

Sunday, September 14, 2014—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 144
Sonship Edification: Origins

Introduction/Review

- The main point of Lessons 143 was to impress upon you that when you hear the word “sonship” you ought not to assume that you understand how a person is using that term. The terms “adoption” and “sonship” have a widely varied meaning depending on who is using them. Consequently, the majority of our time was spent looking at the question of “What’s In a Name?”
- In order to accomplish that purpose, we began by looking at how the Greek word translated “adoption” (*huiiothesia*) is rendered in both the King James Bible (KJB) and modern versions. By doing so we saw that the word “sonship” does not occur in the KJB. In contrast, modern versions such as the New International Version (NIV) render *huiiothesia* as “adoption to sonship” each of the five times the Greek word occurs in the New Testament text.
 - Sonship—“1) The state of being a son, or of having the relation of a son. 2) Filiation; the character of a son.” (*Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*)
 - Adoption—“1) The act of adopting, or the state of being adopted; the taking and treating of a stranger as one’s own child. 2) The receiving as one’s own, what is new or not natural. 3) God’s taking the sinful children of men into his favor and protection.” (*Webster’s 1828 Dictionary*)
- We further noted that many Bible teachers over the years have used the term “sonship” to describe the results of “adoption” in the Bible, i.e., the fact that all believers are adopted into the family of God as fully grown adults. We observed this point was considering the writings of C.H. Mackintosh from the 1860s and C.R. Stam from the twentieth century. Moreover, we considered the entry on “adoption” found in the popular reference work—*Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. This was done in an attempt to ascertain the mainline Evangelical view of adoption.
- Lastly, we considered the definition of “Biblical Adoption” that has been advanced by the supporters of Sonship Edification (SE).
 - “A father adopted his son for the purpose of installing and instilling his wisdom into his son so that the son would labor with his father in all his business.” (McDaniel, *SE Orientation*, Lesson 5, 5)
- Again, our main point of our last lesson was to impress upon you that when you hear the word “sonship” you ought not to assume that you understand how a person is using that term. The terms “adoption” and “sonship” have a widely varied meaning depending on who is using them.

- Before looking at the origins of SE within the Grace Movement, I would like to conclude our discussion of “What’s In a Name?” by presenting one more important name: the “Joint-heir Position.”

What’s In a Name? Part 2

DISCLAIMER: I deliberated long and hard over whether or not to include the information contained in this section in the Grace History Project. In the end, I determined that historical completeness and transparency necessitated the inclusion of this section. To get your bearings, we will be mentioning three different papers:

[*Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ?*](#) by Matt Stutzman (supported by Northern California Grace Fellowship (NCGF))

[*Ifs, Ands, and Buts: The Two-Inheritance Controversy of Romans 8:17*](#) by Pastor Bryan Ross - critique of Matt Stutzman’s *Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ?*

[*Wrongly Deriding Joint-heirs with Christ*](#) by Matt Stutzman & Ryan Michael Jones (supported by NCGF) - rebuttal to Pastor Ross’s paper. Please note the secondary rebuttals authored by Ryan Michael Jones: [*The King James Bible: it’s all Greek to Bryan Ross: An exposition of the Greek game of Bryan Ross*](#) and [*The Erroneous Acts 28 Argument... No Pauline Resurgence, Just "Old Chestnuts": A Rebuttal to the Acts 28 straw man of Bryan Ross*](#)

In late July of 2013, following the Grace School of the Bible Summer Family Bible Conference in Chicago, someone (I can’t remember who) sent me a copy of a paper titled *Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ?* published and promoted by NCGF. Around that same time I was added to the Joint-heirs with Christ group page on Facebook where the aforementioned paper was being “discussed.” After reading NCGF’s paper multiple times I became convinced that they were mistaken in how they were understanding “Joint-heirship” in Romans 8:17: NCGF’s paper maintains that the “if so be” in Romans 8:17 places a condition upon being a joint-heir with Christ in the previous part of the verse. The condition that needs to be met in order for one to qualify for “joint-heirship” according to these brethren is that one suffer with Christ in/for the Pauline paradigm of Scripture. Parties interested in the details of the doctrinal disagreement are encouraged to consult the papers listed above.

Following some initial participation in those discussions on Facebook, I left the group for a variety of reasons. In December, 2013 I preached a message at Grace Life Bible Church (GLBC) titled, “Is Saeed Abedini a Joint-Heir with Christ?” Unfortunately, during that message I accused the Brothers associated with NCGF of drafting their paper for the purposes of stirring up trouble on Facebook and the internet. I also called them “peons” and suggested that they forced me to use Greek to make my arguments. In late January, 2014 we (GLBC) removed the message “Is Saeed Abedini a Joint-heir with Christ?” from the internet and issued a public apology from the pulpit and on Facebook.

