

Go, Labor On

Horatius Bonar (1808–1889)

Go, labor on; spend, and be spent,
thy joy to do the Father's will;
it is the way the Master went;
should not the servant tread it still?

Go, labor on; 'tis not for naught;
thine earthly loss is heav'nly gain;
men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not;
the Master praises—what are men?

Go labor on; enough while here
if He shall praise thee, if He deign
thy willing heart to mark and cheer;
no toil for Him shall be in vain.

Go, labor on while it is day;
the world's dark night is hast'ning on.
Speed, speed thy work, cast sloth away;
It is not thus that souls are won.

Toil on, faint not, keep watch and pray;
be wise the erring soul to win;
go forth into the world's highway,
compel the wand'rer to come in.

Toil on, and in thy toil rejoice;
for toil comes rest, for exile home;
soon shall you hear the Bridegroom's voice,
the midnight cry, "Behold, I come."

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

In Praise of Ordinary Men, Part One: Robert Weckle

Kevin T. Bauder

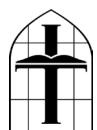
My parents were led to the Lord by a church planting missionary in Free-land, Michigan. I was only three or four years old. When that missionary left, the church went through a series of pastors. Some were more qualified and some less. The congregation finally called a church planter from the Fellowship of Baptists for Home Missions. He is the pastor who baptized me and who began to train me in the faith. His name was Robert Weckle, but the first time I met him he told me, "Kevin, just call me *preacher!*"

Preacher Weckle was not a great pulpiteer. His presentation emphasized biblical content over style. But he delivered content! In those days, everybody preached from a King James Bible. Preacher Weckle's Bible was a Scofield Reference Bible, and he encouraged everybody to get one. He would sometimes announce his text by its page number in the Scofield Bible.

Of course Preacher Weckle was a dispensationalist. He owned a big dispensational chart, painted on canvas. Every few years he would hang it from a wire and stretch it across the front of our church auditorium. Then he would teach through the dispensations, usually on Sunday nights. I was fascinated with that chart, its pictures, and its intricacies. I loved to hear him teach as I kept one eye on the chart and the other eye on the notes in my father's Scofield Bible.

Preacher Weckle fascinated me. He had more books than anybody I'd ever met. He knew more about the Bible than anyone I'd ever heard. As an adult I was surprised to discover that he had only a three-year diploma from Practical Bible Training Institute. He was one of the few people who could openly correct my father—an impressive feat in my childish eyes. Most of all, he cared deeply about his people and looked for opportunities to help them grow.

For example, he once took me fishing with his son. While we drowned worms in the Quanicasee River, he spoke continuously of spiritual things. I also got to observe his character when his son accidentally locked the car keys in the trunk.



In the Nick of Time is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

Permission is granted to duplicate for personal and church use.

www.centalseminary.edu | info@centralseminary.edu
900 Forestview Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441 | 800.827.1043

Our church bought a little bus that Preacher Weckle drove every week to pick up people for Sunday School. He would invite me to go with him, and he let me work the door. I was often in his home and he was often in ours. He taught me far more during those informal moments than I ever learned in church. That is saying something, because between the regular services and the special youth times, I could expect to be in some church activity no less than six hours every week.

During the summers, Preacher Weckle would drive that bus to Bible camp in northern Michigan. The camp had been one of Al Capone's hideouts during the 1930s. Michigan Baptists bought the property during the 1950s. My father helped to erect the dining hall, many of the original cabins, and many of the first recreational facilities. My parents would take their vacation to work as counselors or kitchen help. When I was old enough, I attended as a camper.

Most of the week at camp was pure fun: games, swimming, handicrafts, and other forms of recreation. Preacher Weckle was almost always there, often volunteering to work in the kitchen. The spiritual emphasis was strong, with both morning and evening chapel services plus times for cabin and personal devotions, missionary presentations, and other spiritual activities. It was during one of those camping weeks that I first understood that the claims of Jesus Christ upon my life were truly absolute. At that point, I made the conscious choice to devote my life to whatever Christ wished. Preacher Weckle was there to take me aside and pray with me (and, as I recall, buy me pop at the canteen).

During the school year, the fundamental Baptist churches in our area would cooperate to sponsor a once-a-month youth rally on Saturday night. Between the camps and the youth rallies I slowly became aware that not all churches were just like ours. In those meetings I heard preaching that could electrify, encourage, and convict, but also some that could wound and bruise. While I couldn't have described the difference then, many of those sermons were short on biblical content and long on opinions and stories. Some of them were manipulative. A few were even abusive. I didn't know it, but I was experiencing the tension between different versions of fundamentalism, and these sometimes left me perplexed.

For his part, Preacher Weckle was usually careful about what he would allow in our church. For example, our church would host a one-week missionary conference and an evangelistic conference every year. For two years running, we had an evangelist who was a country-and-western singer and who had starred in a movie or two. He brought Hollywood-style publicity and techniques to his evangelistic meetings, and our auditorium overflowed during every service. People would stream forward at every invitation. Preacher Weckle, however, became deeply uncomfortable with the man's approach. After the second year, the evangelist was not invited to return. So

far as I can remember, none of the people who made decisions under that man's preaching continued with our church.

Preacher Weckle was just an ordinary guy. He had no advanced academic preparation, little personal electricity, and hardly any showmanship. What he did have was a knowledge of the Bible, a willingness to pour his life into (often ungrateful) people, and a determination to keep on serving the Lord through difficult circumstances. I now know that I probably learned more Bible, more Christian doctrine, more philosophy of ministry, and more Christian character from Preacher Weckle than from nearly any other person. God used this ordinary man in an extraordinary way in my life.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
