

Sunday, March 8, 2015—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 165 Sonship Edification: The Evolution of SE in the Writings of Keith R. Blades, 2004 through 2006

Introduction

- In the interest of time and in order to avoid the painstaking process of going quarter by quarter and year by year through the remaining six years of the *Enjoy the Bible Quarterly (EBQ)*, in this lesson we will adjust our approach and seek to summarize the major doctrinal developments in Sonship Edification (SE) between 2004 and 2006 by adopting a more topical approach.
- Adopting a more topical approach to the time period between 2004 and 2006 merits a discussion of three general topics: 1) general advances, 2) sonship checkpoints, and 3) the father’s chain of provision.

General Advances: 2004 to 2005

- In the [1st quarter of 2004](#), Blades wrote an article titled “Loving God.” In this article Blades teaches that it is only through the “outworking and progress of our sonship edification” that believers “are brought into close, intimate fellowship with God our Father, and our love for God is able to grow beyond the issue of loving Him only as our Justifier and Savior,” i.e., Romans 1 through 6. (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2004, 6) In short, it is only through SE that one can learn to love God to the fullest extent.
 - “Yea, it is through our sonship education and edification that we enter into a love affair with our God and our Father, which makes it so that throughout the course of our edification and maturing relationship we are enabled to say to Him, “Abba, Father; I love thee today more than yesterday, yet less than tomorrow” . . . May it be that your love for God is indeed manifold; that through the effectual working of your sonship edification you are learning to love God your Father for the many reasons, and in the many ways, that we as His “sons” should love Him. But most of all may it be that you are not among those who, though saints, are “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.” (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2004, 6)
- “Looking at What You Cannot See” from the [3rd quarter of 2004](#) speaks about the “greater edification attainments” offered by Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. As the title suggests, this article focuses on the need for the believers to walk by faith and not by sight in order for their “Godly edifying” to be properly accomplished.
 - . . . ‘walking by faith, not by sight,’ . . . is an integral, indispensable virtue in our sonship lives, which only becomes more and more of an issue, (and so more and more of a necessity for us), as our godly edification increases and matures. Consequently we cannot properly live as “sons” to our Father’s honor and glory, or to the fullness of the effectual working within us of His curriculum for our “godly edifying,” if we walk by sight or senses, and not by faith. The plain fact is that the nature of our sonship edification

demands ‘walking by faith,’ with the result that little or nothing beyond partial establishment can take place without it.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2004, 4)

- A third general advancement can be found in the main EBQ article from the [1st quarter of 2005](#) titled “The Importance of the Effectual Working of Romans 9-11, Briefly Considered.” It is here that we find, for the first time, the sonship curriculum laid out using the following terms and divisions: 1) Sonship Establishment (Romans 8:16-39), 2) Dispensational Establishment (Romans 9-11), and 3) Sonship Education (Romans 12).
 - “Therefore in view of the vital, practical nature of the dispensational doctrines of Romans 9–11, it should not surprise us that God has Paul teach them to us immediately following our sonship establishment at the end of Romans 8. Likewise we should perceive God’s wisdom in having them immediately precede the actual commencement of our sonship education in Romans 12. For it should be obvious that before we can actually begin our sonship education in earnest, we must not only have it firmly settled in our minds that we know exactly who we are in God’s plan and purpose, but we must also know exactly where God’s specific curriculum for our education today is to be found in the Bible.” (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2005, 3)

