

---

# A Strong Link

---

A reprint from *The ENJOY THE BIBLE QUARTERLY* — 2006, 4th Quarter

— Keith R. Blades

---

Despite our natural tendency to be a ‘weak link,’ we truly can function as a ‘strong link’ in the chain that God our Father has forged for the success of our sonship lives and “godly edifying.” We actually can ensure our ability to achieve the many educational attainments and goals that our Father has for us as His “sons,” and also reach the ultimate objective of our “godly edifying.” This is made possible through the provision of two essential things. The first of these is the positive and proper response we should have to our sonship status itself. The second is the positive and proper response we should have to all of the various things our Father will teach us through the curriculum for our sonship education and edification.

By means of the first of these two responses our Father has designed for our sonship life and its “godly edifying” to successfully get underway, and for it to do so with all of the appropriate zeal, ambition, and enthusiasm that we should possess when it comes to getting our vocational education and training. Then by means of the second of these two responses our Father has designed for the process and progress of our sonship education and edification to go well and prosper, with the result that we successfully meet all of the educational expectations and attainments that are contained in His curriculum for our “godly edifying.”

So then these are the two kinds of responses that we need in order for us to be a ‘strong link’ in ‘the chain of provision’ that our Father has forged for the success of our sonship lives. As such each response more or less functions as half of the link.

## Brief Recap

---

In the previous portion of this article we briefly focused upon the first half of the link — upon the kind of positive and proper response that we should have to our sonship status itself, and therefore to our Father’s desire to educate us as His “sons.” We saw how that by means of the effectual working of what God teaches us about the grandeur, and ramifications, and glory of “the adoption of sons” that He has given us, our Father has provided for us to have the positive and proper response that we need to have to our sonship status.

Wherefore we ought to joyfully ‘cry, Abba, Father’ not only upon receiving the initial news in Romans 8:14–15 that we have been given “the adoption of sons,” but we should be joyfully ‘crying, Abba, Father’ all the more, (and consistently as well), in connection with our Father fully establishing us in our sonship status through the effectual working of Romans 8:16–39.

In fact we should have the same three measures of commitment to our sonship learning that we noted in the general sonship exhortation of Proverbs chapter two. We should have these measures of commitment because of the powerful and earnest determination that the knowledge of our sonship status has generated within us to see to it that we get the education our Father has provided for us to receive.

Therefore if we do possess this kind of positive and proper response to our sonship status and life, then we indeed have “the earnest of the Spirit” fully operating within us, just as our Father has designed for it to operate. Accordingly we also

have the first half of what constitutes us being a 'strong link' in 'the chain of provision' for the success of our sonship lives and "godly edifying."

### **The Second Half of the Link**

---

The second half of what is necessary in order for us to be a 'strong link' in the chain is the issue of us having a positive and proper response to all of the various things that we will be taught by our Father as we progress through His curriculum for our sonship education and edification. Naturally enough this particular component to being a 'strong link' is just as important as the first, since the attainments of our sonship education depend upon it.

Now just as the positive and proper response to our sonship status itself is based primarily upon our favorable attitude toward being given "the adoption of sons," so also is this the case with our positive and proper response to all of the various things that our Father wants to teach us. Our favorable attitude toward God's word in general, and especially toward what our Father has purposed to teach us, is what primarily provides for our positive and proper response to His teachings.

Moreover our favorable attitude toward what God our Father has purposed to teach us needs to be much the same as that which a human father works to produce in his own son in preparation for educating him. In fact when a father works to produce the favorable attitude that his son needs to have both for being taught and for what he is taught, the father purposefully confronts his son with three main things. (1) He confronts him with the nature of the curriculum for his education. (2) He confronts him with the need for him to have a "spirit of faith" in what he is going to be taught. And (3) He confronts him with the great aims, goals, and ultimate objective that are tied to his sonship education.

Now when the son is confronted with these three things, and thereby perceives what his father has designed for him to perceive, this then generates within him the favorable attitude that he needs to have toward what his father is going to teach him. Whereupon the favorable attitude in turn provides for the son to respond positively and properly to his father's teaching.

So it is then that much the same takes place with us as part of our sonship establishment. For we too need just such a favorable attitude toward what God our Father has planned and purposed to teach us as His "sons." And it is the effectual production of just such a favorable attitude within us that makes it so that we can respond positively and properly to the things that He teaches us.

Wherefore let's take a bit of a closer look at each of these three main things with which a father confronts his son, and with which God our Father also confronts us as part of our sonship establishment.

