

Sunday, March 15, 2015—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 166 Sonship Edification: The Evolution of SE in the Writings of Keith R. Blades, 2007 through 2009

Introduction

- In Lesson 165 we summarized the major developments in Sonship Edification (SE) from the pen of Keith R. Blades between 2004 and 2006. In doing so we noted the first clear usage of the terms Sonship Establishment (Romans 8:16-39), Dispensational Establishment (Romans 9-11), and Sonship Education (Romans 12) to delineate the various sections of the “curriculum” (1st Quarter 2005). The bulk of Lesson 165 was devoted to surveying the following major developments: 1) the discussion of “checkpoints” in the curriculum (3rd Quarter 2005), and 2) the Father’s Chain of Provision (3rd and 4th Quarters of 2006).
- In this lesson we want to conclude our discussion of the evolution of SE in the writings of Keith R. Blades by surveying the major developments in SE thinking observable in the *Enjoy the Bible Quarterly* (*EBQ*) between 2007 and 2009.

2007

[1st Quarter 2007: Suitably Impressed and Unimpressed](#)

- In this issue of the *EBQ*, Blades expands upon issues that are already in the thought stream – such as “the creature” and the curriculum’s ability to provide “vocational education and training” and equip believers to bring “functional life” to the creature.
 - “Wherefore our sonship education and edification is actually *highly specialized vocational education and training for us*. It is preparing us to occupy the various positions of intelligentsia of “the creature,” and in so doing to become its functional life-force for God.

Now with this being the case, each aim and goal of our sonship education is naturally a vital and integral part of the vocational education and training that we need as God’s “new creature.” For first of all each of them instills us with required knowledge and understanding that we need for being able to be the intelligence of “the creature.” By doing this, they then in turn provide us with the various capacities and abilities that we will need in order to carry out the creature’s functional life.

Accordingly, therefore, each one of our educational goals and objectives serves to provide us with the acquisition of the highly specialized knowledge, skills, and skillsets that we will need in order to be able to intelligently function in the various positions of intelligentsia belonging to “the creature,” and thereby be able to properly direct and implement its governmental administration of the heavenly places, and produce the functional life thereof.” (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2007, 1)

- According to Blades, only Sonship Education by the Father’s curriculum prepares believers for their heavenly vocation and conforms them to the image of Christ.
 - “In other words, as we progress through our curriculum, and as each educational aim and objective that we achieve effectually prepares us and trains us for our vocation in the heavenly places, each one also corresponds with a recognizable aspect of the Lord Jesus Christ’s own glorious character and image in accordance with “godly edifying.” Hence our attainment of each aim effectually generates in us an identifiable feature or characteristic belonging to God’s own glorious character, and it actually puts it on display. . . . And indeed this should be so. For as our “godly edifying” generates within us the components of godliness — Godly thinking, Godly behaviour, and Godly labour — it is also naturally designed to generate within us the very same thoughts, reactions, and responses that our Father has towards things that displease Him, or that are contrary to Him and to His desire for us. Or more to the point, as our sonship edification conforms us to the image of God’s Son and prepares us for our vocation as God’s “new creature,” by nature it is also designed to generate within us the same attitude of contempt and disregard, (and even disdain), that God Himself has towards things that are purposefully ungodly and/or that are deliberately at odds with His desire to educate us as His “sons.”” (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2007, 3)

- Believers get in the way of their own edification and become their own stumbling block when they fail to be “suitably impressed with what God our Father” teaches in his curriculum.
 - “As we progress through the curriculum for our sonship education we are actually taught to become unimpressed with a number of things, (with some being easier for us to have contempt for and/or disregard than others). But those that we are taught about at the outset, and during the early stages of our “godly edifying,” are the ones which it is most needful for us to condemn. This is particularly so when we realize that if we do not become suitably unimpressed with them at the time that God teaches us about them, then they can become formidable stumbling blocks and hindrances to our ability to make proper progress in our sonship education. . . . Therefore when we fail to become *suitably unimpressed* with what God our Father tells us that He discounts, denounces, or condemns, we ourselves can then become our own stumbling block, even our own worst enemy. For by having improper regard for something that God condemns, we actually carry around in our own minds the very means by which we can be tripped up, or sidetracked, or misled, or seduced, and thereby have the progress of our “godly edifying” impeded. And unfortunately we also carry around in our minds built in resistance to being able to honestly perceive and admit that we ourselves are actually hindering our own “godly edifying.”” (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2007, 4)

 - “So then along with us being *suitably impressed* with each of the aims, goals, and objectives of our sonship education, our Father has also definitely designed that we become *suitably unimpressed* with some other things; especially anything that can either clearly or surreptitiously work against the success of our “godly edifying.”

