

Sunday, February 8, 2015—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 161  
 Sonship Edification: The Evolution of SE in the Writings of Keith R. Blades, 1994-June, 2001

*Note to the Reader: these notes have been updated to reflect further research that was done since the teaching of this Lesson on 2/8/15. Therefore there will be some details contained herein that were not mentioned in the audio/video accompanying this study. (2/16/15)*

### **Introduction: Personal Thoughts Regarding Blades**

- The bulk of Lessons 155 to 160 were taken up with a survey of the precursors to Sonship Edification (SE). Now that we have taken the time to understand SE as a system as well as its doctrinal/theological roots, we are in a position to investigate how SE took shape in the mind of Keith R. Blades and first began to be articulated in the second half of 2001.
- I first learned of Keith Blades in the mid to late 1990s (as a teenager) via exposure to his book *Satan and His Plan of Evil (SHPE)*. In fact, Lee Homoki was speaking at my Dad's church in Genoa City, WI when the bright red cover of Keith's book first caught my eye on Lee's book rack (1996, I believe). I did not immediately buy it, however. It was not until the summer of 1997, at the age of 20, that I purchased a copy of the book at the Grace School of the Bible Summer Family Bible Conference in Chicago, IL.
- *SHPE* was very influential on my thinking in my early twenties. During the 1998/1999 school year, while a student at Grace Bible College, I taught *SHPE* to the college age class at Berean Bible Church in Wyoming, MI (now Rush Creek Bible Church in Byron Center, MI). My enjoyment of *SHPE* prompted me to secure copies of Keith's other printed works including: *A Very Simple Survey of the Bible Volumes I and II* as well as *Have You Ever Wondered What Heaven is Like* and *The Gospel of God's Grace: Make it Clear! Make it Plain!*
- During my undergraduate years (1996 to 2002) at GBC, I also began receiving Keith's quarterly Bible study periodical *Enjoy the Bible Quarterly (EBQ)*. Via the quarterlies, I was also made aware of Keith's extensive library of teaching videos that were advertised in the quarterlies. While I kept up with the quarterlies for a while, eventually I stopped reading them on account of my class load. In addition to being a full time student at GBC, I also enrolled in Grace School of the Bible in the fall of 1997. My studies, in addition to working part time, would not allow me to keep up with the quarterlies, though I continued to receive them and file them away for future reference and reading.
- I was not aware of Keith's teachings regarding SE until March 2014, when his name surfaced in a now retracted Northern California Grace Fellowship YouTube video. Hearing Keith's name mentioned in this context prompted my investigation into his involvement in the "two inherence" controversy. It was this investigation that caused me to consider the quarterlies that I had laid aside years prior as well as to seek out electronic copies on the Enjoy the Bible website.

- As I spoke to people about my findings leading up to teaching these lessons on SE, many expressed surprise. Those who were only familiar with Keith's book length works (i.e., had not read the quarterlies) expressed surprise (as did I) to learn that he was involved and instrumental in the articulation of SE. For those unaware of the full spectrum of Blades' writings it is as though there were two different writers: 1) the Blades of the popular book length works, and 2) the Blades of the quarterlies who is the fountainhead of SE. It is entirely possible to not be aware of this reality. If all one has read from the pen of Blades are his book length writings, they would be totally unaware of his enunciation and support of SE in the quarterlies.

### **The Percolation Period: 1994 through June, 2001**

- I have elected to call the time period between the publication of *SHPE* in 1994 and June 2001 the Percolation Period. During this six and half year time frame many of the doctrinal/theological ideas that would later become part and parcel of full blown SE can be observed in rudimentary form. It was in the second half of 2001 that Blades commenced his full scale articulation of what has become known as SE.
- I chose to begin this time line with 1994 because it was the year that Keith's most influential and well known book, *SHPE*, was published. It was also during this time period that most of Keith's book length works were authored. The only major exception is the publication of *Properly Handling the Word of Truth* in 2006.
  - 1994—*Satan and His Plan of Evil*
  - 1996—*Have You Ever Wondered What Heaven is Like*
  - 1996—*The Gospel of Grace: Make it Clear! Make it Plain!*
  - 1996—*A Very Simple Survey of the Bible, Volume I*
  - 1997—*A Very Simple Survey of Genesis, Volume II*
- As I said in the introduction, SE concepts and thinking cannot be found in any of the aforementioned works to any noticeable degree.
- Rudimentary SE concepts begin to appear in the thought stream of Blades with the first issue of the *Enjoy the Bible Quarterly* that began its fourteen year run in the first quarter of 1996 (as far as I have been able to determine). For the first two years (1996 and 1997), Blades ran four main articles, one each quarter. Beginning in 1998, Blades devoted the fourth quarter issue to addressing questions and answers submitted by his readers. This practice continued until the periodical ended its run in 2009. Between its inception in 1996 and June 2001, twenty-two issues of *EBQ* were published and distributed by Enjoy the Bible Ministries.