On Monday, March 17, 2014 I released my critique of NCGF’s paper on Facebook, *Ifs, Ands, and Buts: The Two Inheritance Controversy of Romans 8:17*. I then spoke on the subject at Grace School of the Bible’s April [Pastors Conference](#) where hard copies of my paper were distributed freely ([PowerPoint](#) used to present). As some of you may be aware, earlier this summer (late June and early July), immediately prior to and in preparation for the Grace School of the Bible Summer Family Bible Conference, NCGF published a “rebuttal” paper titled *Wrongly Deriding Joint-heirs With Christ* and sent it to as many of the conference speakers for which they had contact information. Enclosed was a cover letter from the Pastor of NCGF fully supporting the paper and commending it to the Brethren for their consideration.

As stated above, my decision to include the information contained in this section within the Grace History Project is in the interest of historical accuracy and transparency. Not only is the “joint-heir” controversy a modern development within the Grace Movement but is directly related to the subject matter we began discussing last week in Lesson 143, Sonship Edification. Consequently, the Grace History Project would be incomplete if this controversy were simply stricken from the record or ignored. Therefore, it is in the spirit of historical accuracy, NOT retaliation or revenge that I decided to include this content as a means of explaining why I and others associated the “joint-heir view” of NCGF with SE. I have included links to all the relevant documents, even those that are critical of my paper as well as my personal character (see papers listed above). I will seek to limit my comments to documentable FACTS only and offer little in the way of editorial commenting or personal defense against my accusers.

The Joint-Heir Position - Different Name, But Some Similar Teachings to SE

- Earlier this summer, NCGF released a “rebuttal” to *Its, Ands and Buts* titled *Wrongly Deriding Joint-heirs with Christ* in which they took exception with my associating their “joint-heir view” with SE. Specifically they characterized my work as a “conflation” of SE with their “joint-heir view.” Moreover, they denied having any “cognizance” of SE when drafting *Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ?* (Stutzman and Jones, 2) Similar accusations were also made in the NCGF YouTube video from May 6, 2014 titled “[The Similarities & Differences Between the Joint-heir Doctrine & Sonship Edification](#).” ([Click here](#) to access the written transcript of the video.)
- These are curious statements given the history of NCGF’s internet footprint as well as the public social media postings of one of my chief critics and authors of *Wrongly Deriding Joint-heirs with Christ*, Brother Ryan Michael Jones. See the PowerPoint for photographic evidence.
 - Slide 1—title page on contributors for *Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ*.
 - Author: Matt W. Stutzman
 - Contributor: Ryan Michael Jones
 - Special Thanks: Pastor Ron Knight of Northern California Grace Fellowship
 - Slide 2—title page for *Wrongly Deriding Joint-heirs with Christ*.
 - Authors: Matt W. Stutzman & Ryan Michael Jones
 - Special Thanks: Pastor Ron Knight of Northern California Grace Fellowship
 - Slide 3—screen shoot of the current Northern California Grace Fellowship (NCGF) website (norcalgrace.net). Click on the “About Us” link on the top navigation bar.
 - Slide 4—on the right hand margin there is a numbered list under the title “Listen to Past Sermons” of the various video, radio, and blog ministries of NCGF. Number 2 on this list is titled Questions/Answers and lists a blog titled “I am glad you asked. . .” at bibleanswersrightlydivided.blogspot.com
 - Slide 5—on August 10, 2013 Brother Jones posted a link on Facebook to the NCGF paper *Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ?* This link took those who clicked on it to

the blog associated with NCGF noted and shown on the previous slide. Here, underneath the title “I am glad you asked . . . Sonship Edification”, was a link to download *Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ?* The original blog posting was made on Monday, February 25, 2013.

- Slide 6—on August 19, 2013 Brother Jones stated that he believed the label “Joint-heirship” is preferable to “sonship” because it is “more to the point, focusing on the goal vs. the means.”
- Slide 7—another link to *Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ* was posted on August 28, 2013 by Brother Jones under the title “Sonship Edification.”
 - Illustration: If I placed a heading on one of the websites/Blogs associated with GLBC that read “Universalism” and then it was followed by an article denying the existence of hell would not one conclude that I/we believed in universalism?
- Slide 8—at some point subsequent to August 28, 2013 the title on the blog posting from Monday, February 25, 2013 was changed to read “Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ?”
- Slide 9—on June 7, 2013 Brother Jones stated the following on a Facebook wall in response to a posting made on June 5, 2013. Ryan said in part, “I think the Pauline concept of sonship or even more so pointed when titled Joint-heirship is the most recent “forgotten truth” within Pauline mystery doctrine to be resurged.” Within the same post Jones goes on to equate Sonship and Joint-heirship as the same thing and lists Ron Knight, the Pastor of NCGF, as part of the line of men involved in the resurgence of this “forgotten truth.”
- Slide 10—on March 20, 2014 Brother Jones stated the following on Facebook in response to a saints posting regarding “sonship.” Jones wrote, “Sonship can be a loaded term though. Now-a-days many people perceive the term to be synonymous with Keith Blades study system (involving Proverbs 1 as a framework etc.) since it is often referred to as Sonship Edification and even just “sonship” for short.”
- Slide 11—on May 6, 2014 NCGF published a YouTube video titled “[The Similarities & Differences Between the Joint-heir Doctrine & Sonship Edification](#).” In this video Brother Ron Knight, Pastor of NCGF spells out where and how their “joint-heir view” differs from SE.

