
FAILURE TO INHERIT IN

GALATIANS *5:21*

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The word "inheritance" and its verb forms, was considered as a topic for one of my "Text in Focus" series; however, it was determined that a broader approach should be taken rather than to focus upon a single passage, such as Galatians 5:21. As most of my audience would suspect, this article is written because there exists several issues with this term and its use in the Bible, issues which could be the root of some misunderstandings. I hope to alleviate any symptoms of confusion and to promote a clear understanding of the terms and their usages in the Bible. In most instances wherein the words occur, there are no issues, the basic meanings are crystal clear, I believe they should also be crystal clear in all passages, so let us proceed.

In English an "inheritance" is defined as:

inheritance [in her'i təns]

n.

[[ME *inheritauns* < Anglo-Fr & OFr *enheritance*]]

1. the action of inheriting
2. something inherited or to be inherited; legacy; bequest
3. ownership by virtue of birthright; right to inherit
4. anything received as if by inheritance from a predecessor
5. any characteristic passed on by heredity

The verb "inherit":

inherit [in her'it]

vt.

[[ME *enheriten* < OFr *enheriter* < LL *inhereditare*, to appoint as heir, inherit < L *in*, *in* + *heres*, **HEIR**]]

1. *Obs.* to transfer property to (an heir)

2.
 - a) to receive (an ancestor's property, title, etc.) by the laws of inheritance upon the ancestor's death
 - b) to receive (property) by bequest
3. to receive as if by inheritance from a predecessor
4. to have (certain characteristics) by heredity
 - vi.* to receive an inheritance; become an heir

some synonyms would be:

inherit

v.

Syn. succeed to, acquire, receive, get one's inheritance, fall heir to, be bequeathed, be willed, be granted a legacy, come into, derive, take into possession, take over, receive an endowment, come in for*; see also [OBTAIN 1.](#)

Ant. lose*, be disowned, miss.

[all definitions via: *Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*]

Generally an inheritance is not earned, it is bequeathed, or given. Of course there could be abnormal usages in which a heir would not inherit unless he/she performed some task or goal, or attained to a certain age. I am not going to be especially concerned with these aberrant situations. Emphasis shall be placed upon the aspect that an inheritance is not earned, it is given. In its giving, the recipient is specified and usually what the inheritance consists of. Usually, the recipient has some sort of relationship (ancestor) with the grantor. Father to son, mother to daughter, uncles to nieces *et cetera*.

Since "salvation" is something inherited, and since (apparently) a believer's behavior can affect their inheritance, a Bible student is alerted to factors involving an inheritance. Are there conditions to be

met before an inheritance (salvation) is granted? Is salvation based on our behaviors? Or is it in other terms "earned"? Such questions can and do arise when certain texts containing our words are examined. Misunderstandings are seized upon by the sects, and hurled at the unprepared saints. "Study to show thyself approved..."

The Bible teaches that salvation is an inheritance. Matthew 19:29:

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall **inherit eternal life**.

Luke 10:25 – 28:

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" And he answered and said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and **you will live**."

Hebrews 1:14:

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who **will inherit salvation**?

And several Old Testament allusions: Exodus 32:13 and Psalm 37:29:

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants to whom Thou didst swear by Thyself, and didst say to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall **inherit it forever**.

Psalm 37:29 - The righteous will inherit the land, And **dwell in it forever**.

Those who inherit are, Jews, Jewish proselytes and Christians, only—that is, those who inherit eternal life. So yes, salvation is

inherited, but the heir must first be a family member, must first be a child of God. Salvation is a gift, it is experienced by faith. It is given only to the elect, so in a sense it is a birthright. In fact Christians were made heirs before their birth, as each was chosen by God before the foundations of the cosmos were created. Those of us who are non-Jewish by birth were adopted into the family of God.

Galatians 4:4-7:

But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

Ephesians 1:4,5:

just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

We have been made heirs, there is no debate concerning this Biblical fact. However, salvation is something we all inherit, but there are other bequeaths in the will! Some believers inherit additional "things" additional positions additional possessions, additional statuses. These added aspects are conditional. As we elaborate upon these additional, conditional aspects, keep in mind that the salvation we each inherit, is not subject to any conditions, it is granted to all sons and daughters. A gift, no strings attached.

In many passages "inherit" can be rendered as "possess", or "obtain". Note Genesis 22:17:

indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

Deuteronomy 4:1:

And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, in order that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

Now we have it in Psalm 118:111, that the author will obtain, keep, possess the Word of God forever. In Isaiah it is wild beasts which possess certain portions (inherit) of Edom. In I Peter 3:9, a blessing (an additional blessing) is available to obtain (inherit) if certain conditions are met—especially between husband and wife. In Matthew 5:5, the meek will inherit (obtain) the earth. In Acts 26:18, Paul is sent to the Gentiles, not only so as to preach to them, but that along with salvation they might receive an additional portion, part or inheritance from God.

