

Sunday, January 18, 2015—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 158  
Sonship Edification: Precursors to Sonship, Part 4

### Introduction

- The majority of Lessons 156 and 157 were devoted to a consideration of G.H. Lang’s book *Firstborn Son: Their Rights and Risks* (1936) as a precursor to Sonship Edification (SE). In Lesson 156 we demonstrated that Lang’s work is fraught with SE concepts such as: 1) the necessity of qualifying one’s self to serve in the government of God as an additional issue to justification, and 2) connecting one’s level of sanctification with their portion of future glory. Last week, in Lesson 157 we considered Lang’s teaching on the following subjects: 1) indwelling of the Holy Spirit, 2) translation of Romans 8:17, and 3) meaning of the expression “if so be” in Romans 8:17.
- This week we want to conclude our survey of Lang as forerunner of SE by investigating his teaching on the following subjects: 1) the conditional connection between Romans 8:17 and II Timothy 2:11-13, 2) difference between children and sons, and 3) Lang’s definition of Biblical Adoption

### Precursors to Sonship Continued

*Lang on the Conditional Connection between Romans 8:17 and II Timothy 2:11-13*

- Lang, in similar manner to SE teachers, connects Romans 8:17 with II Timothy 2 to close his argument that there is a difference between “heirs” and “joint-heirs.” Specifically Lang seeks to explain why the “ordinary grammatical rule” regarding First Class Conditions does not apply in II Timothy 2:11-13.
  - “The ordinary grammatical rule that “if” with the indicative of the verb does not create a condition does not hold regularly in New Testament Greek. In II Tim. 2:11-13 there are four parallel clauses which must all be constructed alike, and all have this construction:
    - If we died with him, we shall also live with him;
    - If we endure, we shall also reign with him;
    - If we **shall** deny him, he also will deny us;
    - If we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself.

Now it is plain that the two clauses cannot mean since we deny him, and since we are faithless, for that is not the fact of all believers; so here the “if” does carry a condition, and thus living with Christ (as contrasted with only having life in Him) and reigning with Christ are conditioned by dying with Him (which is more than believing that He died for me), and enduring a share of His sufferings. Thus in this place also, and dealing with the same theme as in Romans 8:17, the same thought is pressed, and the privilege is made conditional.” (Lang, 122)

- Time and space will not permit a full rebuttal to these comments by Lang. This past spring and summer, I spent eight weeks expounding upon the faithful saying of II Timothy 2:11-13 and explaining what I believe to be the most consistent understanding of the passage based upon the grammatical FACTS. For the time being, I would just like to point out that Lang has changed the nature of the condition in the third statement by inserting the bolded word “shall” into the text. By inserting “shall” into the verse before the comma, Lang has changed the verse to read in his favor thereby inserting the condition of uncertainty into the statement. In contrast, the King James reads:
  - “If we deny him, he also will deny us:”
- In the King James Bible this is not a subjunctive statement of uncertainty, as has been asserted by Lang but an indicative statement of FACT. For more details regarding my explanation of the faithful saying in II Timothy 2:11-13, interested parties are encouraged to consult Appendix A on page 7 for a list of links to the studies in question.
- For our purposes in this Lesson, I would just like to point out the following: 1) all who argue for the conditional nature of joint-heirship seek to connect Romans 8:17 with II Timothy 2:12; 2) the arguments put forth by the teachers of SE in any of its variations are identical to those being posited by Lang; and 3) all those who use II Timothy 2:11-13 to close the argument that joint-heirship is conditional in Romans 8:17 play fast and loose with the text of II Timothy 2. This is done by either, 1) reading words into verse 12 that ARE NOT there such as: “If we suffer WITH HIM, we shall also reign with him AS JOINT HEIRS,” or 2) altering the nature of the condition in the second half of verse 12 to make it fit their system ala Lang (this can be done in a variety of ways up to and including committing the formal logical fallacy of denying the antecedent).

*Lang on the Difference between Children and Sons and the resulting connection between Adoption and Joint-Heirship*

- Lang argues that “all children inherit something from their parent, such as their nature, life, love, care, and their daily necessities” but that when it comes to how much of his wealth each child receives “a wise father will determine by their several capacities for profiting by possessions.” (Lang, 122) Using Revelation 21:7-8, Lang identifies three classes of people in the eternal state:
  - “(i) The lost, whose part is the second death (ver. 8)
  - (ii) saved people (ver. 3), with God dwelling among them, and who, because of salvation must include possessing eternal life by the new birth, must be children of God and have entrance to His kingdom (John 3)
  - (iii) heirs and sons; inheriting being not collective but strictly individual, and consequent upon being a conqueror; “the one that overcometh shall inherit;” and the “son” being a

full-grown, mature man, according to the well-known emphasis, and the distinction between “child” and “son,” found elsewhere as carrying the very point of the argument.” (Lang, 122)

