

Sunday, March 1, 2015—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 164 Sonship Edification: The Evolution of SE in the Writings of Keith R. Blades, 2nd Quarter of 2002 through 2003

Introduction

- The previous three lessons (Lessons 161-163) on the evolution of Sonship Edification (SE) in the writings of Keith R. Blades covered the space of time between the publication of *Satan and His Plan of Evil* in 1994 and the 1st quarter edition of the *Enjoy the Bible Quarterly (EBQ)* from 2002.
- In covering this material, we were able to pinpoint the 3rd quarter of 2001 as the turning point where Keith commenced his full public articulation of what has become known as SE. In this lesson we want to consider in detail the 2nd quarter edition of the *EBQ* from 2002 as well as survey the major conceptual/doctrinal developments that appeared in the *EBQs* in 2003.

2002: Expansion and Refinement, Continued

[2nd Quarter 2002: The Effectual Working of Our Joyful Hope: A Primer on Romans 8:18-25](#)

- In the 2nd quarter of 2002, Blades introduced two major developments into the thought stream that have become emblematic of SE: 1) the distinction between “heirs” and “joint-heirs” in Romans 8:17; and 2) SE’s unique understanding of “the creature.”
- In the section titled “Our Sonship Status, Inheritance, and The Sufferings of This Present Time”, Blades takes up a discussion of the difference between “heirs” and “joint-heirs” in Romans 8:17 for the first time (in print). At this point, it would be good to recall that previously, in the 3rd quarter *EBQ* from 1996, Keith had taught that all believers are joint-heirs with Christ.
 - “Right now we possess the standing of adoption, or sonship, and are being treated by God as adult sons, as Paul stated earlier in verses 14-15. However, when God ends this dispensation we will then have the inheritance portion of our "adoption" and will be manifested in that inheritance as the sons of God. Hence, verse 19 refers to "the manifestation of the sons of God." In accordance with this, the "redemption of our body" will not only involve mortality being swallowed up of life, but it will also involve a **number of other changes to our bodies commensurate with our inheritance as "joint-heirs with Christ" and with the special heavenly vocation unto which God has called us.**” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Q. 1996, 2)
- In seeking to explain why a discussion of “the sufferings of the present time” (Romans 8:18) follows so closely on the heels of laying out the believers “sonship status” (Romans 8:14-16), Blades stated the following: “. . . it does this because there is a direct connection between those sufferings and a particular aspect of our inheritance as “sons” ” (Blades, *EBQ* 2nd Quarter 2002, 2). It is here that Blades states that there are two aspects to a son’s inheritance – the first unconditional and the second conditional. As we saw in [Lesson 154](#), SE’s teaching regarding the

conditional nature of joint-heirship in Romans 8:17 is one of its key distinguishing features. This supposed difference was first articulated by Blades in his writing during the 2nd quarter of 2002.

- “Simply and briefly put, one of the first matters about which a father educates his son upon his adoption is the matter of his inheritance. In so doing, a “son” learns that there are two aspects to his inheritance. There is an unconditional part and a conditional part. That is, there is the part which the “son” inherits by default, so to speak, seeing he is his father’s child. However there is also the part that he can inherit by way of promotion, or reward, in his father’s business at the conclusion of his sonship education and training. Or in other words there is the part that is called “the reward of the inheritance.” This particular aspect of a son’s inheritance is tied to the issue of his response to his sonship education and his functional life as a “son.” And this the “son” can receive for having been a wise and honorable “son,” who faithfully labored with his father in his business. The son’s labor is worthy of a reward, and his father rewards him with “the reward of the inheritance.”