Christians who have lived, do live, and continue to live in intentional sin, will not receive much in eternity. They will be saved, that is secure, but they will not be rewarded with a noble position in the heavenlies, they will not inherit a position of authority. Note Ephesians 5:5:

For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Note the little preposition "in". Prepositions often act as rudders in Greek sentences. Observe this verse per the Greek:

τουτο γαρ εστε γινωσκοντες οτι πας πορνος η ακαθαροτος η πλεονεκτης ος
εστιν ειδωλολατρης ουκ εχει κληρονομιαν εν τη βασιλεια του χριστου και
θεου

"In the kingdom", in that place, time or sphere, (a dative or locative case) such Christians will have no inheritance. No positions of authority, no sitting on any seats of authority, no possession of any additional bequeaths. Their behavior nullified these extra blessings.

"Kingdom" (βασιλεια) can also be rendered as "rule" in some passages. For example in Revelation 17:18, it is rendered as "reign" "dominion" or "rule". In parallel passages (parallel to Ephesians 5:5) we note the texts of Galatians 5:21, and I Cor. 6:9, 10 which also speak of those Christians who live or lived immoral lives. In Galatians 5:21, we have no preposition, and in it we can render "kingdom" as "rule".

envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not obtain (the, or, a) rule of God. (my translation)

φθονοι φονοι μεθαι κωμοι και τα ομοια τουτοις α προλεγω υμιν καθως και προειπον οτι οι τα τοιαυτα πρασσοντες βασιλειαν θεου ου κληρονομησουσιν

In the above "rule/kingdom" is in the accusative case, it is the object of the verb, "they shall not obtain". As you can see my translation differs from nearly all published editions. However, in light of Ephesians 5:5 and several other relevant texts, it is the most literal rendition possible, in my opinion. It is here presented for you to consider. My translation can remove some possible confusions and enhance clarity.

I recall that some years ago, a pastor (Richard Jordan, of Shorewood Bible Church in Illinois) pointed out to me, the fact that in Isaiah 49:24 the reader should note that people (Israelites) were legally captives of Satan. Edward J. Young's comments upon this passage [*The Book of Isaiah*, vol. III, pages 292 ff.], reënforce Jordan. Verse 25 of Isaiah 49, presents God's reply to His question, God will rescue the captives from the strong oppressor. Satan became man's "governor" when Adam turned from God and submitted to the will of the evil one. Ever since that fateful day all men live and are born into this realm, born as subjects of the evil one. (This position does not in any way affect the doctrine of election, which is a separate issue). Men had to be bought back (purchased) or redeemed in order to return into the realm of our Lord. This use of "realm" is as a synonym for "kingdom". Essentially until redeemed we all live our lives in the kingdom of satan here on earth. Paul never refers to satan as a "god" of this world; however, I suspect it is Paul's intent that "god" is actually God, as below, it is God Who blinds the eyes of the pagans (note I have an essay upon these verses).

II Corinthians 4:3,4

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the **God of this world** has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (modified NASB)

Jesus Christ told His disciples that His "kingdom" was not of this world (Gospel of John). In John 12:31, Jesus Himself refers to satan as "the ruler of this world", but never as "god of this world". In

order for Christians to be set free from this evil kingdom, from this evil rule, from this evil realm, we must be supernaturally transferred. Jesus Christ has done just that. He has "transferred us". "Transfer" in the Greek is μεταστήσεν, rendered as "translated" of Enoch in Hebrews 11:5. Enoch changed, he had to be changed in order to dwell in a heavenly realm. And we Christians must be changed in order to enjoy life on this planet, in order to bear fruit.

In Colossians 1:12, 13 we note:

giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us [in-]to the kingdom of His beloved Son, (corrected NASB)

What could be more clearer? Well one could render "kingdom" as "rule" (see below at II Timothy 2:12 for example), the sense remains the same. We live on earth within, and under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ Himself moved us (transferred us) from under the ruler-ship of Satan. We are now qualified to earn blessings and crowns and other rewards in our future eternal home, in heaven. However as Ephesians 5:5, and Galatians 5:21 teach, those saints who practice evil will not be granted any of these rewards in heaven, nor will they be granted a position of rule or authority, in heaven or on earth.

In closing: all saints inherit salvation, this is unconditional. However some saints by being faithful and obedient, by bearing fruit will earn extra blessings, crowns and rewards. Disobedient saints, saints who practice evil (adultery, homosexuality, who cause dissensions within the body of saints, who cannot control their

outbursts of anger, *et al*) will not receive/inherit these additional aspects of the inheritance which we as Sons partake of. Galatians chapters three and four are quite relevant herein, but a nice closing quote would be Paul's words to young Timothy in II Timothy 2:12 (in Greek and English).

ει υπομενομεν^{present tense} και συμβασιλευσομεν*

ει αρνουμεθα^{present tense} κακεινος αρνησεται ημας

If we are enduring, we shall also **reign*** with Him;

If we are denying Him, He also will deny us;

* **reign, rule** - a future tense verb (from same root of "kingdom"). These future tense verbs above (reign, deny) are relative to the first two present tense verbs (enduring, denying). Hence, a sequence is meant, not some far off, or yet to be realized kingdom. These are day by day walks! The above "reign" is rendered thusly in the following translations:

rendered as: **reign** – NASB, KJV, ESV, Douay
NKJV, NIV, ASV (1901), NRSV, Geneva,
ERV (1881), NEB, Tyndale

rendered as: **Kingship** – Weymouth

rendered as: **rule** – CEV, God's Word to the Nations (1988), Beck, TEV