### **The Nature of the Curriculum**

---

One of the final things that a father does in connection with establishing his son in his sonship status and life is to acquaint him with the curriculum for his sonship education and edification. A father actually does this for more than one reason, but as noted it is primarily to make it so that his son sees the nature of the curriculum and thereby becomes properly impressed with what he is going to be learning.

Once again, a father knows that his son needs to be powerfully impressed with what he is going to be learning, otherwise he will not have the proper attitude toward it that he needs to have. And if he does not have the proper attitude toward it, then this means that he will not place his full trust in the curriculum's overall capacity and power, nor in the fact that the curriculum has been tailor made to provide for him to receive the full vocational education and training needed for the vocation he is going to enter into.

Wherefore along with showing his son ‘the chain of provision’ that he has forged for the success of his sonship life, a father also purposefully confronts his son with what the curriculum for his education is like.

For example he confronts his son with all that he has incorporated into the curriculum, by which he has fully provided for his son to learn all that he needs to learn in order to receive the complete vocational education and training necessary to be able to fulfill the vocation that is awaiting him. The father does this to make sure that his son perceives both the comprehensiveness and the thoroughness of his curriculum, so that he knows that it is fully capable of and suited to completely and successfully educating him and training him for the vocation that is awaiting him.

In addition to this a father deliberately confronts his son with the issue of the safeguards and provisions that he has built into the curriculum for ensuring that his son is able to successfully cope with any and all forms of resistance and opposition that he will face, which in working against him will endeavor to thwart him succeeding with his sonship education and achieving its attainments.

Upon perceiving this the son, therefore, is to become convinced that though he knows that opposition exists and will be encountered, it need not succeed in thwarting him in the pursuit of the various attainments, aims, and goals of his sonship life and edification. Rather he knows that he will be able to cope with all resistance and opposition, due to the safeguards and provisions that his father has incorporated into the curriculum for his education.

Along with doing such things as these, a father also makes sure that his son realizes that the only way he can receive his vocational education and training is by means of the effectual working of the curriculum that his father has composed. It has been tailor made for him, and therefore it is perfectly suited to the specific vocation for which

the father has been preparing his son.

Wherefore the son is to understand and appreciate that there are no alternatives for him to look at or consider, for there is no other means of achieving what his father has purposed. Nor are there any shortcuts or alternate routes that he can take than that which is laid out in his father’s curriculum. By confronting his son with this realization a father ensures that his son will not be looking for alternatives or shortcuts, which in a son of proper response generates a single-mindedness in his pursuit of getting his sonship education.

So it is then that by doing such things as these a father provides for his son to be *powerfully impressed* with what his father is going to teach him as he works his way through the curriculum for his vocational education and training. In fact the son is to be so powerfully impressed with what he is given to perceive, that deep and strong convictions are generated within him regarding the power and capacity of his father’s curriculum to fully educate him and train him for his upcoming vocation.

### **Generating the Same Convictions in Us**

---

In view of having designed and created the sonship relationship in the first place, God our Father also confronts us with what the curriculum for our sonship education is like so that we too can be *powerfully impressed with what He has purposed to teach us*, and so that we too can have the appropriate strong convictions that we need to have regarding the power and capacity of His curriculum for our “godly edifying.”

Now what our Father does for us corresponds with what is set forth in the sonship exhortations of Proverbs chapter 2, where after the father exhorts his son in verses 1–5 to fervently commit himself to getting his sonship education he then makes sure that his son perceives the general nature and caliber of what he is going to be taught, and knows about the safeguard provisions that are built into the curriculum. Hence in verses

6–9 the father makes sure his son knows that...

6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding.

7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: *he is* a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.

9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; *yea*, every good path.

(Proverbs 2:6–9)

Moreover following this the father ensures that his son perceives the ability of the curriculum to effectually provide for him to deal with the resistance that he will face from ones who are opposed to the success of his sonship life and edification. Hence in verses 10 and 11 he describes to his son how that...

10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;

11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:...

(Proverbs 2:10–11)

...which, as he goes on to describe, will provide for his son to be delivered from the opposition of “the evil man” and also from that of “the strange woman.”

In similar manner to this in Romans 8:31–39 God our Father has the apostle Paul pointedly confront us with the issues of the power, capacity, and might of what He has provided for our sonship lives and edification. Following describing in verses 28–30 the details of ‘the chain of provision’ that He has forged for the success of our sonship lives, He begins by having Paul ask us a thought-provoking question...

