

Sunday, February 22, 2015—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 163
 Sonship Edification: The Evolution of SE in the Writings of Keith R. Blades, 3rd Quarter of 2001, Part 2

Introduction: Clarifying an Important Difference

- Lesson 162 included a section titled “The Influence of Grace School of the Bible.” The main point of that section was to highlight the influence that Pastor Richard Jordan and Grace School of the Bible (GSB) had on the thinking of Keith R. Blades when it comes to the issue of edification.
- While I think it is true that Blades took the concept of edification far further than Brother Jordan and/or other Brothers associated with GSB, that characterization alone is not sufficient to capture the complete nature of what occurred. It is not only a matter of DISTANCE but also one of DIRECTION.
- Brother Jordan’s concept of the Pauline Design for Edification of the Believer is rooted in observing the connection between what Paul’s states will “stablish” believers in Romans 16:25-26 with how Paul’s epistles are organized in the New Testament canon.

	Congregation	Pastoral Epistles
○ Scriptures of the Prophets	Coming	I & II Thessalonians
○ The Mystery	Church	Ephesians to Colossians
○ My Gospel (Paul’s Gospel)	Cross	Romans to II Corinthians

- Brother Jordan’s notion of how believers are edified in the dispensation of grace looks to Paul’s epistles to ascertain how the believer’s edification is going to occur, i.e., what a believer needs to understand to be “stablished.” It then explains the canonical order and structure of Paul’s epistles based upon Pauline texts such as Romans 16:25-26, II Timothy 3:16-17 and I Corinthians 3.
- While Blades was introduced to Brother Jordan’s thinking outlined above, he departed from it by forsaking Romans 16:25-26 as the pattern for the believer’s establishment in favor of appealing to the book of Proverbs as well as other aspects of Israel’s program.
- In short, Blades did not merely carry Brother Jordan’s ideas regarding edification further in terms of DISTANCE; rather, he took the understanding of edification he gleaned from Brother Jordan in an entirely new DIRECTION.

The Turning Point: Public Release 3rd Quarter 2001, Continued

- In Lesson 162 we covered two of the three reasons why the 3rd quarter issue of the [Enjoy the Bible Quarterly \(EBQ\) from 2001](#) signifies a turning point in the ministry of Keith R. Blades towards the full public enunciation of Sonship Edification (SE). The first two reasons included:

1) the explosion and expansion of SE terminology; and 2) the removal of the Calgary, Alberta mailing address.

- A third piece of evidence that the 3rd quarter of 2001 was a turning point in the teaching of Blades regarding sonship is the content of the main article titled: “For It Were Better For Me to Die, Than That Any Man Should Make my Glorifying Void.” Using the church at Corinth as an example, Blades begins to talk about Sonship Liberty 101, 201, and alludes to 301 at the end of the article. Sonship Liberty 101 includes the following according to Blades:
 - “The Corinthians knew the *basics* about our sonship status and liberty “in Christ” in this dispensation . . . they had been educated in Sonship Liberty 101, so to speak. And this being the case, they were immediately impressed with the issue of God treating us and dealing with us today as adult “sons”; and in particular they were thrilled with the personal liberties that go with it.

Hence, they readily understood and appreciated the issue of the liberty that is ours in not being “under the law” in this dispensation. They knew what it means for us not to be under the law’s ‘tutor and governor’ operating principle, nor to be in bondage under “the elements of the world” that it employs . . . they learned that God is not dealing with us today as “children” but as adult “sons.” They knew, therefore, that they were not given “the spirit of bondage again to fear.” But rather in receiving “the Spirit of adoption” and thereby “crying, Abba, Father,” they knew they were liberated “sons.” They, therefore, knew they were ones to whom “all things are lawful,” just as Paul repeatedly acknowledged to them.

Accordingly the Corinthians relished the freedoms of sonship, as they rightfully should. For the freedoms of sonship are truly wonderful and marvelous. There is no comparison between the childish things, limitations, and restrictive operating principles of childhood, and the adult things, freedoms, and mature operating principles of sonship. . .

