

### *The Inheritance*

**T**he verb *klēronomeō* occurs four times in the book of Hebrews.<sup>420</sup> Its usage there is not inconsistent with its usage elsewhere, a reward for a life of faithfulness. The inheritance can be forfeited because of disobedience, as in the case of Esau (Hebrews 12:17), and it is only obtained by persevering, that is, by “faith and patience” (Hebrews 6:12). Jesus has inherited a superior name to that of the angels (Hebrews 1:4). He achieved this inheritance by perseverance in suffering (Hebrews 2:10; Philippians 2:9-11).<sup>421</sup> Similarly, His companions (Hebrews 1:9, Gr *Metochoi*) will “inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14) in the same way. Thus he says, “*Do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised*” (Hebrews 10:35-36).

Perseverance to the end and faithfully doing the will of God are the conditions for obtaining the inheritance-salvation in this epistle, conditions that are absent from the Pauline teaching of obtaining salvation (in the sense of final deliverance from eternal damnation) on the basis of faith alone. As will be discussed below, a different salvation is in view: co-rulership with Christ in the coming kingdom.

The noun *klēronomia* occurs twice in Hebrews (9:15; 11:8). In 11:8 it refers to Abraham’s acquisition of the land of Canaan. Whereas that land was guaranteed on oath, it was obtained by spiritual obedience. What is stressed in Hebrews 11 is that Abraham “obeyed and went.” Had he not obeyed, he would not have inherited.

The other use of the noun is in 9:15:

*And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, **in order that** since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*

The reason we have received an eternal redemption and cleansing from sin is “*in order that*” we might “*receive the promise of an eternal inheritance.*”

Paul Tanner notes,

*The purpose of His obtaining eternal redemption for us is that we might ultimately receive an inheritance that we can eternally enjoy and from which we can benefit. The text does not say, however, that all believers will automatically receive this. The “eternal redemption” is absolutely free, but*

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<sup>420</sup> Hebrews 1:4; 1:14; 6:12; 12:17.

<sup>421</sup> Christ’s obedience as the condition for obtaining His new name, LORD JESUS CHRIST (Philippians 2:9-11, “therefore”), seems to be similar to His receiving His inheritance.

*not necessarily the eternal inheritance. The latter appears to be conditional for at least two reasons.*<sup>422</sup>

The first reason we know that this inheritance is not free is that the author has just said that our cleansing was so that we might “serve the living God” (v. 14). Service for God is required if one is to obtain this reward-inheritance.

Second, throughout the letter the writer specifies how the promise of a reward-inheritance is to be obtained. It is by “*faith and patience*” (Hebrews 6:12) and “*holding firm to the end*” (3:14) that we might “*inherit what has been promised.*” The writer echoes this theme once again in 10:36, saying, “*For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.*”<sup>423</sup>

To what does the promise of an eternal inheritance in Hebrews 9:5 refer? Kaiser insists that the inheritance in Hebrews 9:15 is “the firm possession of the land as Hebrews 11:9 most assuredly asserts.”<sup>424</sup> Christ’s mediatorial work has as its aim that His sons should enter into that partnership with Him. Their achievement of that destiny, however, as explained here and elsewhere in the book, is conditioned upon obedience from the heart. George N. H. Peters (citing Col. 3:24) agrees that what I have called the “reward-inheritance” is based upon works and actions.<sup>425</sup>

No doubt Peters has Hebrews 4:1 in mind, the promise of the remaining rest. To inherit the rest is to inherit the land; metaphorically it means more. We will discuss this “rest” in the next chapter, but anticipating our conclusion there, we may say that the promise of rest refers to the completion of our task and subsequent entrance into our reward. It appears to have similar meaning in Hebrews 11:9, 13 when it is used of the land promises to the patriarchs. They too were to remain faithful to the end of life, and, in so doing, they entered into rest and will one day possess the land. The inheritance should take the meaning it takes elsewhere in Hebrews—ownership of the millennial land of Canaan, the future reign of the servant kings, joint rulership with Messiah in the heavenly country, the millennial land of Palestine.<sup>426</sup>

### *Esau Lost His Inheritance*

One of the sternest warnings of the New Testament is in Hebrews 12:12-29. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews challenges them to pursue sanctification and cautions that without it no one will “see the Lord.” Some have held that this refers to a “beatific vision” which some Christians will enjoy in heaven and some will not.<sup>427</sup> However, in view of the other references in Scripture to seeing the Lord, it may be

<sup>422</sup> Paul Tanner, “Hebrews,” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary* (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2010), 1067.