- Lang cites Luke 20:36 and Galatians 3:23-4:7 to support his notion that “the first resurrection unto a heavenly position (“equal unto the angels”)” hangs entirely “upon the difference between “children” and “sons.” (Lang, 122) This argument advanced by Lang is eerily similar to SE’s teaching that there is a difference between a “regenerated son” and an “adopted son.” Please recall SE’s definition of Biblical Adoption:
  - Biblically, adoption was for the natural-born children of a family. That is, a Father would adopt His natural son or daughter. And this was not unusual, but rather, it was the rule. The primary motivation for adoption was not pity or some strong emotion of rescue, but it had in mind the welfare of the family’s name and the family’s business. It is true that on occasion, a man might adopt a son or daughter outside of his own natural children. It may be that he had no children of his own. There is another circumstance that may arise that would have a man adopting someone other than his natural children, but we will discuss that a little later. . .

In adoption, the father would be looking for some specific traits in the son or daughter he would adopt. The father did not just want a son that would be able to carry on the family business, but one that would carry on that business with the same commitment and dedication that he had. The father would want a son that possessed his wisdom and way of thinking. In other words, the father wanted a son who would carry on the business exactly as the father himself would. To accomplish this adoption, the father would look over his sons, and if he found one that was willing and able to be educated in his father’s business, then the father would adopt that son and begin personally teaching all about his business. He would teach the son the way he (the father) thought, and pass on all his wisdom and experience to his son. This was so that his son would take on his father’s thinking, and living, and then as he labored in his father’s business, all of his dealings were as if it were the father, himself who was engaged in the business. It would really be, “Like father, like son!”

But sometimes the father would look over his own, natural born sons, and still not be able to find one with the desire, the drive, and the ability to be educated properly as his son. In that case, the father could look outside the family and find a child that would fit the bill (so to speak), and he would then adopt a child that was not natural born. The father would take that son (or daughter) and begin to educate them so they could enter into laboring with the father in all his business.

This was done so that the integrity and the success and the character of the father and the father’s business could be successfully passed on from generation to generation. It was a way to not only keep the integrity of the father’s name and the father’s business

strong, but to insure that it would continue getting even stronger and more powerful as time went on. In other words, it was a way to ensure the father's business against corruption, weakness, attack and ultimately, failure!" (McDaniel, *SE Orientation* Lesson 1, 5-6)

### *Lang's Definition of Biblical Adoption*

- Lang, like Newbold and McDaniel after him, makes a distinction between "children" and "sons" in terms of position and inheritance within a given family. In fact, Lang's definition of Biblical Adoption is conceptually exactly the same as the one advanced by SE.
  - "The Roman noble of N.T. times chose one of his boys to be his heir, whichever he thought most suitable, and declared before the magistrates that this was his son and heir. This was the adoption of that child as distinct from the others of the family. His relationship to the father was as theirs, his position in the family was superior." (Lang, 123)
- By extension, the "son" who is the "heir" of the Father is the one who inherits the "heavenly glories," according to Lang. In contrast, the "child" remains a beneficiary of being in the family but possesses no ruling authority in the affairs of the family, i.e., he is an "heir of God," but not a "joint-heir with Christ."
  - "Thus here the son is the heir of the heavenly glories, "these things" just before described, not simply one of the large family; a standing carrying larger privileges, and great responsibly and opportunity. It is for the "revealing of the sons of God" that creation waits (Rom. 8:19) . . . Now Christians are the children of God (Rom. 8:21) who expect to be glorified with Christ "if so be that we suffer with him that we may be also glorified with him" (ver. 17); but we groan as yet, expecting the adoption, the open acknowledgement by the Father of the whole family of the saved that we, who suffer with Christ, are the sons in the family (ver. 23).

The sharing of Christ's sufferings now is our training and qualifying for sharing His glory hereafter; as well as the glory being the compensation graciously promised for the sufferings." (Lang, 123)

- That this terminology and manner of speaking is indicative of SE is beyond doubt. I now believe, that at some point SE teachers Blades and/or Newbold read G.H. Lang's *Firstborn Sons: Their Rights and Risks*. The following aspects of SE teaching are clearly observable in Lang:
  - The definition of Biblical Adoption
  - The necessity of qualifying one's self to serve in the government of God as an additional issue to justification