Consequently, when the Corinthians gloried in the fact that “all things are lawful” for “sons,” and exercised their liberty, their initial delight and glorying was not unfounded, nor in error. And neither is it so when we do the same. However, though this may be true, the understanding, appreciation, and delight that we have for our sonship status and liberty should not stop here. For there is more to sonship than this. Much more. In fact, what we need to learn is that the liberty of having ‘all things lawful’ is merely the means for being able to exercise the ultimate purpose of sonship.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2001, 2-3)

- So the Corinthians had understood the basic principles of adoption/sonship found in Romans 8 and Galatians 4. The problem was that they had not moved beyond the mere comprehension and appreciation for their sonship liberty to the true goal of sonship or Sonship Liberty 201.
 - “Strictly speaking, our personal liberty as “sons” is not the grand purpose or the ultimate aim of sonship. Instead, once again, it is actually a provision through which the ultimate

aim can be achieved. However it is a matter of further edification for us to understand and appreciate this to be so. It is the issue of Sonship Liberty 201, if you will.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2001, 3)

- In an attempt to illustrate his point, Blades compares the difference between Sonship Liberty 101 and 201 with a believer who understands that they live in the dispensation of grace but who fails to grasp God’s ultimate purpose in forming the body of Christ. According to Blades, a believer in this condition does not yet:
 - “. . . have the edification and doctrinal ability to glory in God’s “manifold wisdom.” This only comes later in our edification once we first understand and appreciate the basics. Thus it is one thing to know the basic fact or reality of one of the privileges of God’s grace unto us, and to glory in the fact that we possess it. However it is a matter of further edification to understand and appreciate the *purpose and design* behind the privilege, and to glory in this as well, if not more.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2001, 3-4)
- In the mind of Blades the situation described in the above quote is exactly analogous to the situation in sonship.
 - “Now this is exactly the situation that we have with the privilege of our sonship status and liberty in this present dispensation. So if we like the Corinthian saints are only glorying in the fact that we possess sonship liberty, while at the same time not really understanding and appreciating the ultimate reason for possessing it, then we have much yet to learn.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2001, 3-4)
- The saints in Corinth had become self-centered and selfish, according to Blades because they failed to build upon Sonship Liberty 101 with Sonship Liberty 201 (note the hierarchical nature of this concept. Sounds very similar to Thieme’s notion that the edification complex is not a house built on stilts but that each floor needs to be built before one proceeds to the next).
 - “They (the Corinthians) became self-centered and selfish in their thinking. As such they were exercising their sonship liberty to their own personal pleasure and to their own individual profit. With this going on, other saints among them who were weak in the faith, (not knowing what they knew), were in danger of being adversely affected by their liberty. Yet now what happened to the Corinthians was by no means the fault of the doctrine of our sonship status and liberty. The “knowledge” itself was not to blame. Rather the reason why it “puffeth up” was because it was left to itself. Again it was Sonship Liberty 101, but it wasn’t built upon with Sonship Liberty 201.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2001, 4)
- Sonship Liberty 201 is related to taking the liberty that we have in Christ and not using it to serve ourselves but to “walk in the fullness of Godly love and charity” which is sonship liberty’s highest crowning glory, according to Blades. (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2001, 2) The problem with the Corinthians as well as many believers today is failure to be “suitably impressed” with the unique privileges that belong to our sonship liberty. It is this lack of being “suitably impressed”

on the part of many believers that highlights the need for “further edification” in the matter in the mind of Blades. (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2001, 2)