<sup>423</sup> Similarly, Jesus obtained an inheritance through His cross-work and a faithful life (Hebrews 1:2-4); Noah obtained an inheritance because he “prepared an ark”; Abraham received an inheritance because he “obeyed by going out” (11:8); and Esau lost his inheritance because of evil works (12:17).

<sup>424</sup> Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 69.

<sup>425</sup> Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus, the Christ, as Covenanted in the Old Testament and Presented in the New Testament*, 2:387.

<sup>426</sup> Peters is correct in saying, “This promise, let the reader notice, of inheriting the land forever, is found in the Abrahamic covenant,” *ibid.*, 1:322.

<sup>427</sup> For example Lang, *Firstborn Sons: Their Rights and Risks*, 98.

best to understand the phrase as referring to a deeper Christian experience.<sup>428</sup> Then he warns them regarding the loss of their inheritance rights:

*See that no one is sexually immoral or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit [klēronomeō] this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears (Hebrews 12:16-17).*

The cultural background behind the Esau incident is relevant. Esau was the firstborn son, and therefore by birth he had the rights and privileges described as belonging to the firstborn.

When his father died, he received a double share of the inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:17). During his life he was preeminent among his brothers (Genesis 43:33). God had originally intended to make the firstborn of the sons of Israel His priests. However, because of the disobedience in the wilderness, He took that blessing from the firstborn and gave it to the Levites instead (Numbers 8:14-18).

God often violated His own rule regarding the firstborn blessing. Sometimes this was based on grace. Isaac was selected ahead of Ishmael, the firstborn; and Jacob was chosen instead of Esau for the blessing of the firstborn. Sometimes the reversal of the firstborn right to the inheritance was based on merit. To the end of his life it was the father's prerogative to determine the disposal of his property.<sup>429</sup> If the eldest son was not qualified, then the father could give it to the son who was. The Scripture only requires that, if the firstborn right is denied to the eldest, that it not be a matter of favoritism (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). Even though Reuben was Jacob's firstborn, the inheritance rights passed to the sons of Joseph (1 Chronicles 5:1-2), and ultimately to Judah the fourth in line, because he prevailed over his brothers (Genesis 49:8-10).

The rights and privileges of the firstborn were given, provisionally, at birth. The right to the inheritance was his, but he could lose it. It was necessary that the firstborn son maintain these rights. He must be worthy of the elevated status and honor. All the sons are heirs, but only those who met the conditions of the firstborn achieved the elevated status and authority and retained their inheritance. The many New Testament references to something conditional in the future life of the believer may reflect this Old Testament distinction between the firstborn son who retained his privilege and those like Esau who did not. Those Christians who suffer with Him (Romans 8:17), who endure (2 Timothy 2:15), and who are the overcomers in the book of Revelation are the faithful firstborn sons.

Esau, although heir to the rights of the firstborn, counted them of little value. Like some true believers in every generation, he lacked interest in the inheritance (Hebrews 12:17), "*What profit shall the birthright do to me?*" According to Law, he was first in line for the inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:17). In order to satisfy his passing appetite, he sold his inheritance for a meal. His lack of interest was confirmed by a divine oath (Genesis 25:31-33). Later in life he changed his mind and regretted his rash decision.

<sup>428</sup> Enoch did not "see death," that is, he did not "experience" it (Hebrews 11:5). Moses "endured as seeing Him," (Hebrews 11:27), that is, he experienced God richly and therefore was enabled to endure. In Matthew 5:8 the peacemakers will "see God," that is, they will really know Him and walk with Him. In Job 42:5, Job came to "see" God as a result of his trial. The meaning is that he came to know Him more deeply and intimately.

<sup>429</sup> 1 Chronicles 26:10: "Shimri the first (for though he was not the firstborn, his father made him the first)."

Yet he was unable to change his father's mind. G. H. Lang makes this poignant observation:

*Of Esau himself the history gives, as a final picture, a man who has risen above his earlier hatred of his brother (Genesis 32-33), and who at last joins him at the graveside of his father. Thus, he is the type of one of the family of God who lapses into carnality and bitterness, but years after is restored in soul, yet who nevertheless cannot regain the full position. He is the first that shall be last though still in the family.<sup>430</sup>*

Like Esau, true Christians<sup>431</sup> are children of God; we are firstborn sons. Because of that we possess the rights of the firstborn, we do not have to earn these rights. They are given to us through the grace of God. However, we must value and keep these rights and are warned by Esau's example regarding the possibility of not doing so.