- The following FACTS are plain given the above evidence.
 - Initially the NCGF paper *Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ?* was promoted on an official church blog under the heading Sonship Edification. It is also evident from the comments and “praise” for the paper found below the link to the paper that readers viewed the NCGF paper as indicative of the SE position. As of Sunday, September 14, 2014 there is no posting from NCGF correcting or alerting their readers that their “Joint-heir view” is somehow different from SE. Consequently, NCGF is allowing a misconception of their paper to go uncorrected on their official blog site while at the same time they are accusing me of conflating their “Joint-heir view” with SE.
 - Brother Jones, a contributor to *Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ?* and co-author of *Wrongly Deriding Joint-heirs with Christ*, is on record multiple times equating the terminology “Joint-heir/s/ship” with SE.
 - At some point in the spring of 2014, NCGF took some steps to distance their “Joint-heir view” from some of the more objectionable aspects of SE, namely its use of Proverbs 1 in establishing a “table of contents” for Paul’s epistles. This took the form of changing the title on the blog posting from Monday, February 25, 2013 that contains the link to their paper *Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ* from “Sonship Edification” to “Joint-heirs.” In addition, the aforementioned YouTube video was released on May 6, 2014 to explain the differences between NCGF’s “Joint-heir view” and SE.
- I am perfectly willing to accept the fact that NCGF does not NOW fully embrace the teachings of SE. That being said, it is not as though the actions on the part of NCGF documented above would not have led one (and still may for one who only looks at the blog) to conclude that prior to the Spring of 2014 their position was not part and parcel with SE. Their official blog advertised their first paper as SE and one of the paper’s chief contributors was all over social media equating the views expressed therein with SE.
 - The “Joint-heir view” expressed in *Heirs of God or Joint-heirs with Christ?* is not “identical” to the SE position, however, it is a “cousin” as I expressed in the March, 2014 release of *Ifs, Ands, and Buts*. While NCGF does REJECT some aspects of the SE position they are also in agreement with SE on the following issues among others: 1) the progressive nature of the believers sanctification in Romans 7 and 8; 2) the conditional nature of the Holy Spirit dwelling in Romans 8:9; and 3) the conditional nature of Joint-heirship in Romans 8:17, just to name a few. For a complete explanation of the similarities and differences between the “Joint-heir position” and SE, interested parties are encouraged to either view the video or read the transcript of the NCGF video “[The Similarities & Differences Between the Joint-heir Doctrine & Sonship Edification.](#)” ([Click here](#) to access the written transcript.)

Origin of Sonship Edification

- As we observed in Lesson 143, a distinct type of “Sonship Theology” has developed from within the Grace Movement over the past fifteen to twenty years. Presently, this type of Sonship teaching is known as SE. Proponents of SE subscribe to the following tenants of mid-Acts Pauline Dispensationalism: 1) that the body of Christ did not start in Acts 2; 2) a difference between Israel and the body of Christ; 3) a difference between the earthly and heavenly places and purposes of God; 4) a difference between prophecy and mystery; 5) Paul is our Apostle during the dispensation of Grace; 6) a difference between the Rapture of the church and the 2nd Coming of Christ, and many more.
- The fountainhead of SE, within the Grace Movement was Keith R. Blades, author of the popular book *Satan and His Plan of Evil* and founder of *Enjoy the Bible Ministries*. When I first released *Ifs, Ands, and Buts* on Monday, March 17, 2014, I was very critical of the SE position regarding Joint-heirship in Romans 8:17. Outside of the introduction where I address SE specifically, my criticisms largely took the form of footnote citations of the two most prominent SE teachers Mark Newbold of Triangle Bible Church in Raleigh, North Carolina and Mike McDaniel of Millennium Bible Institute headquartered in Imperial, Texas.
- On March 21, 2014, NCGF released a YouTube video (not more than five days after my paper was made public) titled “[Responding to the Opposition](#)” in which they attacked me for not including/mentioning the fact that Keith R. Blades also taught two separate inheritances in Romans 8:17. This was characterized by my critics as a “tactical” decision on my part to not willfully alienate any of my readers from within Grace School of the Bible who hold Brother Blades in high esteem. (“Responding to the Opposition” Video Transcript).¹ This video was removed from YouTube on March 22, 2014 not more than 24 hours after being posted. The tenor and nature of the video so disturbed some saints that one had the presence of mind to make a written transcript of the video for posterity’s sake. This same allegation regarding Brother Blades was repeated early in May when NCGF posted their YouTube video “The Similarities & Differences Between the Joint-heir Doctrine & Sonship Edification” and again this summer (late June/early July) when they released their rebuttal to *If, Ands, and Buts* titled *Wrongly Deriding Joint-heirs with Christ* in which they stated the following:
 - “While Bryan has wrongly conflated the *Sonship Edification* position together with the Joint-heir paper of NCGF, he has also not disclosed to his reader some details concerning the history of *Sonship Edification*. Page after page Bryan repeatedly cites Mark Newbold and Michael McDaniel (two names most likely unrecognized by those in *Grace School of*