Sonship Checkpoints: 3rd Quarter 2005

- In the [3rd quarter of 2005](#), four years after commencing his public proclamation of SE in the 3rd quarter of 2001, Blades introduces the readers of the *EBQ* to the notion of “sonship checkpoints” with the publication of “Sonship Checkpoints: And the Issue of Us Intelligently Presenting Ourselves to Our Father.”
- Right out of the gate, in the article’s first paragraph, Blades begins to explain what a “checkpoint” is and why they are a necessary part of the “sonship curriculum.”
 - “Throughout the entire course of our lives as the “sons of God” that we are in this present dispensation of God’s grace, and as we are progressively “led by the Spirit of God” through the full scope of the curriculum for our sonship edification, we are regularly brought to a number of prescribed way-points, or designated checkpoints along the way. These are specific points within the progress of our edification at which the ‘measure of our godly edifying’ is taken, so to speak, and in a sense an assessment is then made of our fitness and readiness to go on. Since we are involved in edification — i.e. “godly edifying which is in faith” — it is only natural that we should encounter such checkpoints.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2005, 1)
- Clearly borrowing conceptually from R.B. Thieme, Blades proceeds to compare the believer’s edification with a building project that must pass various points of inspection before progress can continue.

- “Moreover we should not only expect such checkpoints, we should even desire them. For our sonship edification is both a building project and a process, just as the word ‘edification’ denotes. And as with any building project there is not only a blueprint that defines and describes the building that is being built, but there is also a construction plan that defines and describes the process by which the building is to be erected. Not only this, but the construction plan is broken down into all of the various stages of construction that are necessary in order for the building to be constructed properly. Moreover within the construction plan, (and in direct connection with the prescribed stages of the construction process), there are a number of scheduled points, or times, at which the building is inspected. It is inspected not only by the builder himself, but also by a qualified inspector, to ensure that the building is being constructed properly and to ensure that the next stage of construction can go ahead as planned.

Now these times at which the building inspector comes by are times at which he checks up on how the ‘edification of the edifice’ is progressing, so to speak. Hence they are prescribed ‘checkpoints’ that are encountered along the way as the building project takes shape. At each of these points, the inspector specifically evaluates the work that has been done so far at any particular stage in the construction process, and he determines whether or not that work has been done properly. If so, then the next stage in construction can proceed on as planned. But if not, then wherever he finds fault the appropriate steps must be taken to correct the faults before the building process will be able to proceed on successfully. For in an edification project each stage in the process is interconnected, making them dependent upon each other. Hence the success of each stage in the process is dependent upon the success of the previous one.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2005, 1)

- Given the similarities between a building project and the believer’s edification and progression through the curriculum, it is only natural to expect and anticipate the existence of spiritual checkpoints in the curriculum, according to Blades.
 - “Prescribed ‘checkpoints,’ therefore, are a natural part of any edification project and process; whether it be a physical or material one, or a spiritual or educational one.

Wherefore we should not think it strange to find a similar thing in the ‘overall construction plan’ for our sonship edification. For in designing and composing the curriculum for it, our Father has actually ‘drawn up a blueprint,’ so to speak, for the building that we are to build, and He has given it to us so that we can build the building properly. And in connection with doing this He has also incorporated into the blueprint/curriculum all of the various points of inspection, or checkpoints, that are necessary for us to encounter, (as well as to pass), in order to provide for us to be able to succeed with our sonship edification and to obtain the full benefits from it.”

Wherefore *sonship checkpoints* are exactly what we do find strategically placed throughout the curriculum for our sonship edification. And God, being our Father, has clearly purposed that we encounter these points of assessment. For they are integral

components to our edification. And being such, it is not only important for us to understand and appreciate them, but also to clearly recognize them. However it is even more important that we give heed to them. That we honestly deal with them. That we let them effectually do their evaluating work, and then be wise “sons” who respond to their assessment positively and properly. For our “godly edifying which is in faith” depends upon this. (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2005, 1-2)

- That Blades viewed Paul as being keenly aware that he was writing a curriculum is evident from his comments on the supposed “sonship checkpoint” found in I Corinthians 3:1-4.
 - “Now as was just said, the reason Paul limited his ministry to these saints was because he *had* to. He knew that the curriculum for our sonship edification demanded this. For the truth of the matter is that these saints had come to one of the early ‘checkpoints’ in their godly edifying, and when it evaluated them, they were found wanting. They failed to ‘clear the checkpoint,’ so to speak. They did not possess the necessary credentials, (or the prerequisite knowledge and understanding and comprehension), to go on. And Paul knew it.