- Connecting one's level of sanctification with their portion of future glory.
  - Holy Spirit does not indwell all believers.
  - "If so be" in Romans 8:17 not being a first class condition.
  - Difference between a regenerated child, i.e., "heir of God" and a son or "joint-heir with Christ.
  - Only those qualifying themselves for joint-heirship will reign with Christ.
  - Connection between Roman 8:17 and II Timothy 2:12
  - SE sounding statements connecting one's "training" and "commitment" to be educated by the Father now with one's portion of future glory.
- I believe that doctrinally SE's major point of origin resides in following two issues: 1) its definition of Biblical Adoption and 2) in reading the "if so be" in Romans 8:17 as placing a condition upon being a "joint-heir with Christ." In my opinion, a bi-fold door works as a good illustration; on the lower level of our tri-level home, in order to gain access to our crawl space one must pass through a closet that is covered by a bi-fold door. Once one passes through this point of entry, access to the crawl space is granted. The point of entry into SE was the dual issues of redefining Biblical Adoption and conditional joint-heirship in Romans 8:17. Once these doctrines were embraced they necessitated a complete rethinking of the entirety of Romans 8.
  - A future lesson will demonstrate the validity of this theory by investigating the *Enjoy the Bible Quarterly* articles written by Keith R. Blades. When Blades began to write on Sonship, in the early half of the last decade (the 00 decade). His first writings on SE centered on the definition of Biblical Adoption and the conditional nature of joint-heirship in Romans 8:17. This in turn, over time, led to a reverse engineering of the whole of Romans 8 that called other basic doctrines into question like the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in Romans 8:9. Even David Winston Bush, author of the Sonship Stablishment Study Series of books, notes the pivotal role that Romans 8 plays in the SE study system by devoting an entire chapter of his book, *More Than Conquerors*, to discussing the matter (see Chapter 3, Romans 8: The Pivot Point).
  - Considering the FACT that SE adopts that exact same definition of Biblical Adoption posited by Lang and the same teaching with respect to Romans 8:17 and II Timothy 2 as well as many other conceptual and explanatory similarities, there is no way in my mind that Lang's book was not read by the first generation of SE teachers.
  - For the purposes of illustration, if one considers SE to be a river, Lang's book *Firstborn Sons* is a primary tributary among others. In the next Lesson, we will consider two more tributaries to the SE system, R.B. Theime, Jr.'s *Edification Complex of the Soul* (1972) and Zane C. Hodges *The Gospel Under Siege: A Study on Faith and Works* (1981 & 1992).

- Not to mix metaphors, but Theime’s work provided the structural framework for SE whereas doctrines gleaned from Lang, Hodges, and others were hung upon Theime’s framework like sheet rock secured to its framing.

### **Concluding Remarks**

- Recent comments on Facebook by supporters of the notion that there are two different inheritances in Romans 8:17, however they conceive of it, reveal the following trend: the next step in this doctrinal saga will be to argue that anyone who denies the conditional nature of joint-heirship is by default placing a condition upon being an “heir of God” and is therefore, by extension, placing a condition upon the believers’ justification, i.e., they are denying the gospel of the grace of God and teaching a works based gospel.
- Ironically, the writings of Lang, even foreshadow this contemporary and trending line of argumentation by the support of the “two inheritance view.” In 1936 Lang wrote:
  - “Those who refuse the distinction between simple heirship to God and joint heir-ship with the Messiah, make the former as well as the latter to become conditional upon suffering with Christ; and thus would the loss of those who avoid suffering be vastly greater, their salvation itself being imperiled.” (Lang, 123)
- The week of Thanksgiving, I privately predicted to some of my friends in the ministry that within six to eight weeks’ time (first part of 2015), teaching in some form would surface on Facebook and the internet accusing me and anyone else who does not see a distinction between “heirs of God” and “joint-heirs with Christ” of placing conditions upon justification and teaching a works based gospel.
- It is my firm belief and contention that G.H. Lang’s 1936 book *Firstborn Sons: Their Rights and Risks* is a major contributor to the theological system known in our day as SE.

### **Works Cited**

Lang, G.H. *Firstborn Sons: Their Rights and Risks*. Samuel Roberts Publishers: London, England, 1936.

## Appendix A

### *The Faithful Saying of II Timothy 2:11-13*

The following links are to my teaching on the passage in question. All these messages were taught at Grace Life Bible Church in Grand Rapids, MI during the spring and summer of 2014. Select your preferred format by clicking on the corresponding link below.

- The Faithful Saying of II Timothy 2: An Overview
  - [PDF Notes](#), [MP3 Audio](#), [YouTube Video](#)
- The Faithful Saying of II Timothy 2: If Statement Number 2
  - [PDF Notes](#), [MP3 Audio](#), [YouTube Video](#)
- The Faithful Saying of II Timothy 2: If Statement Number 2, Part 2
  - [PDF Notes](#), [MP3 Audio](#), [YouTube Video](#)
- The Faithful Saying of II Timothy 2: If Statement Number 3
  - [PDF Notes](#), [MP3 Audio](#), [YouTube Video](#)
- What Does It Mean to Reign With Christ
  - [PDF Notes](#), [MP3 Audio](#), [YouTube Video](#)
- What Does It Mean to Reign With Christ, Part 2
  - [PDF Notes](#), [MP3 Audio](#), [YouTube Video](#)
- What Does It Mean to Reign With Christ, Part 3
  - [PDF Notes](#), [MP3 Audio](#), [YouTube Video](#)
- The Faithful Saying of II Timothy 2: If Statement Number 4
  - [PDF Notes](#), [MP3 Audio](#), [YouTube Video](#)