- Seedlings to SE can also be observed in some of Keith’s audio/video teachings produced and released during the time frame in question (1994 to June 2001). The following is a listing of relevant audio/visual resources offered by Enjoy the Bible Ministries in their catalogue dated January 2000.
  - 1995—*The Adoption of Sons (A Primer to Sonship)*—while this three hour study is not dated, I believe it dates from the 1995 Northern Rocky Mountain Berean Bible Camp. This is on account of the fact that *SHPE* was published in 1994 and Keith can be heard speaking about his new book in the first hour of teaching in that study. I believe that *SHPE* was published during the second half of 1994 and promoted at the 1995 conference. Then, during the first quarter of 1996, when the *EBQ* was launched – the first article was titled *The Adoption of Sons (A Primer to Sonship)*. This video series is spoken of in a footnote in the Enjoy the Bible quarterly in the second quarter of 1998.
  - 1997—*Godliness*—is advertised as coming from the 1997 Northern Rocky Mountain Berean Bible Camp. The description in the catalogue lists Godliness as the primary objective of the “edification process” outlined in this three hour study.
  - 1998—*A Survey of God’s Program with Israel: Job to Song of Solomon*—advertised as “new audio” on the back of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter issue of the *EBQ*. At this time when teaching through Proverbs, Blades says nothing about Proverbs 1 being a Table of Contents or Curriculum Map for Paul’s epistles.
  - 1999—*The Effectual Working of God’s Word*—advertised as coming from the 1999 Northern Rocky Mountain Berean Bible Camp.
  - 1999—*The Effectual Working of God’s Word in Israel’s Program*—also advertised as coming from the 1999 Northern Rocky Mountain Berean Bible Camp. This three hour study includes a study on “the doctrine of God’s ‘Jehovah-ness’ and grace.”
    - I believe the two studies listed above from 1999 were originally advertised as “new” under the title *The Effectual Working of God’s Word* in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter issue of the *EBQ* in 1999. This 14 hour series was the joint effort of both Alex Kurz and Keith Blades. According to the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter issue of the *EBQ* from 1999 the theme of the 1999 Northern Rocky Mountain Berean Bible Camp was going to be “The Word of God Which Effectually Worketh Also in You that Believe.” The advertised speakers were Alex Kurz and Keith Blades. Later, in the Enjoy the Bible Ministries catalogue from January 2000 the teachings of Blades from the 1999 Bible Camp were separated from the larger joint effort and sold separately.
  - 1999—*Justification & Salvation: Or the Thief on the Cross, Is He an Exception to the Rule*—is advertised in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter issue the *EBQ* as “new.” While this series seems to have had no direct bearing upon the themes of Sonship and/or Edification, it is

controversial for its teaching on the justification of Old Testament saints. In this series Blades maintains that the saints of Time Past are justified in the exact same manner as members of the body of Christ during the dispensation of grace. In short, Blades asserts that works played no part in how Old Testament saints were declared right before God. The question of how saints in Time Past were justified continues to be an ongoing topic of discussion/debate among Grace Believers. This series of studies by Blades has been at the forefront in recent years as these discussions have transpired, especially within the Grace School of the Bible circle of the Grace Movement.

- 2000—*The Divine Design of Edification*—this 2 hour study originated from the 2000 Northern Rocky Mountain Berean Bible Camp. The 1<sup>st</sup> quarter issue of the *EBQ* states that the theme for the 2000 Bible Camp would be “More About: The Word of God Which Effectually Worketh Also in You That Believe.” The speakers were again Alex Kurz and Keith Blades. The 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter issue of the *EBQ* advertises “Part 2” from the 2000 Bible Camp as being available for purchase. The 2 hour series *The Divine Design of Edification* was again taken from these meetings and sold separately. Keith can be heard talking about the Alex and the camp’s theme multiple times in the recordings. The doctrine covered in this 2 hour series is very similar to Blades’ turning point article from the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2001.