But even though we cannot forfeit eternal life, we can forfeit our inheritance rights.<sup>432</sup> This should not come as a surprise because the inheritance in the Old Testament could be forfeited through disobedience. In the words of John, a believer can "*lose what he has worked for*" (2 John 8). This fact surely informed the viewpoint of the New Testament writers! While this is not the same as losing one's justification, the consequences for eternity are serious. At the Judgment Seat of Christ our works will be revealed by "fire" (1 Corinthians 3:13): "*It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work.*" It is possible for a Christian's life work to be burned up because the building materials were wood, hay, and stubble. Only those works done in obedience to the Lord, out of proper motivation and in dependence on Him (gold, silver, and precious stones), will survive the searing heat! Some will survive with very little to carry with them into eternity. As Paul put it:

*If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; **he himself will be saved**, but only as one escaping through the flames (1 Corinthians 3:15).*

Sauer summarizes:

*The position of being a child of God is, indeed, not forfeitable, but not the total fullness of the heavenly birthright [inheritance]. In this sense there is urgent need to give diligence to make our calling and election sure. "For thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10-11).<sup>433</sup>*

The sobering fact here is that our decisions have eternal consequences that cannot be reversed. Even though one can repent and be restored to fellowship with God,

<sup>430</sup> G. H. Lang, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1985), 254.

<sup>431</sup> Whether or not Esau was saved is not relevant to this discussion. The writer uses him as an illustration of the fact that the saved can lose their firstborn inheritance rights. His example is applied to those who have come to the church of the firstborn ones (Hebrews 12:23). The Gr word translated "firstborn" is plural, and therefore the firstborn ones are referred to and not Christ as the firstborn. To come to the "church of the firstborn" means to be called to the privilege of being a firstborn son. All Christians are called to be part of that assembly and by birth have a right to be there. However, they may forfeit that right and never achieve their calling. That is the thrust of all the warnings of the book of Hebrews. See chapters 20 and 21.

<sup>432</sup> This interpretation assumes that the readers of this epistle are genuine Christians and not merely professing ones. This point will be established in chapters 20 and 21.

<sup>433</sup> Eric Sauer, *In the Arena of Faith: A Call to a Consecrated Life* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 154.

believers will one day face the consequences of their sins at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

“To take a very simple example—if a young man loses his purity or a girl her virginity, nothing can ever bring it back. The choice was made and the choice stands. God can and will forgive, but God Himself cannot turn back the clock and unmake the choice or undo the consequences.”<sup>434</sup>

### *Christ's Inheritance: A More Excellent Name (Hebrews 1:4)*

Lest there be any doubt as to whether an inheritance is reward for a faithful life, consider the example of the “author of our salvation” (Hebrews 2:10).

*When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; **having become** [Gr *ginomai*] as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they (Hebrews 1:3–4).*

The Son of God “became” (Gr *ginomai*) something he was not before. Had the writer wanted to say that Jesus “was” what he always had been, he would have used a form of the verb “to be” (Gr *eimi*). But one of the meanings of *ginomai* is “to come to acquire or experience a state.”<sup>435</sup> He had finished his life work, making purification for sins, and, as a result, He became something through experience. What did He become? The text says that He became better than the angels and inherited a better name, the name, “Son.” But wasn’t the eternal Son of God always better than the angels, always a Son? Attridge and Koester state the problem precisely, “The language used of the Son’s superiority, ‘become’ and ‘inherited,’ appears somewhat odd, given the preceding remarks about the Son’s primordial relationship with the Father. The tension, already noted in v. 2, between what Christ is from all eternity and what he is at his exaltation, again surfaces.”<sup>436</sup>

Having stated the difficulty, unfortunately, they give us no help toward a solution. In a manner somewhat typical of “biblical” theologians, they pass over the issue saying, “Yet the implication that Christ became the son at some point should not be pressed.”<sup>437</sup> But Athanasius pressed it and saved the church from the Arian heresy.<sup>438</sup> The implication is there, and one must explain how it is that He “became better than the angels.”