Wherefore it not only behooves us to make sure that we are *suitably unimpressed* with the few fundamental things that have been mentioned, but that we are also unimpressed with all similar type things. For if we are “sons” who want to ensure the success of our sonship education, we too should be able to say with our apostle Paul (Quotes Phil. 3:8).” (Blades, *EBQ* 1st Quarter 2007, 6)

2nd and 3rd Quarter 2007: [Straitened in Our Own Bowels: A Brief Look at this Troublesome Ailment, Including Its Cause and Cure](#)

- The 2nd and 3rd quarters of 2007 saw the publication of another two part feature article – same as in the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2006. The subject matter is taken from II Corinthians 6:11-13 and dealt with the cause and cure for being “straitened in your own bowels.” Regarding this topic Blades stated, “Just as the health and proper functioning of our physical bowels are vital to the welfare of our physical lives, so the health and proper functioning of *the bowels of our inner man* are vital to the welfare of our sonship lives and to our godly edifying in this present dispensation of God’s grace.” (Blades, *EBQ* 2nd Quarter 2007, 1)
- According to Blades, the “bowels of our inner man” are the seat of our sensitivity, affection, and emotional response to what we face in life, based upon our personal likes and dislikes. They figuratively parallel how our physical bowels are very sensitive to our affections and emotions, and are expressive of them. So our inner bowels refer to our sensitivity to things we encounter in our lives, and to our response to them, based upon whether or not we like what we encounter, or agree with them, or find pleasure in them, or are touched by them, etc. (Blades, *EBQ* 2nd Quarter 2007, 1-2)
- As with everything else, Blades ultimately ties all this back into sonship. As one matriculates through the curriculum, God our Father works to make it so that *we like what He likes*, and so that *we dislike what He dislikes*. Or in other words, He works to make our ‘likes and dislikes,’ (which govern our bowels), to be the very same as His own ‘likes and dislikes.’ (Blades, *EBQ* 2nd Quarter 2007, 3)
 - “In short, in accordance with His purpose of conforming us to the image of His Son, our Father works to make it so that we have “the bowels of Jesus Christ.” He therefore works to give us the Lord Jesus Christ’s ‘likes and dislikes,’ and thereby cause us to have the same bowels of sensitivity, affection, and emotional responsiveness to His will and desires for us in our sonship lives as that which belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ in His sonship. . . Whenever we find some aspect about our conformity to the image of Christ to be unpleasant to us, or offensive, or disagreeable; or when we are disinterested in it, or are less-than-enthusiastic about it; and we decide to resist it, or ignore it, or somehow avoid it; then we have become straitened in our own bowels towards our Father’s expressed will and desire for us. Our own ‘likes and dislikes’ cause us to object to some aspect of our Father’s expressed desire for us, and so we straiten our dealings with Him because of it; limiting or confining our cooperation with Him to those things with which we have no objection. This, once again, is the gist of what it means for us to be *straitened in our own bowels*. And from this brief description we also can see that it is a *self-induced ailment*.” (Blades, *EBQ* 2nd Quarter 2007, 3)