31a What shall we then say to these things?

(Romans 8:31a)

And indeed this is exactly what this question is — a thought-provoking question. It is designed to

provoke us to think very insightfully and perceptively about ‘the chain of provision’ for the success of our sonship lives that has just been described, and about the implications and ramifications of it as we embark upon our sonship edification and live out our sonship lives.

What’s more, to ensure that we perceive what we ought to perceive as we thoughtfully consider “these things,” our Father has Paul direct our consideration by asking us a series of questions which provoke us to clearly perceive the specific issues of the power, capacity, and might that are resident in the provision for our sonship lives. Hence after asking us “What shall we then say to these things?” our Father has Paul say...

31b If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? *It is* God that justifieth.

34 Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

(Romans 8:31b–37)

In short what we should perceive is that everything is ‘geared for our success.’ Our Father has provided for everything that we need to be successful, including incorporating into the curriculum for our “godly edifying” all of the things that are necessary for us to obtain the full objective of being conformed to the image of His Son. Moreover He has provided for us to be able

to successfully cope with all of the resistance and opposition that we will face in the pursuit of getting our “godly edifying” and attaining its attainments.

Wherefore the effectual working of these considerations ought to generate within us some very deep set and strong convictions regarding our ability to succeed in our sonship lives by succeeding with our “godly edifying.” Indeed they ought to generate within us the very same powerful convictions expressed by Paul when he concludes answering the question “What shall we then say to these things?” by saying...

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*(Romans 8:38–39)*

So then by forcefully confronting and impacting us with the full power of ‘the chain of provision’ that He has forged for the success of our sonship lives, (including the power of His curriculum for our edification), our Father has provided us with the first thing that we need to be able to respond positively and properly to the things that He teaches us — i.e. deep set and strong convictions regarding the power of His curriculum for our “godly edifying.”

## **The Second Component**

Having, therefore, such conviction and confidence the next thing that we need to possess is a “spirit of faith” in the very things our Father teaches us as we receive our sonship education. In other words we need to implicitly believe everything that He teaches us, and operate upon them by faith. This is what constitutes the second component of our positive and proper response to what our Father teaches us.

## **A Father’s Trustworthiness**

It should go without saying that a son is expected to know that his father can be trusted. In view of ‘the chain of provision’ that has been lovingly forged for him; and in view of all that the father has already done for his child, (and has given him to know), from birth to “the adoption of sons”; a son should know that he can believe whatever his father says to him, and that he can trust whatever his father teaches him to be fully true and reliable.

In fact throughout the childhood years one of the most fundamental things that a father does is to generate and establish a “spirit of faith” in his child. He wants his child to know without a doubt that he speaks the truth and that ‘his word is his bond.’ Hence the father deliberately manifests his faithfulness and trustworthiness to his child on a consistent basis throughout his childhood years, so that by the time he comes to his son’s adoption he has established himself as being completely and utterly trustworthy in his child’s eyes.

Wherefore by the time a child receives “the adoption of sons” he is expected to possess a strong “spirit of faith” in his father and in his words. In fact his father is to be the most trustworthy person that he knows. And in connection with this, upon receiving “the adoption of sons” and being established in his sonship status, the son is expected to carry this strong “spirit of faith” over into his sonship education.

In other words a father looks for his son to believe him implicitly in whatever he says to him and in whatever he teaches him. For doing this is not only consistent with having a strong “spirit of faith,” but the success of the son’s sonship education absolutely depends upon him doing this. For the effectual working of much of what he will be taught depends upon his implicit belief in what his father teaches him, so that it can work within him as his father intends.

Hence a consistently strong “spirit of faith” in his father and in his words is the second component of a son’s positive and proper response to what his father teaches him.

### **Our Father’s Trustworthiness**

---

We too ought to have a consistently strong “spirit of faith” in God our Father and in His words to us. For He too worked to generate and establish just such a “spirit of faith” in us before He ever told us about our sonship status.

Indeed God did this very thing. For by the effectual working of “the gospel of Christ” itself, we were not only confronted with the issues of God’s great love, mercy, and grace unto us, and also with the issues of His wisdom and power in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were also pointedly confronted with His trustworthiness. And so we believed Him. And in doing so we found that He was, and is, absolutely faithful and trustworthy in all that He says.