Westcott gives us the answer. In agreement with the church fathers, he argues that the word “become” (Gr *ginōmai*) “is used of the Lord’s human nature and not of His divine Personality.”<sup>439</sup> Thus he became better than the angels in his human nature.

<sup>434</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, rev. ed., 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 210.

<sup>435</sup> Louw-Nida, 1:153

<sup>436</sup> Harold W. Attridge and Helmut Koester, *Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 47.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>438</sup> E.g., Athanasius says, “This being so understood, it is parallel also respecting the Son, that whatever, and However, often, is said, such as, ‘He became’ and ‘become,’ should ever have the same sense: so that as, when we see the words in question, ‘become better than the angels’ and ‘He became,’ we should not conceive any original becoming of the Word, nor in any way fancy from such terms that He is originate; but should understand Paul’s words of His ministry and economy when He became man” See Athanasius, *Four Discourses Against the Arians*, Discourse 1, Chapter 10, 64.

<sup>439</sup> Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 17.

While living in flesh as the God-man, he was inferior. In fact he was a mere servant (Philippians 2:7). But because of His faithfulness, He was highly exalted.

Two questions remain: (1) What did Jesus inherit? (2) What were the conditions He met to become better and to obtain this inheritance?

### *What Did Christ Inherit?: The Title of "Son"*

In regard to the first question, we are told that he inherited a better name, that of "Son." This seems obvious from the context where the writer cites Psalm 2:7, "*For to which of the angels did He ever say, 'THOU ART MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE?' And again, 'I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME'?*" (Hebrews 1:5).

But the Lord Jesus was always a Son in the Trinitarian sense. However, He became a son in a unique sense. Upon His resurrection He was "*declared to be the Son of God*" (Romans 1:4). Even though he does not yet rule from David's throne, at that time he was begotten as the messianic King of Israel. All the kings of Israel were called sons of God and the Lord Jesus is THE Son of God. By citing 2 Samuel 7:14 in Hebrews 1:5 (cf. Romans 1:4), which was addressed to David ("*I will be His Father, and he shall be my son*"), the author of Hebrews made this specific link. The inherited title of "Son" refers to His messianic investiture, not His eternal essence.

The prophets anticipated a day when David's "Greater Son" would come as the peaceful ruler (Micah 5:2-4; cf. Psalms 89:27) who had four names (Isaiah 9:6). Gabriel announced this to Mary saying, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God*" (Luke 1:35; cf. Luke 1:68 ff.).

Paul Tanner summarizes, "In Ancient Near Eastern thought, when a god elevated a person to kingship, the king assumed the status of being the deity's 'first-born.'"<sup>440</sup> This analogy is applied to the Messiah in Psalms 89:3-4, 26-27. Hence this has nothing to do with physical birth or origin, but rather with the time of coronation. The time of this begetting is "Today," that unique occasion when the Messiah is elevated to the status of Davidic king. Acts 13:33 connects Psalms 2:7 with the resurrection of Jesus. One day He will sit on David's throne. He has been coronated but will not rule from that throne until His Parousia. There is no way that the present era can in any sense be described as the Davidic Kingdom of peace, harmony, prosperity, and justice described in the Old Testament prophecies. In the meantime, he sits at the right hand of the Father. By His resurrection and ascension to the Father's right hand, Jesus has been declared "the Son of God" (cf. Romans 1:3-4), though He must await the second coming for the formal inauguration of His kingdom.

Also, Psalm 2 speaks of the Messiah's inheritance, "*You have only to ask me, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance*" (Psalms 2:8). This is the basis by which the author can say that the Son has been "appointed heir of all things" (Hebrews 1:2). Clearly no angel ever attained the honor that this Davidic Son has."<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> Tanner, "Hebrews," 1035.

<sup>441</sup> According to F. F. Bruce, "The eternity of Christ's divine Sonship is not brought into question by this view; the suggestion rather is that he who was the Son of God from everlasting entered into the full exercise of all the prerogatives implied by his Sonship when, after his suffering had proved the completeness of his obedience, he was raised to the Father's right hand." F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the*

### **Why Did He Inherit It? Because of His Faithful Life**

But the answer to the second question leads us into the subject of this chapter. What were the conditions Jesus met in order to obtain this inheritance, this title of Son? Since it was because He became better than the angels that He obtained the inheritance, how and in what sense did He become better? Hebrews gives the answer. It was “*because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone*” (Hebrews 2:9). It was “*by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross ... God highly exalted him*” (Philippians 2:8). He was “*made perfect*” through sufferings (Hebrews 2:10).