Now as it is with sonship in general, so also is it with us as God’s “sons.” Having declared us to be His “sons,” God therefore immediately educates us in the matter of our inheritance, as Romans 8:16-17 sets forth. And as verse 17 makes clear, we learn that we also have the same two aspects to our inheritance.” (Blades, *EBQ* 2nd Quarter 2002, 2)

- According to Blades, a son’s being an “heir of God” is the default aspect of their inheritance and entails the following: 1) eternal life, 2) honor of living in his presence, and 3) a glorified immortal body. In contrast, being a “joint-heir with Christ” is an additional issue or aspect of our inheritance that is conditioned upon suffering “with him.” It is here that the “sufferings of this present time” (Rom. 8:18) come into play according to Blades.
 - “As Paul says, we are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Being “heirs of God,” we are heirs of God’s life and all that belongs to the honor of living in His presence. And we will have all of this in glorified, immortal bodies. This is the default aspect of our inheritance.

However Paul also speaks of us being “joint heirs with Christ.” Yet being “joint-heirs with Christ” is not the same thing as being “heirs of God.” It is an additional issue, or an additional aspect of our inheritance. And as the remainder of verse 17 sets forth, it is the conditional aspect. It is conditioned upon, “if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.” And with this being the case, this is where the issue of “the sufferings of this present time” come into play.

Indeed as the Lord witnesses the occurrence of such things, and as He sees us encounter and experience them, He ‘suffers’ their existence, as well as our experiencing of them. He does not ignore them, hide His eyes from them, or pretend that they aren’t real. Instead He actually ‘suffers’ them. Yet He does not do this stoically, or fatalistically, or with mere gritty toleration. Rather He does so through the effectual working within Him

of a very particular understanding that He has about them. An understanding that is derived from the comprehension that He has of His Father's business and why they are allowed to occur. And with that understanding He Himself 'suffers' the continued existence of the effects of the bondage of corruption in this world, and He does so with patience and contentment. . .

Now once again, we as "sons" today have the privilege of 'suffering with Christ.' With this being so God is indeed honoring us when it comes to the issue of us encountering and experiencing "the sufferings of this present time." As His "sons" God is honoring us with the godly privilege of thinking like He does, and like the Lord Jesus Christ does, regarding "the sufferings of this present time." Our Father is granting us the sonship privilege of responding to them as His godly "sons"; of possessing His godly thinking and having it effectually work within us to produce the same godly patience, longsuffering, and endurance that He Himself has. This, therefore, is a sonship grace indeed, and one which provides for us to be "joint-heirs with Christ" in the day when God manifests us as His "sons," and establishes both Christ and us in the fullness of His business and its future operations.

. . . Rather, in accordance with our sonship status and our godly edifying, God has given to us a very particular hope that is contained in a 'form of doctrine' which He wants us to have operating within us. This 'form of doctrine' is set forth in Romans 8:18-39, and it begins with the specific doctrine of our joyful hope in verses 18-25." (Blades, *EBQ* 2nd Quarter 2002, 2-3)

- In the next section, "The Doctrinal Purpose of Romans 8:18-25," Blades begins to layout and explain what has become known as the Sonship Establishment portion of the "curriculum," i.e., Romans 8:16-39. According to Blades there is a specific "form of doctrine" with three distinct components found in Romans 8:18-39.
 - "Simply put, the 'form of doctrine' set forth in Romans 8:18-39 has at least 3 distinct components to it, the first of which is contained in verses 18-25 and forms the foundation. This foundation is the doctrine of the specific joyful hope that God has given to us in this present dispensation of His grace. And once again, it is the very same joyful hope that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself presently operates upon. As His "sons" God has designed that it likewise effectually work within us, and as it does for it to produce in us the same kind of *godly patience and content endurance* presently belonging to Christ." (Blades, *EBQ* 2nd Quarter 2002, 3)
- The "joyful hope" for a member of the body of Christ is found in "the creature itself" being "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God," according to Blades. It is in this section, "Our Joyful Hope" that SE's notion of "the creature" is first introduced by Blades into the thought stream. As we saw in [Lesson 151](#), SE's teaching on "the creature" is one of its distinguishing characteristics.