Now in connection with believing “the gospel of Christ” God not only justified us in His sight, saved us from the debt and penalty of our sins, and made us permanently “at-one” with Him, but having confronted us with His trustworthiness He also laid the groundwork for establishing in us a consistently strong and on-going “spirit of faith” in Him and His word.

Wherefore after we receive our sonship establishment through the effectual working of Romans 8:16–39, the strength of our “spirit of faith” in our Father and His words should be such that we too live in accordance with the truth that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” With this being so, we should be ready and willing to believe whatever our Father teaches us, and to operate upon it by faith.

So then as we progress through our sonship education and edification our Father should not need to say to us, ‘O ye of little faith. Why do ye

not believe?’ He should not need to reprove us for being “weak in faith” regarding what He teaches us. Howbeit if we are “weak in faith,” needless to say we will be a ‘weak’ link in ‘the chain of provision’ for the success of our sonship lives. Whereas if we have a strong “spirit of faith,” we will be that much more of a ‘strong link.’

### **The Third Component**

---

The third and final main component of a son’s positive and proper response to what his father teaches him is the issue of him placing so much value upon learning what he is given to learn and achieving the attainments thereof, that he is willing to pursue getting them regardless of the cost. In other words nothing compares with succeeding with his sonship education and achieving its aims, goals, and attainments in the eyes of a positively and properly responding son.

### **Loving Sonship’s Aims and Goals More Than Anything Else**

---

A son who responds positively and properly to what his father teaches him also does so because he loves pursuing and attaining the various aims and goals of his sonship life more than anything else. In short they are ‘the love of his life.’ He would rather learn a form of doctrine from His father’s curriculum and attain its corresponding attainment than do anything else that this world has to offer him.

Now this is also something a father accomplishes as he establishes his son in his sonship status and prepares him for receiving his sonship education. For as a father teaches his son about the upcoming vocation that he will have in his father’s business, and informs his son about the nature of the curriculum for his vocational education and training, the father also makes sure that his son gets a good glimpse of the ‘glories’ that are awaiting him as he attains the various attainments of his sonship education and

ultimately reaches its final objective.

In fact learning about these glories is one of the reasons why a son ‘cries, Abba, Father’ more and more. For they deliberately confront his standard of values and they begin to adjust the evaluation scale of his heart. In so doing they effectually work within him to affect ‘his heart’s desire.’ They displace any importance that he has placed upon the various things that this world has to offer him, and replace it with a passion for the sonship glories that are awaiting him.

So then the exceedingly glorious aims, goals, and attainments of his sonship life, along with the incomparable value of its ultimate objective, effectually work within a son to make him pursue these things as *the love of his life*. Wherefore he will respond positively and properly to his father’s teachings, desiring to obtain these things above all else and being willing to do whatever it takes to obtain them.

### **Generating the Same Degree of Love in Us**

---

Through all that we are taught for our sonship establishment in Romans 8:16–39, our Father also provides for ‘the love of our lives’ to become the pursuit of our sonship aims and goals. For with respect to life in general, what does this world have to offer that compares with receiving our vocational education and training for the everlasting vocation that our Father has purposed for us to have?

So then along with (1) having strong convictions and confidence regarding the capacities of our Father’s curriculum, and (2) having implicit faith in whatever our Father teaches us, our positive and proper response to what our Father teaches us also includes (3) desiring above all else to obtain these sonship glories, and being willing to obtain them regardless of the cost.

### **A Weak or Strong Link?**

---

We are going to function as either a ‘weak’ or ‘strong’ link in our Father’s ‘chain of provision’ for the success of our sonship lives and “godly edifying.” They are the only two options. However there really is no excuse for us to be anything but a ‘strong’ link. For the doctrine about our sonship status in Romans 8:14–15, and the following doctrine about our sonship establishment in Romans 8:16–39, has been specifically designed to provide for both halves of what is needed for us to be a ‘strong link.’ And it has been given to us for free. It requires no works on our part to obtain it. We are only required to receive it by faith, and to let its effectual working accomplish what God has designed it to accomplish.

So then the upshot of the matter is this: To whatever degree, or in whatever way, we may fail to succeed with meeting any or all of the educational expectations and attainments that are in the curriculum for our “godly edifying,” the reason for any failure cannot be attributed either to our Father, or to any of His provisions for us, or to His curriculum for our edification. Rather it can only be attributed to us being ‘the weak link’ in the chain — to our failure to respond positively and properly both to our sonship status and to the things that our Father has taught us as His “sons.”

— K. R. Blades