
A Weak Link

A reprint from The ENJOY THE BIBLE QUARTERLY — 2006, 3rd Quarter

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You are undoubtedly familiar with the saying, ‘A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.’ And indeed this is true. For even though each link in a chain is joined to the one next to it and as such joins its strength with that of the other links, each link is still an independent entity itself. As such each link individually contributes its own strength to the overall strength of the chain. Hence if any link in a chain is weak, the entire chain is weakened; and if that link is weak enough to break, then the entire chain breaks.

Accordingly this saying is also commonly applied to other kinds of chains, because the same characteristic is also true of chains that are not physical or material in nature. For example, the saying also applies to ‘chains of command’ in organizations, corporations, and other systems of administration; as well as to ‘chains of procedure’ and ‘chains of events,’ and so on.

So just as it is with a physical chain, the overall strength belonging to each of these other kinds of chains lies in the strength of its weakest link. Wherefore when a break or failure occurs in any of these other chains, the source of the fault is found by looking for the ‘link’ whose strength did not measure up to the challenge and demands being placed upon the chain.

The Stigma of being ‘The Weak Link’

Needless to say, no one wants to be ‘the weak link in the chain.’ For then you are clearly the source of the problem, or of the difficulty, that has resulted in the failure of the chain. Your weakness has either led to the chain breaking, or to it being unable to fulfill its designed intention of being a ‘chain.’ So there is a definite stigma in

being ‘the weak link,’ and one that is hard to shake, since even after you ‘fix yourself’ you are still the one who ‘broke the chain’ before, and left it unable to function as it was designed to function.

However if it is a shame or a discredit for us to be found to be ‘the weak link’ in some chain of man’s forging, (like a ‘chain of command,’ or a ‘chain of procedure’), how much more is it so for us to be ‘the weak link’ in a chain of God’s forging? Obviously much more. And this is true not only because of the vastly superior quality of God’s chains, but especially because of the vastly superior importance of the things His chains are designed to accomplish.

Now of all the kinds of chains wherein we can function as a ‘link,’ naturally the chains of God’s forging are the ones that ought to concern us the most. Likewise they are the ones wherein we ought not want to be ‘the weak link’ at all. Instead we ought to want to be a ‘link’ whose strength is of the same calibre as the other links in the chain, and one that thereby ensures that the chain can function as it is designed to function and can accomplish what God has designed it to accomplish.

Chains of God’s Forging

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.” For it is a chain specifically designed and forged by God to

provide for the success of our sonship lives and education as His “sons” in this present dispensation of His grace, (i.e. to provide for the success of our “godly edifying”), and thereby to ensure that we reach the ultimate objective thereof.

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 on our part. And without a positive and proper response on our part this link cannot be the ‘strong link’ in the chain that it needs to be. Instead it will be the ‘weak link.’

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 our positive and proper response to our sonship status and to our sonship education and edification.

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 our sonship education, and ultimately reach the ultimate objective thereof and obtain its glory.

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.

A Father’s ‘Chain of Provision’ for His Son

The ‘chain of provision’ that God has forged to provide for the success of our sonship lives and edification is essentially the same as the one that a natural father forges for his son, and then describes to him when he adopts him. And this is only to be expected, seeing that it is God Himself who designed fatherhood and sonship to begin with, including the relationship between a father and his sons and all that pertains thereto.

So it is then that a father, (in connection with knowing that he is going to be a father), begins the forging of ‘the chain of provision’ for the success of his son’s life and education long before his child is born, and so long before the time when he will adopt his child into sonship.

Briefly and very simply described, a father begins by forging *both* the first and the last links in ‘the chain of provision,’ with the last link actually being hammered out first. And with the hammering out of what will be the last link in the chain the father hammers out what He has decided will be the ultimate objective for his son’s life; the ultimate goal that it is his heart’s desire that his son attain unto and obtain the glory of.

Following the actual forging of the last and the first links in ‘the chain of provision’ a father then plans the forging of the other needed links that will connect the first and last links, and so complete the entire chain. These other links are ones that correspond with the various stages of development and education that his son will need to go through in order to attain unto the ultimate objective and obtain its glory.

So then in accordance with what he has planned, a father will then forge these needed links and progressively join them one to another in his

child's life once his child is born. And in so doing the link that is eventually forged and which makes the final connection between the first link and the last is 'the link of the adoption of sons.' For it is with the giving of "the adoption of sons" that a father's son is brought into the final stage of his development and education — his sonship education and edification.

Finally after a father gives his child "the adoption of sons," and during the time that he establishes his "son" in what his sonship status and life is all about, he teaches his "son" about 'the chain of provision' that he has forged so that his "son" can understand and appreciate the full provision that has been made for him to succeed in his sonship education, and can see the greatness of the glory that awaits him at its conclusion.

In doing this the son is also made to realize that since he is now an adult "son" the onus is upon him to respond positively and properly to his sonship status, life, and education, so as not to be 'the weak link' in the chain.