- “The joyful hope that is set before us is our participation in the fabulous glory belonging to the specific role and vocation that God has purposed for us to fulfill as His heirs. And that role, (which God has only now revealed in this dispensation), is that of us providing for “the creature itself” to also “be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” As Paul explains. . . (quotes Rom. 8:19-21)

“The creature” is the designation given to the body, or realm, of God’s creation surrounding the earth, which by the very nature of its creation actually has it being a creature type embodiment for the earth. As such it incorporates the heavenly realm with its living, intelligent angelic creatures designed by God to function within it. Designating it as “the creature,” it is descriptive of God’s intended function for that realm, creating it as He did with the earth in its midst, and designing it to be lively and responsive to His very presence and residence on the earth within the midst of it...

But now the creature’s “hope” has been revealed by God. He will not leave it “subject to vanity.” Rather, “the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” And this will be accomplished through some other “children of God.” Some others, who being God’s heirs, will be used by Him to provide for glorious liberty to be given to “the creature.” And those other “children of God” are us; God’s “new creature,” the church the body of Christ, in this present dispensation of God’s grace.

Such, therefore, is God’s glorious purpose with us in this present dispensation. Being His “children,” and therefore being His “heirs,” God has purposed for us to be utilized by Him to provide for “the creature” to be “delivered from the bondage of corruption.” And with this being so, the indescribable glorious liberty that this will bring to “the creature itself,” as well as the phenomenal honor that it is to us ourselves to be so used of God, combine to constitute our joyful hope.” (Blades, *EBQ* 2nd Quarter 2002, 5-6)

- In [Lesson 158](#), I compared the “point of access” to SE with a bi-fold door; one panel being SE’s definition of Biblical Adoption and the second being the conditional nature of joint-heirship in Romans 8:17. Beginning with the 3rd quarter of 2001 and extending through 1st and 2nd quarter issues of the *EBQ* from 2002, three major issues take center stage in the public articulation of SE from the pen of Blades.
 1. Definition of Biblical Adoption—3rd quarter 2001
 2. Hierarchical notion of edification (Sonship Liberty 101, 201, 301)—1st quarter 2002
 3. Conditional nature of joint-heirship—2nd quarter 2002
- This matrix of ideas was the seedbed from which the rest of SE sprang forth and matured between 2003 and 2009 in the *EBQ*. Keith’s thinking regarding how edification is accomplished was the mechanism upon which the system of SE was anchored and hinged. The dual issues of Biblical Adoption and joint-heirship served as the gateway doctrines that paved the way for the articulation of the rest of the system. In short, the three issues identified above comprised the

bulk of the first three articles in the public articulation of SE that commenced in the 3rd quarter of 2001.

- Rounding out our consideration of the 2nd quarter issue of the *EBQ* from 2002, it is important to note that this issue is the last to carry an advertisement for the Northern Rocky Mountain Berean Bible Camp in Montana. Shortly after commencing his public teaching on SE, Brother Blades pulled out of all Bible Conference/Camp meetings on account of the fact that he viewed them as arbitrary because they did not follow the proper sense and sequence of the sonship curriculum found in Paul’s epistles.
- Statistically, the occurrences of sonship terminology for the 2nd quarter of 2002 are as follows:
 - Sonship—11 times
 - Sonship Status—5 times
 - Sonship Education—2 times
 - Sonship Education and Training—1 time
 - Sonship Privileges—1 time
 - Sonship Grace—1 time (1st occurrence)
 - Adoption—3 times
 - Father’s Business—2 times
 - Creature—18 times (1st occurrence)
- There were no 3rd and 4th quarter issues of the *EBQ* during 2002.

2003: Summary of Key Developments

[1st Quarter 2003: A Brief Look at Romans 8:26-27, at Prayer in General, and at Sonship Prayer in Particular](#)

- In the first quarter of 2003 Blades picked up where he left off in the 2nd quarter of 2002 in terms of explaining the three initial sonship doctrines set forth in Romans 8:16-39 (These verses, Romans 8:16-39, would later be referred to as the Sonship Establishment portion of the curriculum). These three sonship doctrines, along with their “effectual working,” are all explained for the first time on page 2.
 - “Simply stated **the first of these three doctrines, set forth in verses 16-25, is that of the joyful hope that we possess as God’s heirs in His plan and purpose.** It provides us with the proper, fundamental perspective on things that we need to have by knowing what God is doing in this present dispensation together with knowing our role in it as God’s heirs and “sons.” And as verses 23-25 explain, this doctrine about the greatness of what God is now doing for “the creature,” (along with our role in it), effectually works within us to produce the Godly virtue of contentment and patient waiting for the realization of our hope, especially in the face of any of “the sufferings of this present time” that we will experience.

