
Are We Disadvantaged?

A reprint from *The ENJOY THE BIBLE QUARTERLY* — 2009, 3rd Quarter

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An Introduction to a Very Special Feature of God's Word

It is often said that 'experience is the best teacher.' And in many cases this may be true. Yet at the same time it is frequently pointed out that if we can 'watch and learn' from someone, or be coached by him, all the better. For though we can readily learn things in 'the school of hard knocks,' it is often easier for us to learn how to do something, or learn how to apply some particular knowledge to a situation, when we can actually watch someone else do it first and so observe what he does.

For when we have an experienced example or coach to watch, we get a double-dose of learning power, so to speak. In other words not only do we acquire knowledge and learn about its proper application from what a coach *says* to us, but we also get to actually *see him put it into practice*.

Hence we get to see him take the knowledge and properly apply it and make use of it, without ourselves having to go through a process of trial and error of trying to figure out the proper application. We therefore can minimize the necessity of 'learning from our mistakes,' and we also can avoid wasting precious time as we go about acquiring the ability or skill that we are after.

So by both 'hearing and seeing' the learning process is made more powerful and more productive. Moreover it is also usually more complete. For as we observe an experienced example or coach we are often able to see *the full capabilities of the knowledge being applied*. Therefore we are able to pick up on or perceive things about the use of the knowledge that we

probably would not perceive so quickly if we were not able to actually see it being put into action before our very eyes.

Wherefore by having visual instruction accompany what we either read or hear we often make quicker and more insightful connections in our understanding. That is, we often grasp applications of knowledge more thoroughly, and also discern details about its proper use more clearly, because we do not just read or hear about it, but we are able to see it *properly demonstrated to us*.

Having, therefore, an observable example to follow — someone to watch who has already learned what we want to learn, and who has already successfully applied and experienced what we want to apply and experience — is a big advantage for us whenever we need to learn something.

Begs the Question

With this being so it begs the question, *Are we disadvantaged when it comes to learning certain things from God's word?* Or to put it more specifically, *Are we disadvantaged when it comes to us following the apostle Paul's example and pattern for our sonship lives, since it is not possible for us to personally observe his example?*

It truly has the extraordinary power to enable us to enter into 'the spirit of place' of the cross of Calvary,...

This is a legitimate question since there are a number of times in our epistles when God makes reference to us personally ‘seeing’ what the apostle Paul experienced. And then on the basis of his example we are expected to learn just how he applied specific aspects of our godly edifying to his sonship life, so that we can do the same in our own lives.

For example, in I Corinthians 2 Paul says...

- 1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.
- 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.
- 3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.
- 4 And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power;
- 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

(1 Corinthians 2:1–5)

When God had Paul write this to the saints in Corinth the vast majority of them had firsthand or eyewitness knowledge of what Paul said. For they had personally seen and witnessed the things that he said regarding his example to them. They therefore actually *saw* Paul’s “weakness” and his “fear” and his “much trembling.” While at the same time they also *saw* and observed how he dealt with these things and operated in spite of them, just as he relates.

But obviously such is not the case with us today at all. We have no such personal observation of Paul’s experience, nor of his response.

Does this, therefore, mean that we are at a disadvantage compared to the Corinthians when it comes to us being able to effectually learn and apply what God has Paul say to us in this portion of our sonship curriculum?

Similarly, for example, in Philippians 4 Paul says...

9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

(Philippians 4:9)

The Philippian saints had personally “seen” in Paul many of the very things that he speaks about in this passage. As such they were eyewitnesses of how Paul handled himself in the sorely trying situations of which he speaks, seeing for themselves just how he made particular application of the specific knowledge that our Father gives to us as “the God of peace” that He is.

Wherefore the saints in Philippi were able to call upon their *personal memory of Paul’s example to them*, recalling to themselves exactly what they had ‘seen in him.’ And then they were able to “do” the same, or put what they had “seen” into practice, just like Paul said, in order to have ‘the God of peace be with them’ as He was with Paul.

But what about us today? We have no such personal recollection of Paul’s example to us upon which to call.