Wherefore of all of these connecting links between the first and the last, the 'link of the adoption of sons' is the one with which we are particularly concerned. For it is the link in a father's 'the chain of provision' that by its very nature demands the son's proper response and function as a "son," in order for the connection it makes to be a 'strong' one.

God's 'Chain of Provision' for Our Sonship Edification

Now as was previously stated, God our Father has forged a similar 'chain of provision' to provide for the success of our sonship lives and education as His "sons" in this present dispensation of His grace. Accordingly in Romans 8:14–39 He has described His 'chain of provision' for us as part of our sonship establishment. And particularly pertinent to our consideration here is what He says in Romans 8:28–30, which represents the heart and core of

His 'chain of provision' for us...

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

(Romans 8:28–30)

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 weak. Everything is in place. All is done. All is perfect.

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 "the adoption of sons" itself, which establishes us perfectly in our sonship status before our Father, and guarantees the inheritance that goes along with it.

Avoiding being 'The Weak Link'

Since our first and foremost responsibility as "sons" is to respond positively and properly both to our sonship status itself and to the curriculum for our sonship edification, this then is also the 'key' to how we avoid being 'the weak link' in the chain.

Moreover when we do respond to our sonship status and edification as a "son" should, we not

only avoid being ‘the weak link’ in the chain, 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 “godly edifying.”

Now we truly can be an equally ‘strong link’ in the chain, even though we ourselves are inherently weak on our own, (or after the flesh); i.e. even though we have no natural capacity to generate or sustain the proper attitude we need to have for our sonship lives, as well as have no capacity to naturally generate or sustain the kind of thinking and living that our sonship education and edification calls for and produces. For our Father has provided for this too.

In fact by the very way in which He teaches us what our sonship status and lives are all about, He provides for effectually generating within us the positive and proper attitude that we need to have for our sonship status and edification. And then by the very means by which He educates us, He provides for effectually generating within us the capacity to think as a “son” should and to live as a “son” should.

Wherefore ‘our link’ in the chain need not be ‘the weak link’ at all. But rather through the effectual working of our Father’s supplied capacities ‘our link’ can be just as ‘strong a link’ as each of the other links in the chain.

Being ‘A Strong Link’

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 our sonship education. Hence if our response to our sonship status is that of ‘the weak link,’ our response to our sonship education will likewise be that of ‘the weak link.’

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.

The Positive and Proper Response to Our Sonship Status

From the moment that our Father teaches us that He has given us “the adoption of sons” both the effectual working of what He says, along with the effectual working of what it all means, works to begin to generate within us the positive and proper response that we should have, (and need to have), for our sonship status. For the “adoption of sons” is the most phenomenal thing that can happen to us in this life, by far surpassing every other thing we can imagine or conceive of.

Wherefore when in Romans 8:14–15 our Father through Paul declares...

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

(Romans 8:14–15)

...this is where the provision for our positive and proper response, (and for being a ‘strong link’), begins. And the sum and substance of what constitutes our positive and proper response is expressed by the issue of us ‘crying, Abba, Father.’

‘Crying, Abba, Father’ is the natural and expected response given by a child when the long-awaited time comes and he finally receives “the adoption of sons” from his father. In view of

having been bound to the inferior status and state of childhood for so long, with all of its necessary but beggarly elements, the child who has been properly prepared for his “adoption of sons” is overwhelmed with joy and delight at what awaits him.

And one of the most special components of the son’s great joy and delight is his anticipation of now being personally educated by his father in the matter of his business, and thereby learning all the ‘ins and outs’ of it and what he needs to know so that he can function in it, so that he can begin to participate in it under his father’s direction, and so that he can eventually take it over and run it himself.

Now as great as the son’s initial ‘cry of Abba, Father’ is, it is really only the beginning. For instead of the novelty of the grandeur and glory of “the adoption of sons” wearing off soon after it is received, it is actually designed to grow and intensify. And indeed this is what the father wants to occur. For the father is well aware that the more his son comes to understand and appreciate all of the ramifications of what his “adoption of sons” means, and all that goes with it, the more enthusiastic and committed his son will be to his sonship education.

Wherefore when the son is informed of all of these things, he ‘cries, Abba, Father’ all the more. His appreciation for what his father has planned for him and has done for him just abounds, and his desire and enthusiasm for getting underway with his sonship education and vocational training becomes very strong and compelling.

Hence in connection with ‘crying, Abba, Father’ all the more, the father then tells his son about *the kind of commitment* that he needs to make when it comes to getting his vocational education and training. And the son truly needs to make a firm and serious commitment to learning all of the things that his father wants to teach him, if he is to successfully complete his sonship education.

So then after the father tells his son about the kind of commitment he needs to make, a positively and properly responding son then responds to his sonship establishment by declaring to his father that he will make the necessary commitment to learning what his father wants to teach him. And then he proceeds to do exactly that.

Therefore this is just how it ought to be with us too, when through the effectual working of Romans 8:14–15 we receive the glorious news that we have been given “the adoption of sons,” and when through the effectual working of verses 16–39 that follow we too receive our sonship establishment from God our Father.