. . . As already noted, **the second doctrine in verses 26-27 concerns the issue of our prayer life. As such it deals with the Godly virtue of engaging in consistent, intelligent fellowship with our Father through prayer, because we know how indispensable prayer is in view of what God wants to accomplish with us as His “sons.”** Again, this doctrine’s effectual working within us provides for the intelligent fellowship of prayer to be undiminished, and for us to be unperturbed therein, even on those occasions when we “know not what we should pray for as we ought.”

The third of the three doctrines, set forth in verses 28-39, is designed by its effectual working to produce within us the Godly virtue of confidence to boldly face, as well as to profit from, all things that we may encounter in this world. And indeed we should have such confidence, because in view of God’s purpose with us as His “sons” we know that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.” Hence come what may, the Godly virtue of dauntless confidence should characterize our outlook on our sonship life.

These three Godly virtues are truly fundamental and foundational to our Christian lives. Again when they are established within us and we operate upon them, we are equipped to respond properly to the details of our lives as God’s “sons.” We are equipped to embark upon the journey of our sonship edification and training, and to do this not only to our Father’s rejoicing and glory, but also to our own profit and benefit.” (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2003, 2)

- The second sonship doctrine is found in Romans 8:26-27 and deals with “sonship prayer,” according to Blades. In summation, Blades states the following regarding “sonship prayer” throughout the remainder of the article.
 - “Being “sons” prayer should take on all that much more of an important role in our lives. One that we recognize is particularly integral and vital to our sonship edification, and that we make use of accordingly. **For this reason prayer is naturally spoken about by Paul in Romans 8 as soon as he begins to teach us about our sonship status. In fact it is our deep appreciation for the fellowship that we have with our Father through prayer, and for Him ‘searching our hearts’ thereby, that makes the intercessory ministry of the Spirit of God within us so meaningful and so comforting, when we find ourselves infirm not knowing what we should pray for as we ought . . .** This is not only because of the close personal nature of our sonship relationship with God, but especially because of the edification in godliness that God has for us as His “sons.” In truth, our edification in godliness demands that we have close, intimate communion with our Father. So if we deeply appreciate our sonship edification, then we should also deeply appreciate prayer. . . In Romans 8:14 the apostle Paul states the dominant feature that characterizes and distinguishes sonship for what it is, which is the issue of being “led by the Spirit of God.” (Quotes Rom. 8:14) . . . As such being “led by the Spirit of God” has specific reference to the nature of our education as “sons” and to the advancement that it