Are we then at a disadvantage when it comes to either effectually or fully learning how to have “the God of peace” with us, compared to how the Philippian saints learned it? Does the fact that we have not personally ‘seen’ or observed Paul’s example limit us in the sense that it makes it more difficult for us today to learn what Paul teaches in this passage and apply it to ourselves?

The Answer

Simply put the answer is ‘No.’ We are not one whit disadvantaged by not being able to benefit from personally seeing Paul’s example and pattern with our own eyes.

Instead the truth of the matter is that we are *just as equally advantaged*, and we are *just as equally*

capable of fully benefiting from Paul's example and pattern, as the saints of his day were.

For in accordance with one of the most extraordinary features and capabilities of God's word, our Father has both endowed and empowered the curriculum for our godly edifying with the ability *to make virtual eyewitnesses out of us*.

In other words God our Father has given our "doctrine which is according to godliness" the amazing ability to produce within our hearts and minds the very same 'powers of observation,' and the very same degree and amount of perceptibility, as that which was expected to be operational in the saints who personally saw Paul's 'face in the flesh.'

An Extraordinary Capability

Now this is truly an extraordinary capability, and one that we should deeply appreciate.

However it is important for us to understand that this capability is not simply the result of God giving us a supplemental narration of events, (or an accompanying descriptive account of things that happened to Paul), as might be given by a common storyteller or reporter, who wants to help his readers get a sense of what was happening.

In other words our Father has not simply supplied us with an historical record, or descriptive journal, of some of Paul's activities in either the Book of Acts or in his epistles, from which we are supposed to obtain a measure of understanding of what the saints in Paul's day actually saw.

Instead we need to understand and appreciate that what God has done amounts to *much more than this*. It involves much more than providing us with mere background or reference information, despite the measure of help that such information can some times give when it comes from the hands of a capable writer.

For the truth of the matter is that God has provided for us to have *bona fide* empathy with Paul in his example and pattern. Or to say this more specifically, He has enabled us to personally and actually enter into both *the spirit of place* and *the spirit of fellowship* when it comes to Paul's example and pattern. And this is something that is beyond the ability of any human writer or communicator.

Now God accomplishes this phenomenal feat by the operation of His Spirit in conjunction with the particular way in which He had Luke set forth his information about Paul and his experiences in the Book of Acts, and also by the specific way in which He had Paul convey his personal information to us in his epistles.

Whereby God has made it so that the information He has given to us about Paul's example and pattern has the following essential twofold ability:

(1) it has the power to enable 'the eyes of our understanding' to see events and happenings as clearly, and with as much authentic realism, as if we actually had been there seeing these things with our own physical eyes.

(2) it has the power to enable our hearts to genuinely sense, perceive, and respond in the very same way that they would have done, had we actually been there in person observing things for ourselves and responding to them.

This, once again, is an extraordinary capability that God our Father has built into His word, and particularly into the curriculum for our sonship education. As such the impact and fruits of its effectual working within us are nothing short of genius on His part.

Extraordinary, but Needed

Yet at the same time this kind of capability is exactly what we should expect from our Father.

For in view of the fact that our sonship edification is our vocational education and training as God's "new creature"; and in view of God having set forth Paul's sonship life as a "pattern" for us when it comes to us understanding, appreciating, and properly putting into practice the effectual working of our own sonship education; then we need to be able to *genuinely observe our pattern*, and as such be coached by him, so to speak.

Therefore instead of us being disadvantaged or handicapped in any way, the opposite is true. For by means of this supernatural capability our Father has ingeniously empowered His written record of Paul's example and pattern with the ability to make the very same kind of visual and emotional impact upon us today as would have been made had we actually been there to personally observe it.

A Closer Look

Now the more we truly understand and appreciate this extraordinary capability, the better off we will be.

For in order for us to fully benefit from Paul's example and pattern, (i.e. to ensure that we get the full effectual working from them that we should), we need to give them their full value and weight as we encounter them in the course of our "godly edifying." And in order to do this we need to know just how our Father expects us to deal with them, and what He expects us to extract from them.

Consequently this means that we need to deal with the details of Paul's example and pattern with *the intelligent and insightful understanding of their designed effectual working within us*. And so we need to deal with them with the clear expectation and anticipation that they will accomplish within us what they are supposed to accomplish.