### **Sonship Seedlings in the *EBO* from 1994 to June 2001**

1996

- The *EBQ* debuted during the first quarter of 1996 with an article titled “The Adoption of Sons: A Primer to this Wonderful Truth” (note the similar title to the audio series listed above). As the title suggests, this article captures the early thinking of Blades on “sonship” and “adoption.” The inaugural issue of the *EBQ* sets forth many sonship seedlings that would later flower into full blown SE. Some of these concepts include the following:
  - *Definition of Biblical Adoption and the Difference Between “Children” and “Sons”*—“To adopt a child not naturally your own is only one kind of adoption. To “adopt” simply means to take something unto yourself and make it your own. Hence, there are other kinds of “adoptions,” especially in other cultures, one of which is the kind of adoption Paul refers to in Romans 8. In Hebrew culture, and even among the Greeks of Paul’s day, parents adopted *their own children*. When they did this they recognized a level of maturity that their child had reached and they no longer treated him as a little child, but began treating him as an adult. By this kind of adoption the child was declared to be no longer in a state of childhood. He had now passed from childhood into adulthood. He was now declared to be a “son” and no longer a child, and he was now going to be treated as an adult by his parents.” (Blades, *EQB* 1<sup>st</sup> Q. 1996 , 1)
  - *Sonship is Something That Must be Attained Unto*—“Here Paul cites this unique cultural issue of adoption so common in his day. As he says, a father’s own offspring is his

“heir”. But for “as long as he is a child,” or is in the state of childhood, his father doesn’t treat him any different from a servant. He may be “lord of all” being his father’s heir, but he is not treated as such by his father for as long as he is in the state of childhood. Rather, in accordance with childhood and being a minor, the father deals with his offspring through the use of “tutors and governors.” The relationship between the two, therefore, is restricted and is on a puerile level. . . This “appointed time of the father” is the time at which the father “adopts” his own child. He declares his offspring to no longer be a “child” in the state of childhood, but now he is an adult, a “son.” He has attained unto sonship.” (Blades, *EQB* 1<sup>st</sup> Q. 1996, 1)

- *All Believers in the Dispensation of Grace are Sons of God*—“Again, this is the kind of “adoption” Paul is talking about when he declares that we in this dispensation of grace are now the adopted sons of God. Having adopted us God has put us into the position of adult sons. We possess “sonship.” He is not treating us like children. Instead, He is dealing with us as adults, as “sons.” . . . The provision to enable God to deal with His heirs as “sons” and no longer have to deal with them as “children” was made by Christ on the cross. In view of it, God could “adopt” His heirs and the glories of sonship could begin to be enjoyed by them. God, however, suspended His program with Israel and they have yet to receive the adoption of sons. We, the members of the church the body of Christ, are the heirs of God in this present dispensation of grace. In accordance with the provision God has made through Christ for sonship to be a reality, and in view of the riches of His grace unto us, God has wonderfully adopted us, putting us in the position of adult sons and treating us as such. We are not being treated by Him as “children” under the tutor and governor system of the Law, but we are being treated as “sons” (Footnote: Israel will receive the adoption when God resumes and fulfills His program with them upon the conclusion of this present dispensation of Gentile grace. See Romans 9-11, especially 9:1-5; 11:1-36). (Blades, *EQB* 1<sup>st</sup> Q. 1996, 2)
- *Father Becomes His Sons Teacher and Guide*—“Instead, having placed his child in the position of an adult son, now the father himself personally becomes his son’s teacher and guide. The father now personally assumes the remaining education of his son. This is something not only looked forward to by the father, but it is also a wonderful liberty for the son. Going from “tutors and governors” to being personally dealt with by his father is an issue of great joy and relief to a son.” (Blades, *EQB* 1<sup>st</sup> Q. 1996, 2)
- The main point expressed in the inaugural issue of the *EQB* is that, as members of the body of Christ, we are not under the “tutor and governor” principle of the law as Israel was in time past. In this regard it is very similar to what we saw expressed by Pastor Stam in his short piece on Sonship from *Two Minutes With the Bible* that we studied in [Lesson 143](#) (see pages 5 and 6). That being said, there are rudimentary concepts to SE swirling around the edges of the article’s main point.