is upon the education belonging to childhood. And indeed sonship education and edification is advanced, for its course of learning provides for “sons” to actually become like their father, not just know things about him. . . . When a father adopts his child and he becomes his “son” the father personally takes over his son’s education for the purpose of his son becoming like him in mind, in lifestyle, and in occupation. Through direct, close, personal fellowship and communion, (no more “tutors and governors”), he provides for his son to emulate him and to be a help meet for him in his business. **Through personal teaching, fellowship, and communion he educates his son so that the two of them are of one mind in their thinking, attitude, and viewpoint; are of one accord in their manner of living and conversation; and are one in how they spend their time and to what purpose they use their talents and skills. Sonship edification at a father’s hands provides for a “son” to become one with his father, and for both of them to enjoy and delight in the fruits of the fellowship of that ‘oneness.’** Moreover that ‘oneness’ is designed to make it so that in every good sense of the expression it can be said of the “son,” ‘like father like son.’ This is the father’s ultimate aim. Now this is exactly what being “led by the Spirit of God” — “the Spirit of adoption” — is designed to do with us as God’s “sons.” It is the means by which God our Father provides for, and accomplishes, our sonship education and edification. Being “led by the Spirit” is the issue of Him leading us through a curriculum for our edification that has clear purpose to it; that has known levels of edification, training, and corresponding attainments to it; and that has a definite objective and end in view. . . . We are thereby progressively taught godliness by our Father and we learn to be godly; i.e. to think like God does, to live like He does, and to occupy our time and use our acquired skills and talents with Him in the operations of His business. . . . **Moreover our Father ‘searches our hearts’ desiring not only to have such a level of intimate fellowship and communion with our own hearts and minds and to rejoice therein, but also to monitor and to gauge the progress of our edification in godliness and to respond to it accordingly. He ‘searches our hearts’ to know them and thereby to be able to give to us what our edification merits. By the same token we also should engage in this intimate communion through prayer, because as “sons” we likewise should possess the eager desire to express to our Father what is on our minds or in our hearts.** As “sons” whom He is educating, we should want to prove to Him the effectual working of His word within us; tell Him what our mind is with regards to the issues of our lives and how precious His thoughts and His doctrines are to us. Moreover we should want to benefit from Him ‘searching our hearts.’ . . . Engaging in it should be close to, if not, instinctive to us as “sons,” as we desire intimacy of communion with our Father and His searching of our hearts thereby. Such is the basic understanding and appreciation that we as “sons” should have for prayer. Indeed the fundamental effectual working within us of the knowledge of our adoption as “sons,” (which ought to have us “crying, Abba, Father” in the first place), should initially produce within us the eager desire for having such a level of engaging communion and fellowship with God our Father. The lack of such communion, or desire for it, is just plain unnatural for us as “sons.” **So then we should not only crave being edified by our Father through His word to us, we should also crave intelligently communing with Him about it through prayer. Such fellowship and communion is**

virtuous to Him, and He desires it with us being our “Father.” We too, being His “sons,” should possess the same Godly virtue of engaging in consistent, intelligent fellowship with Him.” (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2003, 3-6)

[2nd Quarter 2003: For I am not Ashamed of the Gospel of Christ](#)

- The 2nd quarter issue of the *EBQ* does nothing to move the SE ball forward. In fact, the phrase “sonship grace” found in the side bar section “From EBM to You” stands out as the only occurrence of sonship terminology in this issue of the quarterly. In this respect it is an anomaly in post 3rd quarter 2001 history of the periodical.

[3rd Quarter 2003: Are You an Optimist or a Pessimist?](#)

- After the brief hiatus from sonship that occurred in the 2nd quarter of 2003, Blades picked up in the 3rd quarter of 2003 where he left off in the first. In this edition of the *EBQ*, Blades seeks to explain the third and final “sonship doctrine” found in Romans 8:16-39. According to Blades, the third initial sonship doctrine is “Godly optimism” and is set forth in Romans 8:28-39.
 - “The third of our three initial sonship doctrines begins to be set forth in Romans 8:28. (Quotes Rom. 8:28) With this declaration, the apostle Paul begins to set **forth the doctrine specifically designed by our Father to effectually work within us to produce the capstone of the three initial Godly virtues for our lives — the virtue of Godly optimism.** Now the source of Godly optimism truly is the doctrine of Romans 8:28–39. For Godly optimism regarding our sonship lives is not something that we are naturally born with, nor become possessors of simply by virtue of regeneration. Instead it is something that we learn; that we acquire as part of our sonship edification. . . The source, once again, for our Godly optimism as God’s “sons” in this present dispensation of His grace *is* the doctrine of Romans 8:28–39. As noted it is the third of the three fundamental Godly virtues for our sonship lives to operate upon. By means of its effectual working it is specifically designed to produce within us the two basic components which make up optimism; i.e. (1) a positive outlook on life, and (2) confidence that there is profit to be had or benefits to be received from the details of life. And indeed these are the very things that verses 28–39 are able to effectually produce within us, and sustain within us, come what may.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2003, 3-4)
- In a section titled, “The Doctrinal Purpose of Romans 8:28-39” Blades teaches that the point of these verses is not to teach eternal security but to instill the sonship virtue of “Godly optimism.”
 - “Though producing Godly optimism is the doctrinal purpose of Romans 8:28–39, often times the passage is looked upon, and taught, as if its doctrine is about the eternal security of our salvation. This is unfortunate not only because this is not the true doctrinal design and purpose of this passage; but also because the real passage whose doctrinal purpose it is to teach eternal security to us often ends up being denied its full and proper effectual working within us. Strictly speaking, before we ever doctrinally arrive in the latter part of

