judged. Good and bad works will be examined. What does it mean? It is saying that works are important, and we read of the “*ordained works*” in **Ephesians 2:10** *“For we are his workman-ship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* (KJV)

In **I Corinthians 3**, Paul speaks of works that will be tested, will last, and will be rewarded. He also speaks of wood, hay, and stubble, materials (or works) that will be burned. Will a life constructed of perishable materials qualify us to be a co-heir, and sit on the throne with Jesus?

Our lives will be examined! There is accountability! There is stewardship and accountability for the believer, the heir of God!

I Corinthians 3:8, 11-13 *“Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.”*

In these verses, we see labor connected directly with rewards, i.e., works and rewards. We see that Christ is our Foundation. This happens when we accept Christ as our Savior and we become an heir of God. Upon this foundation, we can choose to build with two kinds of materials: Wood, hay and stubble, or gold, silver and precious stones. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, our lives

will be examined regarding what kinds of materials we built with during the course of our lives.

According to *II Corinthians 5:10* (see above) all believers have to appear at this Judgment Seat, not for salvation, but to be judged to determine our inheritance. Were we good stewards of what God gave us? There will be accountability – our lives will be manifest, and rewards bestowed. All of these things seamlessly fit together. This all has to do with the degree or level of the inheritance of each individual believer.

A godly man once said that God wants us to apprehend everything Christ purchased for us at the cross. I agree, and if we lay hold of everything purchased for us, how much was that? How much of us does Christ own?

Therefore, we see that the Prize to be won and the Throne to sit on includes co-heirship with Christ, whereby the believer owns or possesses everything with Christ. It is awesome to think about such an inheritance being offered to you and to me!

Colossians 3:23-25 “*And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.*”

SUFFERING AND JOINT-HEIRSHIP

II Timothy 2:12 “*If we suffer, we shall also reign (Greek = as a co-regent, one who reigns equally with another) with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us*” (the right to reign as a co-regent.)

When we talk about joint-heirship, we are talking about suffering. Suffering is connected to reigning.

Being a joint-heir is conditional, whereas being an heir is given as a part of salvation or the new birth.

Suffering has to do with perseverance. Connecting perseverance to eternal life is false doctrine. Eternal life through Jesus Christ is one thing, while receiving the full inheritance has to do with suffering and our faithfulness. Pressing toward the finish line and finishing our course is directly related to suffering. If we are not willing to suffer with Christ, He will deny us the right to reign with Him.

Endurance and suffering are required to finish our race. (*I Corinthians 9:24-27*) May we be willing to pay the price! May we be willing to suffer whatever is necessary, to qualify to be a joint-heir with Christ.

There is a story of Missionary Henry C. Morrison and his wife who, after serving for forty years in Africa, returned home by boat. Theodore Roosevelt and his entourage were also aboard; there was much pomp. The president's arrival in New York was greeted with a great delegation and fanfare. But the Morrisons felt dejected, for there was no one there to meet them. As they thought about it, they realized that those who caroused on the ship, drinking and dancing, those who were famous – received a rousing welcome home. The missionaries, who had worked tirelessly for the Lord for forty years, received no welcome at all.

Understandably, the couple felt resentment. But one day the joy of the Lord returned to Mr. Morrison. He explained to his wife that he had been praying, rehearsing one more time his anger toward God. Then, he said, "It was as if the Lord said to me, 'Just wait, Henry – you aren't home yet!'"

Remember the Morrisons, and be encouraged!

CONCLUSION

Romans 8:17 “*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.*”

Let us not connect perseverance with eternal life and confuse the doctrine of heirships! Christians can give up the fullness of their inheritance and consider a pot of stew more important, as did Esau. Christians can be disqualified from the race and forfeit God’s best.

(**I Corinthians 9:24-27**) Christians can win, or lose and fail to overcome if we are not willing to suffer and endure with Jesus.

Romans 8:17 and **II Timothy 2:12** speak to suffering and endurance. Splendid promises are made to believers in the seven letters in the Book of **Revelation**. We see in those letters that there are levels of overcoming. But we can also fail to overcome fully.

May we not elevate works to a condition for salvation. May we not count the heirships as unimportant and insignificant! Let’s go on and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling, and win! (**Philippians 3:14**)

First, we must understand the difference in heirships as clearly stated in the Word, and then apply this knowledge to our lives. And then, let’s commit our lives to having God’s best and being a joint-heir with Christ.

Now is the time to perform!

Now is the time to run!

Now is the time to qualify!

Revelation 3:11 “*Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.*”

Attached is a Chart of Distinctions for us to consider.

Footnote: For further study regarding Heirships, please read the following booklets available at: agfwheatridgeco.com

The Out-Resurrection

The Bride

Paul's Gospel

Adoption

HEIRSHIP DISTINCTIONS

HEIR of GOD

Salvation

Babe in Christ

Birth, basic inheritance

Free gift

Unconditional

Acceptance of Christ

No works/deeds

No wages

No merit

No qualifying

Not worthy

No winning

No obedience

No service

No faithfulness

No perseverance

No suffering

No endurance

No performance

No prize

Not a reward

Place in the kingdom

JOINT-HEIR WITH CHRIST

Reward

Full-grown Christian

Full Inheritance

Earned

Conditional

Growth in Christ

Works/deeds

Wages

Merit

Qualifying

Worthy

Winning

Obedience

Service

Faithfulness

Perseverance

Suffering

Endurance

Performance

Prize

Reward

Co-regent with Christ