For as Paul had said earlier on in chapter 2, though he had wisdom to speak, he only spoke it “among them that are perfect.” And that’s the ‘checkpoint’ these saints could not yet clear. They were not “perfect” yet.

In order to be “perfect” these saints needed to have all of the establishment doctrines of “the testimony of Christ” that Paul had taught them effectually working within them. And by their effectual working within them they needed to be brought to the status of being “spiritual,” as Paul goes on to describe in the balance of chapter 2. For only by being “spiritual” saints would they be able to deal with the specific kind of “wisdom” that Paul had for them in the next portion of the curriculum for our sonship edification.

Now, once again, meeting this criterion of being “perfect” was not something that Paul himself just made up, or imposed. Rather it is something that God our Father established. And He imposes it and enforces it in our edification, just as Paul goes on to declare as he describes the Holy Ghost’s teaching ministry within us as we deal with our sonship curriculum.

Therefore the *sonship checkpoint* that determines whether a saint is “spiritual,” or is “yet carnal,” is the particular checkpoint that these saints in Corinth failed to clear. And so since these saints were not “spiritual,” and were not ‘judging all things,’ (as ones who are “spiritual” would naturally do), Paul did not, and he would not, ‘speak unto them as unto spiritual.’ Therefore they could not, and they would not, be able to proceed on in their sonship edification until they were no longer “carnal.” Hence the reason for all of Paul’s reproofs, corrections, and instructions in righteousness throughout the whole of I Corinthians.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2005, 2-3)

- Blades considered the “sonship beseeching” found in Romans 12:1-2 as a “particular kind of beseeching” and the most important of all “sonship checkpoints.” It is in Romans 12:1-2 that God our Father checks in with his son to make sure they are “on the same page before actually beginning the son’s edification.” The purpose of this checkpoint is to make sure that all necessary “sonship virtues are in place” before a son’s sonship edification actually gets underway. This particular “sonship checkpoint” will “determine whether his ‘son’ is truly ready to get his sonship education underway or not.”
 - “If the “son” has indeed learned what his father has taught him about his sonship status and what it means; and if he has realized the grandeur of it all; and if he has responded positively to it so that he loves his sonship, and this has effectually produced within him a corresponding enthusiasm for his sonship education, and the commitment to get it; and if he has understood what his father has taught him about the power that there is in what he will be learning; and most importantly, if he has an appropriate measure of confidence and conviction from what his father has taught him so that he knows that if he will fully rely upon what he will be taught that he can succeed with his education, and that he can meet its goals and fulfill its objective; then he will *present himself* to his father as such. He will present himself to his father — yea, even dedicate and offer himself to his father — as an *intelligent* “son,” who understands what his sonship is all about, and who now wants nothing less than to get his sonship education underway. . . Moreover, by the time we arrive at Romans 12 we should also be possessors of the sonship virtue that fully realizes the measure of commitment, or dedication, that is required from us in order to receive, and succeed with, our sonship edification. Likewise we should understand what the overall work of sonship edification involves; what the blueprint/curriculum for our godly edifying looks like; what the stages of construction are; and what the purpose for the building is, both for now and for when this present dispensation is concluded.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2005, 4, 6)

- One of the article’s final sections “Clearing The Checkpoint” manifests the works based nature of SE.
 - “Obviously Romans 12:1–2 is a very important *sonship checkpoint* for us. And it behooves us to not only give heed to it, but to do so honestly; letting it effectually evaluate our readiness to go on, and then responding honestly to its evaluation.
 - Wherefore when we arrive at this sonship checkpoint, if we cannot *honestly* present ourselves to our Father as is described; if we do not clearly understand and appreciate what we are doing as “sons” when it comes to ‘presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God’; and if we do not clearly recognize that in view of being “sons” doing this is our only “reasonable service”; if we do not possess the measure of commitment that is required from us to deal with our sonship curriculum and to thereby actually bring about the renewing of our minds; and if we do not have full confidence in the effectual working of what we are going to be taught; then the truth of the matter is that we are not ready to go on. We are not *truly* ready to begin our sonship edification.