Therefore it is imperative that we have more than just a basic realization or awareness that our Father has empowered Paul's example and pattern with this extraordinary capability, despite how impressive it is. For simply being in awe of it will not do. For we really cannot get by with only a vague notion of this matter, or with a poorly defined or foggy idea of what we should expect the information to do for us.

Instead we need to have a real and clear appreciation for this capability. One that comes from a *knowing understanding of how it works and of what it does within us*.

Provision Made

Now our Father is fully aware of this. And as such He took this into account when He designed and composed the curriculum for our godly edifying.

Wherefore before God actually has us encounter and deal with Paul's example and pattern as part of our sonship edification, He provides for us to acquire a knowing understanding of this extraordinary capability and how it works. And this He does by making use of it at least a dozen times before we ever get to Romans 12, where the curriculum for our sonship education begins in earnest.

So then doctrinally-speaking by the time we are ready and prepared to fully delve into our sonship education, we already should have a fairly good working knowledge of this extraordinary capability.

Therefore to enhance our understanding and appreciation for this capability, let's briefly look at two of these pre-Romans 12 occasions. The first focusing upon us being *virtual eyewitnesses*, and the second upon us having *virtual empathy*.

Virtual Eyewitnesses

God first provides for us to be virtual eyewitnesses when through the effectual working of “the gospel of Christ” He enables us to clearly see with ‘the eyes of our understanding’ just what was taking place on the cross when the Lord Jesus Christ was “delivered for our offences,” and then three days later “was raised again for our justification.”

In fact Paul makes direct reference to the issue of us being virtual eyewitnesses of Christ’s crucifixion when he reproved the Galatians saying...

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

(Galatians 3:1)

As we well know the actual crucifying of the Lord Jesus Christ did not take place in Galatia, nor did it occur when Paul was among the Galatians. Rather it took place in Jerusalem in Israel, and years earlier.

Yet through the effectual working of “the gospel of Christ” God has provided for “the preaching of the cross” to enable us, (like the Galatians), to be virtual eyewitnesses of Christ’s crucifixion. Or as Paul says, to have Jesus Christ “evidently set forth” before our “eyes,” and thereby have Him ‘crucified among us.’

Now without any exaggeration, and also without the use of any figurative licence or speech, this is exactly what “the gospel of Christ” is capable of doing to us. It truly has the extraordinary power to enable us to enter into ‘the spirit of place’ of the cross of Calvary, and thereby allow us to ‘see’ with the ‘eyes of our understanding’ Christ being crucified for us.

As such therefore when we go through “the gospel of Christ” in Romans 1–3 its effectual working has the power to make virtual

eyewitnesses out of us, who (1) can ‘see’ Christ being crucified in front of us with as much realism as if we were actually there; and (2) who can also ‘see’ His crucifixion taking place with the intelligent and insightful comprehension of one who knows exactly what Christ is doing, and knows all that is happening to Him, and knows the reasons for everything that happens.

In fact this is the reason Paul says “before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been EVIDENTLY set forth,...”

Accordingly therefore the provision exists in the details of “the gospel of Christ” for the eyes of our understanding to perceptively “see” and follow the very order in which the Lord Jesus Christ went about meeting and fulfilling every legal requirement and every judicial satisfaction that He needed to fulfill for us as our Redeemer.

Hence just as one is able to watch an orderly presentation of evidence in a court case, together with an orderly and corresponding pronouncement from the bench of judicial compliance and satisfaction regarding the evidence, “the gospel of Christ” provides for us to be able to “see” everything that Christ did with the same intelligent and comprehending eyes that God Himself had when as Judge He set forth Christ “to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,” and He watched Christ bear and satisfy each and every judgment that was brought against Him as He took our place.

Now God has both endowed and empowered His “gospel of Christ” with the ability to accomplish this primarily by the way that He composed it, together with the way that He composed the historical record of Christ’s crucifixion in each of the Gospel accounts.