The Commitment to Sonship Learning

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.’

What then should constitute our commitment to sonship learning? Is it some arbitrary or purely subjective thing? Or is it left up to us as “sons” to determine and decide? No, not at all. Rather it is plainly described in the Book of Proverbs, where in His program with Israel God not only specifically describes the kind of commitment a son needs to make to his sonship education, but He also implicitly describes it for us.

Wherefore it is God our Father Himself, (in being both the Father of the members of the remnant of Israel in their sonship, and our Father as His “sons” that we are in this present dispensation of His grace), who describes in the Book of Proverbs the kind of commitment to sonship learning that a “son” needs to make in view of having received “the adoption of sons.”

In accordance with this the opening verses of Proverbs chapter two declare...

- 1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;
- 2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, *and* apply thine heart to understanding;
- 3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, *and* liftest up thy voice for understanding;
- 4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as *for* hid treasures;
- 5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

(Proverbs 2:1-5)

Here then is what constitutes a son's needed commitment to his sonship learning. And just as the father sets forth, his son's commitment should be composed of three measures, with each being described by one of the three "ifs."

With the *first* "if" the foundation, or first measure of sonship commitment is described. Hence the father says...

- 1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;
- 2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, *and* apply thine heart to understanding;

(Proverbs 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' whatever our Father desires to teach us, with the result that we eagerly 'hide' (i.e. store up and treasure) whatever it is that He teaches us.

Such should be our fundamental attitude toward our sonship education. Our desire for our education should be manifestly sincere and serious, with the result that as we give attendance to our Father's teaching we give such fervent attendance that we 'incline our ears unto His

wisdom' and we 'apply our hearts to His understanding.'

In other words, by no means at all do we just 'sit in on our Father's teaching.' By no means at all does what He teach us just 'go in one ear and out the other.' By no means at all do we 'attend class' but act like "silly women." Instead we not only attend our Father's teaching, but we give attendance with an attitude of sincere desire for His instruction, which translates into our 'inclining our ears unto His wisdom' and 'applying our hearts to His understanding.'

This, once again, is what should constitute the first measure of our commitment to getting our sonship education.

The *second* measure is described by the second "if" in verse 3 of Proverbs chapter 2 when the father says...

- 3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, *and* liftest up thy voice for understanding;

(Proverbs 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 to be fully satisfied with the results of his sonship education.

Hence as the son is being taught, he needs to actively engage in the learning process with his father by 'crying after knowledge,' especially when he realizes that he does not know something that he needs to know. And likewise he needs to 'lift up his voice for understanding,' especially when he realizes that he has not yet understood something well enough to intelligently and confidently apply it.

In fact a son's desire for his father's knowledge, and his active participation to ensure that he gets it, ought to be such that he is dissatisfied if he

does not think that he has learned what he needs to learn, or does not think that he has learned it well enough to intelligently and confidently apply it. His ‘cry for knowledge’ and his ‘lifting up his voice for understanding’ should be driven by a deep-seated compulsion to truly know and truly understand everything that his father teaches him.

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 patiently but persistently ‘crying after knowledge’ and ‘lifting up our voice for understanding’ whenever we sense that we do not yet know or understand something as well as our Father wants us to know and understand it.

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.’

The *third* and final measure of commitment to sonship learning is set forth with the third “if” when the father says...

4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

(Proverbs 2:4)

Though there is an awful lot of information and insight contained in these two analogies, the basic upshot of both is that 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 sonship education, along with the greatness of the ultimate objective he has in mind for his son and the glory thereof, need to so captivate the son that he vigorously and with strong compulsion pursues his sonship education.

In other words all of the various 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. For a son’s appreciation for the phenomenal provision his father has made for him, combined with his appreciation for what his father wants to accomplish through his sonship education, ought to be the greatest driving force in his life.

Wherefore getting his sonship education and edification is to be a son’s top priority in life.

Therefore this third and final measure of commitment also ought to characterize us as “sons,” if our response to our sonship status is what it should be. 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 edification.

A ‘Weak Link’?

Though the issue of us having a positive and proper response to our sonship status is only the first half of what constitutes us being an equally ‘strong link’ in the chain that God has forged for the success of our “godly edifying,” as was stated earlier it is the most fundamental of the two responses required of us. For again, if we lack this first positive and proper response to our sonship status, we will also lack the second positive and proper response to our sonship education.

Wherefore we should ‘take stock of ourselves’ as the “sons of God” that we are. Knowing what constitutes a son’s positive and proper response to his sonship status, we should want to honestly evaluate whether we have the initial characteristics of a ‘weak link’ in the chain that our Father has forged for the success of our “godly edifying.” Or more pointedly, we should want to honestly evaluate whether we are

responding positively and properly to our sonship status with the necessary commitment to getting our sonship education. For if not, then we are already showing the initial characteristics of 'the weak link.'

— *K. R. Blades*