¹ My paper *Ifs, Ands, and Buts: The Two Inheritance Controversy of Romans 8:17* was released on Facebook on Monday, March 17. The NCGF video “[Responding to the Opposition](#)” was filmed as part of their Wednesday night meeting on Wednesday, March 19 two days after my paper was released. I first watched the video on Friday morning March 21. Immediately after viewing the video I sent links to a host of pastors and friends in the ministry who were aware of the “joint-heir” controversy thereby alerting them to the existence of the video. By Saturday morning March 22 the video had been removed from YouTube. I am including this footnote lest we be accused of “slander” or “fabricating” the transcript. There are others who saw the video who would vouch for the accuracy and authenticity of the transcript.

the Bible). Yet NOT ONCE does he ever mention that these two men were directly taught/influenced in their *Sonship Edification* paradigm by the ministry of brother Keith Blades (a name most certainly recognized and respected by many among *Grace School of the Bible*). Was this a calculated omission by Bryan? That remains suspiciously unclear. Yet it most certainly could have been. After all, by leaving Keith Blades name out of the discussion the reader is led to believe that the heirs vs. Joint-heirs distinction of Romans 8:17 as something embraced only by a handful of "rogue" pastors in the outer fringes of Mid-Acts dispensationalism." (Stutzman and Jones, 8-9)

- The reason that I did not include a discussion of Brother Blades as the fountainhead of SE in *Ifs, Ands and Buts* is because at the time of the paper's release (March, 2014), I was unaware of Blades' involvement in the articulation of the position. It was the video removed from YouTube, "Responding to the Opposition," that first alerted me to the role Keith Blades played in the articulation of the SE approach to Scripture. After learning of Blades' involvement, immediately I set out to investigate the matter. Since late March, 2014 I have read every issue of Blades' quarterly Bible study periodical *Enjoy the Bible Quarterly* in chronological order in an attempt to understand both the theological and historical evolution of the SE paradigm.
- At this time, having completed that course of study, I can now say with certainty that Brother Keith Blades was the fountainhead of the modern SE doctrine within the Grace Movement. Moreover, a clear theological and historical progression with respect to SE is readily apparent in the writings of Blades. Prior, we had only read Blades' published books, booklets, and pamphlets which do not contain much if anything by way of SE information. Functionally, Blades reserved writing about SE to his quarterly newsletter. In addition, there is very little by way of audio/video material available of Blades teaching on SE (will say more about this in a future lesson). Consequently, it is theoretically possible that those who have never read Blades' quarterly periodical would have no idea that he was the point of origin from the SE movement.
- Other ministries around the United States are also teaching Bladesian style SE. These ministries include the following:
 - Mark Newbold of [Triangle Bible Church in Raleigh](#), North Carolina
 - Mike McDaniel of [Millennium Bible Institute](#) headquartered in Imperial, Texas
 - David Winston Busch of [Columbia River Bible Fellowship](#) in Vancouver, Washington. Brother Busch is also the author of the *Sonship Stablishment Study Series* of books which at present contains the following two volumes:
 - *More Than Conquerors: Sonship, Sufferings, Prayer & the Intercessor Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (2012)
 - *The Fullness of Christ: The Prisoner, the Creature & the Eternal Purpose of the Father of Glory* (2013)

- Josh Strolecki of [Twin Cities Grace Fellowship](#) in Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Ron Knight and [Northern California Grace Fellowship](#) are best thought of as modified Bladesian SE. These brothers desire that people know that their “Joint-heir view” is not identical to or synonymous with SE.

Works Cited

Knight, Ron. “The Similarities & Differences Between the Joint-heir Doctrine & “Sonship Edification”.” NorCalGrace YouTube page, May 6, 2014.

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