Therefore through the effectual working of “the gospel of Christ” God provides for us to be *virtually transported to Golgotha*, where not only are we able to witness Christ being ‘crucified among us,’ but we are also able to hear Him describe and explain to us in detail, (and in

order), the judicial proceedings that took place there when according to Paul's gospel Christ "was delivered for our offences."

Consequently as we are effectually enabled *to watch and observe the crucifixion*, and as we hear God through His gospel define for us and describe to us each aspect of the judicial proceedings that take place, He enables us to understand and appreciate each one of them as He does.

In fact as each step in the process of Christ securing propitiation for us unfolds before our eyes, not only are we enabled to perceptively watch what happens to Him, but as we follow the proceedings *we are also able to intelligently respond to each of them*.

Hence by being in possession of as much realism as those that were there, with knowing comprehension we are able to say to ourselves such things as:

'Now I can 'see' God laying my vile sins on Him, making Him, (who knew no sin), to be sin for me.'

Then as we watch the process of redemption moving on we can say...

'The horrors of what it must be like to be under God's righteous wrath are starting to chill my soul, as I see Him beginning the process of suffering the debt and penalty of my sins for me.'

And then as we are in the midst of the darkness, and our hearts are seized by the horrific cost that Christ is paying to produce propitiation for us, our trembling souls admittedly confess...

'The sheer agony and travail of His soul is terrifying me. For though I am blind to seeing His suffering at this time, I know that He is undergoing ghastly writhing tortures and torments as He is being stricken with blow after blow of punishment from the rod of God's Justice, as God's righteous indignation and wrath against my sins is expended upon Him.'

But then finally, after what seems like an eternity, the darkness is lifted. And with our anxious hearts straining to know the outcome, and with our eyes once again able to see, what we see overwhelms us. And so we are overcome with such a thrill in our souls that the words just burst forth from our lips...

'I can see Him! And, yes, He is still alive! He has endured! O yes He has endured! — And I now hear Him triumphantly declaring, "It is finished." — O Hallelujah, my Blessed Redeemer!'

Realism Indeed

This has been nothing more than a very brief, simple, and feebly put description of the realism that is produced by the extraordinary capability of God's word when it comes to making us virtual eyewitnesses.

Nonetheless it sufficiently illustrates the power of this extraordinary capability, which in turn completely erases any notion that we are disadvantaged.

In fact we are so equally advantaged by the power of the realism of being virtual eyewitnesses, that without one whit of exaggeration, and without any semblance of pretense, we can answer the song writer's question, "*Were you there when they crucified my Lord?*" by honestly saying, 'Yes! Yes I was.'

Such is the realism of being virtual eyewitnesses — of being ones "before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you."

Virtual Empathy

Now as remarkable as it is for God to provide for us to be made virtual eyewitnesses, He actually takes things one step further when He provides for us to have *virtual empathy*.

For with virtual empathy God first of all enables us to realize the way in which Paul was impacted

by the things that he experienced as our example and pattern. But He does not stop there, as if He was only giving us some frame of reference material. Instead our Father also provides for us to *genuinely have the same kind of feelings and emotional responses that Paul had*, so that we can enter into an authentic ‘spirit of fellowship’ with Paul, and thereby unmistakably and confidently know just how the effectual working of our Father’s word is to likewise work within us.

Wherefore it takes something extra, in a sense, to produce virtual empathy since there is more involved, especially as it pertains to our souls. It requires our Father to use information that He specifically empowers with the ability to reach all the way through into our souls, and once there purposefully *touch the emotional and sensory chords of our hearts*.

But then once it has successfully done this, our Father’s word also needs to have the power to go to work in our souls to cause the chords of our hearts *to resonate with the same sentiments that Paul expresses in his example and pattern* — thusly producing an authentic ‘spirit of fellowship’ with Paul.

Now not surprisingly our Father has perfectly provided for this very thing. In truth He actually has made it so that the information about Paul’s example and pattern has the power to be *‘felt’* by us, just as Paul himself felt it at the time. That is, it has the ability to penetrate into our souls and effectually stir within us the same kinds of corresponding reactions, emotions, sensations, sentiments, and the like.

