

I Hear the Words of Love

Horatius Bonar (1808–1889)

I hear the words of love,
I gaze upon the blood,
I see the mighty sacrifice,
And I have peace with God.

'Tis everlasting peace,
Sure as Jehovah's name;
'Tis stable as His steadfast throne,
For evermore the same.

The clouds may go and come,
And storms may sweep my sky;
This blood-sealed friendship changes not,
The cross is ever nigh.

I change—He changes not;
The Christ can never die;
His love, not mine, the resting-place;
His truth, not mine, the tie.

My love is oftimes low,
My joy still ebbs and flows,
But peace with Him remains the same;
No change Jehovah knows.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

In Praise of Ordinary Men, Part Six: Dave Keith

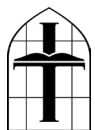
Kevin T. Bauder

I met David Keith in January of 1974. He had just been discharged from the Army (where, as company clerk, he was reputed to have awarded his whole unit a Good Conduct Medal). He rode his Honda 350SL from Panama City up the Pan American highway through Central America and Mexico, then as far as Kansas City before the engine blew. We spent the spring semester rebuilding the engine in our dorm room. The last day of class, Dave rode that bike down College Avenue, standing up on the saddle and saluting with both hands.

Dave wasn't really supposed to room with us that semester, but he just kind of moved in. There were already four of us in the room. Dave had a big pillow that he threw on the floor and used as a mattress. Around campus he made quite an impression, wearing an ankle-length, brown leather coat with a double row of brass buttons. For headgear he donned a long-billed straw cap that he'd found in Panama. In the dorm he would occasionally carry a pair of bright machetes that he'd picked up in Guatemala. None of us had ever seen anybody like Dave, but his grin, his quick wit, and his sheer audacity won us over.

I was eighteen and Dave was twenty-three. At that age, five years is a big difference, and Dave took it upon himself to tutor me in certain aspects of masculine maturity. He introduced me to cap-and-ball revolvers, one of which he kept in the dorm. He introduced me to Honda motorcycles and eventually sold me a 350SL—it was a great wheelie machine. He also demonstrated the value of a high quality stereo system with really big speakers, though the music I've played over those speakers has changed through the years.

We were in a Bible college, and Dave was training to be a pastor. Most of our peers—and most of the faculty—had trouble believing that Dave was serious about it. For that matter, they had trouble believing that Dave could be serious about anything. I knew better. During my sophomore year we had a room to ourselves, which meant that we had plenty of opportunity to observe each other's priorities, struggles, and growth. I knew that Dave's walk with God meant something to him, and I knew that he wanted to see me



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walking with God in a more consistent way than I was. Years later I came to understand that God was using him as an instrument of grace in my life.

Eventually we graduated, married, and moved in different directions. For a short time Dave was an assistant pastor in a small church. That turned into an unpleasant episode when Dave had to confront the dishonesty of his senior pastor. Dave never returned to the pastorate. I went away to seminary in Denver, then eventually returned to a pastorate in Iowa. During those years in Iowa I saw Dave regularly. He worked a succession of jobs. Among others he brokered equipment for machine shops, then sold accounts for a debt collection agency. He would often stop by my home or call on the phone (he'd always greet me with, "Hey, Kevvy!") and we would discuss his dissatisfaction with the work he was doing. He seemed unable to find a job where he fit.

Dave took this matter seriously. He wanted to provide well for his family and he wanted a stable occupation. Then he hired on with FedEx Ground, where he discovered his vocation. He started out driving a delivery truck, eventually working his way up to terminal manager and region safety manager. As a driver he set a record for deliveries which, last time I asked, still stood unbroken. Within FedEx Ground, he was Super Dave.

With advancement in the company came moves to Oklahoma, Texas, and eventually South Carolina. During those years his daughters grew and married, his grandchildren were born, and Dave's hair turned white. Through all the changes, Dave's heart remained constant. Even though Dave was not a pastor, he never saw his biblical training as wasted. His relationship to God was his priority. Over time it came to be the organizing principle under which the rest of his life was conducted. It is what led him to be a faithful husband, a loving father and grandfather, a steadfast friend, and a loyal employee. David's love for God permeated and redefined all of his other loves.

Dave had an odd sense of humor—like the time he swiped his wife's favorite CD, gift-wrapped it, and put it under the Christmas tree. He said he wanted to give her a gift that she was sure to appreciate. On another occasion he joined a queue of husbands who were waiting for their wives in a women's shoe store. After several minutes, he found a pair of red shoes and began to click the heels together, intoning, "There's no place like home. There's no place like home."

Did I mention that Susan was an exceptionally longsuffering wife?

Dave also loved to be the center of attention, and he wasn't self-conscious about how he got it. He once decided to compete in a roping event at a local rodeo. On his way out of the chute, he managed to lasso the tail of his own horse. The crowd roared—it was the most memorable event of the day. Far from being embarrassed, Dave appreciated the humor of the situation and took his bow with satisfaction.

Over the last few years I heard from Dave less and less frequently. Something was wrong with his voice. Then on January 16, 2016 he texted, "Found out I have Stage 4 cancer. If anything happens to me I am requesting you to speak at my funeral." My first thought was, "This is a really bad joke."

Earlier, I had thought the same thing on the day he called and told me that he wanted to leave FedEx and open a hotdog stand. He had a plan to make big money. I thought he was joking then, but he really meant it. And he wasn't joking about cancer.

Months later, on the day that Dave was told his cancer was terminal, he wrote these words to me: "One thing has not changed. I have always been in Our Father's hands. As I look back over His grace and mercy in my life I am thankful."

Dave passed away just over a year ago. He was more than a friend. God used him to challenge me when my Christian commitment had reached a low ebb. Then he was the person who showed me that a believer can be devoted to God, truth, and ministry while also thoroughly enjoying life. Dave was full of the joy of living, but he was even more full of the joy of the Lord. He taught me something about both.



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.