- In the third Quarter of 1996, Blades published an article titled “Awesome Resurrection Changes”. This issue is significant because it contains the following clear statement that, at the time, Blades believed 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* 3<sup>rd</sup> Q. 1996, 2)

### 1997

- Thematically, if the first year of the *EBQ* (1996) focused on the issues of sonship and suffering; in the second year (1997) the process of edification was a dominant theme. Two of the four issues released in 1997 focused on the theme of edification. These included the first quarter article titled “Those That Oppose Themselves” and the third quarter article “Have Their Conscience Seared With a Hot Iron.”
- In “Those That Oppose Themselves” from the first Quarter of 1997, Blades discussed the various ways that believers can oppose themselves and thereby hinder their own edification. Blades identifies the following three ways that believers can oppose their own edification: 1) opposition to the authority and power of the word of God; 2) opposition to rightly dividing the word of truth; and 3) opposition to edification itself. In a section titled “How is that done?” Blades states the following regarding how believers can hinder their own edification.
  - “Just how is it that a Christian can oppose himself and hinder his edification? What comprises it? Simply put a Christian opposes himself when he thinks differently about edification than God does. In particular, when in his thinking he opposes the very things necessary to achieve godly edifying. Self-deception and self-opposition are activities of our mind. Hence, when we think differently than God does about the very things He says are necessary for our edification, then we oppose ourselves and hinder our edification.

Edification, of course, is a function of the word of God. Consequently, the things God says are necessary for our edification are things about our attitude and approach to His word. Hence, it is our thinking about the word of God and how we handle it that is the issue in whether we oppose ourselves or not.” (Blades, *EBQ* 1<sup>st</sup> Q. 1997, 2)
- Later in the same article, Blades begins to tie together the issues of edification and sonship. According to Blades, one ought to desire their edification “more than anything”. In summation, Blades stated in part:

- The third of the three ways that we oppose ourselves when it comes to our edification has to do with our attitude towards edification itself. It is evident that God places great value upon our edification. In fact, to say it that way is to put it mildly. For in truth God longs for it. Indeed, everything He has done for us in this dispensation testifies to this. Consider, for example, that in this dispensation He is treating us as "sons" so that we may be taught directly by Him. . . Without a doubt, God longs for our edification. It is precious in His sight. The question now is, is it precious in our sight? It certainly ought to be. **We ought to desire it more than anything.**" (Blades, *EBQ* 1<sup>st</sup> Q. 1997, 4)
- In his third quarter article from 1997 titled "Having Their Conscience Seared With a Hot Iron" Blades uses the phrase the "process of edification" for the first time. In addition Keith's definition of Godliness which later became part of SE is introduced for the first time into the thought stream.
  - "As "the epistle of Christ," the Lord's very own words to us are written upon the "tables of (our) heart" by the Holy Spirit through the **process of edification.**" (Blades, *EBQ* 3<sup>rd</sup> Q. 1997, 3)
  - "With the renewing of our mind the Holy Spirit takes the authoritative written word of God to us and educates us particularly in the knowledge of what God values and esteems. Our thinking, along with the norms and standards of our conscience, are adjusted by the authority of the written word of God to us and brought into conformity with it. **We are then able to think about things as God does, know how to do things God's way, and labor with God in what He is doing.** The word of God through the Spirit of God becomes the life of our inner man, particularly the vitality of our conscience. As such, therefore, we possess and are to operate solely upon the authoritative knowledge of what God says is right; what He says is truth; what He says He is doing, and the like." (Blades, *EBQ* 1<sup>st</sup> Q. 1997, 2)
- For the record, I am not saying that I do not think that edification is a process because I do. I just do not think it takes place in the manner described by SE.

#### *1998 Through June 2001*

- During the three and a half years between 1998 and June 2001 Blades was relatively silent regarding the subjects of sonship and edification. Of the fourteen issues of the periodical published during these years, only two issues deal with sonship and/or edification to any significant degree. These include the following: 1) "Gird Up Thy Loins Like a Man" from the second quarter of 1998, and 2) "Christian Ungodliness" from the first quarter of 1999. There is no mention of these subjects during the whole of the year 2000 or the first half of 2001.