Rather we are actually ill-prepared for what it involves. We lack the adequate preparation for it, along with the proper measure of commitment to it, as well as full confidence in it. And we lack these things not having sufficiently benefited from the effectual working of what we have been given to learn particularly in Romans 6–8, and most especially in 8:14–39.

- If this should be the case with you, then instead of beseeching you to go on, in essence this sonship checkpoint beseeches you to go back. To go back especially into the doctrine of your sanctified position “in Christ,” and into the doctrine of your sonship status, and into the doctrines that are designed to give you your essential sonship virtues and to fully produce your sonship establishment; so that you can learn what you have not yet fully learned. For just as with any building project, work on the actual edifice cannot begin, or should not begin, until the foundation for it has been properly and sufficiently laid. And the foundation for our sonship edification is our sonship establishment, which is what the effectual working of Romans 1–11 produces within us.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2005, 4, 6)
- “Sonship checkpoints” are “integral and important elements” to the sonship curriculum in that they scrutinize a son’s “fitness” to move on. They are therefore not to be treated lightly or dishonestly but rather a son should desire them and look forward to their evaluation as a necessary part of our sonship edification. (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2005, 7)
- Finally, Blades urges his readers not to settle for or accept the counterfeit edification offered by “learning a bunch of Bible data,” “learning Bible facts and figures,” “systematic theology,” or “a series of topical doctrines.” In contrast, Blades states,
 - “. . . our sonship edification is the issue of “godly edifying.” It is the issue of us being led by the Spirit of God through a carefully planned and constructed curriculum that was personally developed by our Father for us, and that has been specifically designed by Him to actually renew our minds with the very same kind of information and thinking capacity that operates in His mind, so that we ourselves can think like He does, live like He does, and can labour with Him in the operations of His business.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2005, 7)

Father’s Chain of Provision: 3rd and 4th Quarter of 2006

- Beginning in the 3rd quarter of 2006 Blades began writing a two part article that spanned the 3rd and 4th quarter issues of the *EBQ*. The first part was titled [A Weak Link](#) (3rd quarter) and the second part [A Strong Link](#) (4th quarter). These two articles set forth Blades’ thinking regarding something that he called the “father’s chain of provision.” According to Blades, there are numerous chains that God is forming; the most important of which is the “father’s chain of provision” for the Godly edification of his son.

- “We actually function as a link in a number of different ‘chains of God’s forging,’ beginning right with “the gospel of Christ.” Yet the particular chain that we want to focus upon is one that pertains to our sanctification “in Christ” and to God our Father’s purpose in having given us “the adoption of sons.” Specifically we are concerned with the chain God has forged that provides for our godly edification, or more to the point that provides for the *success* of our godly edification.

Now God indeed has forged just such a chain, with each link being perfectly worked by Him and joined one to another so that the ultimate objective of our “godly edifying” can be reached, and so that we can both attain and obtain the glory thereof.

Howbeit in accordance with both the privilege and responsibility that is ours having received “the adoption of sons” there is one link in this chain that by nature requires *our* active participation and *our* input in order for it to function properly. In other words it requires a positive and proper response and function from us in order for it to be a ‘strong link’ in the chain, which can then couple its strength with that of the other strong links and so ensure the success of the chain’s job.

This particular ‘link’ is *ourselves* in view of being “the sons of God” that we are in this present dispensation of God’s grace, having received from God our Father “the adoption of sons.” And *our active participation and input*, (which our Father has designed to comprise the strength of our ‘link’), is the issue of our positive and proper attitude towards our sonship education and edification, as well as our proper response to it.