During His sojourn on earth the eternal Son of God “*made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men*” (Philippians 2:7, ESV). For the first time in all eternity, the second person of the Trinity acquired a human nature and for thirty-three years He lived life as God intended man to live it. “*For a little while was made lower than the angels,*” and then, having faithfully completed His life work, He was “*crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*” (Hebrews 2:9, ESV). For a “little while” He was lower than the angels but because of His perseverance in suffering and the fact that He was crowned with glory, He became a Son “indeed.” The crown He received is the victor’s crown (Gr *stephanos*), awarded to the victor in an athletic contest.<sup>442</sup>

Apparently, in some sense, the second person of the Trinity was not always “perfect,” and in a specific sense, was not always a “Son.”<sup>443</sup> Therefore, “*He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people*” (Hebrews 2:17). By suffering and experiencing life in the same manner His brethren did, He became a merciful priest who can experientially identify with our plight. “*For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted*” (Hebrews 2:18), and “*he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness*” (Hebrews 5:2).

Furthermore, only by living without sin could He qualify to make propitiation for the sins of the people. A sinless sacrifice was needed. When He became a Son, He became not only the messianic King, but He also became a priest! He is indeed superior to the angels! The writer makes this clear later when he associates Psalms 2:7-8 with Psalm 110:4, implying he was begotten as a Son on His resurrection and ascension. At that time the Father says of him, “*THOU ART A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK*” (Hebrews 5:6).

But how did He qualify for these high honors: messianic King, High Priest, and an inheritance? The answer is that He “*LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, THY GOD, HATH ANOINTED THEE WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE THY COMPANIONS*” (Hebrews 1:9). His anointing to receive His inheritance (“*heir of all things,*” v. 2) came to Him because of His good works and His character. If the inheritance granted to the Son of God was obtained because of

*Hebrews*, rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 54.

<sup>442</sup> BDAG, 944.

<sup>443</sup> He was, of course always a Son in terms of His essence, but He became a Son in the sense of messianic investiture on His bodily resurrection and ascension.

His faithful life, how can it come to believers apart from the same? An inheritance based on faithfulness is a reward; it is not initial salvation. Christ did not enter into salvation because of His faithful obedience as a servant to the point of death. Instead, He entered into His kingship and future messianic rule of the restored Davidic theocracy (Acts 1:6). *“He was appointed heir of all things”* (Hebrews 1:2).

Like the Captain of our salvation, who though He was a Son, became a Son in a different sense at the time of His messianic investiture, we too, even though we are sons of God (John 1:12-13; Gal 3:26; Luke 20:36) by faith alone, can become sons in a fuller sense. *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”* (Matthew 5:9). When Christians are led by the Spirit, they are truly sons of God: *“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God”* (Romans 8:14). Also, like our Captain, we too, will one day be crowned with glory and honor and the entire creation will be subjected to Christ’s servant kings as they (Hebrews 2:7) rule with him. We also will be “better than the angels” (1 Corinthians 6:2-3).

### **Noah Became an Heir**

Hebrews 11 has often been called the “faith hall of fame.” This designation refers to how Old Testament heroes of faith illustrated the walk of faith and thus became a cloud of witnesses whose examples we are exhorted to follow (Hebrews 12:1). Note, it was their “walk” of faith which is in view and not the initial act of faith whereby they became just before God. This fact has a bearing on our understanding of the faith of Noah.

*By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith (Hebrews 11:7)*

We are told that Noah “became an heir of the righteousness which is according to” (Gr *kata*) faith.” But, we must ask, “Does ‘faith’ refer to the initial act of faith through which we are saved, or does it refer to a ‘walk’ of faith which is to characterize the life of those who are already justified? Clearly, the context of Hebrews 11 is not discussing how these believers were saved, but how they walked by faith throughout their lives. For example, we read, *“By faith Noah prepared an ark;”* *“by faith when Abraham was called, he obeyed”*; *“by faith”* Abraham offered up Isaac; *“by faith”* Moses’ parents hid him; and *“by faith”* Moses left Egypt, etc. Their walk of faith is in view.