- “However this is by no means an excuse, or a justification, for not being suitably impressed, either for them or for us. Rather what it indicates is the need for further edification in this matter. For further edification that takes our understanding and appreciation past the initial stage of simply glorying in sonship’s personal liberties, to the greater issue of glorying in its highest honor— being a follower of God and emulating Him in our walk.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2001, 2)
- Sonship Liberty 101 occurs in Romans 8 where “we first learn the basics of our sonship status and liberty” as part of “the doctrine of our sanctified position “in Christ.” Education in Sonship Liberty 201 begins in Romans 12 where “God beseeches us to put our sanctified position ‘in Christ’ into practice in our daily lives, including our sonship status and liberty.” In connection with teaching us how our sonship liberty is designed to renew our minds in Romans 12:3 “God gives us doctrine that teaches us to think with the same selfless love that He has.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2001, 4) Beginning in Romans 12:3 we learn that “the grand purpose of our sonship liberty is not to serve ourselves, but to give us the ability by love to serve one another.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2001, 5)
 - “Moreover as the doctrine of Romans 12:3ff effectually works within us it is also designed to produce an initial measure of wise perception and discernment in us, which is a characteristic also belonging to sonship. . . What we should come to realize through the effectual working of Romans 12:3ff is that our sonship liberty is the very means by which the epitome of Godly love and charity can be produced by us and put on display by us.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2001, 5)
- According to Blades, until we become “profoundly impressed” and thrilled in our hearts over the realities of Sonship Liberty 201, “we are not ready for the further edification that belongs to Sonship Liberty 301.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2001, 6)
- If one were reading this issue of the *EBQ* in 2001, they probably would not be able to detect where all this is heading. Reading it now in 2015, with the benefit of hindsight, one can see how, despite making some wonderful doctrinal points, this article is carrying the thinking of Blades regarding sonship and edification beyond the 101 position he presented in the quarterlies between 1996 and June 2001. All of this highlights a key point regarding why SE is so dangerous. In my opinion, there is enough dispensationally correct doctrine embedded within the system that it makes detecting the system’s doctrinal problems difficult. In other words, it is not like denominational teaching where the errors are easy to spot by those who understand right division. This is not just my opinion but a sentiment that has been shared with me by many whom I have heard from over the past six months who were personally involved with SE.

2002: Expansion and Refinement

1st Quarter 2002: Do You “Cry, Abba, Father?” (Plus a few other related questions)

- With the 4th quarter issue of the *EBQ* from 2001 being devoted to the annual Q&A edition; expansion and refinement of SE in the *Quarterly* was reserved for the 1st quarter of 2002. The lead article from the 1st quarter of 2002 (see title above) was a composite reprint of “The Adoption of Son: A Primer to This Wonderful Truth” from the 1st quarter of 1996 and new additional information added in 2002. In fact, this issue of the quarterly opens with the following parenthetical disclaimer under the title:
 - “The opening portion of this article is taken from a previous article on the reality of our sonship status in the present dispensation. We are repeating it at the beginning of this article to refresh the memory on this important truth, before presenting some further aspects of it.” (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2002, 1)

- The break between old material from 1996 and new content from 2002 occurs on page 3 with the heading “The Intimacy of Sonship.” It is in this section that Blades expands upon the notion of a father adopting his own child, thereby personally assuming the remaining education of his son. It is here that we first encounter the notion of a father instructing his son to labor with him in “his business.” (3)
 - **“The father now personally assumes the remaining education of his son.** And this is something that has been eagerly looked forward to by the father. He now gets to take his child unto himself in the close, personal relationship of sonship, which will involve him being able to do things with his child that he was unable to do before.

Specifically, the child is now in the position of maturity **where he is able to understand, appreciate, and participate with his father in his business. And with this being so, the father begins to educate his “son” in his business, and also gives to him the privilege and responsibility of working with him side by side in its operations.**” (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2002, 3)

- In the section titled, “Crying, Abba, Father” Blades states that it is on account of understanding the “grandest of all sonship privileges” the prospect of “working with our Father in His business” that ought to elicit the cry of “Abba Father” on our part. (4)
 - “For nothing less than the grandest of all sonship privileges is set before us; the privilege of working with our Father in His business. And because our hearts naturally should be filled with abounding joy for all of this, this is just what “crying, Abba, Father” expresses.” (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2002, 4)

- Blades uses Mark 14:36, the passage where Christ cries Abba Father in the garden before his crucifixion, to illustrate the need we have as members of the body of Christ likewise cry “Abba Father.”
 - “As both the “Son of God,” and as a “son,” the Lord Jesus Christ had been laboring in His Father’s business throughout His ministry. But now the hour was at hand for the operation of redemption. And in connection with His approaching involvement in this most demanding operation of all, He prefaces His prayer with “Abba, Father.” He thereby acknowledges and expresses to His Father His sonship status. And in so doing He professes His complete willingness to labor with Him regardless of its personal impact, and to see every operation (including this one) through to its end, just as an obedient “son” should do. This is why He uttered “Abba, Father.”