And besides this, just as God has done when it comes to enabling us to be virtual eyewitnesses, so also before we ever get to Romans 12 He has given us some practice sessions, so to speak, with the issue of understanding, appreciating, and possessing virtual empathy. In fact He provides us with no less than five opportunities whereby we can get a working knowledge of having

virtual empathy.

So to enhance our understanding and appreciation for this issue, let’s briefly look at one such occurrence at the end of Romans 8 at the conclusion to our sonship establishment.

Feeling the Heat

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 8:35–37)

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” is the last of the five heart-probing questions that we are asked in Romans 8:31–39. By them our Father works within us to produce the full measure of confidence, assurance, and conviction that we need to have as “sons” in the power of the curriculum for our sonship education, before we actually start dealing with it.

Specifically our Father probes our hearts in five particular ways in order to expose to us any problems we might have in the five areas of our hearts that are responsible for producing and maintaining the issues of confidence, assurance, and conviction.

Hence by the effectual working of each of the five probing questions our Father performs open-heart surgery on us, so to speak. First He works within our heart to expose it to the specific stimulus contained in each question. Then as we respond to each of the stimuli, He proceeds to work to eradicate any weakness, or doubts, or faintness of heart that we might have. And once such things are eradicated, He then simultaneously goes to work to effectually generate in their place the full measure of sonship

confidence, assurance, and conviction that we should have in the power of the curriculum for our sonship education.

Now of the five heart-probing questions, the last one in verse 35 purposely stimulates our hearts regarding the Adversary and his policy of evil against us. For by its effectual working it actually causes our hearts to sense, or feel, the very kind of naturally unpleasant sensations and sentiments that it is going to feel when we eventually do encounter the Adversary's policy of evil in the course of our sonship lives.

Wherefore through the effectual working of verses 35 and 36 our Father causes us in advance to 'feel the heat,' so to speak, that will eventually come upon us from the policy of evil. He causes our hearts to experience *an authentic foretaste of the intimidating and fear-mongering power of the Adversary's opposition*, so that He can address any weakness we might have and replace it with the confidence, assurance, and conviction that He wants us to have, and that we need to have.

Hence the effectual working of verses 35 and 36 causes our hearts to experience *virtual empathy*. For as our Father's question in verse 35, and the parallel example He gives us in verse 36, work within our hearts, they actually stimulate within us a genuine foretaste of the very same kind of chills, fears, trembling, fainting in our minds, straitening of our bowels, and the like, that the Adversary will work to produce within us.

Therefore by the power of virtual empathy our Father actually causes us to 'taste tribulation,' to 'taste distress,' to 'taste persecution' and the rest, and to do so with as much realism as if we were already experiencing them.

In fact it is because of the authentic realism of our virtual empathy with the Adversary's opposition that we are enabled to be "persuaded" that we will have success in the face of the entire scope of the policy of evil, just like verses 38 and 39 declare.

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)

For this profession of persuasion is not an academic one. That is, it is not merely the result of logical reasoning, nor of convincing argumentation. And neither does it get produced within us by the 'inspiration' of others.

But rather this 'persuasion' is both an *heart-generated* and an *heart-felt* persuasion. For it is conceived and brought to the birth in the depths of our hearts, where by means of the effectual working of verses 35-37 and its virtual empathy both the power of the word of God and the power of the policy of evil squared off within our hearts to see which would impress us more. And as we are caused to authentically 'feel' the power of both, it is the mighty power of our Father's words that should impress us the most — that should impress us with its excellency. Hence our own hearts should fully concur with, and we should be able to mutually articulate, the *heart-felt persuasion* that is expressed in verses 38 and 39.

Such, therefore, is one of the pre-Romans 12 examples of the authentic realism that our Father is able to produce within us through the power of virtual empathy.

Realism Times Two

So then through the realism of being *virtual eyewitnesses*, and through the realism of having *virtual empathy*, our Father has eliminated any notion that we are disadvantaged. For He has fully provided for our eyes to actually 'see' things as if we were truly there, and for our hearts to actually experience the very kind of feelings, sensations, sentiments, and the like, that He

wants us to experience, (and that we need to experience), when it comes to learning our sonship education and living out our sonship lives.