Romans 8, God has already taught us about the eternal security of our justification and salvation. This is what the doctrine of Romans 5:5–21 is all about, and what it is designed to effectually produce within us. . . So then God has designed for us to emerge from the doctrine of Romans 5 with the fully assured knowledge of the eternal security of our justification and salvation. So it is then that when we doctrinally arrive at Romans 8:14–15 and are taught that we have received “the adoption of sons”; and when the Holy Ghost — “the Spirit of adoption” — then begins to lead us as “sons” by means of verses 16ff; He does not need to lead us again into the doctrine of eternal security, as if we had not yet been taught it, or needed to have it supplemented. The Holy Ghost has already taught it to us, and established it within us, back in Romans 5; just as it says. Instead when we are declared to be “sons” and begin to be “led by the Spirit” from this point on in Romans 8, He leads us as “the Spirit of adoption” that He is. He, therefore, leads us into sonship doctrines. Specifically He leads us into, (and begins to lead us through), the particular curriculum for our sonship edification that God our Father has specifically composed and written for us as His “sons” in this present dispensation of His grace. Moreover this curriculum for our sonship edification begins with the same ‘form of doctrine’ that a father is responsible for teaching to his son first and foremost after adopting him. A ‘form of doctrine’ that provides the son with his fundamental and foundational operating virtues, of which the third and final one is his proper outlook on life. This, once again, is what Romans 8:28–39 gives to us.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2003, 4-5)

- Keith concludes this edition of the quarterly by asserting that it is only when believers have the “Godly optimism” that this portion of the “sonship curriculum” is designed to produce within them are they able to do what I Thessalonians 5:18 instructs, i.e., “in everything give thanks.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2003, 6)
- By the end of his quarterly writings in 2003 Blades had laid out in summary form what has become known as the Sonship Establishment portion of the SE curriculum.

Appendix A

The purpose of this Appendix is to breakdown the utilization of sonship terminology by Keith R. Blades in the *Enjoy the Bible Quarterly* during the year 2003. Please recall from page 8 that the 2nd quarter of 2003 saw the occurrence of SE terminology (“sonship graces”) in the side bar titled “From EBM to You.” Consequently, the table below captures the totals from 1st and 3rd quarters of 2003.

1st Quarter 2003	3rd Quarter 2003
Sonship—21 times	Sonship—25 times
Sonship Status—2 times	Sonship Education—1 time
Sonship Life—1 time	Sonship Lives—13 times
Sonship Doctrines—1 time	Sonship Edification—6 times
Sonship Prayer—4 times	Curriculum for Our Sonship Edification—4 times
Sonship Edification—6 times (1 st occurrence)	Adoption—8 times
Sonship Education & Edification—2 times (1 st occurrence)	Adopted—1 time
Sonship Relationship—1 time	Edifying—1 time
Sonship Learning & Edification—1 time (1 st occurrence)	Godly Edifying—1 time
Curriculum—2 times (1 st occurrence)	
Curriculum For Our Edification—1 time	
Curriculum For Our Godly Edification—1 time	
His Business—2 times	
God’s Business—1 time	
Adoption—5 times	
Adopted—3 times	
Edification in Godliness—2 times	
Edified—1 time	
Godly Edifying—7 times	