Once again, therefore, the issue of us “crying, Abba, Father” is the issue of us acknowledging our sonship. It is the issue of our joyful response to having now received “the adoption of sons.” **And if we truly understand what it means for us now to be God’s adopted “sons”; and if we truly appreciate the nature of our sonship status and sonship relationship to God, along with what it now entails both for us and Him; then our hearts can do nothing less than cry out to Him in joy. We cannot help but cry out to Him as “sons” to our Father, joyfully acknowledging to Him the glory of our sonship status, as well as joyfully anticipating each and every aspect of what our sonship life with Him has in store for us.** (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2002, 4)

- “A Simplified Prospectus of Our Sonship Life” section introduces its readers, for the first time, to the three levels of sonship life and education that are laid out in Paul’s epistles.
 - “He is actually educating us and training us in the operations of His business. And as this takes place with us, He also grants us the privilege of laboring together with Him in the things He is doing and accomplishing in His business. Moreover He does all of this in preparation for the day when we will be entering into the full and future aspect of His business, following the conclusion of this present dispensation of His grace . . .

Simply and briefly put, the sonship education and life of a “son” is composed of three major stages (see point about the endnote below). In total they provide for his complete education, training, and work experience, with respect to his father’s business. Accordingly in each stage a father educates his son in some particular issues pertaining to his business. And within each stage, as the “son” receives his education, he is trained in particular aspects of his father’s business, and is given opportunities to labor with his father in the day-to-day operations of that business....

And we too, as we receive that education, are trained in various and progressive aspects of God’s business, and are given opportunities to participate in it.

In connection with this it is interesting to note something about the structure of Paul's church epistles to us, i.e. Romans through II Thessalonians. It is quite easy to see, and commonly acknowledged, that they have a three part makeup, or are composed of three groups. First comes Romans through Galatians; then Ephesians through Colossians; and then I and II Thessalonians. And as the internal evidence of the epistles themselves shows, they possess a **clear doctrinal and educational sense and sequence** (also speaks of the sense and sequence of the Pastoral Epistles in endnote five) as we progress through them from Romans to II Thessalonians.

However what is often not recognized is that this three part structure with its doctrinal progression exists as such because it conforms to the issue of providing for our sonship education and life. The three groups of epistles set forth and provide us with the progressive education we need for the three stages that belong to our sonship education and life in this dispensation. And as we receive that education in its proper order, and as it effectually works within us, it takes us through the three stages of our sonship life, and we are thereby effectually trained in our Father's business, and are given the opportunities to labor with Him in the various operations of it." (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2002, 4-5)

- Blades concludes the 1st quarter edition of the *EBQ* from 2002 by asking his readers the following question, "Do You, "Cry, Abba, Father"?"
 - "For as the heirs of God (note that there is distinction yet between "heirs" and joint-heirs") and adopted sons that we are, indeed there is no life like the sonship life. . .

Hence in view of the incomparable grandeur of our sonship status, the original question in the title to this article now bears asking, *Do you "cry, Abba, Father"?* In other words, do you indeed know what it means to have received "the adoption of sons"? And does it hold the same importance to you that it does to God?

Furthermore: Does your joy as a "son" go beyond the issue of you not being "under tutors and governors" and not being "in bondage under the elements of the world"? Does it include you being thrilled at the prospect of being educated by God as a "son," and of actually participating with Him in the operations of His business in this dispensation?" (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2002, 5)

- In this issue of the quarterly (1st Quarter 2002) Keith does not explicitly tie Paul's epistles to anything specific in the book of Proverbs, however, there is evidence that the connection was growing in his mind. In support of the statement noted above regarding the three major stages of sonship education, Blades states the following in endnote #3.
 - "Cf., for example, the doctrine of sonship in the opening chapters of the book of Proverbs." (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2002, 5)

- As the following statistics reveal, the 1st quarter of 2002 saw a continued expansion of the SE lexicon of terminology. Debuting for the first time in the 1st quarter of 2002 are the following terms: sonship education (1 time), sonship education and life (5 times), father's business (5 times), and sense and sequence (2 times). The totals from this issue of the *EBQ* are as follows:
 - Sonship—47 times
 - Sonship Status—14 times
 - Sonship Life—7 times
 - Sonship Privileges—2 times
 - Sonship Education—1 time (1st occurrence)
 - Sonship Education and Life—5 times (1st occurrence)
 - Sonship Living—1 time
 - Sonship Relationship—1 time
 - Adoption—30 times
 - Adopt—2 times
 - Adopted—1 time
 - Adopts—1 time
 - Father's Business—5 times (1st occurrence)
 - Sense and Sequence—2 times (1st occurrence)