- The question of whether or not a saint has cried Abba, Father is paramount in determining whether or not they are straitened in their own bowels, according to Blades. The crying of Abba, Father, though, does not pertain simply to having understood and appreciated the liberties and privileges but the full pursuit of the curriculum and its rewards.
 - “Therefore do you “cry, Abba, Father” regarding obtaining your sonship education and edification, knowing that it is your vocational education and training for the glorious eternal vocation your Father has for you in His business? And since this is so, are you pursuing your “godly edifying” with earnest zeal, esteeming it to be your most worthwhile and needful pursuit, and cherishing its incomparable rewards and benefits more than what this world can offer you?” (Blades, *EBQ* 2nd Quarter 2007, 5)
- Regarding this situation, Blades asks his readers whether or not Proverbs 3:13-15 is true for them.
 - “Are your bowels receptive to this? Does this *truly* constitute part of the ‘table of likes and dislikes’ of your heart? Or are you more happy ‘finding’ and ‘getting’ things in your life other than your sonship education, or in preference to it? Do you prefer ‘the merchandise of silver’ and ‘the gain of gold’ to the merchandise and gain that your Father has designed for you to purchase by means of your sonship education? Does the value you place upon getting your sonship education testify that the saying ‘all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her’ is true of you?” (Blades, *EBQ* 2nd Quarter 2007, 5)
- [“The Cure for Being Straitened in Our Own Bowels: The Conclusion to our Two-part Article on this Troublesome Ailment”](#) is the topic of the 3rd quarter issue from 2007. “Since the cause of the ailment is having a heart whose ‘table of likes and dislikes’ does not properly or fully conform to our Father’s own ‘likes and dislikes’ for us as His “sons,” then, obviously, the cure lies in remedying this discrepancy.” Consequently, the cure “lies in us being honest with ourselves and with our Father, and undergoing *a heart operation* to fix the discrepancy between our heart’s ‘likes and dislikes’ and those of our Father,” according to Blades. (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2007, 1)
- So the cure for being straitened in your own bowels is to have “an enlarged heart” according to II Cor. 6:11-13 and Proverbs 23:36. Once again, this heart enlarging cure prescribed by Blades comes at the hands of a proper response and application of the sonship curriculum.
 - Now this is the very kind of ‘heart enlargement’ that is naturally supposed to occur in sonship. For after a father gives his child “the adoption of sons,” his son is then expected to begin to ‘enlarge his heart’ by starting to fill it with the content of his father’s heart. Moreover this enlarging of the son’s heart is something that takes place on a regular on-going basis throughout his sonship education and edification. . . . But having now brought his son to a significant juncture in his sonship education, the father specifically works to ‘enlarge’ his son’s heart some more so that he will earnestly desire to partake of the next advancement in his sonship edification and life.

The father does this to make it so that his son will *strongly* desire the next step in his sonship life, especially in preference to certain powerful worldly desires and seductions which his son will face. For the father knows that not only could these temptations seriously interfere with his son’s sonship edification if his heart inclines unto them, but

they could also derail it, even destroying his son's ability to go on." (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2007, 2)

- "Therefore in connection with our sonship status itself, if we are straitened in our bowels at the issue of properly applying ourselves to getting our sonship education, (i.e. if we prefer other pursuits in life to that of getting our sonship education; or if we are more happy having the merchandise of this world rather than the merchandise of sonship wisdom; or if we prefer the world's definition for 'living life to the fullest' to that of God's definition; or in short, if we are in any sense "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God"), then our heart needs the most basic form of 'enlargement.' For we clearly are not as passionate about our sonship status as we should be." (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2007, 3)
- For those who are straitened in their own bowels with respect to the "sufferings of Christ" Blades prescribes the exhortation in Proverbs 1:7-9 as the cure for being suitably unimpressed with the things of the world that hamper a son's education and matriculation through the curriculum. A wise son should be pursuing after his sonship education and vocational training so as to qualify for the "creature's positions of intelligentsia. In short, believers ought to be seeking after the acquisition of "creature-skills" as well as "creature capacities and abilities" that only come through the curriculum. (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2007, 4)
- The enlarging of a son's heart is provided for at "strategic points throughout the course of our sonship education and lives." One such strategic point is when a son becomes "eligible to partake of any of prescribed sonship sufferings." The cure for being straitened in our bowels with respect to our sonship sufferings resides with a son "learning to be impressed with just how great an honor and a privilege it is for us to partake of the suffering. And then once we are suitably impressed with the privilege, our heart can begin the process of being enlarged." (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2007, 5)
- In conclusion to this two part article Blades wrote:
 - "However knowing what the cure is and having it readily available to us does not do us any real good, *if we do not take it*. What's more, in accordance with being adult "sons," it is *our responsibility* to avail ourselves of the cure.

So then if you are straitened in your own bowels at any of the demands of sonship living, or at the sonship grace of suffering for godliness' sake, or at partaking of any of "the sufferings of Christ," (or for that matter at any aspect of our Father's will and desire for us as His "sons"), do not resign yourself to 'just live with it.' For this is neither a harmless nor a merely inconvenient ailment to have. Instead it truly can, and it truly does, wreck havoc with our sonship lives. And it will not go away, or get better, on its own.