And in particular this includes the issue of us being virtual eyewitnesses of, and having virtual empathy with, the apostle Paul's example and pattern, so that we can be effectually 'coached by him,' as we (1) enter into *the spirit of place* with him and authentically 'see' him in his situations and circumstances; and (2) have virtual empathy with him and an authentic *spirit of fellowship* with exactly how his situations and circumstances affected him, and with how he dealt with them by means of the effectual working of his sonship education within him.

The Importance and Necessity of this Extraordinary Capability

It was said at the outset of this article that it is often helpful for us to be able to watch and observe another's example when we are endeavoring to understand how to properly apply new information, or when we are trying to learn a new skill. And indeed it is.

However when it comes to our sonship education and edification it is *more than just helpful to us* to be virtual eyewitnesses of Paul's example and pattern, and to have virtual empathy with him. It is actually a necessity.

For to us Paul's example and pattern is designed to be much more than an help. For God our Father has designed it to be much more than a simple guide, and even much more than a practical tutelage.

Instead He has designed it to be *a pattern to be followed*. A pattern in which we see the very kind of things that happen and occur when we pursue the course of our sonship education and properly live out our sonship lives. A pattern in which we can both see and sense how the demands and experiences of living our sonship lives are going

to affect us. (For as they affected Paul, so also will they affect us.) And a pattern in which we can both see and sense just how the effectual working of our sonship education successfully operated within Paul, and in doing so be able to intelligently perceive exactly what our Father has designed specific aspects of our education to do for us, and how to properly apply them, so that they will effectually work within us as they worked within Paul, and thereby bring forth the same fruits unto God's glory in us as they did in Paul.

Such is the fundamental nature of a pattern, which in turn necessitates that a pattern be able to be watched and observed so that it can convey to the observer all of the pertinent information that he needs in order for him to be able to unmistakably and confidently follow the pattern.

Therefore the importance and necessity of God empowering His word with the extraordinary capability of making us virtual eyewitnesses, and giving us virtual empathy.

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

In fact this means that our Father has enabled us to know the very kind of godly cogitations and heart-calming persuasions that Paul's godly edifying produced within him, and He has enabled us to know them just as intimately, and just as thoroughly, as if we were able to personally talk to Paul about them, *like saints in his day were able to do with him*.

Wherefore as our Father enables us to virtually observe Paul's example and pattern, and

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

Only The Beginning

Once again this is truly both an extraordinary and a phenomenal capability which our Father has given to the curriculum for our sonship education. What’s more, the closer we examine it the more phenomenal it becomes. For what has been briefly described in this article is only the beginning of what it is designed to do for us, as we receive our sonship education and follow Paul’s example and pattern.

In fact we need to understand that as we progress through the curriculum for our sonship education *it becomes more and more important for us* to be able to benefit from being virtual eyewitnesses of Paul’s example and pattern, and to benefit from having virtual empathy with his heart and mind. This is because things in our sonship education and lives become much more personal, and they become more intensely subjective, the further along we get in the course of being conformed to the image of God’s Son.

For not only does our progressive conformity to Christ’s image naturally make things more personal and subjective for us, but so does the increasing opposition that we receive from the Adversary’s policy of evil. For by nature it too becomes much more soul-troubling and more mind-disturbing.

Wherefore as we get further along in our conformity to Christ’s image it becomes all the more important for us to be able to ‘see’ and observe more as virtual eyewitnesses than we did at the first. For God has Paul relate much more that needs to be ‘seen’ by us, and much more that needs to be observed by us, as we deal with later occurrences of his example and pattern.

Likewise through the power of virtual empathy we must be able to sense and ‘feel’ more of what went on in Paul’s heart and mind than we did at the first. For not only does God have Paul express more ‘feelings’ in later occurrences of his example and pattern, but during the latter stages of our sonship lives the battle within us between what ‘feelings’ tell us to think, and what our Father teaches us to think, becomes a raging battle within us right to the end.

So whether we have just been introduced to this extraordinary capability, or know it well, it behooves us to invest the time in understanding and appreciating it all the more. For only then can we ensure that we will fully benefit from it like we should as we live out our sonship lives.

— K. R. Blades