Wherefore if we have both the proper attitude and response to our sonship education and edification, then we will be able to function as a ‘strong link’ in the chain that God has forged to provide for the success of our “godly edifying.” We will then be able to achieve every attainment that is contained within its curriculum, and thereby be able to reach its ultimate objective. But if our attitude and response to our sonship edification is not what it should be, then we will be ‘the weak link’ in the chain, and as such we will fail to attain and obtain all that the forging of the chain has been designed to provide for us to attain. Hence in view of what is at stake with this particular chain of God’s forging, we should not want to be ‘the weak link’ in it.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2006, 2)

- In terms of providing for the success of our “sonship lives and edification” God our father has forged both the first and last links in his chain of provision. The last link was hammered out first when the father decided and purposed the ultimate objective of his son’s education and life. Meanwhile, the first link in the “father’s chain of provision” relates to the design and composition of the curriculum that God provided whereby he can accomplish the ultimate objective comprised in the final link. (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2006, 2) In the mind of Blades, Romans 8:14-39 describes God’s “chain of provision” for us as part of our sonship establishment.
 - “Wherefore we are given to understand and appreciate that every link in ‘the chain of provision’ for the success of our sonship lives and education has been perfectly designed

and forged by God our Father for us, and has been put into place. No link is missing, or has yet to be forged, or is faulty or inadequate.

Instead, from what our Father has showed us and has described to us we are to look upon His ‘chain of provision’ with great awe and admiration. Not only because of the perfection of its completeness, but also because of the superb quality and strength of its links — including the quality and strength of ‘the link of our sonship status,’ even though as “sons” we are given to know that the onus is upon us to live properly as “sons” so as not to be ‘the weak link’ in the chain.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2006, 3)

- Believers can avoid being a “weak link” in the “father’s chain of provision” by responding positively and properly to both our sonship status and to the curriculum for our sonship edification. Only by having the proper response can a believer avoid being a “weak link” in the “chain of provision.”
 - “. . . but we actually make ‘our link’ to be just as strong and enduring as the other links in the chain, and we thereby ensure our success of meeting the objective of our Father’s purpose with us as His “sons.”

. . . As stated, we function as a ‘strong link’ when (1) we respond positively and properly to our sonship status itself, and (2) when we also respond positively and properly to what we are taught by our Father throughout the course of His curriculum for our sonship edification.

Now of these two components to being a ‘strong link’ our response to our sonship status is the most fundamental. For if we lack the positive and proper response to our sonship status itself, it should come as no surprise that neither will we have an adequate positive or an adequate proper response to the issue of our sonship education.

Hence responding properly to our sonship status itself is not only fundamental for us, it is also a prerequisite to our ability to respond properly and fully to our sonship education. Therefore it needs to be looked at first.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2006, 3-4)

- “It is our commitment to sonship learning that more or less defines whether or not we have the positive and proper response to our sonship status that we ought to have and need to have, if we do not want to be ‘the weak link.’” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2006, 5)
- According to Blades, one’s commitment to “sonship learning” is not subjective or arbitrary but “plainly described in the Book of Proverbs where, in His program with Israel, God not only specifically deals in detail with the issue of “the adoption of sons,” but He also sets forth the general format for sonship education.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2006, 5)
- It is the 3rd quarter of 2006, some six years after the turning point in the 3rd quarter of 2001 that one encounters clear connections between the Book of Proverbs and how believers in the dispensation of Grace are to be edified in the thought stream of Keith R. Blades. Proverbs 2:1-5 sets forth “the kind of commitment to sonship learning that a son needs to have,” according to

Blades. The three commitments of sonship learning are found in the three ‘if’ statements of Proverbs 2:1-5. (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2006, 5)

- “With the **first** ‘if’ the foundation, or first measure of sonship commitment is described. Hence the father says... (Quotes Pro. 2:1-2)

Very simply put, our first measure of commitment has to do with our basic attitude toward our Father’s desire to educate us. And as stated our attitude ought to be one of truly wanting our sonship education, with no insincerity or pretense. It begins with us having the genuine willingness and desire to ‘receive our Father’s words’ and thereby be taught by Him. And then in connection with being taught by Him our attitude should be such that we also purposefully determine to ‘hide His commandments with us,’ having the sincere and strong desire to make full use of them and to have them effectually work within us precisely as He has designed.” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2006, 5)