- In “Gird Up Thy Loins Like a Man” from the second quarter of 1998, Blades uses the term “sonship status” two times, “sonship” one time, and “adoption” four times. In addition, he sets forth, for the second time, his definition of Godliness.
  - “Briefly put, godliness is composed of three main issues: **1) To think like God does. 2) To do things God’s way. And, 3) To labor together with God in what He is doing.** These are the issues that comprise being intelligently occupied with God. In being made godly, God created man to operate like Him and with Him in these three particular ways. . . Job definitely needed counsel. However he needed counsel that was true to, and in accordance with, thinking like God does, doing things God’s way, and laboring together with God in what He is doing. He needed *godly counsel* from that kind of “knowledge.” . . . By means of ‘words with knowledge’ God brought Job’s thinking into line with His own; enabled him to do things God’s way in the situation he was in; and gave him reason to rejoice in the fact that he was laboring together with God in what He is doing.” (Blades, *EBQ* 2<sup>nd</sup> Q. 1998, 2-3)
- The first quarter of 1999 saw the publication of “Christian Ungodliness” by Blades. “Christian Ungodliness” uses the terms “sonship” two times and “edification process” one time. Moreover, a third mention of the definition of Godliness, as well a brief but related discussion of sanction, can be found in this issue of the *EBQ*.
  - “Briefly put, with a make-up corresponding to God’s, man was created to be godly in three specific areas: **1) To think like God does; 2) To do things God’s way; and 3) To labor with God in what He is doing.** These are the three fundamental components to godliness, with the inner man issue of thinking like God does being the crux of the matter.
  - Ungodliness, by definition therefore, is the opposite of this. It is the issue of not thinking like God does; not doing things God’s way; and not laboring with God in what He is doing. . . Ungodliness, therefore, can afflict God’s own people. Through neglect of the Scriptures, improper or dishonest Bible handling, heeding false teaching, following traditions and the commandments of men, and the like, saints can be ungodly. They can fail to think like God does; not do things God’s way; and fail to labor with God in what He is doing. And this is possible not only in God’s program with Israel, but also with us in this present dispensation of God’s grace. . . In the opening verses of I Timothy Paul makes it emphatically clear that “godly edifying” is what God wants for every Christian. Godliness, therefore, is the goal of the edification process (quotes I Timothy 1:3-4).” (Blades, *EBQ* 1<sup>st</sup> Q. 1999, 2-3)

### Conclusion

- During the years between 1994 and June 2001, the seedlings of SE were being planted via the writing ministry of Keith R. Blades in the *EBQ*. During these years Blades focused most of his teaching regarding adoption/sonship on the fact that members of the body of Christ are treated as

adult sons in the dispensation of grace and are therefore not under the tutor and governor principle of the law. There were, however, certain conceptual and explanatory precursors to SE that had not yet fully bloomed in Keith's writings. During the third quarter of 2001 this would change and Keith would begin his full scale articulation of what has become known as SE.

- During these years 1994 to June 2001 Blades began to write and speak of the "process of edification" and began tying it in with his views on adoption/sonship.
- In the next lesson we will assess the impact that Pastor Richard Jordan and Grace School of the Bible had upon Blades as well as discuss the abrupt shift that transpired during the second half of 2001.

*Appendix A*

The purpose of this Appendix is to breakdown the utilization of terminology that would later become emblematic of Sonship Edification by Keith R. Blades in the *Enjoy the Bible Quarterly* between 1996 and June 2001. Please note that these figures include only occurrences of SE terminology in the main text of each article. Occurrences in the subject headings and/or article titles have been omitted.

<b>Year</b>	<b>SE Terminology Used</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter 1996—“The Adoption of Sons: A Primer to this Wonderful Truth”	Sonship Status—1 time Sonship—7 times Adopt—2 times Adopting—1 time Adoptions—1 time Adopts—2 times Adopted—8 times Adoption—20 times
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter 1996—“Awesome Resurrection Changes”	Sonship—1 time Adoption—5 times
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter 1997—“Those That Oppose Themselves”	Edification—22 times Godly Edifying—9 times Edified—2 times Definition of Godliness
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter 1997—“Having Their Conscience Seared With a Hot Iron”	Edification—2 times Adoption—3 times
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter 1998—“Gird Up Thy Loins Like a Man”	Sonship—1 time Sonship Status—2 times Adoption—4 times Definition of Godliness
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter 1998—“Rejoice in the Lord Always”	Sons—1 time
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter 1999—“Christian Ungodliness”	Sonship—2 times Edification Process—1 time Definition of Godliness

Of the twenty six issues of the *EBQ* published between 1996 and June 2001 seven of the articles contain SE seedling terminology and concepts that would later germinate and flower into the mature form of SE that we have been studying over the past five months. The following is a listing of the totals from this time period.

- Sonship—12 times
- Sonship Status—2 times
- Adopt—2 times
- Adopting—1 time
- Adoptions—1 time
- Adopts—2 times
- Adopted—8 times
- Adoption—32 times
- Edified—2 times
- Godly Edifying—9 times
- Edification—24 times
- Edification Process—1 time
- Definition of Godliness—3 times