Furthermore, while it is common to understand “righteousness” in verse 7 as right standing before God through faith alone, Paul Tanner has shown that this meaning is highly unlikely in the Epistle to the Hebrews.<sup>444</sup> He points out that the word “righteousness” is never used in Hebrews in a forensic sense. It is always used (6x) of moral righteousness and not legal justification.<sup>445</sup> For example, “the word of righteousness” in 5:13 is a word about a quality of discernment which characterizes the mature in contrast to the baby Christian. The Old Testament saints performed “acts of righteousness” (Hebrews 11:33), and our Father trains us through disciplines so that we may know “the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:11). These training sessions are designed to produce ethical righteousness in our lives.

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<sup>444</sup> Paul Tanner, personal communication, May 8, 2012.

<sup>445</sup> See 1:9; 5:13; 7:2; 11:7, 33; 12:11.

Tanner says, “Since ‘faith’ in Hebrews 10—11 is not ‘saving faith,’ and since ‘righteousness’ in Hebrews 10 is not ‘forensic imputed righteousness,’ this verse is probably talking about something else. Noah was a man of faith, and as Genesis 6:8 teaches us, he was a ‘righteous and blameless man.’”

The writer of our Epistle tells us that Noah “*became an heir (Gr klēronomos) of the righteousness which he received according (Gr kata) to faith.*” A *klēronomos* is “one who receives something as a possession.”<sup>446</sup> What Noah came to possess is a righteous quality of life. Attridge concurs saying, “What Noah’s story exemplifies is a reverent reliance upon God’s promises and consequent faithful action that enables one—in a quite un-Pauline fashion—to do what is righteous.”<sup>447</sup>

This righteous quality was “according to faith.” The Greek preposition, *kata*, is best rendered as “corresponds”<sup>448</sup> or, “according to the standard of his walk by faith.” In other words, his righteous quality of life corresponds with how he walked by faith.<sup>449</sup>

One might paraphrase,

*he possessed a moral quality of life which corresponded to his walk of faith.*<sup>450</sup>

### Summary

Throughout the book of Hebrews the writer speaks of an inheritance that may come to believers in Christ on the basis of faithfulness. Those faithful followers are called “Partners of Christ,” Christ’s *Metochoi*. Abraham illustrates this well. The writer states that “*he obeyed and went,*” and as a result he obtained an inheritance. This inheritance/reward for obedience is called an “*eternal inheritance*” later on in the book (9:15). This “eternal inheritance” comes to the believers because of their service for Christ (9:14) and because of their faith and patience (12:12). In other words, this eternal inheritance is only awarded to Christ’s *Metochoi*, His partners who hold firm to the end of life (3:14).

That the inheritance is not heaven but something in addition to heaven, which can be obtained by faithfulness, is illustrated in the life of Esau. Even though he was the firstborn son and had the right to a double portion of the inheritance, he lost his inheritance because of his disobedience. And he could not get it back (12:16-17). Once again, as in the rest of the New Testament, we see that the inheritance is something linked to works, and not faith alone.

Finally, the writer states that Christ obtained the inheritance of a “more excellent name,” the name “Son” (3:4). This did not come to Him automatically because He was already the Son in essence. What conditions did the Son of God have in order to obtain the title of “Son” and be “better than the angels”? We are told that it was “*because of the suffering of death*” (2:9) and the fact that He “*loved righteousness and hated lawlessness*” (1:9). To obtain these high honors, it was necessary that He become like us and live as we must live. Because of His character and His faithful completion of His life work (to make purification for sins), He qualified for the inheritance of a better name. If the “Captain of our salvation” obtained His inheritance because of the faithfulness that He lived and the character He possessed, certainly His brothers must follow a similar path. An inheritance is something beyond initial salvation. It is a reward granted to those who finish their life work, who love righteousness and hate lawlessness, who hold fast to the end. Some Christians will, and some like Esau will not.

<sup>446</sup> BDAG, 548.

<sup>447</sup> Attridge and Koester, *Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 320.

<sup>448</sup> NIDNTT, 3:1200.

<sup>449</sup> See Romans 8:5 where to be “according to the Spirit” means to walk according to the Spirit.

<sup>450</sup> Or, possibly, he possessed a moral quality of life which was directed by his walk of faith. In Galatians 5:17 he speaks of “those whose lives are directed by (Gr *kata*) the Spirit.” (NIDNTT, 3:1200).