Therefore, be a wise son and take the cure." (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2007, 7)

2008

- In 2008 Keith published a three part series in the *EBQ* on the subject of *Acquiring Godly Love and Charity*. This series was advertised as a "follow-up to [Are You Being Taught of God to Love](#)

[One Another](#) from the 2nd quarter of 2006 (See small print under the title). The three articles that comprised this study include:

- [Acquiring Godly Love and Charity](#)—1st Quarter 2008
 - [Being Firmly Rooted and Established in Godly Love](#)—2nd Quarter 2008
 - [Ready for the Growth and Development of Godly Love and Charity](#)—3rd Quarter 2008
- After conducting a thorough reading of the *EBQs* from 2008, I have concluded that there is substantively no new thinking added to the SE thought stream in these issues of the quarterly. As always, they have much to say about a son being expected to “intelligently track” his “progress” through the curriculum for his sonship education. The local church is mentioned for the second time as being a “trade school” that affords his adopted sons a chance to engage in our Father’s operations as well as acquire and exercise the various vocational skills and abilities received from sonship education.
 - Throughout the course of my research I have heard from multiple witnesses that Keith came down out of Canada in August of 2008 and made an unanticipated appearance at the 2008 Northern Rocky Mountain Berean Bible Camp after many years of not attending. The Northwest Grace Conference’s website confirms that the theme of the camp that year was [Pressing Towards the Mark: How to Participate in Your Own Edification](#). Given that the topic that summer was “edification” it is natural to see why Blades would have been interested in checking it out. The speakers that year were John Verstegen and Alex Kurz.
 - It is commonly reported by those who were in attendance, including Brothers Verstegen and Kurz, that Keith met with some saints one afternoon while others went on an outing. During this meeting Keith expressed the useless value of the topical teaching format of the camp because it did not follow the sense and sequence of the sonship curriculum found in Paul’s epistles. Many of these saints reported having been deeply troubled by the things Keith said at this impromptu meeting.
 - Brother Jordan told me in one of our conversations that the last contact anyone associated with Grace School of the Bible had with Keith was at the Bible Camp in Montana in August of 2008.

2009

- There was no *EBQ* for the 1st quarter of 2009. The 2nd quarter issue contained the following statement in an announcement sidebar titled “From EBM To You:”
 - “Due to Keith’s situation we did not attempt to publish a first quarter edition of the ETB Quarterly. And even though he has some life-style adjustments to make, and also has a few complications that need to be dealt with, with this second quarter edition we hope to resume publishing the Quarterly on our regular schedule.” (Blades, *EBQ* 2nd Quarter 2009, 2)
- The lead story from the 2nd quarter of 2009 was titled “[Do You Have the Dew of Your Youth? A Brief Look at this Vital Need](#)” In this article Blades maintains the decisions made by a son in his sonship youth will shape the nature of his or her adult sonship life.

- “Now there is no context in which the time of youth is more meaningful, (and during which there is more at stake), than in the context of our sonship status in this present dispensation of God’s grace. And so when it comes to us making the kinds of decisions and choices that determine what our adult sonship lives will be like, there are none more important than those that we are given to make at the outset of our sonship youth when God our Father provides for us to acquire *our proper and necessary sonship virtues*.

For our sonship virtues are what effectually shape, determine, and ensure what the quality and worth of our sonship living will be. And as such they are vital and powerful virtues, which when we acquire them and operate upon them they function as *the dew of our youth*.” (Blades, *EBQ* 2nd Quarter 2009, 2)

- It is at the outset of one’s sonship youth that he is given to acquire “the dew of their youth.” Specifically it is during the sonship orientation and establishment provided in Romans 8:14-39, “that our Father provides for us to acquire our proper and necessary sonship virtues with their dew-like qualities.” The dew of one’s sonship youth is provided for by the three main components of sonship established in Romans 8:16-39. The three components include:

- “(1) the virtue of *being devoted to getting our vocational education come what may, as well as being committed to becoming proficient in carrying out the operations of our Father’s business, because we are far more impressed with the opportunity to be educated and trained in His business of being His “new creature,” as well as with the opportunity to invest our time and energy in His operations, than with anything else.*

Logically this is the first and foremost virtue that we need to acquire, seeing that the success of our sonship life depends so much upon how dedicated and committed we are to getting our sonship education and to living our sonship life.