- “The **second** measure is described by the second ‘if’ in verse 3 of Proverbs chapter 2 when the father says... (Quotes Pro. 2:3)

In saying this the father describes how his son needs to actively participate in the sonship learning process. And indeed he does. For the very nature of sonship education and edification demands that the son have active interaction with his father in what he is being taught, if both he and his father are going to be able to properly deal with everything that the son needs to learn.

... We too, therefore, need to actively participate and actively interact with our Father as He educates us; as the Spirit of God — the Spirit of adoption — leads us through the curriculum for our sonship edification. And such active participation and interaction for us should especially involve us partaking of the God-designed opportunities that are built into the operation of a local church for the specific purpose of ensuring that proper learning takes place by all the saints. And also it especially involves us taking advantage of the privilege of sonship prayer, whereby our Father ‘searches our hearts’ for the very purpose of personally dealing with us about the proper understanding of, and application of, what He is teaching us.

Wherefore this second measure of commitment to sonship learning should also be possessed by us, if we are to have the positive and proper response to our sonship status and edification that we need to have in order for us not to be ‘the weak link in the chain.’” (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2006, 6)

- “The **third** and final measure of commitment to sonship learning is set forth with the third ‘if’ when the father says...(Quotes Pro. 2:4)

... a son needs to pursue his sonship education and edification vigorously and with strong compulsion. All of the various aims and benefits that the father has built into the curriculum for his son’s education ought to be perceived by the son as being so important and valuable that they grip him with a compelling drive to possess them.

In other words all of the aims, goals, benefits, attainments, and the like, belonging to his sonship education, (along with the unspeakable glory of obtaining its ultimate objective),

ought to so captivate the son that no other desire or pursuit in his life equals that of getting his sonship education and edification.

Wherefore getting his sonship education and edification is to be a son's top priority in life. . . To put it bluntly, we ought to orient and organize our lives around the pressing need for, (and around the compelling pursuit of), getting our sonship education; and not the other way around. For in view of being "the sons of God" that we are, getting our sonship education and attaining the objectives thereof *is* our life." (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2006, 6)

- The second half of the article titled *A Strong Link* from the 4th quarter of 2006 is largely redundant and recaps much of the same ground covered in the first (a phenomenon that is not uncommon in the writings of Blades). Our primary concern here is with the very end of this two part article found in the 4th quarter issue of the *EBQ* from 2006. The last two paragraphs capture the works based nature of SE, God our Father and his curriculum cannot and will not fail, "they are faultless." Rather, if one finds themselves in the position of being a "weak link" it is their own fault because they are deficient in one of the three sonship commitments outlined above and found in Proverbs 2:1-5.
 - "We are going to function as either a 'weak' or 'strong' link in our Father's 'chain of provision' for the success of our sonship lives and "godly edifying." They are the only two options. However there really is no excuse for us to be anything but a 'strong' link. For the doctrine about our sonship status in Romans 8:14–15, and the following doctrines for our sonship establishment in Romans 8:16–39, provide us with the very means by which we can function as a 'strong' link. They are purposefully designed by God to generate within us the two kinds of positive and proper responses that we need in order to be a 'strong' link. Wherefore we just need to avail ourselves of them, let them effectually work within us, and thereby be the 'strong' link that we ought to be.

So then the upshot of the matter is this: To whatever degree, or in whatever way, we may fail to succeed with meeting any or all of the educational expectations and attainments that are in the curriculum for our "godly edifying," the reason for any failure cannot be attributed either to our Father, or to any of His provisions for us, or to His curriculum. For they are faultless. Rather any reason for failure lies solely with ourselves. Because the simple fact is that we do not have to be a 'weak' link." (Blades, *EBQ* 4th Quarter 2006, 6)