(2) the virtue of *having implicit faith in whatever our Father teaches us in the curriculum for our education because we not only know that He is trustworthy, but because we know that His curriculum for our education is perfectly suited to its task and is flawless, with the result that we do not foolishly distrust or doubt any of His teachings or instructions, nor faithlessly question His wisdom, motives, or fidelity.*

This virtue is also naturally essential to our successful sonship living, especially in view of the numerous challenges, demands, and difficulties that we will encounter.

And (3) the virtue of *having unwavering loyalty to doing things our Father’s way, and to fulfilling His business operations, because we know that His way is the best and only way, and we are convinced of His word’s mighty power to operate within us, with the result that we do not compromise, alter, or refuse any of our Father’s operations, nor become self-willed.*

Likewise this virtue is also essential to successful sonship living. For it not only works to provide against us being cunningly enticed, fooled, or overthrown by opposition, but it also works to prevent us from being deterred or thwarted by any weakening of our resolve or by the draining of our courage.

. . . Now of these three virtues the second is the central one, and therefore the chief or controlling virtue. For without it our devotion to receiving our vocational education will

not amount to very much, nor will our loyalty to doing things our Father's way last very long." (Blades, *EBQ* 2nd Quarter 2009, 2-3)

- After spending much time and space talking about "Israel's Misspent Youth" and the example of our Lord Jesus Christ in his earthly ministry, Blades extols "The Power of the Dew of Our Sonship Youth" to see a son through the "fearsome tribulations and perils belonging to "the sufferings of Christ," and that come from the Adversary's policy of evil against us." (Blades, *EBQ* 2nd Quarter 2009, 7) It is the virtues acquired from the dew of our sonship youth (see above) that ought to sustain a son with dew-like freshness through all of the pressures of life.
- The final edition of the *EBQ* was published in the 3rd quarter of 2009 with a lead article titled "[Are We Disadvantaged: An Introduction to a Very Special Feature of God's Word.](#)" Once again there is much in this article that is redundant and observable in previous issues of the *EBQ*. One new development is the use of the terminology "five heart probing questions" to describe the questions raised by Paul in Romans 8:35-37. (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2009, 5-6)
- The conclusion of the final issue of the *EBQ* is taken up with a discussion of the relationship between the Apostle Paul and the alleged sonship curriculum. That Keith viewed Paul as being keenly aware that he was writing a curriculum is beyond doubt.
 - "For to us Paul's example and pattern is designed to be much more than a help. For God our Father has designed it to be much more than a simple guide, and even much more than a practical tutelage.

Instead He has designed it to be *a pattern to be followed*. A pattern in which we see the very kind of things that happen and occur when we pursue the course of our sonship education and properly live out our sonship lives. A pattern in which we can both see and sense how the demands and experiences of living our sonship lives are going to affect us. (For as they affected Paul, so also will they affect us.) And a pattern in which we can both see and sense just how the effectual working of our sonship education successfully operated within Paul, and in doing so be able to intelligently perceive exactly what our Father has designed specific aspects of our education to do for us, and how to properly apply them, so that they will effectually work within us as they worked within Paul, and thereby bring forth the same fruits unto God's glory in us as they did in Paul.

. . . But now let's be a bit more specific and look at this extraordinary capability a little closer. For the truth is that through the effectual working of being virtual eyewitnesses of Paul's example and pattern, and by having virtual empathy with his heart and mind, our Father has actually enabled us *to follow Paul's very thought processes, and also to sense the responses of his heart and bowels*, as he himself operated upon our sonship education and applied it to the details of his own sonship life.

In fact this means that our Father has enabled us to know the very kind of godly cogitations and heart-calming persuasions that Paul's godly edifying produced within him, and He has enabled us to know them just as intimately, and just as thoroughly,

as if we were able to personally talk to Paul about them, *like saints in his day were able to do with him.*

Wherefore as our Father enables us to virtually observe Paul's example and pattern, and empathize with him, we are actually able to benefit from his counsel and 'coaching' in the same way, and to the same extent, as if he personally took us aside and counselled us saying, 'Look, this is how what you have just learned is designed to work in your sonship life.' And so by being our pattern we are actually enabled to benefit from Paul explaining to us exactly what to expect out of the effectual working of what our Father teaches us, (just like he did with the saints in his day), seeing that he himself has already experienced what we are now experiencing, and he himself has already benefited from our Father's words on the matter." (Blades, *EBQ* 3rd Quarter 2009, 6-7)

- So ended the writing ministry of Keith R. Blades. There were no additional *EBQs* published between the 3rd quarter of 2009 and his death on July 4, 2010.